

Southeast Asia Program



Fall 2023 Bulletin



Cornell University

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Collection of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art,
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Acquired through the George and Mary Rockwell Fund;
2018.061
Image courtesy of the Johnson Museum

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

AS THE WEATHER TURNS COOL and the leaves begin to turn, I'm pleased to welcome us all to the Fall 2023 semester. The Southeast Asia Program's schedule for this term features our regular schedule of receptions, Gatty seminars, and other special events.

I am pleased to announce that this year's SEAP Graduate Co-Chairs are Geronimo Cristobal and Eric Goh, both PhD students in the History of Art working with Professor Kaja McGowan. Eric and Geronimo have put together a fascinating Gatty Lecture series for the fall, featuring lectures ranging from the decline of Malaysia's dominant-party system, to haute couture under Ferdinand Marcos, to transnational feminist practices in Southeast Asia. As we welcome Eric and Geronimo to their new roles, I am especially thankful to outgoing SEAP co-chairs Tamar Law (Global Government) and Harry Dienes (Government) for their outstanding service to the program in 2022-23.

The Gatty Lecture series is named after Ronald and Jeanette Gatty, whose generous support has allowed SEAP to convert what was once called the "SEAP Brown Bag"—named for the brown paper bags that students and faculty once used to pack their lunches—into the program's premier lecture series with a free hot lunch provided for all attendees. Writing in these pages several years ago, Professor Thak Chaloentiarana noted that the original purpose of the SEAP Brown Bag was to "construct a new field of study and to educate its graduate students about Southeast Asia." The Brown Bag/Gatty Lecture series is much more than that now. It is the most important regular event in the intellectual life of the Southeast Asia Program, drawing faculty and students alike to engage across disciplines on the most interesting new research on Southeast Asia by scholars from around the world.

As Southeast Asian studies at Cornell approaches its 75th anniversary in 2025, it is fitting to announce that the Gatty family's ongoing support for SEAP will afford the program with substantial new resources to support a range of new activities in support of Southeast Asian studies. One notable example is a new postdoctoral fellowship, which targets the field of Southeast Asia and the social sciences. The inaugural postdoctoral fellow is Aichiro Suryo Prabowo, a specialist in public finance and

disaster resilience in Indonesia who joins us in Ithaca after having completed his PhD at the University of Maryland. Chiro will be based at the Kahin Center for the coming year, and also will be affiliated with Cornell's new Jeb E. Brooks School for Public Policy, marking a new domain for collaboration between SEAP and the policy community here in Ithaca and around the world.

It also gives me great pleasure to report that Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences has received a substantial gift in support of Indonesian studies at Cornell, which



will go to strengthen the Indonesian-language collection at the Echols Center, to provide current support for instruction in Bahasa Indonesia, and will also support new initiatives and programs on Indonesia. Together with the Gatty family's generous support, SEAP is poised to embark on an exciting new chapter in Southeast Asian studies here at Cornell.

There have been some important changes within the SEAP office in recent months. Over the summer, our longtime Administrative Coordinator James Nagy

departed for Madison, WI, where his partner and SEAP alum Juan Fernandez has accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Wisconsin. We all miss James and Juan terribly, but the close links between Cornell and Wisconsin mean that we will surely stay in touch as they start the next stage in their careers.

As a partial replacement for James, we have hired Jennifer Munger in the role of Program Manager. Jennifer conducted her graduate studies on Southeast Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was Managing Editor for the *Journal of Asian Studies* before coming to Cornell. Thamora Fishel continues in her role as Associate Director, but with an expanded position that will provide vital support for new initiatives and new types of programming. I'm delighted to welcome Jennifer to SEAP, and to work with Thamora, Ava, Emily, and the rest of the SEAP team in support of SEAP's mission.

—Tom Pepinsky, Professor of Government

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Testing Tigers



by Martin Gilbert,
Associate Professor of
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Creating Partnerships to Assess Disease Threats to Tiger Conservation

TERENGGANU, MALAYSIA – The young male Malayan tiger stepped out onto the road, undeterred by the oppressive heat of the midday sun. The security of the forest shadows meant nothing to him now as he padded dully across the searing tarmac. The respiratory infection that had laid him low was now gone, and at least outwardly he appeared back to full health, yet his mind had submerged into the fog and his world was robbed of its allure, danger, and fire. The smells and sounds of people that once repelled him drained into the background and he blinked placidly at the vehicles and crowds that began to gather around him. Then everything went black.

The tiger, soon to be named ‘Awang Besul’, was taken into care by the Terengganu Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan), then transferred to the National Wildlife Rescue Center in Sungkai, Perak. Initially he ate and drank on his own, but his neurological disease worsened. Despite the best efforts of the veterinarians caring for him, his condition deteriorated, and he died just four days later. Suspicion focused on canine distemper virus, and it was soon announced that Awang Basul was the first case of the infection recorded in a wild Malayan tiger.

Canine distemper virus (CDV) is something of a misnomer. Although long recognised as a serious and often lethal disease of unvaccinated dogs, it is also commonly found in wild carnivores, from the raccoons of urban America to the lions of the Serengeti, and even the seals of the Caspian Sea. But the case of Awang Besul was an alarming development. Fewer than 100 Malayan tigers remain in the forests of Peninsular Malaysia and the subspecies is now recognized as critically endangered. In better days, in the early twentieth century when tigers thrived throughout the verdant forests of Southeast Asia, outbreaks of disease were inconsequential, with any deaths quickly replaced by the abundant breeding population. But in today’s world, with depleted tiger numbers scratching out a living in remaining pockets of snare-infested forest amid a sea of rubber and palm oil, every death counts and an outbreak of disease can drive the last nail into the coffin of population extinction.

The story of CDV in wild tigers didn’t begin in the tropical swelter of Malaysia, but three thousand miles to the north in the frozen taiga forests of the Russian Far East. Concerns were first raised following the death of a young tigress in early 2004, but it wasn’t until 2010 – when a series of cases were detected in widely scattered locations – that alarm bells really started

to sound. At the time, I was working as a wildlife veterinarian for the Wildlife Conservation Society, and I made my first visit to Russia to investigate whether distemper might pose a threat to the Amur tigers (also known as Siberian tigers) that live there. My research there – which became the focus of my master’s degree and then of my PhD – found that the virus did indeed pose a threat to the tigers, particularly the smaller and more isolated populations that had become the reality for most tigers worldwide by that time.

By the time I joined Cornell University in 2016, we had accumulated a fairly detailed understanding of the epidemiology of CDV in Russia and its impact on the tiger population there, but almost nothing was known about the threat it posed to tigers elsewhere in the species’ range. Researching the health of an animal as rare and elusive as the tiger is a challenging proposition. How do you study a species that is observed so infrequently? Compounding this, the virus itself can be hard to find. Infections last just a few weeks, and either kill the tiger host or are vanquished by its immune system. The answer lies in the longevity of this immune response, with antibodies to CDV remaining detectable for years in those tigers that survive infection. Detection of antibodies in tiger blood is therefore the key to assessing the level of CDV exposure in a tiger population, and with antibodies now found in a third of Russian tigers, we have a benchmark against which to compare.

Although in theory these tiger antibodies are a prime target for surveillance, the practice of detection presents a considerable challenge. Commercial test kits designed for measuring CDV antibodies in dog blood have proven useless for screening tigers, as the dog-specific indicator reagent they use fails to bind reliably to tiger antibodies. The most practical alternative is called a serum neutralization test (SNT).



Left to Right:
Virologist Navapon Techakriengkrai (Chulalongkorn University) guides Silmi Mariya (Bogor Agricultural University) on the interpretation of the serum neutralization test. (Photo credit: M. Gilbert)

Martin Gilbert digitizes histopathology slides using the Grundium scanner in Nepal. (Photo credit: J. Bodgener)

Manager of the Barumon Centre, Syukur Alfajar uses a remote camera to monitor the Sumatran tigers being rehabilitated at the facility. (Photo credit: M. Gilbert)



This does not detect the antibodies directly, but measures the ability of serum (due to the antibodies it may contain) to neutralize virus and prevent it from infecting cells. However, this is more technically demanding and largely unavailable in the countries that tigers inhabit. Prospects for shipping tiger samples for testing in international laboratories are hampered by export restrictions in some countries, and the reluctance of others to issue CITES permits (designed to regulate trade in endangered species) unfortunately and ironically curtails access to critical wildlife health diagnostics. This leaves us with only one option – if we cannot get the sample to the laboratory, then we must take the laboratory to the sample – and set up our own SNT protocols in tiger range countries.

With generous support from the Cornell Feline Health Center, we have now introduced SNT protocols to Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia, and the Agriculture and Forestry University in Nepal. Our training sessions have included veterinarians from each of these countries as well as colleagues from the tiger range states of Bhutan and India. Most crucially, we have been able to use these tests to screen archived samples from wild tigers, and have confirmed the presence of CDV exposure in tigers in Sumatra and in Nepal for the first time.

Simultaneously, we have also been working to strengthen our capacity to investigate wildlife mortalities, including those of tigers, in the countries we work in. Once again, we are focused on local solutions – an approach that is more cost effective and sustainable in the long term. In Nepal, the most significant bottleneck to post-mortem diagnosis is a lack of local capacity in wildlife pathology. Using local facilities, we were able to make ultra-thin sections of tissues for examination under the microscope, but Nepal lacks veterinary pathologists with the expertise needed to interpret the diagnostic changes they contain. To solve this, we are grateful to Grundium, a company in Finland that donated an Ocus 20 scanner – a precision instrument capable of digitizing our

tissue sections, while withstanding the rigors of field life. These high-definition images can then be shared via a web-based platform donated by PathoZoom to specialist wildlife pathologists anywhere in the world, thus delivering vets in the field the key diagnoses they need in near real time. In this way, we have diagnosed cases of CDV in a tiger and a leopard in Nepal. But just as crucially, the images and the records of expert feedback represent a growing catalogue of case material for training future wildlife pathologists in tiger range countries like Nepal, bringing benefits for the conservation of tigers and other wildlife once it is in place.

Of course, diagnostic tools are just one piece of the disease surveillance process. A great deal of planning is required to collect valuable blood samples during those rare occasions when wild tigers are handled (for conflict management, rehabilitation or research). These samples must then be safely frozen, with contingency plans in place to control for failures in electricity supplies that can occur anywhere, not just in remote field stations or wildlife rehabilitation centers. Transfer to the laboratory brings its own challenges, with bureaucratic needs and logistical hurdles, and access to sufficient coolant to navigate the transport connections necessary to ensure a safe delivery. All of this requires good relationships and communication between the people involved at each stage of the process, and the support of the government agencies responsible for wildlife management. With all of this in mind, we were delighted to receive invites from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) in Indonesia to contribute to a workshop held in Bogor on Java during September 2022, which would begin planning for a national CDV surveillance program for Sumatran tigers.

With travel supported by the Cornell Southeast Asia Program and the charity Wildlife Vets International, I was able to fly out to join my colleague, veterinarian Dr. Jessica Bodgener, who had worked with me throughout our distemper research in South and Southeast Asia. Before reaching Indonesia, we

took the opportunity to call into Kuala Lumpur, to give a lecture at the Veterinary Faculty at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and meet with a dynamic group of veterinarians and ecologists developing their own research on CDV in Malaysia's forests. We also met with the veterinarians at Perhilitan's National Wildlife Forensic Laboratory to discuss the practicalities of monitoring CDV in Malaysia's tigers. Our new UPM colleagues agreed to join the Bogor workshop, and we began planning to establish the SNT techniques in their laboratory to begin testing for antibodies in Malaysian samples.

Days later, after landing in Indonesia, we accompanied team members from meeting organizers Forum HarimauKita (FHK) on a flight to Sumatra, where we visited a tiger rehabilitation center and learned more about the local practicalities of sampling tigers in the field. Hosting wildlife professionals from across civil society, FHK acts as a technical hub for coordinating the conservation of Sumatran tigers. After a day's travel from Medan, we reached Barumon nestled in the low forested hills of South Tapanuli, replete with the haunting song of siamangs. Center manager Syukur Alfajar explained that the site was home to six tigers, all rescued from encounters with people. With the encroachment of human society, contact between tigers and people inevitably increases, leading to incidents of conflict and injury of both parties. The government's Natural Resources Conservation Agency (also known by the Indonesian acronym BKSDA) oversees the rescue of tigers in difficulty and coordinates their placement within a network of government and privately run rehabilitation facilities scattered throughout the country. As we toured the facility, the tigers remained hidden from view, secure in their extensive and thickly vegetated enclosures, with barriers limiting contact with the center's few workers. But as our visit drew to a close, and we turned to leave for our vehicle, a spleen-splitting roar ripped through the greenery, leaving no doubt whose realm we were leaving.

Back in Bogor, the delegates were welcomed to the workshop by Drh. Indra Exploitasia, Director with the MoEF-Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation of Species and Genetics (KKH). Our new friend Syukur sat alongside representatives from each of the other rehabilitation centers, together with vets from BKSDA and Indonesian zoos, conservation agency representatives, as well as laboratory specialists. Dr. Bodgener and I presented sessions on CDV epidemiological theory and surveillance, providing context from our experiences elsewhere in the tiger's range. Other delegates spoke of the day-to-day realities of tiger rehabilitation and the capabilities of national laboratories. A series of animated group discussions then ensued, tackling the key individual components of a disease surveillance system. Finally, these coalesced in the closing sessions into an outline of recommendations for a national surveillance plan.

There are times when the issues facing wildlife conservation can feel overwhelming. With a conveyor belt of tragic stories scrolling through our daily news feeds it is easy to feel helpless. But events like the one in Bogor provide reason for optimism. Regardless of the challenge, there are people with the interests and skills that are needed to address any wildlife conservation problem. These people are the building blocks, and with sufficient vision, coordination, and cooperation we have all we need to formulate a cohesive and effective response. Together, the Bogor delegates had prepared a blueprint to begin addressing CDV in Sumatran tigers. We now know what to do, and we know how to do it – all that is needed is that last step of putting theory into practice. The ball is now in the Indonesian government's court; only they have the mandate to move things forward. But in doing so, they would make an important statement, as Indonesia would become the first country in the world to implement a national surveillance system to monitor the health of wild tigers. 🌿

Brenda Yeoh's Golay Lecture introduced the concept of a "temporary migration regime" in Southeast Asia, linking a widespread practice of labor migration to the daily and sometimes intimate lives of transnational families. Observing that Southeast Asia's nation-states experienced a compressed form of nation-building, her lecture traced the implications of contemporary labor migration for understanding new phenomena such as global householding, and the experience of "permanent temporariness" that now characterizes millions of families across Southeast Asia. Viewed in the context of established cultural practices across the region, such as *merantau* (which describes a traditional form of circular migration in maritime Southeast Asia), Professor Yeoh's talk revealed how the temporary migration regime transforms family life, with new technologies enabling a kind of synchronous everyday experience in which labor migrants are at once at work and at home, away from their families but often in regular contact with them. This notion of synchronicity recalls Benedict Anderson's famous invocation of Walter Benjamin's idea of simultaneity, so important for imagining new forms of communities in an interconnected world.

—Tom Pepinsky, SEAP Director



Transnational Families and the Temporary Migration Regime in Southeast Asia



by Brenda S.A. Yeoh,
National University
of Singapore

The pandemic has taught us all over again to appreciate the privileges of travel and the joys of experiencing new places. This is despite how border crossings and travel have become very difficult and unpredictable at times. It has brought to the fore how migration pathways across the world have been narrowing. But it is also important to remember that temporary migration—a way of making a living that is filled with prolonged precariousities and uncertainties—has been the mainstay of transnational labor circulation in Asia from the very start, not just during the pandemic.

I think most of us have experienced, at different phases of our life course, what it feels like to be a temporary migrant, and to do family across space and time. The question I have been asking in the past decades of my research pertains to the renewed migrations and increased mobilities in Asia, and how these shape the meanings and practices of doing a family. At the center of this question has always been the migrants and their families, who have had to contend with permanent temporariness and prolonged separation not just during these unprecedented times of COVID-19, but in most of their everyday lives.

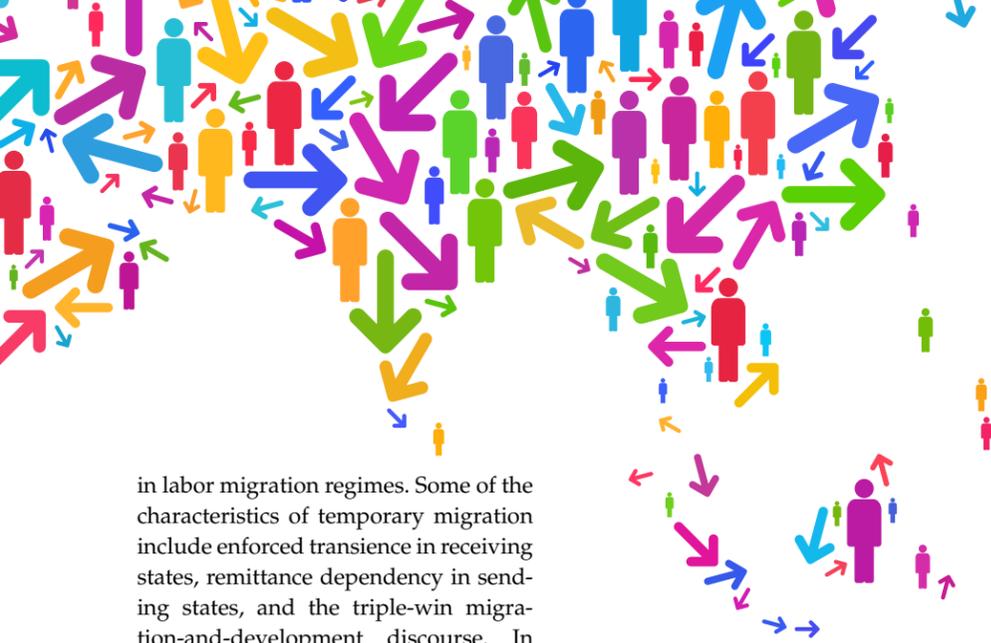
In Southeast Asia, large-scale labor migration started around the 1970s: First to the Gulf, and then internally within the region. This was a time when Southeast Asian nation states were still in the process of nation building. Nation-building projects in Southeast Asia were quite different from the European tradition that was mainly based on homogeneity and common heritage over a long period of time. In terms of

time, Southeast Asian nation-building was very compressed. It was also quite different from the North American and Australasian settler colonies, which featured versions of multiculturalism that privileged "white" subjects at the core of the nation. In a nutshell, Southeast Asian post-colonial nation states built their nationhood from an "already existing plurality" rooted in the migrations and diasporas of colonial times.

This is a particular moment in history when nation states were gearing up in building what it means to be a nation. During this time, many nation states in Asia wielded citizenship as a legal instrument of exclusion that very sharply separated citizens as insiders from those that they deemed outsiders, or even aliens. The dominant migration regime that emerged was one of temporary migration. Apart from creating a privileged pathway for highly skilled migrants to gain residency and citizenship, most Asian receiving nation-states "rule[d] out settlement, family reunification and long-term integration,

including acquisition of citizenship, for less skilled migrants," particularly low-wage workers.¹ This minimized challenges to the fragile imaginary of the nation-state in the making by rendering migrants as transient sojourners whose place in host societies is to sell their labor but make no claims on the receiving nation-state.² In short, they are allowed to labor, but not to stay. This also serves the purposes of the sending states, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, which also encourage temporariness and eventual return of their citizen-sojourners. This secures remittance flows, homeward investments, and transnational linkages, which are very resilient even in the face of the pandemic. As such, a temporary migration regime is produced, where the classic features of enforced transience and permanent temporariness can be seen clearly.

Contract-based migrant workers and their families contend with permanent temporariness that is institutionalized as a fundamental principle



in labor migration regimes. Some of the characteristics of temporary migration include enforced transience in receiving states, remittance dependency in sending states, and the triple-win migration-and-development discourse. In Southeast Asia, there is also a feminization of migration being driven by a gender-segmented economy, where there is a strong demand for largely feminized occupations of care. The temporary migration regime is also predicated on commercial brokerage. In fact, one could say that migration governance is often outsourced to the migration industry to facilitate the movement of people for profit. In Asia, we see the expanding space of commercial brokerage. All this, of course, means that there is increased precarity and limited access to social rights and protection for migrant workers. Many of them are either totally or partially excluded from the labor laws in host countries.

Global Householding and Transnationalizing Families

I have been reflecting on two conceptual frameworks that have been important in my thinking about the impact of temporary migration on family life. These are the concepts of global householding and transnational families.

We all have this imaginary in our heads that families are conceived as nuclear units. They live together. In Southeast Asia, of course, eating out of the same pot is a mark of familyhood. As Mazzucato and Schans remark, “Methodologically and theoretically, families are still predominantly conceived of as nuclear, living together, and bounded by the nation state. [...] Transnational families [...] have been treated as a temporary phenomenon, with family reunification in the host society the preferred

outcome for all family members.”³ This is difficult, if not almost impossible, to happen in a predominantly temporary migration regime. As such, those of us who are interested in studying Asian migrations need to pay attention to the taken-for-granted objects of study—the “family” and “household”—as the basic units of production and social reproduction have to be rethought in terms of these new spatialities and temporalities. There is this popular sitcom in Singapore called “Under One Roof.” This is the way that families are usually understood. But this is not the case with the transnationalizing families in Southeast Asia.

Largely based on Asian case studies, Michael Douglass developed the concept of “global householding” fifteen years ago to capture this phenomenon of the changing structures of the family in a globalizing world. It emphasizes the links between migration, household reproduction, and the reproduction of society in an age of globalization where the formation and sustenance of households are now increasingly reliant on the transnational migration of people, as well as transactions across international borders.⁴ The term global householding attempts to illustrate the rapidly increasing new forms of households in Asia: employing migrant domestic workers to do care duties for the family, engaging in international or cross-border marriages, raising and educating children abroad, and having frequent flier lifestyles with continuous

border crossings for productive (work) and reproductive (family) activities.

In a news article in the Straits Times, 73-year-old Mr. Goh Wok Kwang recounted how he gave up his bedroom so that his Indonesian live-in domestic worker Nurlia Santi Wahuda (29-years old) would have a room for herself. “She’s like family,” Mr. Goh said, referring to Nurlia, his primary caregiver. This depicts what Ochiai coined as “liberal familialism,” where the cost of purchasing care labor is borne by the family but where filial piety is outsourced to others whose services are bought from across international borders.⁵

A second example of global householding that is on the rise in Asia concerns cross-border marriages. If you look at the statistics, this is an increasing phenomenon within Asia. Somewhat analogous to the practice of middle-class families recruiting migrant domestic workers for household-



The shopfront sign of a marriage agency in Singapore, advertising the “traditional” values of Vietnamese wives.

ing purposes, working-class families without the financial means draw on unpaid care labor by recruiting “foreign brides.” I have done several projects on this topic, and we have interviewed the men and women who are involved in marriage migration. The Singapore men would tell me how much difficulty they have in the Singaporean marriage market because they are largely from the lower socioeconomic classes. Singaporean men from the lower socioeconomic strata who feel positionally “left behind” by local women’s participation in the workforce seek to fill care deficits in their households through international marriage with women from the less developed countries in the region considered more “traditional” and will-

ing to take on procreation and caring roles in sustaining the household.⁶

In Singapore, amongst Singaporean Chinese men, the brides that they will be matched with largely come from mostly rural areas in many countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, but primarily Vietnam. This phenomenon is predicated on certain gendered ideologies of what rural women in Southeast Asia are keen to do. In conducting fieldwork in Singapore, I once came across the shop front of a marriage agency promoting Vietnamese wives: “A Vietnam wife is keen to do household chores and is willing to take care of parents wholeheartedly.” This plays on the idea that Singapore women are abandoning their wifely roles and Singaporean men must resort to more traditional women out in the region to fill this particular care gap.

Many globalizing Asian cities like Singapore, Taipei, Korea, and so forth, have seen a steep increase in international marriages, introducing “diversity” into the primary relations that constitute the family. Cross-nationality marriages involving a citizen and a foreign spouse accounted for one in three marriages registered in Singapore, while marriages across ethnic categories made up 20% of all marriages.⁷ This is yet another example of global householding that is practiced by those who are not able to afford purchasing the labor of migrant domestic workers.

Transnational Families

The concept of the transnational family refers to the notion that the family continues to share strong bonds of collective welfare and unity even though core members are distributed across national borders. The emphasis here is how members maintain a feeling of collective welfare and a sense of familyhood over the life course and across national borders. In many of our fieldwork projects, although the migrant family members were away, they still figured prominently in the everyday lives of the households through constant and, often, intensive communication. In this image generated to reflect what was observed during our field research, we can see that the mother is taking care of the baby, but she is not



AI-generated representation of a stay-behind mother caring for her child while chatting with the migrant father who is overseas. (Source: Canva.com)

alone. On the screens of the computer and the smartphones is the migrant father in his Qatar living room, chatting and interacting with his family, as if he was just sitting in his own family living room in the Philippines. Despite the distance, family membership becomes a matter of choice and negotiation: members choose to maintain emotional and material attachments of varying degrees of intensity with certain kinspeople while opting out of transnational relationships with others. In many ways, the transnational family idea leads us to the notion of family politics across space and time.

Developing countries in Southeast Asia have increasingly promoted overseas labor migration as a development strategy to address issues of poverty and domestic unemployment, and to grow foreign exchange income through remittances. There is an increasing feminization of breadwinning migration in response to the rise in global, gender-segmented demand for domestic and care labor. It is the families in developing Southeast Asia absorbing, processing, and acting on opportunities or threats posed by major structural change, thus becoming the all-important link between macro and micro factors shaping socioeconomic change. We have on-going projects that examine the transnational family in a time of the pandemic. Although we are still in the process of analyzing the data, we can see how the pandemic, with the closing of borders and tightening travel restrictions, has disrupted the everyday rhythms of the transnational family.

Time, Temporalities, and Social Reproduction

Using a critical temporalities lens, I want to focus on how transnational families engage in social reproduction. Whilst notions of spatial separation are central to the idea of the transnational family, I want to bring attention to time and temporality as equally productive lenses to look at the transnational family in a regime of temporary migration. Why is time as important as space? Under a temporary migration regime, transnational family life is not just about living across spatially inscribed borders, but it is also very significantly shaped by the structuring of time within the prevailing migration regime. I would like to speak to **four different social constructions** of time and temporality to illustrate my point.

ONE: Borders and temporal control

The first concept of the social construction of time is looking at time as control—as borders and temporal control. Borders stimulate mobilities, and at the same time, act as tools of controlling and managing mobilities. In terms of migration governance and border regulation, time can be mobilized as a form of discipline and control, which in turn structures migrant and family life. “Being temporary” is a mode of governmental disciplining power that affects migrants’ everyday lives and labor market opportunities through creating differential inclusion in terms of workplace vulnerabilities and incorporation into host society. This “temporariness [...] embeds and normalizes a directionality in which workers’ rights are limited and states’ rights (to expel, to control) are expanded”.⁸

But I want to go beyond just looking at workplace vulnerabilities to also think about the transnational family life of the migrants. In the case of migrant domestic workers, they operate under a regime of permanent temporariness. Family life for migrant domestic workers is strongly conditioned by rhythms dictated by work contracts and employment conditions. It is a highly managed system of two-year work permits.



Photo of the urban center of a field site in the Philippines, where we interviewed left-behind family members of Filipino migrants in 2017.

This introduces a sense of precarity and uncertainty in the life course of these domestic workers. The migrants are admitted into the nation state as disposable labor without any kind of pathway towards permanent residency. As part of the cycle of migration, they also absorb the high risk that comes with temporary migration: the risks of repatriation. In terms of the enforced transience to prevent migrant domestic workers from sinking roots into Singapore society, family formation is circumscribed. They are not allowed to bring dependents. They are prohibited from marrying Singaporean citizens and permanent residents. If the migrant domestic workers were found to be pregnant, they would be repatriated. These very draconian principles are in place as a way of circumscribing family formation and enforcing transience.

The daily and weekly rhythm of family time is shaped by uneven access to communication technologies. For

example, the use of smartphones is dependent on your employment circumstances. In most cases, migrant workers will be allowed access to a phone. But in some cases, the phone could also be kept aside when they are at work during the workweek. This means that the rhythm of transnational family life is dictated by their employment conditions. It might seem banal, but for the migrants, the time to foster their relationships with their families every day is crucial. Their cycle of two-year contracts with no break in between means home visits to reengage the family physically needs to be negotiated in between contracts.

We see how temporal control asserts very important consequences for transnational family life. But I also want to speak to the fact that migrant domestic workers are coming to Singapore on the basis of what is called debt-finance migration. Migrant indebtedness is not an unfortunate side effect.

Rather, it is central to the work of commercial brokers and agents in facilitating and channeling migration. The migrants' movement into Singapore under the temporary migration regime is financed by debts and indebtedness. In a sense, the migrants borrow against their own future. A prospective migrant woman in Indonesia or the Philippines is able to migrate supposedly without cost because the cost is borne by the commercial broker. But she then pays off this debt through salary deductions that could range from six months to nine months once she is employed in Singapore. This is what is called the "fly now, pay later scheme," which allows for debt to be circulated, but with the debt falling quite squarely on the shoulders of the migrant worker in the end.

There are consequences for this form of debt-financed migration because migrants accept long hours of labor under exploitative conditions to be able to send remittances home as quickly as possible, in order to avoid the risk of repatriation before paying off their debts.⁹ Indebtedness and their remittance obligations can indefinitely extend migration timelines and prolong family separation.¹⁰ We found in our research that most migrant domestic workers that we spoke to usually migrate with the idea that they will only be working for one contract or, at most, two. During this time, they hope to reap the benefits of migration and then return and be reunited with their families. But most of them do not find this to be a pathway that is viable. Many who in the end are able to reap the gains of migration must work for many contracts.

TWO: Digital times and mediated intimacy

A second construction of time that I think is important in thinking about transnational family life is digital time and mediated intimacies, because temporary migrants must negotiate online and offline family ties. Often, this is a double-edged sword. With the increased possibilities of "online" and even "always on" communication, scholars observe that "the fact of communicating may be seen as just as important as

its content," even where the content is seemingly banal and predictable. Mediated communication becomes a mark of familial ties. These kinds of prosaic exchanges between family members across physical distance serve as acts of recognition and affirmation, "generating a strong sense of shared space and time that overlooked—even if only temporarily—the realities of geographical distance and time."¹¹ At the same time, Madianou cautions us not to "romanticize the role of communication technologies for 'doing family' because, as with non-mediated practices, acts of mediated communication can have complex consequences, both positive and negative, depending on a number of factors, including the relationships themselves."¹² The disjuncture between "imagined proximity and physical separation" may catalyze new sources of conflict, such as the unfulfilled expectation to be "always present" or the moralized subtext embedded in acts of disengagement or the creation of social distance.¹³ This tends to be the case when relationships are already weak and unstable.

THREE: Negotiating institutional and family times

A third way in which constructions of time matter emerges when we explore how transnational families negotiate two different scales of time: institutional time and family times. Migrants have to negotiate the institutional timescales of migration alongside significant biographic events such as marriage and the birth of children.¹⁴ Critical life events such as relationship formation, reproduction, childrearing, ageing, and death are reconfigured in migration timelines and, at the same time, are important cues for when they would need to return home. Temporary migration regimes can prolong liminal times of family separation, slow down or put on hold family plans, and create uncertainty around future family reunification.

There are two ideas that I want to speak about in understanding the way that families negotiate institutional and family times. The first has to do with how the temporary migration regime temporally structures family life course



A rural village in Indonesia, where some of the interviews with family members of Indonesian migrants were conducted.

by producing seriality in migration. Many of these migrant workers go not for just one or two contracts. It is a series of contracts. If we take Ossman's idea of seriality, this is understood in terms of the multiple international migrations over a person's life course, where one migration episode stimulates the next. In this sense, temporary migration interspersed with "family time" in between migration episodes is often driven and prolonged indefinitely by a moving spiral of material needs and wants.¹⁵

In the interviews that we have conducted with transnational families, it is often the case that the initial reason for migrating has already subsided, but the migrant is still not home because other priorities and pressing needs take center stage and become the drivers for further migration. As the remittances become the primary, if not the only regular source of financial support that sustains a family life course, aspirations also gradually expand upwards. Soon migrant mothers' absence from the family becomes accepted as part of the greater good of the family. In short, serial migration is powerfully driven by the human capacity to aspire. But it is in a context where aspiring is ridden with precarity. Silvey and Parrenas depict serial migration among domestic workers in irredeemably negative terms, as "precarity chains" shaped by "indebtedness, insecure employment, few rights, and limited occupational and financial mobility" and that "per-

sist and often deepen across the various stages of the migration cycle".¹⁶

I turn to one short case study of migrant mother Lintang and her daughter Adiratna to bring out the voice of the migrants in these issues. Against her husband's wishes, Lintang (43-year-old Indonesian mother of two) decided to migrate abroad as a domestic worker because of the family's "low economic condition." Her migration journey that eventually spanned 17 years took her first to Sumatra, then Abu Dhabi and Hong Kong. Her husband's earnings as a casual laborer in the local construction business were highly irregular, and it was Lintang's remittances – sent without fail every three to four months – that sustained the family. Lintang came home after each contract, but would return to overseas work again and again each time the money run out. Apart from supporting the children's education as they grew up, money was always needed. First it was for building a house, then for a motorcycle, then for a handphone for the older of her two children, Adiratna (a 19-year-old university undergraduate).

While Lintang had not intended to migrate indefinitely, needs were pressing and wants continued to spiral one after the other. Lintang said, "She [Adiratna] hates [me] because I often left her." Adiratna would plead, "Please don't go mum" but was told by Lintang that she needed to be away so that Adiratna could remain in school. Lintang finally returned home two years ago when Adiratna completed high school, primarily in response to her daughter's constant "begging" for a sibling to ease her loneliness. While Adiratna is delighted that she now has a baby brother, she also lamented that the family's economic circumstances have reverted to pre-migration levels (*balik ke awal*): Her income as a part-time tuition teacher was enough only for personal needs such as soap, and the family had to rely on Adiratna's grandmother to provide money for rice, while a maternal aunt working in Hong Kong with no children of her own covered her university fees. This is an example of the dynamics within the family that can lead to serial migration. 🌸



FOUR: Social reproduction across generational time

I now want to turn to the idea of relay migration to illustrate a fourth different sense of time. Here I want to look at generational time, how social reproduction does not just happen across the life course but crosses into the next generation. Relay migration is a cycle of migration where “parents, who have worked as migrants, return and are replaced by their children,” primarily as a family survival strategy or a form of economic diversification within the family. This has also been called different names including “intergenerational chain labor migration.”¹⁷ I bring this up because while serial migration promises to consider the social reproduction of the family across the life course, relay migration may help us give attention to how reproducing a family continues or changes course across two generations. I think the big question for me when looking at Southeast Asian migration is if this will continue into the next generation. Is there a cultural migration that is going to persist across generations?

I turn to the story of Wahid and Shirot to illustrate this concept. Wahid (64-year-old Indonesian left-behind husband), a farmer, had accumulated land they purchased using his serial migrant wife’s remittances from Saudi Arabia. She has been a migrant since their older son Shirot (19 years old, waiting for a migration call to South Korea) was two years old, returning home every two years for about six months at a time. The family has a younger child with a disability, who they have successfully put through school. Despite his migrant mother’s misgivings, Shirot has “made up his mind” to migrate and seek work abroad. He has taken practical steps towards achieving his goal independent of direct parental involvement: “I did my research at the [work training center], asking all information about migrating to Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea. I compared them all by myself.” Shirot commented that “Men need [to work overseas]... for their future and for the purpose of capital accumulation [more so than]... women who may earn IDR 7 hundred, 8 hundred thousand or 1 million if they work [locally] as a pharmacist or

non-permanent teacher... maybe that is adequate [for women].” He wants to “find money” to fund his own education after working abroad so as not to burden his parents. While his mother had offered to contribute funds for his higher education, he refused, wanting to be independent and insisting that his migrant mother returned home to “retire and enjoy old age.”

I have only shared one case study, but in the cases that we have been looking at, we notice two trends in relay migration: One is about success and emulation, and the other is about sacrifice and recuperation. For the first trend, when the parental migration has been seen to be visibly successful and the family project has advanced, the children tend to want to carry on with migration. They accept the migration baton with a view of emulating their parents’ success formula. This is often the case with the support of the parents preparing the way, as well. On the other hand, like Shirot, when parental migration is associated with sacrifice, particularly maternal sacrifice—one that may be seen as injurious to the migrant—the children tend to

think about recuperating their mothers. They contemplate embarking on relay migration as a means of bringing their parents, and particularly the mother, back so that the breadwinning mother could be reunited in the safe haven of the family.

We are still exploring this issue. But our initial thoughts on this particular project is to think about young men’s reaction to parental migration in terms of emulation and recuperation, largely in line with the idea in many parts of Southeast Asia that men need to migrate and have an independent income. For the Indonesian women that we have interviewed who grew up in left-behind families of migrant parents, many of them are choosing to stay instead. They talk about not repeating the sufferings of their migrant parents by building local careers rather than migrating. The idiom of “enough” was a recurring one: enough migration. We have “enough” locally without migration. This is, in some ways, a rational response to the social risks which migration has confronted the family. When we interviewed these women, they were on the cusp of adulthood. They were around

the age of 18, 19, or 20. Whether this will be the case was something that we were hoping to explore in a third wave of interviews but then the pandemic struck and we were not able to return to the field. But there is this question as to whether these young women who say “enough” to the cycle of migration and who aspire to build a life locally will have the opportunities to do so. Given the way that the pandemic has affected social economic conditions, we foresee this opportunity to say “enough” fading quite rapidly.

The point I want to try to make is that transnational families under the temporary migration regime represent a new family form that is borne out of the inequalities of the global economy. In a sense, they are reproduced through this transnational division of labor that is both spatial and temporal, as the temporary migration regime is very much predicated on the organization of spatial and temporal control. At the same time, temporalities are experienced and negotiated within the inner workings of the transnational family. I have spoken in length about enforced transience because this is a salient condition that

has far reaching consequences for doing family across borders. Transnational families attempt to transcend the temporal “lags” between the here and the there. When they do succeed in doing this—and of course, they do succeed sometimes—they create synchronous times. In creating synchronous times, “they simultaneously create historic trails of the past, synchronize different time zones in the present and express [shared] imaginaries of the future.”¹⁸ It is a hopeful picture. But when they fail to transcend the temporal gap, transnational family life may lead to a sense of disjuncture, precarity, and the continuity of liminal times. Unfortunately, our current research in looking at transnational families in a time of pandemic suggests that the latter is going to be the more pronounced trend in Southeast Asia. 🌸

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE 12TH FRANK H. GOLAY, MEMORIAL LECTURE

Frank Hindman Golay (1915–1990) came to Cornell University in 1953 as an assistant professor of economics and Asian studies. He became a full professor in 1962 and remained at Cornell until his retirement in 1981. He was chair of Cornell’s Department of Economics from 1963 to 1967 and director of the university’s Southeast Asia Program from 1970 to 1976. In the latter capacity, and as director of the program’s Philippine Project (1967–73) and London–Cornell Project (1968–70), he contributed much to strengthening Southeast Asian studies at Cornell. He was appointed to visiting professorships at London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies (Fulbright–Hays) from 1965 to 1966 and at the University of the Philippines (Rockefeller Foundation) from 1973 to 1974. For his scholarship on the Philippines, Frank Golay was awarded an honorary doctor of law degree by the Ateneo de Manila in 1966. He was awarded research fellowships by the Guggenheim and the Luce Foundations, the Social Science Research Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the United States Educational Foundation (Fulbright). Golay further served as chairman of the Philippines Council of the Asia Foundation (1964–67) and as the president of the Association for Asian Studies in 1984.

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CAMBODIA

Visiting Cambodia and Angkor, 2023



by Magnus Fiskesjö,
Associate Professor
of Anthropology

In January 2023, the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, in collaboration with the Center for Khmer Studies, restarted the annual winter course in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The course was first launched back in 2015, but was put on pause in recent years by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given my longstanding interests in Cambodia's history and heritage, I was overjoyed to teach the 2023 class, which focused on Cambodian heritage: How it was once created, how Cambodians see their heritage today, and not least, the country's recent spectacular successes with repatriations of stolen fragments of Angkorian heritage.

Each time one has a chance to re-visit the stunning buildings that still stand in the ancient city of Angkor, it feels just as exciting as seeing them for the first time.

As we explored the ancient Angkor capital, we tried to build a historical sense of the growth and development of the ancient mega-city. We conjured up a grand parade of royal elephants

marching past the king's reviewing stand at Angkor Thom's central plaza. We also pondered the less spectacular but fascinating Krol Romeas enclosure just north of Angkor Thom. Despite the name, which suggests an "enclosure for rhinoceroses" (*romeas*), the Angkor kings are said to have kept their elephants here, and we imagined herds of royal parade elephants gathered inside of the round stone walls.

As an anthropologist, I am very curious about what people want with animals—especially with rhinos!—and I have been trying to find out whether Angkorian kings, themselves worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu, ever performed the recent ascension rite of Nepalese Hindu kings once described by the conservationist Hemanta Mishra in his book *The Soul of a Rhino*. Mishra explains that the king had to kill a rhino and then kneel inside its belly, while performing a *tarpan* rite, honoring his ancestors. But none of the ancient inscriptions seems to mention this for Cambodia — where rhinos are extinct today. (I wonder if anyone knows).

We were lucky to have the Cambodian archaeologist Ea Darith as our special cicerone, as we toured the more distant Koh Ker area where he is currently undertaking temple reconstruction work. Koh Ker once served as an Angkorian capital, and some of the most spectacular recently returned statues were stolen from Koh Ker during the troubled 1970s. We were able to see them on temporary display in the National Museum in Phnom Penh, the country's modern capital, on the last stop of our class.

More repatriations are incoming,—including the recently returned crown jewels of the Angkorian royalty!—from museums and private collections in other countries that can no longer ethically hold on to what rightly belongs in Cambodia. The National Museum in Phnom Penh is planning an eagerly-awaited major expansion, partly because the current building is too limited, and partly to house the expected returning treasures.



Ea Darith (center), Kathy Le (Cornell, on right), Monich Long (Harvard, on left), and River Mendenhall (McDaniels College, in background), exploring Angkor's mysterious "Rhino Corral."

Cambodia's Heritage Repatriation Successes, in Global Perspective

Cambodia's successes in having ancient artifacts repatriated may be the most spectacular in the world, and it coincides with an important turning point in the story of the world and its museums.

Repatriation battles have been fought with increasing intensity since the end of World War II. The old concept of war loot—once *comme il faut* for the victors of war or colonial masters, even the Nazis and the Soviets—has been replaced by a new international legal framework of conventions designed to protect cultural heritage even in war, and also with respect for the original ownership of artifacts.

Trade in stolen artifacts has also been outlawed, although the UNESCO convention designated 1970 as a cut-off date for pursuing such matters. It is also hampered by the very structure of today's world, built on nation-state jurisdictions.

At the same time, it has become clear to people worldwide that in ethical terms, retaining possession of artwork and other fragments illicitly carted off in earlier times also cannot be defended, even though their acquisition might have been legal at the time. The long-standing arguments of the self-declared universal museums in the world metropolises that they are better placed to keep and display objects from everywhere now ring hollow—and selfish.

In the 2000s, I served as director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, in Stockholm, one of Europe's foremost museums of Asian art and archaeology. The museum is a mix of legit pieces, and fragments of smuggled artefacts. It provoked my interest in the concept of world heritage, and in repatriations from Western museums to the countries of origins.

This is not a matter of political correctness. In other writings, I have



Recently returned statuary from Koh Ker, now on display at the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. Photo by Magnus Fiskesjö.

argued that for the sake of world heritage, we should prioritize the repatriation of those fragments of world heritage that belong together in their original context, like the Cambodian statues whose feet were left behind on the ground when they were stolen. The same applies to the Axum Obelisk of Ethiopia, or the British Museum's pieces of the Parthenon Temple, which still stands.

I believe we should try to foster a new concept of world heritage, one that de-emphasizes an overly selfish, nationalistic circus of world heritage sites as a *global competition*. Instead, "world heritage" should evoke a global public spirit; the idea that all the world's heritage belongs to everyone, not just to this

and that modern country. And because this heritage is humanity's shared record, it is everyone's responsibility to make sure that no harm comes to it, so that coming generations also can see it and learn from the rich diversity of our past—our shared past.

Our current nation-state borders do not always reflect the borders of the past. Cambodia is one example: Relics of Khmer traditions can be found in today's neighboring countries. But the answer to such discrepancies is not more nationalism. The answer is to teach the world that all these past creations are humanity's creations, and we are obliged to preserve them and not raze, burn or steal them, because of narrow nationalism (as, for example, Azerbaijan, China, and Russia have sadly been doing recently, to other people's heritage in Armenia, East Turkestan[Xinjiang], and in Ukraine).

With the success of the waves of repatriations, new questions arise: As stolen and looted objects now return home, to their modern custodians, how should they be cared for and how should they be displayed?

Germany recently returned a set of Benin bronze artifacts to Nigeria, the modern country that would own them. There was an understanding they would go on public display. But the outgoing president decided to hand them over to a local king, who could claim original ownership going back to before there was a modern Nigeria. Now we do not know: Will they be visible to Nigerian audiences, or hidden from view? And—if they were to be put on public display, what kind of display?

For too long, the reigning model of the museum has been the modern art museum, which tends to isolate objects from their context—which in the case of objects looted from Cambodia or Ethiopia, when their context was not always known anyway, since they often arrived

at the museums "anonymously," by way of middlemen that got them from secretive tomb robbers, not from carefully documented excavations.

In these temples dedicated to the Fine Arts, these objects get put on a pedestal, supposedly to highlight their artistic qualities but often boring, and obscuring their original context as well as their history. So, we often see one chunk of the head of Vishnu, but not the rest. Legs but no feet. Fragments in isolation, but never quite the setting, where these things once came alive for their makers and users. Often, lifeless.

Sadly, all this is also true of many—if not most—of the museums currently displaying fragments of Angkor and ancient Cambodia. Could there be another way, a new way?

Is there a possibility now, at this juncture of human history where the tide has turned in favor of repatriation of stolen things, and where new thinking and new technologies are emerging, for displaying the objects and fragments in new ways?

It is said that Shiva dances so that the world continues to move. Is it possible to put a show of this dance on display—perhaps replicating the recently reconstructed Dance Hall at the Temple of Ta Prohm, where statues and dancers appeared together? The potential for combinatory approaches that virtually merge the real objects with their original setting seems endless.

As it happens, the recently launched, SOAS-led pan-Southeast Asian project on Circumambulating Objects: on Paradigms of Restitution of Southeast Asian Art (CO-OP), takes up precisely these issues for all Southeast Asia. The program will organize in-country curators to think about this new era, including how:

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This essay is adapted from my keynote lecture at the 25th Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) Graduate Student Conference at Cornell, March 10, 2023.



A young Cambodian couple taking pre-wedding pictures at Angkor, and letting us take pictures of them taking pictures. Photo by Magnus Fiskesjö.

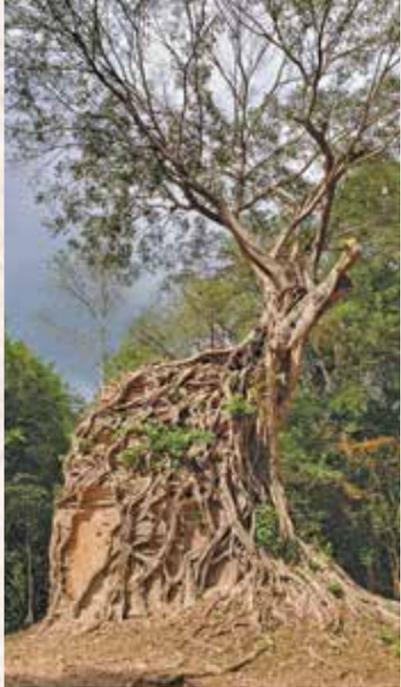
"just like members of the diaspora returning 'home,' 'art' does not return to the same context from which it was first displaced. The new home has to be created in the stead of the old—in stores, on display, in museums, temples or palaces; in turn, wherever 'art' is, it contributes to the ongoing making of 'home.'"

This is very true. Simply put, there are new choices to be made: Shall museums continue to look the same, or are there new possibilities?

Perhaps Cambodia, with its truly spectacular world heritage, could

become a world leader breaking new ground for the display and communication of this heritage as world heritage in a new key.

Certainly the country is well disposed for this: The heritage of the nation possibly means more than in any other country. The relics of the past are so important for the country today that they are even depicted on the national flag, as is often pointed out; there is tremendous pride, yet also an intense awareness that Angkor belongs to the world. Cambodia also a young nation, with tremendous creative potential!



Left: Sambor Prei Kuk: Temple at Sambor Prei Kuk, January 13. Photo by Ian Stewart.
Above: Bridge statue: Bridge to Angkor Wat, January 4. Photo by Ian Stewart.



Viewing a performance at the Kanell Restaurant, Siem Reap, January 3. Photo by Kathy Le.

What It Means To Be A

Student Visiting Cambodia



by Ian Stewart, Undergraduate, Development Sociology; and Kathy Le, Undergraduate, Biological Engineering

Still grappling with its relatively recent past of French colonialism and war, Cambodia is a deeply complex place. The tragedies, along with temples and dance, are often all that many Euro-Americans consider when picturing the country, generalizations originally derived from colonialism. As our group was traveling in Cambodia, we were faced with the intricacies of how the modern state has utilized its history for both constructing a contemporary national identity and for fueling economic growth, primarily through tourism. But being student visitors, no matter how deeply we delved, we could still only be observers. Our trip was a privilege, one that can only scratch the surface of what there is to understand. This itself is a fact that some of us continue to be challenged by. That said, this trip serves as a stepping stone for future considerations of study in Cambodia.

From the stone reliefs of an 800-year-old temple, to an Apsara dance show on the modern touristic stage, we witnessed the significance of performance

as an expression first of religious iconography and now of national pride and entertainment. Today dance, as an aspect of cultural heritage, functions not only as an expression of national rebuilding and pride, but also as a means of building an economy through tourism. This multifaceted nature causes us to marvel both at the beauty of the dance itself, but to also question our own role as visitors in its transformation. Are we really just passive observers? Are we aiding the commodification of cultural heritage? As we traveled through the glorious Angkor complex, we became aware of the people who were being uprooted from the area and relocated by the government to preserve the temple grounds for paying visitors. As said visitors, are we contributing to this? One can also ask what role the modern nation-state plays in these circumstances: how must a society adapt to the international system of states and the marketplace? Cambodia today relies very heavily on tourism, and so the government makes these decisions prioritizing the main-

tenance of cultural heritage not only as a symbol of the nation, but also for the purposes of economic growth. Who specifically benefits from these sweeping government actions is another complex question to be explored.

It's important to consider how our group connected to the various aspects of Cambodian culture we were exposed to. As scholars, we were urged by our insightful teaching assistant Brian Sengdala to learn alongside Cambodians rather than purely from a spectator standpoint. In terms of how visitors can interact with Cambodian culture as tourists, scholars, or something in between, there are more layers to experiencing the country that can be found outside the realm of cultural commodification. No matter what role one enters Cambodia as, there is still a richness of exploration and learning to be had if one is open to it.

On our first evening, we visited the Kanell Restaurant, where we watched a series of performances while eating a meticulously prepared multicourse meal. Entering the huge, dimly lit

room, we could see that almost all the other visitors appeared to be tourists. The show itself lasted several hours and consisted of several dances, and one staged fight (known as Bokator) involving blunted flint swords. Each performance was modified and shortened for the sake of time. The dances included those originally intended for general audiences (such as the Fishing Dance), and those meant for the royal court (like the Blessing Dance). Viewing these all in one consolidated, modified setting would have been largely inconceivable in the earlier days of these performances, but today, visitors from around the world can pay money to view this eclectic collection of dances almost any day of the week. This is just one example of a scenario that compels us to question our role as both visitors and as observers of Cambodian performance, a powerful and ever-evolving medium of cultural expression.

Like dance, the ancient temples themselves have acquired a multifaceted nature. On our trip, we visited several historical sites, including Angkor

Wat, Banteay Kdei, Ta Prohm, and the temples of Koh Ker, all of which were spectacular. These landmarks are what many non-Cambodians most commonly know of Cambodia. Most notably, Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious structure and the pride of Cambodia, is not only displayed on the country's flag but also its currency. In the past, these temples were symbols of powerful kings and of two all-encompassing religions (Buddhism and Hinduism). Today, they are symbols of national identity (as heritage) and economic growth (via tourism). From the French colonial period to the brutal Khmer Rouge years, a great many items from these temples were looted, leading to a concerted, international effort to relocate and repatriate them. Our class had the opportunity to visit Angkor Conservation in Siem Reap, usually inaccessible to public visits, to view where and how recovered statues are restored. We also viewed fully restored pieces at the Angkor National Museum in Siem Reap and the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

Golden Shovel: Repatriation Tetris (1/11/2023)

On our visit to the Angkor National Museum and Angkor Conservation in Siem Reap, by Kathy Le.

“Why is the statue missing its feet?”

—Nic Long (undergraduate class participant from Harvard University)

That’s crazy!”

It doesn't take a long time wandering around the Angkor National Museum to wonder **why** limbs end jaggedly, phantom hands, arms, feet up to one's imagination. It **is** an atrocity, that what was stolen may never be returned to **the** place of its origin, to its rightful home where the remains of the original **statue** are. Who knows what else is **missing?** This broken jigsaw puzzle, this impossible game of Tetris and repatriation, **it's** untenable. Attempting to piece together all that was lost is a **feat** only the most determined can pursue. But **that's** Ea Darith and his team at Prasat Krachap for you, though some may claim their endeavor **crazy!**

In this secluded place of rows and rows

Of Brahmas and Naga Buddhas,

elephants amongst

a smattering of jackfruit trees,

is it a mercy to be headless?

To no longer witness

for centuries,
comrades lost

one

by

one?

Today 5000 becomes 5020 fellow statues,
tomorrow 5040.

Mercy to the one who can't find his missing
piece

Mercy to those still healing from binded glue

Mercy to the dusty one in the back, the one

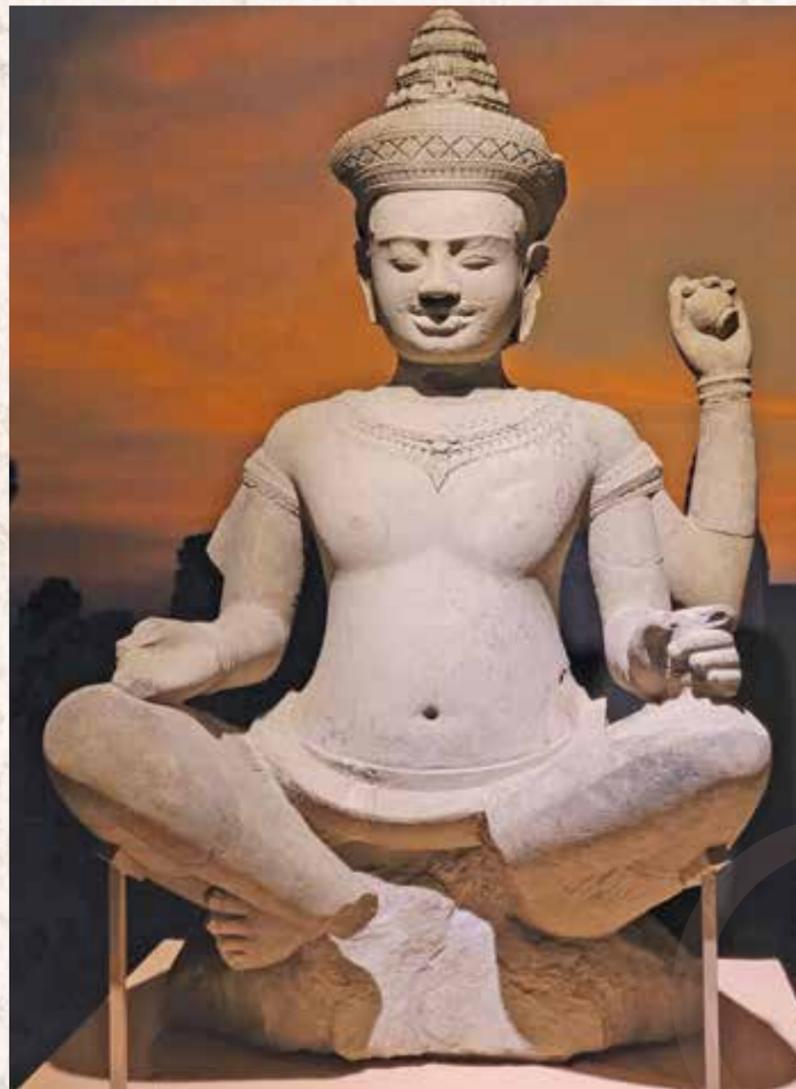
with a spider web sprawled across its lips

Mercy to the ones who have fallen so deep,

there is no being put back together

Mercy

Right: At the Angkor National Museum, Siem Reap,
January 11. Photo by Kathy Le.



Journal Entry (Kathy's perspective)

As we walked the extensive grounds of Angkor Wat, notebooks in hand and listening attentively to Ea Darith, who was both our tour guide and the Head of Angkor Ceramics Unit of APSARA (Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap), I couldn't help but feel transported into another dimension. Coming from Ithaca winter, the sun was both a blessing and a curse: we welcomed its warmth but not the exhaustion that came with being outside for hours on end. The ancient reliefs were crumbled in some areas, worn with weather and time, some with strategically drilled holes, others red with rust. There were a few exhibits under construction, and we even saw some houses in several states of disrepair on the outskirts of the main temples. Later, we learned that these were the houses of the thousands of locals who had been relocated by the government in order to preserve the cultural integrity of Angkor, which was ironic since those very people were a part of the culture surrounding Angkor.

I had noted down the most interesting tidbits in my notebook, which turned out to be almost every other sentence from Ea. I wasn't sure what I was writing for per-say. Part of me wanted to write down every little detail so I could immortalize my experience of being in a completely new country. At times I was so consumed with capturing the details down as accurately as possible, I spent more time writing than looking at the actual relief—there were assignments to be written after all. It wasn't until months later after talking to Brian Sengdala that I had a startling realization: our class was the only group taking notes at Angkor. It wouldn't

have been hard to imagine us as a little bubble of academia that had some greater purpose for being at Angkor compared to tourists who were only there to take pretty photos. Of course this wasn't necessarily the case, but I imagine we could look that way from the outside.

Today, when I opened my Cambodian-made notebook gifted by Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) at the start of our class, I saw facts upon facts about Cambodian culture and history but little about the significance of such things. What did we actually learn? I could go on and on about all the little things I've garnered; the price of a coconut coffee, the number of years an apsara dancer's husband has been away, how many arms the Hindu god Shiva has. Then there are the

integral parts of Cambodia that are unquantifiable: the stray dogs, swerving mopeds, bustling market stalls. But how much of this was mindless capturing of facts versus true learning and appreciation of Cambodia itself? Let's put it this way: I am still deeply in awe of Cambodia and the experiences I had there. It's not that I think the value of a country relies on what it can provide for me as a visitor. It's the fact I was able to experience it at all that makes me appreciative of my time there.

CU in Cambodia group, starting from the back left row with teaching assistant Brian Sengdala, then Maximillian Guo, Benjamin Dever-Mendenhall, River Dever-Mendenhall, Kaitlyn Beiler, Professor Magnus Fiskesjö, Olivia Fu, Ian Stewart, and Mr. Phorn Pheng (facilitator at the Center for Khmer Studies), the rightmost person. Starting from the leftmost individual, there is our traditional dance instructor, then students Stephanie Naing, Emily Vo, Kathy Le, Monich Long, Emily Hernandez, and Kaylee Cornelius. Our contemporary and classical dance instructors are posed at the front.



SilverBelle Dance Company, Phnom Penh, January 15, taken by staff.

Dance in Cambodia (Kathy's perspective)

1/14/2023

Cambodian Dance Lesson

*I mimic her body in mine
 imagining my muscles holding this stretch
 taut
 for several minutes every day
 The sweet pain
 must be worth it,
 to have an S in every crook of the body,
 to properly channel
 the spirits of the gods
 Spine aligned, toes arched up, elbow inside out
 hands in vibrato,
 vibrating to an unheard tune
 Back and forth, smile soft
 She flicks her wrists fluidly, picking a flower
 hands into love
 against her chest, left over right,
 love thrumming within her body
 fingers pinched down, wiggling, digging,
 planting a seed,
 so the cycle starts
 over again*

One of my favorite memories in Cambodia was participating in a dance lesson taught by the staff at SilverBelle Dance Company in Phnom Penh, who specialize in Cambodian dance workshops and performances. Building upon our previous experiences with local dancers in Siem Reap and the film "The Tenth Dancer," which was about the rebuilding of dance culture following the Khmer Rouge, we were able to immerse ourselves into an artform that felt both sacred and exciting to learn. Before starting, we dressed in sompot chong kben, loose breeches composed of long rectangular sheets of fabric. In the three-part lesson, we started with a folk dance called the Coconut Shell Dance, which is usually performed in Khmer weddings, new years celebrations, and now during tourist performances. We then moved onto classical dance, consisting of two roles, male and female, each having four main movements that complemented each other and emulated different stages of a growing plant. Lastly, we learned a contemporary dance that emphasized improvisation and emotion. The transition from traditional to contemporary-style dance showcases the thread within Cambodian dance that continues to prevail: one of strong emotionality, purposeful movements, and cultural pride.

PROFILES

Magnus Fiskesjö, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology
 Professor Fiskesjö was an excellent instructor during our time in Cambodia. With his extensive anthropological background, he helped us to better understand the context of our experiences while challenging our preconceived notions of "heritage." He also took on just as much of a learning role as he did a teaching role, sharing our unforgettable experiences as we traversed the culturally rich landscape of Cambodia. During our trip, we were constantly exposed to the changing nature of culture and heritage. According to Professor Fiskesjö, "the thing with culture is that it is always recast, reinterpreted, remade. Each time somebody new does it, it is never going to be 100% the same. It can be very conservative, some things can get kind of frozen in how they are done, but there are other ways in which things are renewed, like we saw in modern dance."

Brian Sengdala, Teaching Assistant, PhD student in the Department of Performing and Media Arts
 As someone with a personal connection to Cambodia, our wonderful teaching assistant Brian Sengdala found himself with many intriguing thoughts related to our status as a visiting class in the country. His expertise in performance arts also provided us with an extra layer of understanding regarding the significance of music and dance in Cambodia, both historically and in the current age. According to Brian, there comes a point where we should be learning with Cambodia instead of from. There's more to Cambodia than its trauma, than its problems, and it's up to the current generation of Cambodians and academics to redefine what new space Cambodia takes on in the future.



Building a Public Interest Media for Myanmar from Afar



by Nay Yan Oo,
 Founder of Burma Media

TEN YEARS AGO, I arrived in the United States, landing at LAX in August 2012. I made my way to Northern Illinois University (NIU) in DeKalb, Illinois, for graduate studies. It was an exciting time for my homeland, Myanmar. A new administration, led by former military generals, introduced political and economic reforms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, an opposition leader, was freed from 15 years of on-and-off house arrest, and her National League for Democracy party won a by-election in 2012. These events, along with other significant reforms, inspired hope that Myanmar was progressing towards democracy after decades under military regimes.

Motivated by these developments, I decided to make a career move to study politics and public policy in the United States, with the goal of contributing to Myanmar's democratic transition. After completing my graduate studies at NIU, I worked for several international NGOs in Yangon and also pursued another Master's degree at Oxford University. Realizing that Myanmar needed a new generation of politicians, I ran for the Myanmar Parliament in the 2020 election. Although I lost, I was able to raise important issues for the country, including promoting democratic values, strengthening civil-military relations, and rebuilding the education system.

A decade later, I returned to the United States. Just two months after the 2020 election in which I ran, the military staged a coup, ending the brief period of democracy. All the progress made in the past ten years was lost. The junta arrested democratic leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and violently cracked down on protesters. The opposition realized that non-violent means proved insufficient to end military rule, leading them to resort to violence. Myanmar has now been plunged into a civil war with no immediate solution in sight.

The coup shattered the hopes of the 55 million people of Myanmar. Dreams were lost, and lives were sacrificed in the struggle for democracy. While I advocate for the return of democracy, I do not support the opposition's use of violent means to defeat the military. My preference lies

Above: "သင်သိပါသလား Did you know?" is an anthropology and archaeology series produced by Burma Media. The show focuses on the diverse society and rich culture of Myanmar.

with non-violent movements, but my political view has been marginalized in Myanmar’s politics. Like millions of people in my country, I was lost in the post-coup environment.

A few months after the coup, the Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) at Cornell University offered me a Visiting Fellowship, which I accepted, and I moved to Ithaca with my family. Dr. Rachel Safman, a SEAP alumna who conducted research on Thailand and Myanmar as part of her doctoral study at Cornell, and her husband, Daniel Robinson, graciously hosted us in their home. In my first year at Cornell, I attended several classes to deepen my understanding of social science. I audited anthropology and sociology courses and took political science classes. These lectures helped me understand structural problems in Myanmar’s society.

The SEAP Visiting Fellowship also provided me with the opportunity to explore new projects, including a media initiative. Although my background is primarily in politics and research, media is not new to me. I had previously founded one of the first internet radio stations in Yangon in 2011, a year before I left for NIU. During the 2020 campaign period, I hosted a weekly political talk show called “Trends in Myanmar” until the coup in 2021. The show attracted millions of viewers and featured discussions and debates with top politicians, scholars, and analysts.

Through my brief experience in the media industry, I came to realize the need for public-interest media in Myanmar. While there were established news organizations and entertainment media, a platform focused on politics, history, and culture with a strong societal purpose was missing. This realization led to the founding of Burma Media. Our mission at Burma Media is clear: to build a media organization that prioritizes the public interest over commercial gains.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the coup, the education system in Myanmar has experienced significant disruptions. Students and teachers have chosen to boycott the junta-led education system, and the military regime has also tightened its grip on the education sector. At Burma Media, we recognize the urgent need to address the educational crisis in Myanmar. Through our educational programs, we aim to inspire and motivate students, cultivate a love for learning, and foster an environment of intellectual curiosity.

Since May 2022, we have produced dozens of explainer videos on YouTube and TikTok, covering topics such as politics, history, Myanmar’s culture and society, and global affairs for a Burmese audience. In just over a year, Burma Media has gained nearly 270,000 followers and over 25 million views on social media. We have partnered with the University of British Columbia to produce an educational video series for Myanmar’s students. Additionally, we have received several media grants to create informative and educational content.

I am grateful to Cornell and SEAP for providing the necessary resources for Burma Media. The Burmese collections at Cornell’s library have been invaluable for our research, and the classes I took in my first year at Cornell have influenced the content we produce at Burma Media. For example, I learned about transitional justice in a political violence class taught by Professor Sabrina Karim and created a mini-series to share this knowledge with our audience. Another favorite class of mine at Cornell was an anthropology course by Professor Magnus Fiskesjö, which inspired me to create an anthropology show at Burma Media. In fact, we are one of the few media organizations in Myanmar that dedicates an entire show to anthropology topics.

It brings me joy to learn that Ma Yu Yu Khaing has been using our videos in her Burmese-language classes. She has utilized our videos on topics such as *Mingalaba* (a Burmese greeting) and the burial practices of the Burmese people to teach not only the language but also to share our culture with Cornell students.

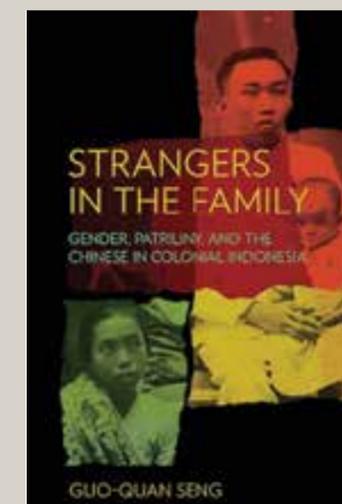
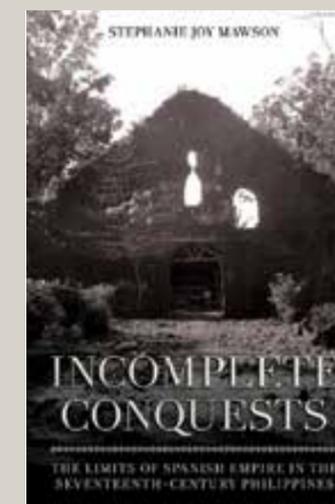
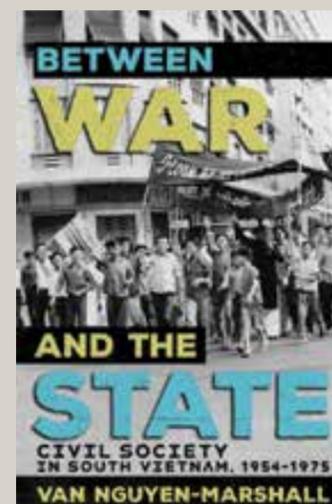
Although I will be moving to the University of British Columbia for my doctoral studies in the fall, I will remain in touch with Cornell and SEAP. In fact, Ma Yu Yu Khaing has asked me to develop teaching materials for her Burmese-language classes, and my team at Burma Media will gladly support her. Furthermore, I hope to continue working together with SEAP faculty on several media projects.

Burma Media represents one of the pioneering media initiatives in Myanmar, striving to shape a public-interest media landscape. By amplifying voices, fostering critical thinking, and advocating democracy and democratic values, we aim to empower the Burmese people to actively participate in the ongoing struggle for democracy and progress. Together, we can create a brighter future for Myanmar. 🌟

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Displaced.
detained.
UNDETERRED.

by Sarah R. Meiners,
 PhD Candidate,
 Department of History



Who owns the dead? How can grief be characterized—is it necessarily “bad”? What is the relationship between private grief and public memory?

Yên Lê Espiritu (Distinguished Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego) and Eryn Lê Espiritu Gandhi (Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles) raised these questions as part of their keynote address entitled “On Refugee Grief: An Intergenerational Remembrance,” which opened *Displaced. Detained. Undeterred. A Creative/Critical Symposium*.

This symposium was hosted at Cornell University from April 20 to April 22, 2023, and organized by Saida Hodžić, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Cornell University. In her own speech, Professor Hodžić explained that the symposium’s primary “purpose...[was] not to educate those who don’t know, but to invite everyone into conversations among people who do know, but know differently.” The gathering brought together scholars, artists, and organizers with experiences or close knowledge of displacement. Together, the panelists and the audience considered departure and return; detention and border policing; life, death, and grieving; and creative and critical reflections.

Professors Espiritu and Gandhi introduced attendees to these themes in their keynote, as they explored private and public remembrances of their relative Đại Tá [Colonel] Hồ Ngọc Cân. In their first co-presentation as mother and daughter, they examined how private grieving practices and public memorialization intersect, inform, and challenge each other to form a politics of grief. South Vietnamese refugees in the United States have created internet memorials which display photos of the deceased and named streets in Eden Center, a major shopping complex in Virginia and a center for the Vietnamese diaspora on the East Coast, after military officers. This can address the absence of South Vietnamese soldiers in U.S.-based memorials and form a “repertoire of countermemorials” accessible to multiple generations. However, such public displays can complicate private grieving, leading family members to ask when they will finally be left to privately grieve their relatives. Professors Espiritu and Gandhi encour-

aged us to grieve/remember—and to interrogate those acts—for the symposium’s duration. Those interested in engaging with these questions should visit Professor Espiritu’s *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (2014).

The symposium also invited attendees to engage with a variety of performances. In addition to screening documentaries and works-in-progress during panels, we opened an in-person installation room at the conference location, which attendees and interested community members could visit over the course of the weekend. The symposium provided a soft launch for Professor Hodžić’s *Refugees Know Things* podcast and featured episodes by Mimi Thi Nguyen (“Refugee Patriots, Refugee Punks”), Zrinka Bralo (“Building Power: Hope is a Verb”), and Sabrina You and Yên Lê Espiritu (“Critical Refugee Studies”). These and further episodes should soon be available wherever podcasts are streamed. Other installations included Sofia Villenas and Patricia Rodriguez’s *Transnational Network and Conversations about Salvadoran/Central American Migration* podcast and films by Selma Selman (*Saltwater at 47* (2016) and *Haram* (2019)) and Natasha Raheja (*Sindhi Kadhi* (2018)).

I conclude by thanking our generous sponsors. First, this symposium would not have been possible without the generous support of the Minority, Indigenous, and Third World Studies Research Group as well as assistance from Anthropology; Feminist, Gender & Sexuality Studies; and the Society for the Humanities. Non-financial co-sponsors included: the South Asia Program; the Southeast Asia Program; History; Asian American Studies; American Studies; European Studies; the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies; the Migrations Initiative; Government; Performing and Media Arts; the Institute for Comparative Modernities; the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program; the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program; Africana Studies; Near Eastern Studies; and the Latina/o Studies Program. I would especially like to thank James Nagy and Ava White of the Southeast Asia Program for their advice. 🙏

Left: Promotional art used to advertise the symposium. “Murales Kabul - Shamsia Hassani” by we_free is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

A Creative/Critical Symposium



Left: Students at the Southworth Library in Dryden learning about Russian geography with FLIP teacher Victoria Franklin. Above: Students with FLIP teacher Jean Marie Nizigiyimana learning about Burundian culture during a French lesson. j36



Nurturing Language Learning and Global Citizenship in Upstate New York

For years now, the Foreign Language Introduction Program (FLIP) has been bringing the languages and cultures of the world into the local communities of Upstate New York. A volunteer-based program, FLIP recruits students from the Cornell community to teach a bit of their own languages and cultures to K-12 students in fun and engaging ways, with the support of the Einaudi Center's various area studies programs.

FLIP began as an initiative of the Einaudi Center's Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) at Cornell in the early 2000s. The initiative was then called the Afterschool Language Program, and it offered short classes in Thai, Tagalog, Burmese, and other languages to local communities – with the goal of sparking international interest and connections for the local students, rather than full language acquisition. The program was very successful and popular, and it soon expanded its scope and reach. In 2018, the program changed its name to the Afterschool Language and Culture Program (ALCP) and added more languages from beyond Southeast Asia to its curriculum. In 2022, the program underwent another transformation towards becoming a student-led initiative, and now operates under the name FLIP.

Today, FLIP carries on the legacy of sharing world languages and cultures with young generations and creating a space for intercultural learning. The program is overseen by Sarah Plotkin, the Einaudi Center's Student Engagement and Community Outreach Coordinator, and run by student

volunteers who are fluent in the languages they teach. The classes are designed to be fun and interactive, helping students to improve their speaking skills and learn about the cultures behind the languages. FLIP has received rave reviews from the community, including Diane Pamel, the Director of the Southworth Library in Dryden, NY:

"The students involved in the Foreign Language Introduction Program from Cornell have come to our library to provide a cultural experience for the children in our community. The Southworth Library Association is a small library in a predominately white, rural village in Upstate New York. The FLIP program has provided cultural and language introductions to Mandarin, Russian and French for our students. Over 30 children and some parents have been introduced to cultures and languages from around the world.

One mother reported that her child now has a keen interest in languages and is learning Spanish on her own and Russian with a tutor. This child is only 7 years old! Several others have reported a new awareness of world cultures and languages with an awakened interest to learn more. It has been a wonderful experience for our library and community to participate in this program."

FLIP is always looking for ways to collaborate with other programs and initiatives that share its vision of promoting language and culture learning. One of these programs is GRASSHOPR (Graduate Student School Outreach Program),



by Maksym Tkachuk,
M.Eng. student,
Engineering Management

which pairs Cornell graduate students with teachers in Tompkins and Ontario Counties to teach mini-courses of three to five sessions on topics related to the graduate student's field or interests. FLIP also shares some features with the Translator-Interpreter Program (TIP), a student-run program that trains bilingual and multilingual Cornell students to serve as volunteer translators/interpreters for community agencies. There are therefore a variety of avenues for interested students to share their talents and skills.

FLIP volunteer teachers develop themselves as global citizens through their work with youth in the surrounding communities. Many FLIP teachers are international students at Cornell, and have not had previous opportunities to interact with American children. One such volunteer is Jean Marie Nizigiyimana, a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow who has been teaching French with FLIP this spring. Jean Marie taught students at the Southworth library in Dryden, NY – a small, rural community about 20 minutes from Cornell. Within his French lessons, he incorporated lessons about the geography and culture of his home country, Burundi, and even taught some of the drumming techniques that were an important part of his childhood. One highlight for the class was the videos he showed of his 3-year-old daughter introducing herself and counting in French.

About his experience teaching with FLIP, Jean Marie shared:

"FLIP opened a door for me to have an opportunity to impact the lives of kids through teaching. As someone who has kids, I really enjoyed spending time with children... and I enjoyed seeing kids repeating, singing with me, playing with me and asking questions. It was my first time teaching kids speaking a different language than mine, and I really learned that a teacher is always the same regardless the audience he is given, he can still draw the attention of the students."

The current staff and volunteers of FLIP hope to create a vibrant community of language lovers who encourage and inspire each other in their linguistic adventures. We want to offer various ways for our members to connect and interact throughout the year. For example, next year we plan to organize workshops on topics such as language learning strategies, cultural awareness, and career development. We also plan to host potlucks, movie nights, trivia games, and other fun events that celebrate the diversity of languages and cultures. FLIP shows how language learning can be fun, accessible, and impactful for everyone.

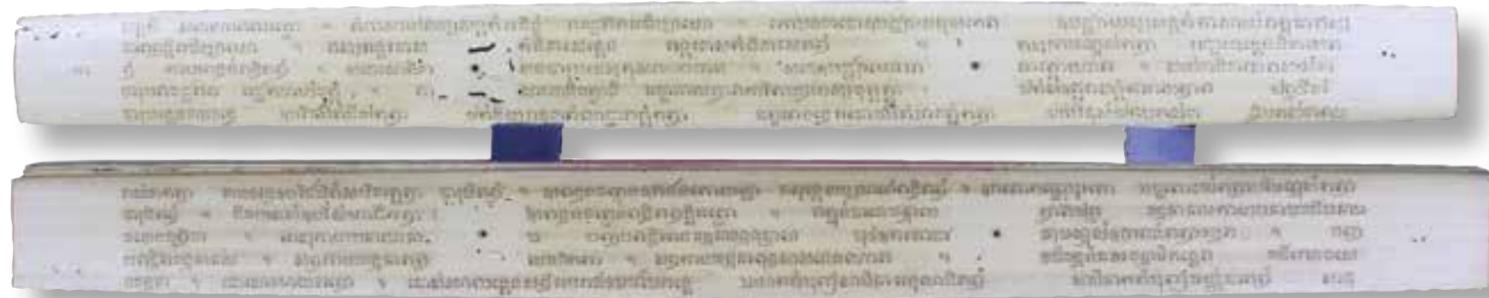
If you would like to join FLIP as an instructor or a participant, or if you want to learn more about FLIP, visit our website (<http://bit.ly/3o83AgG> or scan the QR code), or contact us by email: outreach@einaudi.cornell.edu.



Digitizing Thai Manuscripts at the National Library of Cambodia



by Emily Zinger,
Southeast Asia
Digital Librarian,
and
Pin Assakul,
Undergraduate,
College of Human
Ecology



Archives have the power to surprise their readers in personal ways, as Pin Assakul—a sophomore studying Human Development at Cornell University—recently discovered when working on a project for the Southeast Asia Digital Library (SEADL). In the Spring of 2021 SEADL uploaded over 500 newly-digitized palm-leaf manuscripts from the National Library of Cambodia to its free and open online repository. This digital collection was made possible by funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, which allowed Hao Phan, Southeast Asia Curator at Northern Illinois University, to travel to the National Library in Phnom Penh and assist the Librarians in Cambodia with photographing these manuscripts.

During the rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979, the regime destroyed the National Library of Cambodia and repurposed the building for military offices. The soldiers occupying the Library burned books and furniture to

fuel their cookfires, destroying most of the Library's materials. In 1979 when the Khmer Rouge was deposed, only a few thousand books remained in the national collection. These palm-leaf manuscripts recently digitized for SEADL were among those surviving items. Written largely in Pali and Khmer, the manuscripts are valuable records of the Library's original holdings, including Buddhist literature and prayers, as well as folktales. Each manuscript online is contextualized by a description including the item's title, approximate date of creation, associated place, and the topic of its contents. This information enables scholars to search for these manuscripts online, and then to quickly understand them. Librarians at the National Library of Cambodia helpfully shared their subject and language expertise with SEADL to write most of the collection's descriptions. However, there were a handful of manuscripts that required additional help. While the Librarians in

Cambodia were able to create description for the items in Khmer and Pali, 32 of the manuscripts were in an old version of Thai. Lacking the language expertise to read and describe these items, the SEADL team brought Pin on board to help prepare these digitized manuscripts for publication online.

Pin, who moved to the United States from Bangkok to attend Cornell, was born and raised in Thailand and is fluent in Thai. She undertook the painstaking process of reading each manuscript, summarizing its content in a few sentences, and providing important keywords to describe the story contained within its pages. It is unknown exactly when the manuscripts date from, but their language is quite old. Pin estimates that they were written during the reign of King Rama II. This places their composition between 1809 and 1824. Such antiquated language made it difficult even for a native Thai speaker like Pin to read them quickly. While the grammar of these texts is

similar to what Thai students learn today, the spelling in the manuscripts is significantly different from standard modern Thai. Take the common verb to *have*. In modern Thai this word is spelled *มี*. In the manuscripts, though, this word is often spelled *หมี*. To complicate matters even more, the spelling *หมี* in modern Thai refers to the noun *bear*. Another difficulty stems from the use of *garaan*, or the silent mark in Thai script. When this symbol is placed above a consonant, that letter is not pronounced. In the manuscripts, this marker is often—though not always—omitted. For example, Himmapan Forest, a mythical forest in Thai literature, is spelled *หิมพานต์*, with the marker. In the manuscripts however the marker is absent and the word is spelled *หิมพาน*. Additionally, while some stories were written in prose, others were in verse, rendering these manuscripts even more complex. Each item took approximately two weeks to read and summarize.

Yet once Pin began to dive into these manuscripts, she made an exciting discovery: The stories were familiar. Many of the folktales they contained were the same traditional tales that she grew up hearing. These were the stories that she read as a child with her friends in the library and had told to her before bedtime. These were the stories she studied in high school. One manuscript tells the tale of a princess named Pigun-Torn who spills golden cherry flowers from her mouth whenever she speaks. Another, that of Phaya-Charnlawun, a crocodile who kidnaps a young woman and the man sent to rescue her who instead falls in love with the crocodile's wife. Sompassorn Wiriyapanlert – a first year MA student in Asian Studies, with a concentration in Southeast Asia who is additionally helping to describe the manuscripts—noted that while many of the folktales are familiar, they are often not the sanitized modern versions shared with children. These original versions include more adult content, such as intimate scenes, that are not often incorporated into the versions read at school today. Though the manuscripts are over 200 years old, Pin could trace the legacy of their stories



Left: A page from *คัมภีร์ธรรม*, a manuscript about the rules of Buddha's Dharma. Above: A page from *พิรุณทอง*, the story of the princess and the cherry flowers

throughout her own life. The language was difficult to read, but astoundingly beautiful, and Pin found it inspiring to connect these historical objects with her own contemporary experiences.

The project filled Pin with nostalgia. She speaks of how lucky she feels to have been surrounded by Thai culture and traditions growing up. At six years old she began to study *โขน*, or Khon, the traditional performance art of Thai pantomime. Khon was inscribed onto the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2018 and combines dance, music, drama, and handicraft masks to portray the heroics of Rama, the incarnated hero of the god Vishnu. Pin attended classes every Saturday at the same dance school where her mother had learned to dance Khon, who herself followed generations of her own ancestors who had performed this art. Now that Pin has moved to the United States to attend Cornell, she seeks every opportunity when home in Bangkok to attend performances by professional Khon dancers. Working with the manuscripts for SEADL unlocked these memories for Pin, re-immersing her in the traditions and culture of her home.

This is the magic of archives—to pull history into the present, to transport the stories of our pasts to our fingertips. These stories may inform a dissertation or supplement a professor's syllabus. They may be the key piece of evidence in a groundbreaking article or they may simply delight. There is no end to the ways in which archives enrich our lives, both within and beyond academia. Yet acquiring and preserving these archival items is only the first step of sharing these materials with all who seek them. Archives must be made both accessible and discoverable. Digitization is one way of achieving the former; description work by scholars such as Pin helps immensely with the latter.

This project remains a work in progress but to explore the rest of the items in the *Palm-Leaf Manuscripts at the National Library of Cambodia* collection, visit the Southeast Asia Digital Library at sea.lib.niu.edu. There you can also find thousands of other items on topics ranging from Philippine history to experimentation in Vietnamese art. Discover all that SEADL offers yourself—who knows what connections you may uncover between these rare materials and your own personal history.

Giving Back to Southeast Asia

by Greg Green,
Curator, Echols
Collection



When Cornell University Library (CUL) and the Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) began intensively collecting books and other materials that would become the John M. Echols Collection on Southeast Asia, they recruited a dedicated scholar from Indonesia to lead the work: **Giok Po Oey**, who would continue this work for thirty years, and eventually become the first Curator of the collection.

Having grown up and completed an undergraduate degree in Indonesia, then doing graduate work in the United States (at both Stanford and Cornell), Giok Po witnessed firsthand the state of libraries in Indonesia as compared to those at major universities in the United States. Political and

In 1957, soon after graduating from Cornell and returning to Indonesia, Giok Po found himself with his new bride on a return trip to Ithaca, NY to begin a career with two purposes. First and foremost, Giok Po worked to build the best academic collection on Southeast Asia in the world to support the research being done at Cornell. Beyond that core goal, he was also determined to preserve as much of the publishing output from Southeast Asia as possible in hopes that one day that information could return home to support the growing educational systems in the region.

A partnership formed in the early 1970's between Cornell's SEAP, CUL and the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) to film the collection's holdings on Indonesia, which initiated the work of giving these collected resources back to the region. On March 17, 1972, Giok Po gave a speech in the Netherlands as the first phase of that project came to an end. He said:

"We had for a long time understood that some day, in one form or another, some of the Indonesian materials we had been collecting, would be returned to Indonesia. We had understood that this country, which had been struggling through one of the most difficult periods of its history, was preoccupied with more pressing problems of the day, and could not for many years be expected to devote its attention to the seemingly

minor problem of the systematic preservation of its printed publications. Yet minor as the problem may seem, history has shown how important the printed word, and therefore its pres-

...Giok Po worked to build the best academic collection on Southeast Asia in the world to support the research being done at Cornell.

ervation is. It was precisely to ensure that at least one copy of each Indonesian publication be preserved that has become one of the guiding principles in the building of Cornell's Southeast Asia Collection" (quoted from a copy of his speech held in Giok Po Oey's personnel file maintained by Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program).¹

Since that time, the Echols Collection has worked to make its vast holdings more accessible in Southeast Asia itself. Another project helped the National Library of Cambodia rebuild its holdings on microfilm after the disastrous Khmer Rouge period. These days, the collection participates in digitization projects, such as the Southeast Asia Digital Library <https://sea.lib.niu.edu/>, to provide open access to as much of the collection as possible. It is a long and expensive process, but one that continues the legacy of Giok Po Oey and others who had the foresight and vision to preserve as much of Southeast Asia's publishing output as possible, not just for use here at Cornell, but also for future generations in Southeast Asia and around the world.

¹ See the online exhibit <https://exhibits.library.cornell.edu/giok-po-oey> for more information on the life and work of Giok Po Oey, including a similar description of this event using this same quote.

...upheavals in the early days of Indonesia, resulting from World War II, the end of colonialism and the messy development of democracy, meant that libraries lacked the attention and funding they needed to properly build and preserve collections.

societal upheavals in the early days of Indonesia, resulting from World War II, the end of colonialism and the messy development of democracy, meant that libraries lacked the attention and funding they needed to properly build and preserve collections. Giok Po knew that working alone in Indonesia, he could not make changes quickly enough to save the publishing output of his home country. However, using the combined strength of SEAP and CUL, he stood a chance of doing just that.

FOR MORE ON Giok Po's life and the founding of the Echols Collection, see the Spring 2021 SEAP Bulletin.



Left: Muttu Un (Freshman, Global Development), Nathan Baker (Masters, City & Regional Planning, FLAS Vietnamese) & Ashmitha Sivakumar (Junior, Biomedical Engineering) discuss principles and characteristics of electronically produced music.

Above: Also an accomplished vocalist, Summer Seward (Freshman, Policy Analysis & Management) experiments with seeking electronic equivalents for melody line layers on a track.

Explorations in Southeast Asian Hip Hop Culture

by Billy Noseworthy,
Vietnamese Language
Cataloger, CU Library





Left: Associate Professor Kevin Ernste, Director of the Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center (CEMC), introduces the seminar to Cornell's electroacoustic music studios, priming the students for a participatory workshop and exploration of beat-making.

Right: Dr. Paige Johnson (Performance & Race, Department of Theater, Barnard College) discusses the dynamics of Hip Hop, Black music, gender and performance in Island Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia.

Left: Jaesup Sim (Senior, Industrial & Labor Relations) lays down beats, while Luis Malenab (Sophomore, Arts & Sciences), Lillian Li (Freshman, Hotel Administration), & Muttu Un (Freshman, Global Development) provide support and advice.

Right: Lillian Li (Freshman, Hotel Administration) adds layers to the topline of a track, while Muttu Un (Freshman, Global Development) looks on.

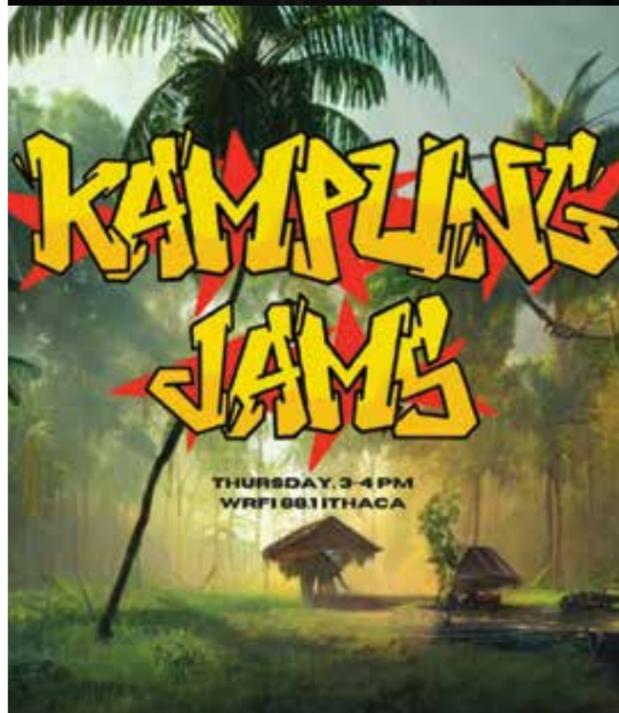
Easing from winter into spring of 2023, a disciplinarily robust mix of undergraduates, along with a few graduate students, joined the "Movement & Memory" seven-week course to explore the contemporary music and deep cultural history of Southeast Asia as a region. The course followed campus performances by pathbreaking Cambodian American artist Bochan Huy and Filipina American Hip Hop artist Ruby Ibarra in Spring 2022 (see the Fall 2022 SEAP Bulletin for more) and was the first of three planned arts and culture seven-week introductory courses for undergraduates in Southeast Asian Studies.

Hip Hop is arguably the break-out genre of the global music community of the 21st century, and its impact on Southeast Asian music scenes has been dramatic, although styles, form, and syncretic blends with existing musical scenes vary significantly place to place, city to city, *kampung* to *kampung* across the region. In this course, emphasis was placed on understanding transpacific connections, blends of contemporary and traditional styles, discourses on originality and appropriation, and discussions of artistic freedom.

What made January 2023 unique, from a pedagogical standpoint, was not just the nature and material of the course, but also the staggering popularity of the new ChatGPT artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot. While professors and lecturers across the world struggled to address the educational and research implications of advancing text generating AI technologies, students in *Movement & Memory* simply surfed the wave. The exercise proved that although not every bot can write poetry, every student can.

We began with an introductory assignment where students visited the latest "Cosmos in the Home" exhibit at the Johnson Museum with a simple instruction: Go forth, explore the exhibit and write a haiku. While perusing the exhibit students also wrote down ten terms from the exhibit with which they were not familiar, whether they be artists, titles of pieces, or terms from the text descriptions of art objects in

Dr. Billy is the host of *Kampung Jams* a show exploring the latest and greatest of Southeast Asian music every Thursday, 3-4 pm on 89.7 WRFI Odessa, 88.1 FM Ithaca, and 91.9 FM Watkins Glen. The show streams live to the web at WRFI.org, with recordings archived for the past two weeks, and an entire program archive of playlists available at <https://wrfi.org/wrfi.programs/kampung-jams>.



the museum. They then took these terms and asked ChatGPT to generate a haiku. In the next seminar, students gathered in small groups and chose human-authored and AI-generated poems to compare with the rest of the course, as we all attempted to guess which poem had the living human touch. Through the exercise they also gained an appreciation of how trained researchers are easily able to catch "tells" in AI-generated texts that would usually not be caught by even the incredibly adept undergraduates in the course.

"Through the lens of hip-hop music, this course shed a modern light on the intertwined, connected, yet unique cultural products emerging from Southeast Asia. The course made me reconsider how contemporary artists and citizens in the region must negotiate complicated historical relationships and international commercial influences to establish novel identities...I spent hours listening to obscure YouTube music videos and reading publications with only a few hundred views. This process developed my taste by skirting the boundaries of familiarity and prior knowledge. I also learned how to navigate the region's distribution networks. Forced outside of my department and comfort zone, I began to understand how artists cultivate innovative and proprietary sounds that simultaneously draw upon traditional and transnational influences. Overall, this course broadened my knowledge and conceptual understanding of two of my favorite subjects – hip-hop music and Southeast Asian cultural studies – that I had not previously considered together." - Nathan Baker, Vietnamese Language FLAS student, M.A. graduate student.

"With each artist experiencing different kinds of hardships and backgrounds, the music of the region incorporates traditional music and blends it well with the more modern techniques of Hip Hop. I learned a lot about the variety of languages of Southeast Asia, and I thought it was great that their artists often collaborate, even though they speak

different languages and come from different communities, I found that super." – Maddie Slavett, undergraduate.

In addition to early explorations proving anyone can write poetry, course highlights included an assignment to write on primary source materials evidencing the early history of Hip Hop in Cornell's Hip Hop collection located online and in Cornell Library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, in-course discussions on "originality" and the plagiarism charge levied at Indonesian rapper Young Lex by Chinese K-Pop trained super star Lay Zhang, a special visit with the formidable Dr. Kevin Ernste, Director of Cornell's Electroacoustic Music Center (CEMC), and a phenomenal appearance by Dr. Paige M. Johnson of Theater and Performance at Barnard College. While the visit to the CEMC was crucial, in that it allowed students to see and experience how electronic music is produced, Dr. Johnson's visit encouraged students to think critically through intersections of race, gender, and class.

"I really enjoyed studying how American Hip Hop was brought into different Southeast Asian countries and how it was newly interpreted in the contexts of different cultures and histories. Understanding the importance of Hip Hop in self-expression, advocacy, and uplifting disenfranchised communities is essential, as well as learning about censorship and backlash. I found the final radio segment project to be a fascinating way to learn about different songs from a particular Southeast Asian country." – Ellie Fassman, undergraduate.

For their final project, students in *Movement & Memory* produced segments of a radio show by selecting tracks, telling a story, and working to interpret those tracks for a broader audience. Select segments will air on WRFI intermittently throughout the fall.



NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



Geronimo Cristobal, Joshua Chun Wah Kam, and Eric Goh (May 2023)

Graduate Student Co-Chair Eric Goh

Greetings, fellow Southeast Asianists!

An advisee of Drs. Iftikhar Dadi and Kaja McGowan in the History of Art Department, I study modern and contemporary art of Southeast Asia with a focus on artistic practices that engage with eco-spiritual concerns, but really my interests are broader than that. I embrace intellectual promiscuity while I still can as an early-stage PhD student! Some of my current projects include: revisiting turn-of-the-century works of modernists who are left behind by the “global” turn to contemporary art in Malaysia, unpacking Bali as a regional and global node for artistic exchanges throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and addressing the oversight of geometric abstract discourse in Southeast Asian art.

In my spare time, I commune with nature, devour novels, and host dinner parties.

Plans for SEAP this year?

Fun, joy, and beauty: the three things that academia tends to shun. Well, as the co-chair, I intend to infuse them into the events and programs we organize. What makes SEAP so special for me are the life-affirming conversations and connections I’ve had the great opportunity to forge under its “roof” so let’s have more of those!

Graduate Student Conference Chair Joshua Chun Wah Kam

I’m Josh, a third-year PhD student in the Department of Asian Studies, helming the graduate conference committee for spring 2024. I study culinary history in my native Malaysia. Food was a big pivot for me; in another life, I studied histories of desire in classical Javanese and Malay literature during a Fulbright Fellowship in Indonesia (2019) and my subsequent MA at the University of Michigan (2021). My current projects center on other kinds of desire, tracing the aftertastes and leftover longings of twentieth-century restaurants. It’s hard to imagine a better intellectual home for my projects than SEAP, among my cosmopolitan colleagues and our many, many cuisines. Some of our best ideas come together over the diasporic dinner table—itsself a de facto tradition of the program. I’m excited to helm this year’s conference, and to meet the confluence of scholars arriving in snowy Ithaca. Dress warmly. We’ll see ya here in the spring!

Graduate Student Co-Chair Geronimo Cristobal

Sampurasun! I’m a second year PhD student in the History of Art Department where I study the material culture of Maritime Southeast Asia under the guidance of Dr. Kaja McGowan. I’m fascinated by the agimat, objects believed to have magical and protective powers, in the part of the world where I grew up. Before attending Cornell, I taught undergrads at Ateneo de Manila, and pursued graduate studies at Columbia. I spent a year learning Indonesian languages from 2017-2018 in Bandung. Before that, I lived in Berlin during the hipster invasion.

Aside from being the co-captain of the Graduate Student Committee, I am one of eight Digital Humanities Fellows of the Olin Library and recipient of this year’s Milton Barnett Scholarship. Outside academia, I am father to Martina, my four year old pride and joy. I play tennis, mahjong, and enjoy ballroom dance.

Plans for SEAP this year?

I was taught to under promise but over deliver, so I’ll just say, SEAP people can count on my presence at the Kahin Center, corny jokes, auto-likes, and convincing nods when you say something smart. With everyone’s involvement, I look forward to a legendary SEAP year, with delicious Gatty Lectures, unforgettable social events. Our terms will be about enriching traditions and making a place for Southeast Asia in a big university.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Thess Savella (Senior Lecturer of Tagalog) on being awarded the Sophie Washburn French Instructorship! This annual award recognizes excellence in language instruction among language lecturers in the College of Arts & Sciences.

I am humbled and very grateful to receive this honor from the College of Arts and Sciences. My sincerest thanks, as well, to the Department of Asian Studies and Southeast Asia Program for their warm and full support in the teaching of Southeast Asian languages at Cornell.

—Thess Savella



From the Southeast Asia Program
at Cornell University



DID YOU MISS OUR GATTY LECTURE THIS WEEK?

Over the course of the 2022-23 Gatty Rewind Podcast season, we brought you 22 loaded podcast episodes showcasing scholars and novelists who focus in, on, and around Southeast Asia. As our lead producer, Unaizah Alam, leaves the podcast family behind (congratulations on graduating!), we look forward to continuing to evolve our content.

Keep an eye out in September for our new season, launching on all major streaming platforms, with a star-studded list of Gatty guests!

Ronald and Janette Gatty Lecture Series

Southeast Asia Program

All held at 12:20pm, 374 Rockefeller Hall

- August
24 Tom Pepinsky / *Government, Cornell*
Can We Decolonize Southeast Asian Studies?
- September
07 Meredith Weiss / *Political Science, Albany SUNY*
Decline and Fall of Malaysia's Dominant-Party System
- September
21 Vicente L. Rafael / *History, Washington*
The Authoritarian Imaginary: Intimacy and the Autoimmune Community in the Contemporary Philippines
- October
05 Lisandro Claudio / *Southeast Asian Studies, Berkeley*
Imperialism and the Formation of Good Governance Discourse in the Philippines: The Case Study of the Philippine National Bank in the 1920s
- October
12 Jenny Hedstrom / *War Studies, Swedish Defense*
Reproducing Revolution: Women's Labor and the War in Kachinland
- October
19 Van Nguyen Marshall / *History, Trent*
Between War and the State: Civil Society in South Vietnam, 1954–1975
- October
26 Nina Baker Capistrano / *Art History, Ayala Museum*
Reinscribing P'u-tuan in the Metanarrative of Early Southeast Asia
- November
02 Talitha Espiritu / *Film and New Media Studies, Wheaton*
Phantom Threads: Haute Couture in the Philippine Camelot of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos
- November
09 Elliott Prasse-Freeman / *Anthropology, NUS*
Rights Refused: Grassroots Activism and State Violence in Myanmar
- November
16 Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol / *Contemporary Art, McGill*
Contemporary Art After Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
- November
30 Viola Lasmana / *American Studies, Rutgers*
The Shadow Image: Transnational Southeast Asian Feminist Practices and Pedagogies
- December
04 Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz / *History, Columbia*
Fernando Amorsolo: Master Painter of Philippine Sunlight and Elite Conceptions of Nature

Matthew Venker is a cultural anthropologist studying the historical intersections of race, religion, and citizenship in Burma. His dissertation, *Racial Categories, Religious Distinctions: Mixed Buddhists and the Burma Laws Act 1898-1947*, interrogates how British colonial structures created new categories of legal personhood that divided the colony's Buddhist population, which disenfranchised women in interracial marriages and antagonized members of Burma's early nationalist movements. This research combines insights from 14 months of participant-observation research on contestations of law and practices of belonging among various Chinese communities in Burma with archival research methods to adapt long-standing interests in the Burma's citizenship rights regime to the radically changed political environment following the 2021 military coup. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in May 2023.



Matthew additionally holds an MA in Anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2017) and a BA in Asian Studies and Sociology/Anthropology from St. Olaf College (2012). He has training in East and Southeast Asian studies and speaks both Mandarin Chinese and Burmese. In addition to his time in Burma, Matthew lived in China for three years, mostly in a rural village along the Chinese-Burmese border from 2012-2014 where he taught English through Teach For China. His experiences along this porous border generated the interest and much of the initial insights his research is based on. Matthew is from St. Louis, Missouri.

Sara A. Swenson (she/her) is an Assistant Professor in Religion at Dartmouth College. Her research focuses on contemporary Buddhism in Vietnam. During her time at SEAP, she will be completing her first book entitled *Having Heart: Buddhist Charity in Urban Vietnam*. This study examines rising trends of Buddhist volunteerism in Vietnam's fastest growing urban area, Ho Chi Minh City. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2015 and 2019, Swenson explores how lay and monastic Buddhist charity workers coped with experiences of urban alienation by framing altruism as an intersubjective act that benefits all beings. Her scholarship shows how Buddhist practices fundamentally inform and drive a shift toward grassroots social service programming in Vietnam amid increasing economic privatization.

Swenson's research has been published in *The Journal of Global Buddhism*, *Asian Ethnology*, *The Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, *Political Theology*, and the *Journal of Theology & Sexuality*. Her work has been previously funded through the Dartmouth College Leslie Center for the Humanities; American Academy of Religion; Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship; Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA); and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, awarded through ACLS. This year of writing is graciously funded through a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).

Swenson completed her Ph.D. in Religion from Syracuse University in 2021. She holds an M.Phil. in Religion (Syracuse University, 2016), a Certificate of Advanced Study in Women's and Gender Studies (Syracuse University, 2015), an M.A. in Comparative Religion (Ilf School of Theology, 2012), and a B.A. in English (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2009).

Beyond research, Swenson also enjoys creative writing and hiking with her dog. Please feel free to contact her at: sara.a.swenson@dartmouth.edu. She looks forward to connecting with the Cornell community and participating in SEAP events this year.



VISITING FELLOWS



Aichiro Suryo Prabowo (Chiro) is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program (SEAP). His research integrates sustainability and resilience issues into public finance and budgeting. His dissertation, "Essays on Natural Disasters and Fiscal Resilience," investigated the extent to which American state governments develop their budgets strategically in the face of major disasters, such as hurricanes and flooding. While disasters have been increasing in frequency and magnitude in recent decades, he found that most state governments were more often reactive than proactive, and that many had grown financially dependent on assumptions of federal assistance whenever needed. At SEAP, Chiro will continue working on the political and financial dimensions of climate change, focusing on Southeast Asia. He will also be actively engaged with an array of research and pedagogical activities within SEAP, including teaching one class on a topic focused on Southeast Asia.

Chiro has published papers on fiscal policies in the United States and Indonesia, and his opinions have been featured in national outlets, including *the Jakarta Post*, *the Conversation*, and *Seputar Indonesia*. Previously, he was a lecturer at Universitas Indonesia and Institut Teknologi Bandung, during which he was awarded the Australian National University's New Mandala Indonesia Correspondent Fellowship. Beyond academia, he has served as an associate director at the Office of the President of Indonesia (UKP4) in Jakarta and consulted internationally for the World Bank's offices in Jakarta, Washington DC, Abuja, and Brussels. Chiro earned his Ph.D. in Policy Studies from the University of Maryland, where he also taught public budgeting and public economics courses, and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chicago.



Hew Wai Weng is a research fellow at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (IKMAS, UKM). His research interests include the intersections between ethnicity, religiosity, class and politics in Malaysia and Indonesia. He writes about Chinese Muslim identities, Hui migrations, political Islam, urban middle-class Muslim aspirations and their social media practices in Malaysia and Indonesia. He is the author of 'Chinese Ways of Being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia' (NIAS Press, 2018). As a visiting fellow at SEAP during 2023-2024, under the Fulbright Malaysia Scholar Program, Wai Weng will research political Islam and Malay Muslim majoritarianism in contemporary Malaysia by looking at various key actors and their narratives - ranging from politicians, activists, and preachers to influencers. He is also interested in examining how and under what conditions pious middle-class Muslims appropriate urban places to meet religious needs and pursue middle-class lifestyles in Malaysia and Indonesia. He looks forward to exchanging ideas with Cornell University scholars and graduate students, as well as exploring the university library collections.

VISITING



Aini Hasanah Abd Mutalib is a Visiting Scholar at Cornell University's K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics and affiliated with Southeast Asia Program (SEAP). Aini's interests lie in wildlife conservation management. She has also recently taken a position as a Research Officer at the Institute of Tropical Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (IBTPL, UMT) where she initiated projects on terrestrial biodiversity, especially for passive acoustic monitoring application for small apes such as lar gibbons (*Hylobates lar*). She is also a co-founding member of the Malaysian Primatological Society (MPS), Malaysia's first NGO which focuses on conservation, scientific research, collaborative networking, and outreach for Malaysian primates. She is also the technical advisor for Setiu Wetlands Ecotourism Discovery (ECOSWED) and a team member for the Shorebirds Peninsular Malaysia Project.

Aini received her bachelor's degree from School of Biological Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. After an internship at a turtle project at WWF-Malaysia, Aini pursued a master's in science, which focused on the conservation management of the green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in Setiu, Terengganu. She then participated in a project on orangutans, attended the 2014 International Primatological Society (IPS) Congress in Hanoi, and organized the 2014 International Primate/ Orangutan Dialogue in Penang. Since then, Aini and her colleagues have co-founded the Malaysian Primatological Society (MPS) and have been actively working on primate conservation research and outreach. In 2018, the team has won the bid to bring primatologists from around the world to Kuching for the IPS-MPS Joint Meeting in August, 2023. Aini stands as the chairperson for that IPS- MPS Joint Meeting in 2023, and coordinates the IUCN National Conservation Action Plan for Small Apes. In recognition for her work, she had been awarded a number of awards and research grants, locally and globally. In 2021, she was awarded Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment, a prestigious award which allows recipients to undergo research attachment in various leading institutions and universities. Aini wishes to expand her research field in bioacoustics, terrestrial biodiversity management and collaborative network between the stakeholders for wildlife conservation in Terengganu, especially for gibbons.

We are delighted to have these scholars joining our community this academic year!

—The SEAP Community

A Warm hello to the SEAP Community

by Jennifer Munger,
SEAP Program Manager



AS WE PREPARE FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR AT SEAP, I too am preparing for new experiences. I have just begun my term as SEAP Program Manager, after James Nagy's departure to Madison, Wisconsin and as Thamora Fishel focuses on her role as Associate Director. I have spent time at Cornell before, back when SEASSI travelled between the different universities equipped with a Southeast Asia Studies Program. At that time, Pak John Wolff ran the program, so I had the pleasure of studying Indonesian with him. I also had the lucky experience of attending a lecture by Ben Anderson, followed by a most lively gathering at his home. Marty Hatch ran the gamelan at the time, so I was able to enjoy learning from him, too.

What brought me to Cornell – then and now – is a long-standing interest in Southeast Asia, focusing on Indonesia. As a young child my family traveled throughout the United States. My grandfather had a globe, which I used to both trace our journeys and wonder about places yet unseen. My parents' church sponsored a family from Borneo, who came to the US before moving on to the Netherlands, increasing my interest in the world and its people beyond my borders.

As an undergraduate, I had the chance to learn more about Indonesia when I studied Javanese gamelan with Andy Sutton and dance with Peggy Choy. Hearing their stories and meeting musicians from Java solidified my interest in conducting research of my own. I attended the weekly talks hosted by the Southeast Asia Studies Center at Wisconsin, and applied for graduate study there, combining a Southeast Asian Studies MA with a PhD in Anthropology.

I opted to conduct my studies outside Java; I was drawn to the eastern archipelago. My initial research plan was to go to Maluku because of its importance as an early trading hub. Conflict in the area stymied that plan, so I redirected my focus to North Sulawesi. There I studied brass bands composed of locally-made instruments. I observed and participated in the making of instruments, the composition of melodies, and performances at multiple venues. I wrote about those experiences through the lens of people's visions of their past and future and where they fit into a global modern world.

Before completing my degree, I began my work as Managing Editor for the *Journal of Asian Studies*, under the mentorship of my advisor, Kenneth George. I spent several years doing that work, relocating to UC Irvine after Ken stepped down. After the journal restructured, I spent some time at Fresno State; when COVID hit, I relocated to Arizona to be near my father. I had a fun interlude there as a museum guide at a Cold War missile silo – but when I saw the posting for this position, I leapt at the opportunity to join the SEAP community.

I am excited about my work at SEAP, and happy to be among Southeast Asianists again. When talking with Thamora Fishel, I realized that anyone I do not already know already knows someone I do know. I think that is based on our collegiality and strong sense of community. I am delighted to reconnect with friends I met while studying at UW-Madison, including Ibu Jolanda Pandin, who taught me Indonesian, and Chris Miller, who, one summer was part of a trio of Chris Millers who all played gamelan, including some experimental pieces written by members of the group. I am looking forward to meeting folks in person that I know professionally from my work at the JAS, and am very eager to meet and make memories with those of you I have not yet spent time with.

I will be based in Uris Hall. If you are on campus, please do stop by and say hello.

I am looking forward to meeting folks in person that I know professionally from my work at the JAS, and am very eager to meet and make memories with those of you I have not yet spent time with.

DEGREES CONFERRED

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
SOUTHEAST ASIA
DOCTORAL DEGREES**Dan Cameron Burgdorf**

Linguistics
Chair: Sam Tilsen
The Consonant/Vowel Distinction: A Cognitive Difference Evidenced by Glides

Juan Fernandez

History
Chair: Tamara Loos
Becoming Anthropologists / Becoming Natives: Sex, Gender, and the Ethnographic Encounter in the American Colonial Philippines

Dharmasinghe Geethika

Asian Literature, Religion, & Culture
Chair: Anne Blackburn
Third Wave Politics: Violence and Buddhists in Sri Lanka

Piyawat Louilarprasert

Music
Sound, Physicality and Theatricality in the Works of Mauricio Kagel's Staatstheater: Repertoire and Carola Bauckholt's Oh I See

Annie Sheng

Anthropology
Chair: Magnus Fiskesjö
Bread Instead: Baking Up Values and Shaping Moral Beings in the Economies and Socialites of Bread Production, Distribution and Consumption in Modern Japan, Taiwan, East and Southeast Asia

Tinakrit Sireerat

Asian Studies
Chair: Naoki Sakai
Looking North: Hokkaido's Farms, Lanna's Forests, and the Colonial Nature of Knowledge in Nineteenth-century Japan and Thailand

Kelsey J. Utne

History
Chair: Durba Ghosh
Corpse Politics: Disposal and Commemoration of the Indian Interwar Dead, 1919-1939

Amira Rizaldy

Regional Science
Chair: Ravi Kanbur
On The Relationship Between Informal Employment and Inequality in Indonesia

Darren Wan

History
Chair: Eric Tagliacozzo;
Durba Ghosh

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

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

Anne Blackburn, Old Dominion Foundation professor in the Humanities; and Asian studies

Thak Chaloehtiarana, retired professor, Asian literature, religion, and culture; and Asian studies

Abigail C. Cohn, professor, linguistics

Kathryn Fiorella, assistant professor, public & ecosystem health

Magnus Fiskesjö, associate professor, anthropology

Chiara Formichi, H. Stanley Krusen professor, world religions; and Asian studies

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY
SOUTHEAST ASIA
MASTER'S DEGREES**Anna Koshcheeva**

Asian Studies
Chair: Arnika Fuhrmann

Michael Miller

History
Chair: Eric Tagliacozzo

Hui-Yuan Neo

Government
Chair: Tom Pepinsky

JOHNSON MUSEUM ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHT



Indonesia, West Java, Cirebon

Batik kain with peksi naga sakti motif

Cotton

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

Gift of Wanda Warming and Michael Gaworski; 2018.057.027

Image courtesy of the Johnson Museum

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