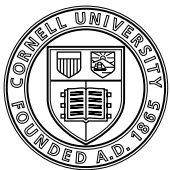




SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

FALL BULLETIN 2013



Cornell University

"Negara. *Leluhur*, 110X124. Silk threads on cotton, mirror glass, scrap cloth triangles, and nylon fringes. Ceiling canopy used in ceremonies and rituals. Balinese script in the center is composed of sacred letters, here denoting the god Siwa. The four persons are Balinese ascetics or holy men with their traditional jackets and elaborate headdresses. Each is holding a petal and one holds a *bajra* (sacred bell); which are used in meditations and prayers. Depictions of persons on these embroidered ceiling canopies are rare, as most have sewn floral and geometric motifs with little embroidery. There are four large lotus motifs. The dragonfly, goose, and pig are apparently just decorations. The six words are transliterations from the Balinese language but their precise meaning and significance is unclear: *Ukir* (carved or engraved), *kawi* (ancient form of Javanese), *nela jang* (fisher), and *tampaking kuntul* (a heron who catches fish)" (Fisher 2004: 9). Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. Acquired through the George and Mary Rockwell Fund 2007.031.008. See article page 5.



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FRONT COVER IMAGE: A woman stands on a wooden boat characteristic of the Mekong Delta working a pair of long oars in the bustling Cái Răng floating market, a few kilometers upriver from the city of Cần Thơ. Edmund Oh.



Outgoing Director Tamara Loos, Isle of Skye, Scotland, 2013

**LETTER FROM THE
OUTGOING DIRECTOR,
TAMARA LOOS**

Dear Friends,

I have happily discovered during the past three years directing the Southeast Asia Program that renewal chases the heels of change. We successfully received an NRC grant only to see it reduced by half and then largely replenished by the Provost, have survived the first term of a new director after being guided for well over a decade by the indefatigable Professor Thak Chaloemtiarana, and have witnessed a nearly total replacement of our small staff. SEAP member Professor Fred Logevall, who recently won the Pulitzer Prize, now serves as Director of Einaudi and Vice Provost for International Affairs. His goodwill and deep understanding of the importance of languages and area knowledge to internationalization efforts at Cornell and in our relations abroad bode well. We are distraught to see Professor Lorraine Paterson leave us; she will be sorely missed. But we have also been fortunate to bolster our faculty ranks with three new hires: Professors Arnika Fuhrmann and Chiara Formichi in Asian Studies, and Professor Victoria Beard in City and Regional Planning. I honor our strong past and am grateful for the future, energized by what we have accomplished so far. I now hand over the directorship to our capable interim directors, Professors Sarosh Kuruvilla (Fall 2013) and Abby Cohn (Spring 2014).

Professor Kaja McGowan will serve as the next full term director from 2014-2017 after she finishes her sabbatical leave next year. All of these transitions and renewals have made the program an even stronger and more cohesive academic community.

I now hand over the directorship to our capable interim directors, Professors Sarosh Kuruvilla (Fall 2013) and Abby Cohn (Spring 2014)

A strength that encapsulates both our past and our future is Indonesian studies, which has been fully reinvigorated thanks to the labor of our Indonesianists. Cornell faculty members led the efforts that established AIFIS (American Institute for Indonesian Studies), which is officially designated an American Overseas Research Center by the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC). Their successful grant writing enabled AIFIS to receive funds from the Luce Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education's AORC program. In addition to its main office in Jakarta, AIFIS will soon open a satellite office in Yogyakarta, and AIFIS staff members are exploring opportunities to open similar offices in other regional cities such as Medan, Padang, Denpasar, and Makassar. The Cornell Modern Indonesian Project will work with SEAP Publications to publish a series of books based on papers given in yearly conferences, including the State of Indonesian Studies conference at Cornell in 2011 and one on "Wealth and Power in Indonesian Politics" held at the University of Sydney in 2012. These efforts build on our existing foundation in Indonesian studies such as the journal *Indonesia*, climate change projects with Cornell scientists, visits by Indonesian academics and dignitaries such as Ambassador Djalar, new courses, and the biannual Yale-Cornell Indonesia graduate student conference.

If Indonesia focused SEAP's major academic initiative during my directorship, Burma will join Indonesia's side

in the upcoming years. The number of faculty and students taking Burmese at Cornell is on the rise; this fall we will offer a new course on Burma, facilitate the various entities at the library and CALS pursuing projects in Burma, apply for a Fulbright-Hays Group

and cosponsored our first joint conference on "Transnational Southeast Asia," held in Kyoto in January 2013. SEAP also hosted a workshop on "The Politics of Criticism in Thailand: Arts and *Aan*" that featured literary critics, the publisher of Thailand's best literary magazine, film experts, and other scholars. SEAP was honored to have Professor Benedict Anderson give the prestigious Golay Memorial Lecture on "Letters, Secrecy, and the Information Age: The Trajectory of Historiography in Southeast Asia" in 2013, included in this issue.

SEAP graduate students continue to run the weekly brown bag luncheon series with intellectual verve and to organize the annual SEAP Graduate Student Symposium—last year over 80 graduate students working on Southeast Asia applied. During the past three years we have hosted more than 30 visiting research fellows from around the world. Outreach programs are stronger than ever: yearly we work with other Einaudi programs to offer the International Studies Summer Institute for K-12 teachers and the After School Language Program, in which Southeast Asian languages are taught to elementary students in the area. SEAP Publications continues to publish several monographs on Southeast Asia per year and two volumes of the award-winning journal, *Indonesia*, which is now accessible to more subscribers through JSTOR and Project Muse.

If you can't tell, I am extremely honored and proud to have been the director of SEAP these past few years. SEAP's biggest boast by far is the dedication and warm community of faculty, lecturers, staff and graduate students, without whom my job would have been impossible. Thank you all!

Warm wishes,



Tamara Loos



SEAP Interim Directors Professors Sarosh Kuruvilla (Fall 2013) and Abby Cohn (Spring 2014).

Projects Abroad Program grant, and strongly feature Burma specialists in our brown bag luncheon series.

These two foci enhance our ongoing programming and projects. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kyoto University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies



RISKING SELF & SPACE

What Kind (*Kim*) of Human Being (*Nara*)? Teaching the History of Southeast Asian Art, One Travel Story at a Time

Kaja M. McGowan, *associate professor, art history, archaeology, and Asian studies*

K*innara/Kinnari* are often distinguished from other celestial creatures in the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon by their human heads, torsos, and arms, gracefully synthesized with avian legs, up-swept tail feathers, and auspiciously articulated wings. As composite creatures, their very name in Sanskrit revolves around a riddle: “What kind (*kim*) of human being (*nara*)?” Inhabiting the mythical Himavanta forest of Buddhist legend, these paradigmatic couples are found throughout Asia, more commonly as half-horse, half-human (*kimpurusa*) in India, where they are thought to have originated (Zimmer, 1946: 119-120). However, it is their bird-like qualities that come to the fore throughout Southeast Asia; each feather ascribed with protective powers, each proffered jewel

of wisdom, transformative. Associated with music, poetry, and dance, these enigmatic beings are endowed with apotropaic possibilities to engender fear and to inspire the imagination. Whether found face to face on suspension brackets for sacred bells in Burma, or lending their weight to support post-Angkorian columns in Cambodia, their resonant presence resides at the interstices of all things, where moments of divine intervention are marked by the spontaneous giving of gifts. In Java, Indonesia, images of paired *kinnara/kinnari* can be found on stone temples (*candi*) like Borobudur, Mendut, Pawon, and Prambanan, where they are most often poised at the base of wish-granting trees (*kalpataru*), resplendent with garlands of jewels. According to older, local informants in Southeast Asia—especially artists and

performers—*kinnara/kinnari* once forced viewers to risk self and space but no longer.

In what follows, I shall stake a claim for the continued importance of introducing Southeast Asian objects like *kinnara/kinnari* in the classroom—as guardians, creative catalysts, and muses. The meaning of knowledge and power, and the overarching purpose of education are perceived as related subjects. Pedagogical theory and the practice of teaching should be part and parcel of a fully embodied story of Southeast Asia. I want to speak of “teachings” as my primary example but not just ordinary classroom lectures. I mean rather those infrequent lessons in living that transform or radically change lives. In an age of entitlement, students often grow impatient with sources of knowledge

that do not immediately materialize. I repeatedly encourage my classes to get lost in the stacks of Olin Library. I tell them of all the serendipitous discoveries that transformed my life and the lives of my colleagues, while wandering in Kroch. Compared with digital database mining, traditional stack-based research may be slower, but it is infinitely gratifying. I am not making a nostalgic claim for the way things were. Discover, Google, Bing, Wikipedia—these are all fast and efficient tools that, in one form or another, are here to stay. And certainly digital searches, as we all know, can lead to serendipitous consequences as well. I am inclined, however, to see the ease with which such searches are generated as leading to a scattering of energy that is soon depleted, or a hoarding of factual knowledge that rarely gets processed internally. Online sources have their strengths, but I would argue that we need a greater awareness of what we relinquish when we only rely on digital sources.

I often hear my colleagues praise students for the speed and efficiency with which they scan information and complete their research but not always for the depth and enduring quality of the work itself. As Elliott Eisner argues: “Efficiency is largely a virtue of the tasks we don’t like to do; few of us like to eat a great meal efficiently or to participate in a wonderful conversation efficiently, or indeed to make love efficiently. What we enjoy the most we linger over. A school system designed with an overriding commitment to efficiency may produce outcomes that have little enduring quality” (2002: xiii). To create anything of enduring quality requires a leap of faith. The process is always a bit mysterious. You linger over a project, you work and work, and still it will not coalesce. Then, when waking from a sound sleep, taking a walk, or harvesting peas in the garden, the whole thing falls into place. There are times when it is important to preserve the slower, more thoughtful approach to writing, reading, and making things. At such times, one must be willing to undergo

the humbling and life-altering experience—like a mystical visitation—of arriving at a train of thought, writing a poem, or of making something, and not being able to fully explain from whence the inspiration or impetus came.

Much of this mystery entails allowing the materials a life of their own, experiencing with delight, their unique affordances. Understanding the vicissitudes of the lost wax method, for example, the unpredictability of pouring molten metal into molds, is a perfect medium with which to introduce students to the fluid, multivalent properties of *kinnara/kinnari*. Linger over a loom in motion or learning to spin thread on a drop spindle, as described by Janet Hoskins, affords students the opportunity to quite literally connect earth and sky with their own bodies as a winged *kinnari* might, further risking self and space to empathize, perhaps more deeply, with the joys and sorrows of a young woman’s experience on the island of Sumba in Indonesia (1998).

Recently, students feel entitled to request that a professor turn over all PowerPoint presentations in the first week of class. When this happens, I grow concerned about such demands that effectively cut off all commerce with the *kinnari*-like wonder of seeing and touching a work of art for the first time and being utterly transformed by its power. In a time when students increasingly opt to play it safe, choosing visual clarity and predictability nine times out of ten, encouraging ambiguous encounters with *kinnara/kinnari* is timely. Stanley J. O’Connor insists that artifacts should be seen as “centers of [Southeast Asian] experience” that teach us “what is socially and culturally possible at a given place and time” (1992: 150). Turning university museums into classrooms allows for these materially rich and transformative experiences as witnessed by the recent exhibition, designed and created by my students in a seminar entitled “Threads of Consequence: The Role of Textiles in South and Southeast Asia.” I am drawn to *kinnara/kinnari* to make a case for

shaking things up a bit when teaching the history of art at Cornell University, or indeed anywhere. When art acts as an agent of change, where teachers and students can be seen together to risk self and space, then we may correctly speak of it as a “gift.” I will return to this concept of art as “gift” momentarily, but for now what follows is my own attempt to get at an evolving philosophy of teaching the history of Southeast Asian art.

Vincent Houben offers this insight in the volume he co-edited with Cynthia Chou entitled, *Southeast Asian Studies: Debates and New Directions*: “Therefore the future of Southeast Asian history lies in its connectivity with both its own discipline and other disciplines, building trans-disciplinary bridges and transcending its spatial-temporal confines” (2006: 156). Poised as if effortlessly on her wooden base, hovering between earth and sky, a female *kinnari* from Thailand was recently acquired by The Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University (See Fig. 1). She will serve here in what follows as a possible “site for connectivity,” an interstitial presence, arguably more messenger than message. In an era of personal media, we are repeatedly being told that the message has become the messenger. In today’s world, “messengers” increasingly play overlapping and multi-dimensional roles: analysts multi-task as entrepreneurs; artists double as activists; bloggers run non-profits. Can this gilded *kinnari*, complete with reflective insets of colored and clear glass, serve as muse to these developments? Let us begin to situate her historically, culturally, stylistically even, thereby securing a vivid example of a quintessentially Southeast Asian “trans-disciplinary bridge...transcending its spatial-temporal confines” accordingly.

Siamese Travel Story as Spatial Practice

In Siam during the 19th century, and presumably much earlier, *kinnara/kinnari* were considered powerful **vehicles**, capable of bridging worlds. Ritually delegated to encase relics of the Bud-

dha in their breast feathers, the male *kinnara* were known on occasion to strut about on tufted hocks, flexing their muscular wing-bars and digging their gilded spurs into the earth. Increasingly, however, the female *kinnari* seem to predominate, reduced to mere **metaphor**—preening their clipped feathers on the margins of pots and textiles, flitting about in the form of glazed tiles on ornamental rooftops, or perched precariously in prayer, their decidedly female breasts impeccably covered, tail feathers held conveniently high in the air on lampposts along, for example, the main exit boulevard of Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi Airport. In this capacity, they may be said to oversee the comings and goings of modern mass transportation, while perhaps still wielding residues of their former talismanic and evanescent charm, at least enough to claim some responsibility for Thailand’s bustling urban metropolis securing the name “City of Angels.” Michel de Certeau describes vehicles of mass transportation in modern Athens as *metaphorai* (1984: 115). To go to work or come home in the urban sprawl that is Greece, one takes a “metaphor”—a bus, for example. He argues that stories, everyday or literary, serve as a means of mass transportation. As *metaphorai*, “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice” (1984: 115).

In *Emerald Cities: Arts of Siam and Burma (1775-1950)*, Forrest McGill and Pattaratorn Chirapavati unfold just such a Siamese travel story, developing a narrative progression that is chronological, stylistic, and subtly socio-political for, among other things, *kinnara/kinnari*. Rich in textual sources and linguistic subtleties, their research sends students of art on a temporal and spatial journey of discovery. This is in startling contrast to the “quick bus” as *metaphorai* offered by a digital source like Wikipedia. (Etymologically speaking, *wiki* means “quick” in Hawaiian, the “wiki-wiki bus” being the quickest shuttle offered in the Honolulu International Airport.) McGill and Chirapavati unpack the “spatial practice” of *kin-*



FIGURE 1: Thai mythological bird-woman (*kinnari*). 19th century gilded and painted bronze, with inset colored and clear glass. She stands approximately 36 ¾ X 14 ¼ X 19 inches [figure alone] with a detachable wooden base, 8 X 9 X 9 inches. Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. Gift of Simeon Slovacek, MS 1974, Ph.D. 1976, and Camille Slovacek. 2012.050

nara/kinnari from large, wood-carved, predominately male *kinnara* (ca.1775-1850) to more diminutive, feminine, copper alloy *kinnari* (ca.1930-1950)—the latter serving comparatively as the most likely niche, both stylistically and historically, for situating this recent Johnson Museum acquisition (See Fig. 1). In the authors' careful re-localizations of *kinnara/kinnari* from earth to air, wood to metal, ceremonial centrality to relative decorative obscurity, readers might register a decidedly unspoken, gendered message underpinning this functionally and spatially oriented shift in plumage. If "space is a practiced place" (De Certeau, 1984: 117), then this gendered aspect of the narrative, only intimated but never fully traveled in the text, would be well worth exploring further in the classroom.

We are urged instead to question why "starting from around the reign of Rama V [Chulalongkorn, 1851-1910], statues of these mythical beings took on new functions and were placed high up on posts and lampposts along the boulevards of Bangkok" (McGill, Chiraprapati, and Skilling, 2009: 196-197)? An enduring theme throughout Southeast Asia, historically, has been the effect

at a time. We are encouraged to think of place as a physical fact, an arrangement of forms located in space. Narrative descriptions of Siam before 1957, during the period Thai environmentalists call the Jungle-Village era, are described poignantly in books by Kamala Tiyanich (1997; 2003; 2007). What is provided for readers are richly dense forest experiences that oscillate between what De Certeau describes as the alternative of **seeing** (the knowledge of an order of places) and **going** (spatializing actions) (1984: 119). As intrepid meditators-on-the-move and tellers of tales, the Buddhist monks in Tiyanich's texts once inhabited a tropical environment—arguably a mirror image of the legendary Himavanta forest—a terrain teeming with life, and inviting at every turn along the path magical encounters with creatures of all kinds. Experiencing that hothouse jungle atmosphere, composed of its multiple intersections of mobile elements, requires readers to suspend belief. *Kinnara/kinnari* once engaged these currents, providing the possibility of divine intervention. These are "teachings" intended not only for the spiritually adept, but for unsuspecting travelers as well.

and urbanism underwent new kinds of interpretation. The creation of a common national identity and culture forced Theravada Buddhism to become increasingly text-based and to serve as the core national religion and ideology of the state (Kirsch, 1978). The pressure from the state for monks to study textbooks rather than learn the oral tradition from local teachers was itself a consequence of the historical forces at play in the transition to modernity. Boasting a modern administrative and bureaucratic system, Siam was altered into a new nation-state, where an almost primordial and unspoken acceptance of the god-like quality of those who rule "by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation" moved increasingly toward "a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history [were] indistinguishable" (Anderson, 1983: 36). And somewhere in the transition, these winged messengers with their celestial voices primed to transfer syllabic jewel wisdom were effectively silenced, their feathered forms blown off course by the winds of change. Our Siamese "travel story" with its gendered shift from *kinnara* to *kinnari*—ceremonially central to peripherally decorative—must be seen in this modernizing light. And yet, there is still no advance in technology, no modern time-saving device in all its efficiency that can alter the richly gendered rhythms of creative work. As this second "travel story" set in Indonesia will attest, *kinnara/kinnari* are still alive and well in Southeast Asia. You just have to know where to look and when to listen.

...these winged messengers with their celestial voices primed to transfer syllabic jewel wisdom were effectively silenced, their feathered forms blown off course by the winds of change.

of cosmology on built forms, the belief that there exists a magic relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between the human body and the natural world. This has produced awe-inspiring attempts on the part of social groups to achieve harmony by integrating courts, governments, customs, and kingdoms into conformity with the laws of nature. *Kinnara/kinnari*, in their celestially complimentary roles, might be considered as part of the mass transportation involved in maintaining that magic. As winged *metaphorai*, they once provided divine knowledge and power, albeit one syllabic jewel or relic

Then, sometime between the reign of Rama V (Chulalongkorn) and his father and predecessor, Rama IV (Mongkut), a period of reform was initiated in Siam, an avouched turn toward modernity that incrementally over time began to pry people away from these forest sensibilities. With the advent of modern technologies of telephones, trams, and trains, the lure of centralized urban spaces eclipsed the dense forests surrounding more rural settings. European architectural styles and features replaced or came to coincide with Indian and Chinese influences. As a result, Siamese architecture, art,

Reconsidering Celestial Voices and their Traces: Throwing Light on the Problem of Art as "Gift" in Indonesia

Though the Mahabharata clarifies the role of *kinnara/kinnari* as "forever lover and beloved, ever embracing," we are told that they are not in the end capable of creating progeny themselves. The same cannot be said for *kinnari* in their encounters with mortals, however. In Thailand, the most renowned *kinnari* is Princess Manora (derived from Mano-

hara), whose love story with Sudhana, the Crown Prince of North Pancala is taken from a previous life of Buddha, the Pannasa Jataka. This story inspired a dance called “Manorah Buchayam,” hailed as one of the more esoteric in the Thai classical dance repertoire, as well as the “Norah” dance of Southern Thailand. As one of the Divyavadana or “Heavenly Avadanas,” the story appears as well in a detailed series of stone reliefs on the first gallery of the 9th century *candi*, Borobudur, in Central Java (Miksic, 1990: 71-81). When poised as couples at the base of wish-granting trees, *kinnara/kinnari* maintain their half-human, half-bird forms. In the case of Manohara and her celestial sisters on Borobudur, however, they are depicted in human form, their birdlike traces lingering only in their gestural stances, prompting the riddle: “What kind (*kim*) of human being (*nara*)?”

It is generally accepted that the tale of Manora (Manohara) told in Southeast Asia has become conflated with the story of the Cowherd and the Celestial Weaver Girl, popular in China, Korea, and Japan. This conflation of tales, in which Indian and Chinese concepts of sky nymphs cohere, suggests a consummate example of what historian Oliver Wolters refers to as “localization” in Southeast Asia. He describes the process as one in which materials—be they words, sounds of words, books, or artifacts—tend to be “fractured” and “restated” to “fit into various local complexes of religious, social, and political systems and belong to new cultural ‘wholes’” (1999: 55-57). One resounding aspect of these celestial voices and their divine traces as jewel utterances (“be they words [or] sounds of words”) is that they are unequivocally female. Both tales in fact involve a spiraling descent of seven, sometimes nine, heavenly nymphs who sing enchanting melodies, while bathing naked in a secluded pool. Their celestial voices lure a young, unmarried mortal man to discover their whereabouts, usually while herding his cow. Love-struck, he steals a magical garment from the prettiest

bird maiden. As a result, she is unable to fly back to her celestial abode with her sisters and is obliged to marry the man. In time, they produce semi-divine offspring, who in some versions of the tale assist their mother in discovering the hidden location of her magical textile. Once the cloth is found, the mother reassumes her feathered form and flies back to her abode in the heavens, leaving her husband and her children behind. A favorite theme for artists in Bali, Indonesia (Bagus, 1976; Geertz, 1994; McGowan, 2010), this is also a motif found in folk-tales from around the world. As winged protagonists in a richly comparative and composite travel story, “*kinnari/weaver girl*” presents a uniquely gendered point of entry for rethinking Southeast Asian Studies within a global framework.

“...sometimes when I look up at *Lintang Kartika*, I hear voices singing and the rustling sound of wings. Then I know that one day very soon I will find a *manik sekucap* (a jewel utterance).”

One evening in 1981, while casting off docking lines and rowing out into the middle of the crater-lake—home to the goddess, Dewi Danu—at the base of Mount Batur in Northern Bali, I was urged to look up at the night sky. Ni Ketut Reneng, the late *legong* classical dancer, and a local resident named Guru Badung accompanied me, and soon our conversation shifted to constellations. “Do you see those bright, white stars over there?” asked Guru Badung, pointing off to one side of a row of distinct stars that I immediately recognized as the belt of Orion. “Yes I see them,” I said. “But can you hear them?” he rejoined. Referring to them as *Gugus Lintang Kartika*, he offered that they were the stars by which to navigate boats at sea (*sebagai panduan navigasi*) and the stars by which to plant and harvest crops (*sebagai petunjuk menanam dan panen*). He was pointing to what is known in the West as the Pleiades (or more colloquially as “The Seven Sisters”), the most famous galactic star cluster in the heavens, first appearing in Chinese annals as early

as 2357 BC. In Greek mythology, the Pleiades were seven sisters of Hyades pursued by Orion. Zeus rescued them by turning them into a flock of celestial doves. I followed up by asking, “What do you mean by ‘hear them?’” “Well,” he said, “sometimes when I look up at *Lintang Kartika*, I hear voices singing and the rustling sound of wings. Then I know that one day very soon I will find a *manik sekucap* (a jewel utterance). I do not know where or when, but, if I am patient, it will appear.” From the profusion of bejeweled rings on each of his fingers, save his thumbs, I had no doubt that he was right, but I hesitated to include this particular admission in my dissertation, entitled: *Jewels in a Cup: The Role of Containers in Balinese Landscape and Art* (1996). Guru Badung had been one of my key informants, but

I had drawn the line with this confession, in part because it strained academic credulity, or so I thought. Lewis Hyde has remarked that “spatial proximity becomes social life through an exchange of gifts” (1983: 57); here, a cluster of stars and the sound of celestial voices, combined with a mysterious rustle of wings, created the auspicious conditions for finding a jewel utterance of great power. This site of connectivity of sky and earth, stars and stones, in an actively volcanic caldera sent me as a graduate student on a journey to discover more about these “jewel utterances” in Balinese art and architecture. A seminar called “Problems in Asian Art” taught by Professor Stanley J. O’Connor provided the inspiration. From a tantalizing essay by O’Connor, I learned that in the ancient kingdoms of Southeast Asia it was customary practice for one or more sacral deposits to be placed in the foundations of religious structures, and sometimes under the crown of the pedestal as well (1966: 53-60). Observed to be fundamentally similar to those

used in both Brahmanic and Buddhist systems of thought, some form of these deposit boxes are still being ritually activated by Balinese priests today.

While O'Connor's data focused primarily on foundational deposits (*panca datu*), my own pre-dissertation research (conducted on a Fulbright Hays in 1990-91) entailed a closer examination of the direct connection between these deposit boxes, used to enliven ancestral shrines, and rituals of life process involving "jewels in a cup" (*manik cupu*). Later, I came to focus on the **problem** of the more visible, earthbound signs of these gift exchanges in the form of ritual deposit boxes as "message," but what I had not considered exploring was the more elusive, sky-borne **riddle** inherent in the celestial voices of winged *kinnari* as "messengers." During fieldwork, a "trans-disciplinary bridge" composed of singing bird women had materialized, virtually exploding all spatial-temporal boundaries—where any number of disciplines could converse from astronomy to art history, maritime to textile history, anthropology to ethnomusicology, theater to dance, literature to linguistics, geology to ornithology, psychology to gender studies, and so on. In retrospect, I ask myself, why was I so reticent at the time to make room for riddles, and to risk self and space to engage with these celestial connections?

What I did not realize is that the dissociation from the culturally symbolic and emotionally embodied experience of celestial phenomena has a long history in the university going back to the origins of Plato's academy. Indeed, it was Plato, according to E.V. Walter, who "invented the 'problem,' and the emergence of a mathematical way of 'saving' appearances in the sky" (1988: 176). Knowing the stars through geometry offered what Plato's academy viewed as "eternal truths not subject to the uncertainties of sensory experience" (1988: 182). Posing Asian art history as "problems" has the automatic effect of setting hard and fast boundaries of what is relevant and what is not. I am not advocating doing away with problem-solving

altogether. It certainly has a hallowed place in the academy and beyond, but "making room for riddles," as encouraged by Walter, allows us as teachers and students the opportunity to better explore "the rhythmical phenomena of body, earth, and sky" (1988: 177). In fact, reconsidering celestial voices and their traces in Southeast Asia affords me now (through the tactile agency of objects) the opportunity in the classroom to broach the richly gendered nuances of "Voice," but this was not always so.

"A gender-oriented study," according to Oliver Wolters, "should do more than put women into history. It should also throw light on the history—male as well as female—into which women are put (1999: 229)." As a relatively new assistant professor at Cornell University in 1998, I remember the distinct honor of being invited to lunch one day at Banfi's by the esteemed scholar himself. Wolters explained that the reason for the lunch date was to discuss his most recent revisions to his first 1982 edition of *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. If I had any suggestions that would further illuminate his work, he offered that he might "put me in the text, or at the very least a footnote." Specifically, he wanted me to comment on one of his new appendices, entitled "A Sample of Gender Relations," where he compared and contrasted historically situated Javanese and Vietnamese women of prowess, who served as both household managers and promoters of their husbands' public status, or in Wolter's words, "engage[d] in crisis control (1999: 229)." I commended him for the inclusion but, when pressed, admitted with some trepidation that I wondered why, when there were ample moments in his text where further development of the feminine angle would have shed significant light, for instance, on "local literatures," he had relegated this discussion to an appendix. When asked for a specific example, I raised the richly gendered subject of *Vac* ("Voice").

In his book, Wolters describes how a king's "royal voice is sometimes meta-

phorized as the goddess Saraswati, another name for *Vac* (*Vagiswari*). As a very specific angle of approach to a subject, Saraswati is said to have "'resided in' a king's mouth. She is Brahma's consort and honoured in India and South-east Asia as the goddess of eloquence, writing, and music..." (1999: 82). Seated in a lotus pool on or beside a white bird (often but not always a swan), Saraswati is frequently shown playing sensuously on a stringed instrument. Wolters only alludes to her continued popularity, not in Java, but in Bali. He shifts then to Angkorian Cambodia, promising that there too, like Bali, "more respect seems to have been paid to Saraswati than to her consort" (1999: 82). But from there his argument begins to lead readers away from *Vac* ("Voice") or Saraswati as a feminine force. Wolters describes how *Vac*'s water (*amrita*) was regarded as signifying the essence of the germ of life, or ambrosia, which supported life in the newly created world. Still further, he maintains in Cambodia that "Yasovarman's glory was to be compared with a lotus stalk, attributing to him the life-sustaining energy released when the creator married *Vac*" (1999: 81). Turning then to Indian mythology for clues to the presence of celestial voices in Southeast Asia, Wolters proceeds to shift his attention to identifying the male creator god who had descended to earth. Was it Siva? Was it Brahma? When all the while, this Khmer king, Yasovarman, is described as rivaling these gods, implying that he becomes the god himself through his direct "marriage" with the goddess. Somewhere in the academic writing process the celestial voice of the goddess gets lost.

Turning the Museum into a Classroom

In Vedic thought, *Vac* is the Hindu goddess of speech, usually associated with the creator god, Prajapati. She is described in the Rig Veda as not only speech itself, but also as truth and perception, the force that allows us to turn divine knowledge into words. Said to be the Mother of the Vedas, her voice

alone inspired sages and kings to write and to speak. As I remarked in my introduction, the meaning of knowledge and power, and the overarching purpose of education are perceived as related. If so, then like a celestial singer's voice, a writer's voice (sage's, king's or Cornell student's) is an elusive thing. What essentially is a writer's voice? A distinctive vocabulary, syntax, or sentence structure can certainly affect a student's style of expression. More importantly, voice can emerge from even more subtle dimensions of experience, for example, a particular angle of approach to a subject or from the raw materials themselves. A cryptic canopy from Negara in West Bali, Indonesia, affords me now, by way of conclusion, an opportunity to begin to reclaim the traces of richly gendered celestial voices in the classroom (See Fig. 2). This colorful embroidered cloth is a recent Johnson Museum acquisition from collector and author, Joseph Fischer. I choose to quote Fischer's description of this ceiling cloth (*leluhur*) in full in the caption that accompanies the image (see inside front cover) with the intention of building on (and spatially departing from) his original assessment. Harnessing this canopy's compositional complexities to a "travel story—a spatial practice" not only connects students with Southeast Asian, specifically Hindu Balinese sensibilities, but it encourages them in the process to linger over the threads of this ceiling cloth with its richly embroidered and reflective surfaces, while engaging with a series of assignments that would both build incrementally toward art historical knowledge, while allowing students to experiment in the process of self-fashioning required to develop a writer's voice.

A careful reading of Fischer's caption reveals a iconographical description of the embroidered *leluhur*, unusual because of its figural representations. In its museum context, this story cloth is part of a larger collection of textiles. As such, it has slowly disengaged itself from the original itineraries that were the condition of its possibility, both in the

act of its making and then when hung performatively on ceremonial occasions under the roofs of ritual structures, possibly in a Hindu Balinese house temple. Preliminary assignments in the classroom would encourage students to first connect the detailed inventory of motifs on Fischer's label with the actual design and deployment of the embroidered images on the cloth, and then to experiment with enlivening their descriptions through setting the cloth appropriately in motion, both ritually and cosmologically. In this context, where shrines are often circumambulated, a *leluhur* must be read "in the round."

sometimes even provided with clothes, but the emphasis here is on art as "gift." The four praying sages on the cloth are also bearing gifts, each clasping a flower between the fingers of their right hands. Only one holds a *bajra* (bell) in his left hand. The four animals accompanying the men do not fit any of the prescribed iconographical examples known in Bali. Fischer determines that the animals, for example: dragonfly, pig(?), heron, and the overlooked butterfly are "apparently just decorations" (2004: 9). Between that and the alleged lack of clarity of the textual elements replacing two sides of the red, satin stitched, bor-



FIGURE 2: Detail, featured on inside front cover.

A gendered reading will reveal that the original sketch in pencil may have been executed by a man, while the colors and the choices of stitchery would have fallen into the hands of a woman from Negara, probably sometime in the late 1950s to early 1960s. She may have been paid for the original commission, but more likely was engaged in a Balinese form of ritual labor called *ngayah*. This is a culturally established idea in Balinese religion, where artists are sought out for their talents to contribute their labor, often as a "gift" to the family temple or to the larger village community. *Makarya* (literally "work") is another name for this ritual labor that is done willingly for the gods without any immediate need for remuneration. Artists might be fed and

ders, this ceiling cloth is deemed both playfully decorative, and iconographically ambiguous. As such, the celestial voices and their feathered traces, potentially rich in subtle gendered nuances, are effectively silenced.

Reconsidering celestial voices and their traces in this canopy requires students to linger over the threads, to look repeatedly and to listen attentively. On the surface, they will recognize the lotus stalks, and the four ascetic men in godlike stances. They will undoubtedly ask where is the goddess of voice (Vac or Saraswati) as *amrita*, the sacred ambrosia interacting with the lotuses as described by Wolters? Perhaps the pools of jewel wisdom are referenced in the fringed mirrors? Perhaps they register in the subtle rhythmic border-play

between text and red diamond pattern, where letters and jewels as remote analogies flit in and out of legibility? Can they be seen successfully in this celestial canopy as sky? Can their rustling feathers be heard? The answer lies in a subtle linguistic riddle that stays close to grounded experience: *Ukir Kawii...Tampaking Kuntul Nelujang*. As transliterations from Balinese, the precise significance of these words is unclear, according to Fischer, who translates the cryptic message accordingly: *Ukir* (carved or engraved), *kawii* (ancient form of Javanese), *nela jang* (fisher), and *tampaking kuntul* (a heron who catches fish).

Ukir Kawii, as an engraved or carved letter, may stem from the tradition of incising palm-leaf manuscripts with a sharp implement. A literary language, *Kawii* is based on Sanskrit that evolved in South India and was transmitted to Java. Many sacred Balinese palm-leaf manuscripts are written (or carved) in *Kawii*, which is largely unintelligible to the average person and must be interpreted like this riddle. Heroes and heroines of the epic poems speak in *Kawii*; presumably the wise ascetic men depicted on the cloth speak in *Kawii* as well, or they are meditating with the hope of receiving divine intervention through lower case *kawii*, which means “creative force,” or “to write or compose prose or poetry.” The subtle play of

uppercase and lowercase “*kawii*” comes into renewed focus when the act of carving (*ukir*) these inspired jewel letters is brought close to earth through association with the white heron’s *kinnari*-like movements.

The riddle connecting sky and earth is in fact a play on the word “*tampaking*,” which implies a subtle double meaning and an elusive bridge connecting lines one and two. The second line when translated by Fischer, reads roughly “a heron catches fish.” But Fischer does not translate the multiple meanings of *tampaking*, which can include both “looks like” and “making footprints” as in “*Kawii* script looks like the tracks of a heron fishing.” An analogy is being made between the act of writing (*Kawii*) and a heron (*Kuntul*) whose three-pronged feet engage the coastal border of the cloth. In this richly localized statement, Indian and Chinese concepts surrounding the language and augury of birds can be seen to “fracture” only to be “restated” in a distinctly Balinese context. The tracks left in the mud by the white heron can signal a local adaptation of Saraswati’s swan, while simultaneously triggering a reference to the popular Chinese story of Cang Jie (a legendary figure in Ancient China, 2650 BC), who is credited with inventing writing after observing the tracks of birds. The bird on the canopy sets out from the direction of

the ringing bell (*bajra*). *Bajra* comes from *vajra*, (Sanskrit for club or mace) as witnessed in the three-pronged handle of the ringing bell (visually resonant with the heron’s tracks), used by Balinese priests during ceremonies, often as a way to punctuate the rhythmic order of prayer. It is the god, Iswara, to the East who holds the *bajra*. All ritual circumambulations begin from the northeastern corner. Perhaps the meaning of the text is set in motion by the sounding of the bell? Could the white heron, setting forth from the east, rhythmically enlivened by the *bajra*, be setting in motion a “travel story—as spatial practice” of her own? Balancing as if on a wire around the contoured border of the story cloth and leaving traces of the syllabic jewel wisdom with her wet tracks in the mud, the heron argues for the staying power of *kinnari*, both in Southeast Asia and in the classroom, one travel story at a time... By means of these encounters with *kinnara/kinnari*, students “may begin to question their own cultural assumptions and thereby fulfill what has been proposed as the goal of a liberal education: ‘risking the self so that it may be broadened and deepened, so that it will be rooted fully in its time and place in a way that is effective, responsible, and imaginatively rich’” (Wolters [based on O’Connor, 1992: 156], 1999: 224). ✿

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José Rizal's writings can be found in Kroch Library.

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Letters, Secrecy, and the Information Age: The Trajectory of Historiography in Southeast Asia

Cornell's Southeast Asia Program's lectures in memory of Frank Golay have always been intended to reach over the walls between disciplines, area studies, and the larger campus community. Needless to say, this is a difficult task. But I decided to speak to you about the Life and Death of different Archives, in honor of Cornell's most important institution—its Libraries and those who make it so.

The Specter of a State Without Archives

The great Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah's 1970s trilogy, titled *Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship*, is a portrait of his country's experience during the first decade of General Siad Barre's ruthless autocracy, begun with a coup in 1969 and ending in civil war in 1991 and the rapid decomposition of the state. The reader learns that the regime puts nothing on paper, and all orders, threats, decisions, and dreams are conveyed by unidentified whispering voices on untraceable telephones. Written communications from the citizenry are never answered. This Somali state has no archives. Under this oral dictatorship, "information" consists of rumors, mostly initiated by the creatures of autocrat, as well as enigmatic aural and optic propaganda. Middle class opponents of the regime are scared enough to destroy their personal or family archives. If they are interrogated in safe houses, neither questions nor answers are recorded. There are no meaningful courts. It seems as if the novelist-in-exile self-consciously situated himself as both the archivist without archives, as well as as Walter Benjamin's fabled storyteller.

Professor Benedict Anderson delivered the 9th Frank H. Golay Lecture on October 25, 2012 at Cornell University. A full recording of the lecture, including an introduction by outgoing SEAP Director Tamara Loos, can be found at CornellCast: <http://www.cornell.edu/video/?videoID=2434>.

The foreign reader will find the allegorical novel's mix of magical and social realism riveting, but she or he needs to be reminded that the Somalis never had monarchies of their own, and fell into the clutches of Italian and British imperialism in the later 19th century until just after WW II, when defeated Italy lost its empire, and the United Kingdom, working under a UN mandate, ruled all of Somalia till 1960. The independent new nation-state was extremely poor and the literacy rate was very low. There was no standard Somali orthography till the early 1970s, soon after Barre's coup. The autocrat in fact created hundreds of new primary and secondary schools to enforce national literacy. This program obviously had its beneficial aspects, but as in many other post-WW II new states, it had a long-run, hidden agenda. This can be described as linguistic sequestering of colonial archives to make them illegible: easy for Italian, much harder for English in the time of Anglo-American global linguistic hegemony. But in his novels Farah always uses the Italian name of the capital, Mogadicio, rather than Mogadishu.

The Death by Linguistic Sequestration

Let me turn to two contrasting cases in Southeast Asia. Spain ruled most of today's Philippines for about 350 years, during which vast Spanish archives accumulated both in the colony and in the metropole. Unlike in Spanish America, which was heavily Hispanicized, in the Philippines only a tiny percentage of the population ever learned to speak and read the Master's language, and only when Spain's authority was in final steep decline. The Protestant American conquerors of the archipelago at the beginning of the 20th century, contemptuous of "feudal" Catholic Spaniards, worked hard to install a state-controlled secular educational system down to the village level, with the aim of making "democratic" American English the language of state as well as the colony's lingua franca. More and more, Spanish was consciously marginalized. However, since many members of the native upper class (including most politicians) were Spanish mestizos, there was still residual serious teaching of the Spanish language (after World War II, this was partly subsidized from Madrid by the Generalissimo Francisco Franco). With Franco's death in

1976, the program more or less collapsed, so that today there are only a very few Filipinos who are capable of accessing the vast Hispanic archive. The post-independence decision to make Tagalog the national language has not been easy, and has been unsuccessful in replacing American English. The irony is that if the Americans had recognized the short-lived

Republic of the Philippines in 1898, the chances are great that the Spanish-speaking political elite would have decided to use Filipino Spanish as the language of the state and even schooling. Then the strangulation of this beautiful language would not have happened.

In the case of Indonesia, sequestering occurred for different reasons. As you may know, large parts of today's Indonesia were ruled for almost all of the 17th and 18th century by the United East Indies Company, which was by far the largest and richest corporation in the world until London's East India

Company came on the scene. The company had neither the interest nor the financial capacity to set up any serious kind of Dutch-language education. Dutch was primarily used for the company's confidential reports to the Board of Directors in Holland and for internal communication. The company was lucky enough to discover that various forms of the Malay language had long been used as a spoken and written lingua franca both on the Malay Peninsula and along the many trading ports throughout the vast archipelago. This was a godsend, since "market Malay" was easy to learn and readable by merchants and various local monarchies. Roman lettering gradually marginalized the Arabic orthography and its various local, ethnic competitors. In 1815, after the fall of Napoleon, London imposed a monarchy in Holland, which had been a Republic ever since it had freed itself from Spanish rule two centuries earlier. Control of "Indonesia" was for half a century a secretive royal monopoly. The Dutch were aware that their country was small, and its language had no European cachet. So it was only in the early 20th century, and only for 40 years before the Japanese conquered the colony, that Dutch language schools were hesitatingly created and only on a very small scale. The heritage of the United East Indies Company remained strong, and with the rise of print-capitalism, market Malay was indispensable; already at the end of the 1920s, Indonesian nationalists agreed that this lan-



Ben Anderson eats gudeg rice, street food in Semarang, Indonesia in 2010.

guage would be the national language with the advantage of not being the first language of any of the larger ethnic groups. When Indonesia won its independence after a bitter war from 1945 to 1949, Dutch simply disappeared, except as the private language of elites educated in the colonial period. Subsequent efforts in the 70s and 80s to train young Indonesia academics to access the huge colonial archives were not very successful. Bahasa Indonesia, a standardized form of market Malay, became the national language without any opposition.

The cases are by no means peculiar. When armed resistance to colonial regimes is successful, it is possible and likely that the archive is sequestered by a basic change in the language of state and of the citizenry. At the same time, the defeated metropolises have no reason not to open the archives at least after a decent interval. It is only then that the secret files on imperial massacres, tortures, and corruption can come to light. The complete defeat of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy had the same effect of liberating the devastating documents in open archives. The fall of the USSR also, for a while, opened archives of great value. Provided one could read Russian.

Leakage

I don't mean Wikileaks! In 1962, when I first came to miserably poor Indonesia, which was heading fast for hyperinflation, I discovered that in Jakarta's flea-markets one could find and perhaps buy very cheaply not only a huge number of Dutch language books and magazines from the colonial era, but also old books, texts and journals in regional languages including Chinese, publications of the Japanese Occupation regime and fragile copies of journals and books from the time of the Revolution. Private libraries, built by educated grandparents or parents, were being sold by descendants, who could not read them, or who were sinking into poverty. But no letters. The most startling things on sale were neatly bundled 5- or 10- kilogram packages containing post-independence state documents. The vendors regarded these packets simply as paper to be used for lighting stoves, anti-mold insulation in homes, packaging, etc., rather than as sources for historical study. They would freely comment that civil servants, whose meager salaries lost value day by day, tried to make a little money by stealing and then flea-selling documents in their reach. It was also said that many ministries did not have the money to house their records, nor the trained and committed archivists necessary to safeguard and catalogue them. When today I look back on my Ph.D. thesis on the latter half of the Japanese Occupation and the early years of the Republic, I realize that my written sources came either from flea markets in Jakarta or from the archives in the Netherlands, including interrogations of Japanese officers for war crimes. (The Occupation regime burned most of its files just in time.) The rest came from interviews with retired politicians and veterans of the Revolution. None from the Indonesian state. In those days, my fellow students and I were gently instructed

by John Echols, the self-sacrificing founder of Kroch Library's magnificent Echols Collection on Southeast Asia, to seek and buy for Cornell as many disappearing and valuable documents, books and journals as we could manage.

Autocracy and Paranoia

The rise of autocratic regimes, military or communist, during the height of the Cold War in Asia made for much more state secrecy than hitherto. But there were other conditions that played an important part in increasing inaccessibility of research materials. The most important was deep distrust of any national archive among politicians, intellectuals, military officers, senior bureaucrats, and so on. Handed over to the state, private letters, memoranda and diaries, if not lost, destroyed, or quietly sold off in flea markets, could be used to damage their political and moral reputations. Typically such documents, if they survive, are kept in the family, but the level of care usually declines—children and grandchildren move to new premises, quarrel over legacies, and have no real interest in the documents except as unread testimonies for the depth and honor of the lineage. My experience of research is that interviews are quite easy to get, and are best when the subject rejects tape recording, but family "treasures," if they still exist, are very difficult to access. Oral memory is fascinating but generally unreliable. You might call this the Farah effect. Distrust of universities and their libraries is a function of their politicization, even if nominally private, as well as lack of financial, technological and professional capacities to collect, safeguard, and organize the documents—to say nothing of reliability over promised time releases.

Of course, there are admirable exceptions. The long-lived literary critic H.B. Jassin, who knew well almost every Indonesian writer of his generation, and regularly corresponded with them, created an extraordinary archive on modern Indonesian literature, and opened it to any writer or researcher. The uniqueness of the archive is that it is full of personal letters. Jassin was probably lucky that the political elite, especially the generals, were philistines with no interest in literature. Meticulously catalogued, and funded over decades by Jassin himself and his friends, the archive is still there, but it is stagnant.

One outcome of these conditions is the heavy imbalance between biographies and autobiographies. Serious biographies are quite rare, and most are done by foreign scholars or journalists, who depend on foreign or domestic newspapers and magazines, fragmented state archives in the ex-colonies and in the West, and as many interviews as possible. The risks are always there if the object of the biography is still in power. After years of careful research, the American journalist Paul Handley wrote a thoughtful biography of the King of Thailand, titled *The King Never Smiles*. The Thai King had the nerve to try intimidating Yale University Press into stopping any publication. He failed, but in Thailand itself, this calm text is still banned, like its author.

Local biographers run greater risks. Yet one can find substantial volumes composed by the sons or daughters from well-known families, anxious to defend the honor of their deceased fathers. Naturally, they tend toward hagiography, but the works are still important because they use the family archive of letters and diaries.

The great exception for Southeast Asia is the case of the Philippines' martyred hero, José Rizal, executed by the Spanish colonial state at the age of 35. There are endless good and bad biographies of this great novelist, social critic, and leader of late 19th century Filipino nationalism. The crucial factor is certainly the 20 or so thick volumes of his letters to friends and enemies, family members, foreign scholars, political colleagues, as well some arresting short-term diaries. If one asks how this miracle came about, there are two good reasons. One is that Spanish rule collapsed after his death, and Americans took over the country two years later. The new colonialists were happy to help what became a cult of the great man. Filipino intellectuals and politicians in the calm of the late American colonial era created a Historical Commission that worked hard to locate Rizal's letters in private hands, obtained the cooperation of Rizal's family, and started publication. Ironically, if the infant republic of 1897-1898 had not been destroyed by Washington, internal political strife would not so easily have carried out this monumental project. The second reason this exception came about is that this enormously gifted letter writer was recently dead. If he had lived to be 80 (in the turmoil of WW II), one can't be sure what would have happened to his archive.

Autobiographies abound in the Philippines and in Indonesia, mostly in the form of "memoirs" by retired generals and politicians. Almost always vanity publications, often without footnotes, full of lies, ugly prose and strategic silences, they nonetheless can be very readable and give the scholar a pretty good idea about the authors' obsessions, enmities, social skills, political aspirations, even the typical attraction to mythography. Curious as it may seem, the late colonial era produced a number of really interesting childhood and adolescence autobiographies. The most remarkable is the long memoir (finished in 1931) of a young man called Sutjipto about whom almost nothing is known. A series of ghastly domestic experiences is chillingly described, as well as the misery of total poverty as he roamed eastern Java after running away from his brutal stepfather when he was only 15. The most astounding feature of the first part of the memoir is the powerful and tender account of his first love affair (at age 13) with a slightly older boy. The typescript, written when he was in his late 20s, somehow came into the hands of the colonial state's archives, and still survives there. During the Suharto period, a well-meaning Chinese man discovered it, and published a very bad and heavily cut first edition, which was promptly banned by the regime for obscenity. It has yet to be republished and honestly edited. This kind of typescript would never have entered the archives once

the Japanese military occupied the country, the Revolution broke out, and so on. Sutjipto's sad, funny, honest, and angry memoir is the exact opposite of almost all autobiographies in Indonesia today.

The Twilight of Letters

It must have about 1990, when my mother died, that I stopped getting letters. She had faithfully written to me every ten or so days since I left for America in 1958. I took them for granted and almost always answered in the same time frame, while every letter between us had to have delicious stamps for which we had to pay. Walter Benjamin famously said that one feels the beauty of things at the moment they are vanishing. After she died, I looked again at all her letters and was astounded to see that in her ink-pen writing she never crossed anything out. She had time to reflect on what she wanted to convey to me. Later I saw the same thing in my father's diaries and grandfather's letters—elegant personal style and no deletes. Some of my letters to my mother were hand-written, if I was doing fieldwork, but most were typed, and massively crossed out for typos, lousy grammar, and missing words. The machine encouraged me to go fast, but at least the clumsy traces of this speed were very visible. There was always an innocent kind of signaling between us. If there were tuna sandwich traces on a letter of mine, she would know I was hard at work. In turn, I would know from the angle of her writing whether she was happy or annoyed. We wrote to each other, not to anyone else. She only kept some of my letters which she thought important, whereas I kept a steady archive of hers maybe instinctively foreseeing the future. Sending any letter simultaneously to a couple of hundred people, known or unknown, was not remotely imagined. If I wanted to destroy them, they would be gone forever. This is why reading real letters in archives necessarily has something perverse about it—snooping, peeping Tom—with no risk of being snooped upon, at least till we are dead.

People who bought the early computers regarded them mainly as superfast electric typewriters, which allowed one to correct letters, get rid of indiscretions, and edit all kinds of written documents. Of course, unconscious errors and follies did not disappear. Still, one printed out the final draft of a letter, paid for the stamps, and sent it off in an airmail envelope letter as a first-hand document. Then came, very fast, the era of the internet. I remember giving a talk in those days at the University of Indiana. Foolishly, I included some Luddite comments about computers and the World-Wide Web. At the end of the lecture a furious young woman in the audience stood up and shouted that I was an arrogant ignoramus. The best sex I ever had, she yelled, occurred in cyberspace as her lover lived in South Africa. I was stunned and could not think of anything to say. To my further astonishment, the youngsters in the audience cheered her on in a completely supportive way. I could easily imagine writing erotic cyberletters,

but having sex? I thought only about Catholic churches that silently make available to their congregations cheap red wine internally transfigured into the blood of Jesus.

It is interesting to consider the contrast between the letter and the email/internet message or communication. If one opens one's laptop, one notes at least five characteristics of the latter, which have no equivalent in the former. The first must be the sheer volume of messages—in my experience at least ten times more per day than what existed 25 years ago. At the same time, these messages implicitly demand an immediate reply. Second are the inescapable visible command sign (behind which lies the invisible command: Decide!): Delete. Empty Trash. Forward. Attach. Save. Print. There is no sign saying Reflect! or Delay! Third are deep changes in writing style. Only rarely are phone calls thought out or reflected upon, let alone made stylish. Their charms, even when two interlocutors are furious with each other, lie in spontaneity, off-the-cuff chatter, malicious gossip, digressions, personalized grammar, and so on. One can see that messages on the internet are much closer to phone calls than to the fading letter. The need for speed and saved time means that typically the messages are quite short, colloquial, clumsy, coy, coarse, ungrammatical, with plenty of typos (who cares anyway?) and used a limited vocabulary. This transformation is exceptionally visible if one compares today's New York Times' crossword puzzles and those published ten years ago that still tried to improve the reader's English vocabulary. These days, I calculate that on an average 30% of solutions can't be found in a good dictionary: affixes, suffixes, abbreviations, acronyms, American corporate logos, names of American

athletes past and present, as well as those of forgotten TV personalities. The easiest way to solve the puzzles is by clicking on to Google. Fourth is the technique of almost instant multiplication of any number of receivers. Finally, there is the question of longevity. Our great libraries have in their Rare Book sections letters dating back for half a millennium at least, but the life span of today's "messages" is pretty short. Print-outs decay quite rapidly, and incessant technological change makes the readable life of message-filled discs quite brief for most of us, who have neither the time, the skill, nor the money for resurrection work. The most melancholy of the computer's commands is Save, which really means "Temporary Reprieve."

Finally, a word on research engines. Recently I read an interesting article by a well-known historian on the sway of Google and the reach of digitization. The author pointed out that the digitization of an archive can only be done when the site of its documents is known and its contents already catalogued. Interestingly enough, he concluded that preserved private letters are, over all, the most immune to digitization and Googlization precisely because they are widely scattered in unexpected places and difficult languages. Under these conditions, the research engine has to give way to the slow, dogged, tactful detective work, by diligent, often polyglot individuals. Finding and accessing unknown files is one of the greatest pleasures of scholarship, not least because they never come "free" if they come at all. One might even go so far to say that these unknown collections are more secret than the secrets of states, to say nothing of the Vatican. ✱



THE INTRICACIES OF FIGURING ONE ANOTHER OUT:

Reflections on Doing Fieldwork as a “Local Foreigner” in Vietnam



Edmund Oh
Ph.D. candidate
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sociology

Edmund Oh is a Ph.D. candidate, development sociology currently writing his dissertation on the emergence of a novel mode of fisheries governance in Vietnam called co-management. His research examines the social and political implications of co-management across different scales in the context of a nation striving to retain its socialist ideals as it becomes increasingly integrated into the global market economy. Before embarking on his Ph.D., Oh worked as a researcher at The WorldFish Center, an international research center that seeks to reduce poverty through improving fisheries and aquaculture. He worked with partners in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, seeking ways to improve livelihoods among the rural poor through better governance of wetland resources. Oh’s research interests, though varied, are driven by a curiosity to understand how human societies can co-exist with nature in a more sustainable and equitable way. This article draws on the 14 months he spent doing dissertation fieldwork in Vietnam between 2007 and 2010.

Right: A woman spreads newly-harvested unhusked rice out to dry in a village in the coastal province of Soc Trang. At this site, a participatory co-management project was in place to resolve water-use conflicts between farmers practicing mixed rice-shrimp cultivation.

Below: The central square in Châu Đốc, a city in An Giang province on the banks of the Hậu or Bassac River (one of two distributaries of the Mekong), close to the border crossing between Vietnam and Cambodia, upriver from the village of Vàm Nao.



All photos by author



Footballing Allegiances in a Southeast Asian Context

It was approaching sundown in the village of Vàm Nao in An Giang province, Vietnam, not far from the border with Cambodia. Situated along the four-mile river that connects the Tiên Giang and the Hậu Giang—the two branches of the Mekong River, Vàm Nao was the site of a new fisheries co-management project that I was studying as part of my dissertation fieldwork. After a full day of household interviews that culminated in a lengthy community meeting, I was exhausted but brimming with insights that I was desperate to write up in my field notes. Yet, as I soon

was to discover, the evening was only just beginning.

As soon as the meeting was adjourned, the men began rearranging the chairs, filling a small adjoining room in the makeshift community center. They proceeded to gather around a small television set and beckoned to me and the rest of the research team to join them. Only then did it dawn on me, and I really should have known: the final, gold medal men's football (soccer) match of the 2009 SEA Games was about to begin.¹ Vietnam was playing against Malaysia for one of Southeast Asia's most coveted sports prizes.

For two weeks I had witnessed how life in Ho Chi Minh City (where I was based) would come to a virtual, if momentary, standstill whenever Vietnam was playing a match. Men and women, young and old, would cram into every café or restaurant with a TV, and the otherwise monotonous drone of the traffic would be punctuated with exuberant cries of either agony or elation, depending on which side scored a goal or missed a chance to do so.

To the collective national delight, Vietnam had made it to the final. Not only did they win all their matches en route except one, which they drew, but they also soundly defeated Singapore



Above: A woman on her motorcycle aboard one of the many river ferries in the Mekong Delta. For a region crisscrossed by innumerable rivers and canals, and which has some of the poorest road infrastructure in the country, ferry crossings are a reality of daily life for the 17 million inhabitants of the delta.

Right: A young man shucks a bag full of freshwater snails to prepare the evening meal. These, together with sacks full of water snakes and other aquatic animals were purchased from traders near the Cambodian border and brought back to the household where I was conducting interviews.



4-1 in the semifinals. Justifiably confident, the national football team now stood at the cusp of winning gold at the SEA Games for the first time. All they had to do was to win this match against Malaysia, a team they had already defeated earlier at the group stage.

Having seen up close the fervor and passion of the Vietnamese people for what might be regarded as the *de facto* national religion—be it in metropolitan Ho Chi Minh City or in this isolated riverine hamlet deep in the Mekong Delta—part of me really wanted Vietnam to win tonight. The collective joy, should Vietnam emerge triumphant, would be close to indescribable, not least to the men, women, and children of this village whose unbridled excitement and hopes for their country to win were plain to see. Even the otherwise staid researchers from Ho Chi Minh City whom I was accompanying on this research trip were now enthusiastically cheering on their team and their country. Victory for Vietnam would certainly enliven our long ride back to the city the next day.

From my perspective, a win for Vietnam might also provide a window for me to observe and hopefully begin to understand the extent to which nationalism has shaped and is shaping the psyche of the contemporary generation

of Vietnamese, a topic that would significantly inform my research. Personally, however, I had only two problems with Vietnam winning: first, I was in fact just as patriotic and football-crazy as most of the Vietnamese I had met; and second, I happen to be Malaysian.

This was but one of several instances during my fieldwork where I had to confront a rather unique methodological dilemma—that of being a Southeast Asian researcher conducting fieldwork in a Southeast Asian country other than my own. How big a deal could that possibly be, I hear you ask—which is precisely what I initially thought. After all, it is not at all uncommon for social science researchers to eschew the familiar and instead seek out strange and people, cultures, and societies in foreign lands to study and hopefully understand. Besides, Vietnam certainly has had its fair share of foreign researchers. How different was I from the many other foreign graduate students researching different aspects of Vietnamese society in Vietnam? And even if I was, so what? How significant would that be to my ability to participate in meaningful conversations, interviews, and observations?

In this essay I reflect upon some of the ways I was challenged during my fieldwork to come to terms with my own

identity and what it meant to me, just as I was trying to make sense of a society, culture, and political system that were in many ways new and foreign to me. I also describe how being sensitive to the ways in which others perceived my identity yielded an invaluable insight into the research process, namely that meaningful research necessarily entails mutual discovery. Finally, I explore several ways in which this sensitivity proved crucial in navigating the challenging process of gaining entrée into the communities of people I sought to understand.

Being From Neither Here nor There

Apparently, my identity as a foreign researcher was less straightforward than I had first imagined. It seemed—and this observation is borne out from conversations I've had with people whose frankness I could rely on rather than simply being a projection of my own stereotypical preconceptions—that I didn't quite fit into the prevailing notion of what a *người nước ngoài* (foreign) researcher of Vietnam was like.² Little did I realize that I embodied several paradoxes that evidently baffled many of those I came into contact with. For one thing, I came from another developing country in the region, and I was a student of develop-

ment sociology. Didn't Malaysia have its own development issues worthy of my interest and attention?

Next, thanks to four semesters of Thuy Tranviet's rigorous language training at Cornell, I was fairly able to carry out a casual conversation in Vietnamese. Despite still needing an interpreter when conducting interviews, the little Vietnamese that I did speak amazingly managed to break a lot of ice and win much trust and goodwill—something for which I remain very grateful. Yet unlike many of the other foreign researchers I knew who spoke Vietnamese, most of whom tended to be white, male, and from the global North, I had neither the benefit nor incentive of what many referred to rather mischievously as a “long-haired dictionary,” or a Vietnamese spouse or girlfriend.³ To the surprise of many, I have a Malaysian wife. What, then, was it about Vietnam that enticed me to invest the time and effort needed to learn a foreign language spoken in few places beyond its shores, let alone immerse myself in and attempt to navigate a completely new and unfamiliar environment?

Finally, I was surprised to learn that I also did not seem to fit many Vietnamese people's expectations of what a Malaysian was supposed to look like. To the villagers crowded around the TV that evening, for example, it might have seemed somewhat odd that my features appeared a little different from those of most of the players on the Malaysian football team (almost all of whom were either ethnic Malays or Indians). I wondered at times if I was being overly self-conscious about this, but numerous experiences gave me cause to think otherwise. I was told more than once that I looked more Vietnamese than “typical Malaysian,” whatever that is. Indeed, I often could not help noticing a slightly perplexed look among those to whom I introduced myself as a “*người Mǎlǎixia*,” only to get subtle nods of comprehension the moment I followed that up, as I often felt compelled, with “*gốc Hoa*” (of Chinese origin or descent). Admittedly, it felt rather odd to have to wear my ethnicity on my sleeve in addition to my nationality, but more often

than not, that somehow seemed to help make things more comfortable and fathomable for everyone.

All this gave me reason to believe that many of those I interacted with, at least on first impressions, found me a somewhat anomalous, if not enigmatic *người nước ngoài*. Consequently I found myself constantly grappling with the issue of my own identity and how others perceived it as I tried to derive meaning from the many conversations I had. In a sense, I'm glad that others found me hard to pigeonhole, as that realization kept me attentive to the folly and dangers of pigeonholing others. In other words, my “anomalous” status served as a constant reminder to be mindful in my interactions with others and understand that my interlocutors were often trying to figure me out just as I was trying to figure *them* out. The more I understood that, the more I realized and appreciated that in this process of figuring each other out, we were all becoming a little more enlightened.

Assimilating the Other

Being an atypical foreigner did have its interesting moments too. Because of my intermediate identity—that is, neither a “real” foreigner nor a Vietnamese local but somewhere in between—I had the distinct feeling that I was often held to a higher standard than most other foreigners when it came to partaking in cultural rituals that were new and unfamiliar to me, most of which involved the consumption of food and drink. These sometimes felt like rites of initiation I had to undergo if I was to gain acceptance and trust from my hosts. Don't get me wrong—I am profoundly aware of how privileged I was to be able to not only observe but also be part of such practices. The insights they provided into cultural and social understandings were fascinating and truly invaluable. Still, some practices took more getting used to than others.

There were times, for example, when I was invited—or more accurately, expected—to share certain foods that a few foreigners might be squeamish about eating. At a forest protection ranger camp in the Plain of Reeds

wetlands where I stayed for several days, the main source of protein, apart from eel and other fishes, was field rat. Trapped in the surrounding rice fields bordering *Melaleuca* (tràm) forests, the rats would be generously marinated with turmeric and lemongrass, skewered, barbecued, and served at almost every meal. When it was first offered to me by the chief forest ranger, I recall feeling the weight of the other rangers' eyes on me, as if waiting to see if I could pass muster and not only consume it, but actually share their fondness for it. Thankfully I managed to do both. I was apprehensive at first, but then discovered that it was indeed delicious and soon developed a liking to it (it had a texture slightly firmer than roast pork, and tasted curiously like barbecued chicken). Not long after that, the rangers quickly warmed to my presence, and I felt I had crossed an important line in engaging with that community.

Apart from rats, the other exotic dish that I had the opportunity to sample on more than one occasion was snake. Often boiled to make a soup, the snake I had had a peculiar, somewhat medicinal taste. Interestingly, the gall bladder was removed prior to cooking and the bile squeezed into our rice wine. This precious elixir, and to a lesser extent the snake flesh itself, was thought to enhance one's virility—which explains why every time we had snake it was almost exclusively among the male researchers I worked with. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on how you may see it), I'm not aware of any effects it may have had on me.

Speaking of rice wine, it did not take long for me to realize that the ability to imbibe that substance in rather large quantities constituted an important research skill in itself—one that I struggled, and failed, to master. Distilled from glutinous rice, the wine has the potency of vodka and is typically drunk with others over a leisurely, drawn-out meal. In the south of Vietnam, the wine is drunk out of a communal shot glass that is continually refilled in a curious ritual that I inevitably became all too familiar with: A person fills the glass (often to the brim), looks another per-



Above: “Challenge yourself,” urges the ubiquitous Marlboro Man in a café in Cần Thơ. As a non-smoker, one of the challenges I had to endure was the prevalence of second-hand cigarette smoke among local colleagues and interlocutors.

Right Top: The strong stuff that makes for spirited conversation. A rare occasion when a pair of glasses is used instead of the single communal glass that usually gets passed around.

Right Bottom: Bottles of rượu nếp, the glutinous rice wine brewed in Long An province that can be bought in bottles of up to 5 liters (1.32 gallons) from roadside stalls. 29% ABV. (And this was one of the milder varieties!)



son in the eye, and then offers a toast to that person. He then drinks half the glass before passing it to the other person to finish. The glass is then refilled, and the process is repeated often until two or more bottles are consumed, by which time almost everyone is well and truly drunk. As much as I was aware that it was in bad taste or even sometimes offensive to refuse the glass when offered it, there would inevitably come a point when I could simply take no more. I would then have to sheepishly apologize and pray that my fellow drinkers would make an allowance for this foreigner unaccustomed to such strong spirits, and who frankly has a rather limited tolerance to alcohol.

In most cases I would be let off the hook. But on one particular occasion I received looks from those around me that seemed to express shock at my audacity to refuse the glass from the person toasting me. And this was after more shots than I could keep count of, many of which were offered by this same gentleman opposite me. This, I should mention, was no village party. Rather, I was at a conference dinner in a hotel seated among senior government officials, a couple of whom I knew and had worked with in the past. To my

chagrin I learned later that the person whose toast I had turned down was a Vice Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development!

Thankfully I suffered no repercussions from the incident, or at least none that I was aware of—either in terms of my relations with ministry officials, or in terms of the health of my liver. Perhaps being a foreigner did give me some leeway in that instance, but at the same time I had the feeling I was being put to the test to see how far I could go to earn the privilege of being “part of the group,” as it were. Whether or not my being Malaysian had anything to do with it is something I can only surmise. I also wondered to what extent my masculinity was being assessed, given how drinking is almost always a male activity, and the ability to hold one’s drink is often considered a mark of male pride. Whatever the reasons, I suspect that in such instances—be it in the offering and consumption of rat, snake, or wine—beneath all the laughter and frivolity, there was a lot of serious “figuring out” of one another going on.

After the Final Whistle

Back at Vàm Nao, despite a slew of chances for both sides, the match was

still scoreless at half time. Since it was already dark and we were all hungry, the research team—which included the director of the research institute where I was based—decided to return to the inn where we were staying in a larger village, just a few kilometers away. Once we arrived, however, the two younger researchers, still enthralled by the excitement of the match, decided that dinner could wait. They invited me to their room to watch the second half. I heartily joined them, though as I did at the village, I made no attempt to hide my sporting allegiance, cheering the Malaysian team at every opportunity.

As we approached the last ten minutes of regulation time, both teams had yet to score a goal. The mounting tension became palpable, as any slip-up in these final moments of the match could tip the fine balance between victory or defeat. The deadlock remained unbroken until the 83rd minute when, through a cruel twist of fate, a Vietnamese defender inadvertently deflected a cross from a Malaysian player into his own goal. The entire Malaysian team erupted in glee, as I myself so wanted to do, but out of deference to the friends I was with, I tried as much as I could to mute my own celebrations and sym-

pathized instead with the unfortunate defender. It might have seemed a trivial matter, but at that moment, my two friends could not have looked more distraught.

Managing to endure a Vietnamese onslaught for the final few minutes of the match, Malaysia eventually won the match 1-0. In an instant, Vietnam's dream of football glory, expressed in the self-assured display in the build-up to the final, was shattered. My two colleagues and I—together with the director, who had been following the match in his own room—proceeded to walk down the road for a bowl of *phở*. Hoping to lift everyone's mournful spirits, I offered to pay for dinner that night. They graciously accepted, and to my relief did not begrudge me for happening to come from the country that had just robbed Vietnam of victory.

As it turned out, that evening's dinner marked a significant turning point in my fieldwork. Not only was our conversation that night unusually convivial, it was also unusually candid. And before you get any ideas, we were all relatively sober. Although I had worked with this team for some time, what I had learned about the co-management project till then was mostly factual—the kind of information one could glean from reports. That night, however, I became privy to details that were unwritten, personal in nature, and consequently priceless to my research: these included historical information about the genesis of the project; the private hopes, expectations, and concerns of the researchers; and how much the success of the project meant to them and to the reputation of their institute. But perhaps just as important as what I learned about the project that night was the fact that we all got to learn a great deal about each

other. I could sense a growing camaraderie not only between them and me, but also among themselves. It was a pleasure to behold my otherwise serious and formally behaved colleagues letting down their guard and poking fun at each other for a change.

The next morning we returned to Vàm Nao for further interviews. I was a little nervous about how I would be received, as the memories of the previous night's drama were still fresh, and the wounds were likely still sore. To my relief and surprise, almost everyone I came across gave me a broad, knowing smile, and many congratulated me on Malaysia's hard-fought victory. Strangers only a day ago, and nations apart, we were suddenly that much closer; overnight, bonds had been forged through the simple realization that we shared the same passion for the game and for our respective homelands. The rivalry embodied and expressed in that one football match, ironically, did more to help us "figure out" each other than the many interviews and meetings we had held.

The Typicality of Being Atypical

Over the course of the time I spent in Vietnam, I wrestled but eventually came to terms with the fact that I was not your typical foreign researcher in the field. That in turn, however, raises the question of just what a "typical foreign researcher" is. How did I, in the first place, get a sense of what "typical" was? Having chewed considerably on these thoughts, I realize that to a large extent, the "typical foreign researcher" is a construct of my own making, a convenient foil against which I came to view and define my own identity. But if there's something else I've come to

terms with, it is that that's OK. In my case, I defined myself—as I saw others defining me—in contradistinction to the privileged white, Western, upper/middle-class, male researcher or development practitioner, often with a "long-haired dictionary" in tow. For other researchers, however, what's "typical," as reflected in the questions they might be asked by the locals, could be someone altogether different: liberal or conservative, gay or straight, religious or atheist, male or female, married or single, short or tall, take your pick. The point I'm trying to make is that if we think hard enough about it, we are all in one way or another atypical. Consequently then, as much as there is arguably no such person as the "typical foreign researcher," we all need that person to be able to recognize, appreciate, assert, and celebrate our own distinctiveness. While doing so was by no means easy for me, and did indeed pose quite a few challenges especially in gaining entrée in the field, my acceptance of that reality ultimately enabled me to share more generously of myself and to be comfortable with the ways in which history and geography have made me who I am. Crucially, it also helped me reflect more critically on my own tendencies to label and categorize others.

In many ways, my experience in the field was as much a process of profound self-discovery as it was about learning about fisheries governance in Vietnam. In figuring out each other, I guess both I and the people I had the privilege of encountering through my research ultimately came to figure *ourselves* out to some degree. I would like to think we have all emerged from this encounter as somewhat wiser and better human beings. ✿

NOTES

1 Although my son (a native Ithacan) and I still disagree over what to call the sport, I refer to it as football in this article as that is what most of the English-speaking world outside North America calls it.

2 Though seemingly self-evident, I still find it fascinating how, linguistically, conceptions of externality (*ngoài*) and internality (*nội*) factor into understandings of foreignness versus domesticity in Vietnam. The term for foreigner, *người nước ngoài*, can be literally translated as "person of/from external waters," which suggests a rather clear distinction in the Vietnamese mind between who is and is not Vietnamese—a distinction that, I suspect, denotes more than mere citizenship. (The fact that the word for water, *nước*, also refers to country or nation, is of course interesting in and of itself, but will not be discussed at length here). Interestingly, these terms also carry highly gendered connotations. Relatives on the paternal side of the family, for example, are said to be "*bên nội*" (internal) while those on the maternal side are "*bên ngoài*" (external).

3 I do not intend to imply in any sense, as this euphemism may appear to suggest, that one strategy for foreign researchers to improve their fluency in the vernacular is to marry or be in a relationship with a local. Rather, my own tentative interpretation of that expression, corroborated by my own observations while working with expatriates in the region, is that to many locals, a local spouse or partner may be the most rational explanation for a foreigner's willingness and ability to learn the language.

Martin Hatch leads a gamelan performance in December 2006.

During his tenure as Cornell Gamelan Ensemble Director, since 1972, more than 3,000 students played gamelan at Cornell.



MARTIN HATCH, *Emeritus*

PASSIONATE
COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE
AND INSPIRED IN HIS TEACHING

Long-time SEAP faculty-member Martin Hatch, founder and former director of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble, retired last year from the Music Department at Cornell University. At the graduate-student-organized SEAP annual spring banquet this year, the community gathered to acknowledge his many years of service and welcome in the next phase of friendly collaboration and collegiality outside of the framework of teaching and advising. He continues to serve as the faculty coordinator for the Kahin Center for Advanced Research on Southeast Asia and is actively involved in the American Institute for Indonesian Studies (AIFIS), as well as participating in other projects close to home and far-reaching. Colleagues and friends have described him as passionate, committed to social justice and inspired in his teaching.

In an email thanking the SEAP community, Hatch said, "...[T]hroughout the last forty years, my associations with faculty and students involved in Southeast Asian studies at Cornell have been the high points of my studying, teaching, performing, directing, and researching. The intellectual stimulation and practical insights of this multi- and interdisciplinary community is, to my mind, the highest form of academic life. Long live the Cornell Southeast Asia Program!"



The Cornell Gamelan Ensemble, performing here on the Arts Quad at Cornell, often plays outdoors and collaborates with SEAP Outreach to perform on campus and in the wider community and local schools. Martin Hatch pictured fourth row.

words of thanks

from ANN WARDE

Research Analyst, Bioacoustics Research Program, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Largely due to Marty Hatch's interest and efforts, I was invited to Cornell in 2000 as a Mellon Postdoctoral Teaching and Research Fellow. This opportunity brought me into direct contact with the lanky and erudite scholar of Javanese arts and gamelan I had met many years prior during my M.A. study at Wesleyan University. It also uncovered our overlapping interests in the work of Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot, whose much earlier book *Sonic Design* (1976), and subsequent writings, incorporated spectrographic visualizations of sound into a new approach to the investigation and instruction of music theory. The innovative analyses outlined in *Sonic Design* create ways to connect patterns in time, dynamics, and frequency that form the basis of a set of diverse musical compositions. Visualizing sound in this way, we agreed, fostered a kind of "objective" view of music, and of sound in general. Apart from the dynamic, emotional references and embedded cultural implications of audible musical sounds, within which so much important yet often controversial ethnomusicological scholarship finds itself intertwined, these visual patterns form a simple, abstract way to compare and elucidate some of the most essential elements of musical structure and performance practice.

Our shared fascination with the unorthodox yet equitable accompanied me as I continued along my familiar path of musical composition, performance, and analysis, with new wanderings among some mysterious links between tuning systems and human song. And it ultimately led, for me, to the uncharted but now familiar world of animal vocaliza-

tions, underwater noise analysis, and scientific conservation research which I have been occupied with at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for almost 10 years. As a result, I am at last beginning myself to come full circle in an investigation of how to integrate the divergent perspectives of musicians and scientists (just as I walk by the "Martin Fellows Hatch: contributor" sign on the door of a shared computer-inhabited space in the Lab's Bioacoustics Research Program).

As co-director of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble (2003), I made a composition that re-organized the instrumentation of the classical Javanese composition *Wilujeng*. It was Marty's habit to include *Wilujeng* in every end-of-semester gamelan concert, and his signature contribution, along with drumming and directing the ensemble (and perceiving and shaping the details of every instrumental part) was as a singer. That year we attended the New England Gamelan Weekend at Wesleyan, co-organized by Chris Miller, and we performed my composition. The saron part was played on the kenong, the bonang played the gender part, and *Wilujeng* itself was both recognizable and oddly filtered into something new, with an almost twisted sense of tuning and timbre. But the most wonderful moment of the performance arrived when Marty began to sing the same part, with the same intrepid, liquid voice, that he had sung so many times before. And it brought the otherworldly beauty of Javanese music right along with it into this strange performance.

Marty has not been content to simply be an incisive Western researcher and performer of a music so radically different, on so many levels, from the classical canon, jazz standards, and popular song that he continues so enthusiastically to enjoy performing. His understanding looks beyond, spearheading new ways to link all musics while affirming

MARTY'S FUNDAMENTAL PASSION IS



their wonderful diversity. His vision sees more than bridges among musicians and the work of scientists studying animal vocal communication and the challenges to it in our increasingly human-centered world. Marty's fundamental passion is humanity—gathering the varieties of our humanity together through a shared understanding of its musics, and bringing all the world together through the inclusion of everyone's voices: whales, birds, frogs, ants, ... and those other people we might finally come to understand and admire through the patterns of their sounds in time and space.

from **SUMARSAM**

Professor of Music, Wesleyan University

In 1970, ASKI (Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia, an arts university, now ISI, Institute Seni Indonesia) in Surakarta assigned me to teach foreign students who wanted to study gamelan there. Mas Martin was one of them; I taught him *gendèr*, to supplement his study of vocal music. Since then, our friendship never ends. In 1971, Mas Martin returned to the United States; I was working at the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra. In the middle of the day, while working in my office, the telephone rang; it was Mas Martin, informing me that the Music department at Wesleyan was interested in inviting me to teach gamelan there. I responded without any reservation. After a few months processing paperwork, the rest was history: in August 1972, my wife and I started teaching at Wesleyan until now, and my friendship with Mas Martin continued. After several years of teaching and studying at Wesleyan, I was interested in getting the highest academic degree. So, I called Mas Martin: in 1984, I enrolled as a Ph.D. student at Cornell. Now Mas Martin was my mentor and advisor, not my *gendèr* student. It is amazing how long friendship and collegueship can last. From the bottom of my heart, *terimakasih, maturnuwun*, thanks, Mas Martin for guiding and shepherding my intellectual life throughout these years.

from **BRITA HEIMARCK**

Associate Professor, Boston University

I worked with Professor Martin Hatch at Cornell for my doctoral studies and dissertation completion 1992-95 on campus, and 1996-1998 to complete the dissertation and defense, which I filed in January of 1999. I came to Cornell with a master's in ethnomusicology from UCLA, where I completed my M.A. thesis in 1991 on the Balinese shadow play tradition. I knew that Marty specialized in Javanese gamelan and surrounding traditions and I was eager to expand my perspective while continuing to pursue a dissertation on Balinese *gender wayang*. Jan Mrazek was also at Cornell studying Asian arts, and I believe it was Marty's idea that Jan and I could learn from each other by exchanging Balinese *gender* lessons for lessons on Javanese *gender*. Jan taught me Javanese *gender* patterns and style, and I taught him several Balinese *gender wayang* compositions, learned in the oral tradition. We performed together in the Javanese gamelan concerts, and expanded their repertoire by performing Balinese *gender wayang* as well. I remember the concert when Jan and I performed the Balinese show piece "Sulendra" beginning with a lengthy *gineman* (introduction) through the entire piece (*pengawak* and *pengecet* sections). The audience at Cornell, long accustomed to Javanese gamelan concerts, thought we were on fire and they were on the edge of their seats for the entire Balinese piece! The first time I performed on Javanese *gender* with the gamelan I remember asking Marty if we should use a microphone so people could hear all the intricate patterns I was playing! Of course we didn't, the subtle Javanese *gender* patterns blended in almost imperceptibly and yet added the final elaborative touches to the composition with perfection.

Even in my Ph.D. exams Marty expanded my perspective by assigning me a massive topic outlining the entire history of music in Bali and Java from medieval times to the present. I used archaeological sources, inscriptions, court records,

HUMANITY



Far Left: The Cornell Gamelan Ensemble performs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Martin Hatch pictured front right.

Middle and Right: In spring 1982, Cornell's Gamelan Ensemble performed for more than 3000 people in the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A series of masked dances called *topeng babakan* were performed. Endo Suanda, pictured here, performs selections from the Panji cycle, a series of stories in masked dance about Panji, an Indonesian pre-Hindu hero. Master drummer Undang Sumarna, pictured with drum, also performs. Martin Hatch pictured front center. The instruments that form the core of Cornell's gamelan ensemble are on long-term loan from the MET, who acquired them as gift from Carroll C. Bratman in 1977.

and Indonesian manuscripts to document centuries of music practice and change, and I must say, this historical perspective is still with me today as I continue to document Balinese traditions.

When I completed my Ph.D. exams I returned to Calgary, Canada and began to teach at the University of Calgary for their world music classes. Each class was filled to capacity, 50-70 students with no teaching assistants. When the opportunity arose to write my dissertation in Florence, Italy under the auspices of Harvard University's Villa I Tatti where my husband became a Fellow for a year, I wrote diligently for the entire year, sending chapter after chapter via e-mail to Marty at Cornell. He reviewed them and sent them back to me in Florence and in this manner, I completed a lengthy and detailed dissertation. I was very grateful to Marty for enabling me to work independently under varied circumstances as they arose. His patience and compassionate understanding were very apparent.

I am much indebted to my doctoral advisor Professor Martin Hatch for allowing me to follow my interests independently, but also for instigating my interest in the historical references to Indonesian musical culture as part of my doctoral qualifying exams at Cornell. This understanding of ancient history in Indonesia has greatly informed my perspective on current traditions, supplemented and clarified of course by more than three years of fieldwork in Bali. Marty urged a broad approach informed by social and political trends, which is now standard in the field. I wish him the very best in this new phase of his life and intellectual career.

from CHRISTOPHER J. MILLER
Cornell Gamelan Ensemble Director
(2008-present)

Through his years of teaching, and agitating, Marty Hatch has forever changed the face of Cornell's Department of Music. He secured a dedicated room in Lincoln Hall for the gamelan,

which was the first of several non-Western ensembles he founded. He introduced several innovative courses into the curriculum. Most importantly, he pushed his colleagues to think about music, its place in society, and why it matters, differently. He still pushes. Music scholars and educators have, on the whole, shifted their perspective significantly, to better appreciate and value a greater diversity of musics, and to approach music first and foremost as social process rather than as *objet d'art*. At times, it may seem like Marty is fighting battles that have already been won. But while many of the key battles have been won, we should not be complacent. It is precisely because people like Marty have fought so fiercely that things have changed. There is still work to be done, and new challenges from other directions, complacency not the least of them. But because of Marty's passion, vision, and tenacity, we are in a much better position to carry on, and for that we are truly grateful.

from THAK CHALOEMTIARANA
Professor, Cornell University

I have been asked to say a few words about my good friend Marty Hatch on the occasion of his retirement. We met each other as graduate students in 1972 when Marty returned from Indonesia to start his graduate studies in musicology. Although I had preceded him by four years, I had always recognized him as having seniority both in age and status. I had just returned from doing my field research, and as many of you know, it is a time of bewilderment trying to figure out what to make of all the stuff we had gathered while we were in the field. Marty had already spent years in Indonesia and really seemed to know what he was talking about judging from the questions he would frequently raise at our Brown Bag lectures. Needless to say, his colleagues at Cornell recognized his talents and Marty was immediately hired by the Music Department after finishing his Ph.D. in 1980, which parenthetically was the year I returned to work at Cornell.

Back then, we were paid a royal salary of, as I recall—and Marty could correct me on this, about \$19,000—(Marty tells me it was only \$16,000).

As you know, Cornell does not usually hire its own Ph.D. graduates right after graduation unless they are really good. I know of four others in our program—Ben Anderson, Stan O'Connor, Kaja McGowan, and Tamara Loos. Others who were at Cornell as undergraduates or graduated with Ph.D.s had to go wander in the wilderness for several years before coming back to Ithaca, the Mount Meru of Southeast Asian studies, to wit, David Wyatt, Frank Huffman, John Wolff, Randy Barker, Iwan Azis, Abby Cohn, Lorraine Paterson, Takashi Shiraishi, Warren Bailey, and myself.

We all know that Marty is a man of great passion and tenacity. Once he fixes his sight on something, he does not let up until it becomes a success. I can name three sightings that came into Marty's crosshairs that shall remain a legacy that Marty has left for all of us at SEAP.

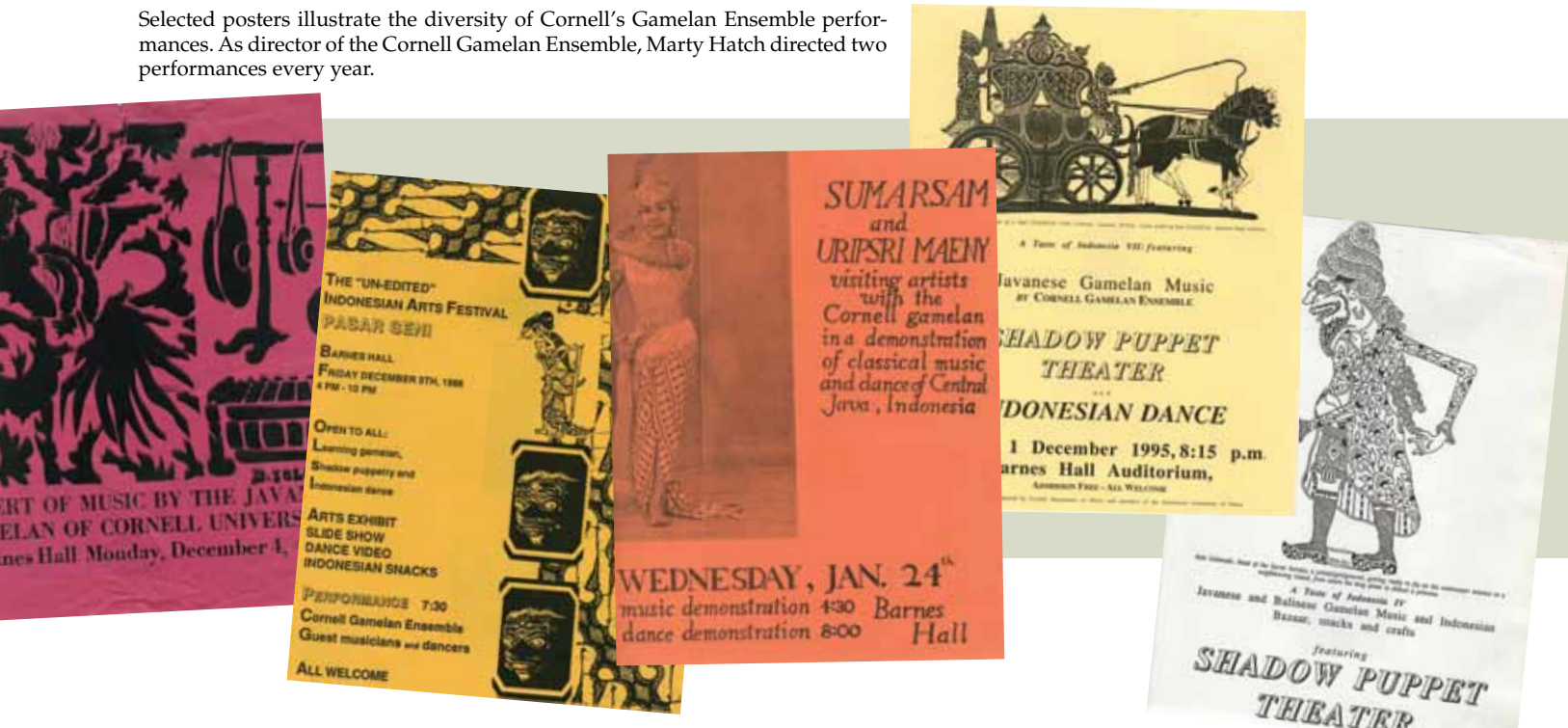
First, the Gamelan program at Cornell. Marty has always insisted that Music and the Arts are the best way for undergraduate students to learn and appreciate Southeast Asia. To many Cornell students, participating and taking Marty's famous Gamelan class are highlights in their Cornell education. My own daughter Khwan and many of her friends took Marty's course, and she and others can still recite from memory the notation for Gamelan music. Every time I mention Marty, my daughter will parrot Marty's "five, four, three, two, one," and imitate the blissful look on Marty's face when he does that. From what began as a group of amateurs who got together to perform for our annual banquet (remember Ben Anderson wearing his Union Jack dressing gown playing the gamelan?), Marty turned the gamelan into a professional level ensemble. We are most happy to have Chris Miller continue this legacy.

Second, the Kahin Center. Since its inception, Marty has been the Great Helmsman (borrowing from a description of Mao Tse-tung) who has guided the building, maintenance, consideration of room assignments, and improvement (most recently to overhauling of the computer and telephone systems) of the Kahin Center with a steady hand. If you have not noticed, there is a plaque in the seminar room that attests to Marty's contribution to this magnificent building.

Third, the revival of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP) and the establishment of the American Institute for Indonesian Studies. After the faculty approved the initiative to revive the CMIP as a major project in our last NRC proposal, several goals were identified. First, under the leadership of Eric Tagliacozzo and Tom Pepinsky, the Indonesianists organized a much needed conference on Indonesian studies to assess the past, the present, and the future of Indonesian studies. Second, a team-taught undergraduate course on Indonesia, led by Marina Welker was organized. And third and most importantly, I was able to convince Marty Hatch to lead a project to establish an American Research Center in Indonesia. The Center, which received support from the Luce Foundation, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and consortium university members, is now a reality. Because of Marty's dedication, tenacity, "never say never" personality, and the hard work of our Indonesianist faculty and with special thanks to Audrey Kahin, AIFIS is now established to support scholars doing research in Indonesia. The center is located in the Sampoerna College of Education in Jakarta.

Cornell and the Music Department have already enumerated Marty's contributions at his grand retirement party last spring (2012). But for us, the three achievements that I mentioned will remind us of Marty's legacy and dedication to the Southeast Asia Program. ✿

Selected posters illustrate the diversity of Cornell's Gamelan Ensemble performances. As director of the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble, Marty Hatch directed two performances every year.



Fall 2013 SEAP Brown Bags

9/5/2013

Abby Cohn

Professor, Department of Linguistics, Cornell University
The Impact of Indonesian on Local Languages of Indonesia: Language Maintenance or Language Shift?

9/12/2013

Chie Ikeya

Assistant professor, Department of History, Rutgers University
Intra-Asian Intimacies and Infidelities: Contesting Race, Religion, and Nation in Colonial Burma, Southeast Asia, and Beyond

9/19/2013

Bradley Davis

Assistant professor, Department of History, Eastern Connecticut State University
Upland Frontiers: Vietnamese Imperial Ethnography and Ethnographic Knowledge During the Long Nineteenth Century

9/26/2013

Robin W. Radcliffe

Adjunct assistant professor of wildlife and conservation medicine, Cornell Conservation Medicine Program, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine

Kurnia Oktavia Khairani

Postdoctoral fellow, Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University
"Hemorrhagic Septicemia Surveillance in Buffalo as an Aid to Range Expansion of the Javan Rhinoceros in Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia"

10/3/2013

Jeff McNeely

Senior science advisor, International Union for Conservation of Nature, A.D. White Professor, Cornell University
Many Resources, Many Approaches: Comparing Policies and Practices of the ASEAN Countries
Note: This lecture will be in Mann 102

10/10/2013

Heather Maclachlan

Assistant professor of ethnomusicology, Department of Music, University of Dayton
Burma's Evolving Pop Music Scene

10/17/2013

Pavin Chachavalpongpan

Associate professor, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
Thailand in the Post-Bhumibol Era: Monarchy and Democracy

10/24/2013

Krisna Uk

Director, Center for Khmer Studies, New York, New York
Living with Explosive Remnants of War: Local Livelihood Strategies from Cambodia and Laos

10/31/2013

A. Chaedar Alwasilah

Professor, Indonesia University of Education, Bandung, Indonesia, Fulbright senior research fellow
Developing Liberal Studies for Indonesians: A Critical Review of the Curriculum

11/7/2013

Anto Mohsin

Ph.D. candidate, science and technology studies, Cornell University
Lighting "Paradise": Balinese Electrification and Indonesia's National Identity in the New Order Years

11/14/2013

Don Selby

Assistant professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, College of Staten Island, CUNY
Human Rights as Event: The Case of Thailand

11/21/2013

Duncan McCargo

Professor of Southeast Asian Politics, politics and international studies, The University of Leeds
The Trial in Thai Life: Political Court Cases in the post-Thaksin Era

12/5/2013

Inga Gruss

Ph.D. candidate, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University
Future in Death: Migration, Funerals and Cultural Literacy

Graduate Student Committee

The SEAP Graduate Student Committee co-chairs for 2013-14 are Katie Rainwater and Matt Minarchek (pictured at right). Their responsibilities include planning and organizing the annual spring banquet, the SEAP brown bag series, the SEAP graduate conference, and social events for the SEAP community. They hope to foster a collaborative atmosphere so that students will participate in event organization. They welcome all ideas and suggestions for ways to improve SEAP events.

Kahin Center Update

Matt Minarchek is the fall 2013 interim Kahin Center building manager, until Rebekah Daro Minarchek resumes the post in spring. Please direct Kahin-Center related questions and requests to him at kahinbuildingmgr@einaudi.cornell.edu or through the online forms for the Kahin Center under the resources tab on the SEAP website: seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/kahin_center.



August 24-December 22, 2013

Vietnamese Ceramics from the Menke Collection

On view August 24 to December 22, 2013 at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art

The history of Vietnamese ceramic traditions reflects the complex history of Vietnam itself. Early on, during a millennium of rule by China, northern Vietnamese potters learned from China's ceramic technology even as the region incorporated aspects of Chinese culture. With the independent dynasties of Ly (1009-1225) and Tran (1225-1400), experimentation with new forms and approaches expressed a reinvigorated cultural confidence as the Vietnamese expanded their territory southward. Commercial trade with Southeast Asia in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries flourished on the export of blue and white ceramics imbued with uniquely Vietnamese designs and flair. During all of these periods, potters incorporated elements of Vietnam's interaction with foreign cultures but adapted them in distinctive ways based on available raw materials and their own cultural identity and vitality.

The Menke collection consists of 57 objects ranging in date from the Dong Son Culture (700-43 B.C.) through the 17th century and was assembled over a period of more than 40 years by the eminent nuclear physicist, John R. Menke (1919-2009). The collection is currently on long-term loan to the Johnson Museum. After the fall exhibit concludes, selections from the collection will remain on display in the Southeast Asia gallery on the 5th floor of the museum.

September 27-28, 2013

The Language Resource Center will host a workshop, "Computer-assisted pronunciation feedback for language learners: Perspectives and Possibilities"

The workshop will begin on Friday, September 27 from 7-9 pm and continues on Saturday, September 28 from 9-4 at Noyes Lodge. The workshop is open to the public and anybody interested in natural language processing and language teaching is encouraged to attend.

Thursday, November 14, 2013

Cornell Cinema to Screen *The Act of Killing*, an Indonesia Documentary

SEAP and Cornell Cinema are co-sponsoring a screening and film discussion of *The Act of Killing* on Thursday, November 14, 2013. The debut documentary, directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, has garnered significant critical acclaim and presents a startling view into the thinking of death squad leaders that rose to power after the Indonesia government was overthrown by the military in 1965. Anwar and his friends, formerly small-time gangsters who sold movie-theatre tickets on the black market, agree to tell, in fact script and act out, playing killers and victims, the story of the killings they conducted on a mass scale. The film slowly exposes how a regime that has never been held accountable was founded on crimes against humanity against the backdrop of the strange nightmarish vision of killers who joke publicly on television chat shows about the crimes they committed with impunity.

Tuesday, December 10, 2013

Fall Gamelan Concert

The Cornell Gamelan Ensemble Fall Concert will be held December 10 in Lincoln Hall (B20).

Vietnamese, Le Dynasty (1428-1788)

***Yuhuchun-ping* vase with dragon and pearl design.** Stoneware with blue and white underglaze decoration. Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. *Asian private collection, formerly the Menke Collection.*



15th Annual Southeast Asian Studies Graduate Conference

The 15th Annual Southeast Asian Studies Graduate Conference took place March 1-3, 2013 at the Kahin Center. Lindy Williams, Cornell Professor from the Department of Development Sociology delivered the keynote, "Whither State Interest in Intimacy?" Six panels framed presentations: On the Origins and Consequences of Institutions; Colonial Facework: Labors of British, Dutch and French Prestige-Management; Cinemascesapes of Modernity; National Imaginings: Object and Technique; Engagement with the State through Reform and Resistance; and Karma, Charisma, and Conversion in Contemporary Thai Religious Life. Twenty-four students presented or acted as discussants, including graduate students from Singapore, Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Thailand, England, from universities across the United States, and 11 students from Cornell. Presentation topics ranged from alternative libraries in Indonesia to colonial propaganda films, to nationalism in video games, and the "karma business" in Thailand.



*SEAP Faculty Member
and Einaudi Center
Director*
**Fredrik Logevall
Wins
Pulitzer**



Nicky Koschmann, Cornell Educational Resources for International Studies Coordinator, talks with Fredrik Logevall during this year's International Studies Summer Institute.

In July, SEAP Professor Fredrik Logevall assumed the post as Cornell's vice-provost for international relations. Earlier this year, he won the Pulitzer Prize in History and the 2013 Francis Parkman Prize of the Society of American Historians for *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (Random House, 2012), also named a best book of the year by the *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

The Parkman prize annually honors a book that is distinguished by literary merit and makes an important contribution to the history of the United States. Logevall's book was deemed an extraordinary work of modern history that combines narrative skill, scholarly authority, and quiet interpretive confidence to chart the development of Ho Chi Minh's liberation movement, the loss of the French empire, and the fateful decisions of the United States in the late 1950s to enter the conflict in Southeast Asia. Revealing how the American commitment in Vietnam originated in the tangled logic of French engagement there, Logevall also shows how the United States was never able to free itself from taking the same steps that had led France into an earlier, fatal quagmire. His exemplary research in French, Vietnamese, and American sources, both published and archival and in at least three languages, reveals multiple perspectives on the conflict between a single, small, divided, people and two of the richest and most powerful nations on earth.

AWARDS

Cornell University

DEGREE GRANTED

May 2012

Ivan Victor Small

Doctoral Dissertations on Southeast Asia

DISCIPLINE/CHAIR/THESIS

Anthropology / A. Willford

Currencies of Imagination: Channeling Money and Chasing Mobility in Vietnamese Remittance Economies

Lawrence Chua

History of architecture and urban development / D. Lasansky

Building Siam: Leisure, Race, and Nationalism in Thai Architecture, 1910-1973

August 2012

Upik Wira Marlin Djalins

Developmental sociology / S. Feldman

Subjects, Lawmaking and Land Rights: Agrarian Regime and State Formation in Late Colonial Netherlands East Indies

Wannasarn (Saam) Noonsuk

History of art and archaeology / K. McGowan

Archaeology and Cultural Geography of Tambralinga in Peninsular Siam

Claudine Tsu Lyn Ang

History / K. Taylor

Statecraft on the Margins: Drama, Poetry, and the Civilizing Mission in Eighteenth-Century Southern Vietnam

Irene Vrinte Lessmeister

History / F. Logevall

Between Colonialism and Cold War: The Indonesian War of Independence in World Politics, 1945-1949

January 2013

John Duong Phan

Asian literature, religion and culture / K. Taylor

Lacquered Words: The Evolution of Vietnamese under Sinitic Influences From 1st Century BCE through the 17th Century CE

May 2013

Alvin Pratama

Regional science / I. Azis

Three Essays on Poverty and Polarization in Indonesia

Chika Watanabe

Anthropology / H. Miyazaki

Ambivalent Aspirations: Aid and the Cultural Politics of Proximity in a Japanese NGO in Burma/Myanmar

FELLOWSHIPS

MILTON L. BARNETT SCHOLARSHIPS

Sebastian Dettman—Ph.D. candidate, government, for preliminary research in Malaysia

Jack Meng-Tat Chia—Ph.D. candidate, history, for fieldwork in Malaysia

Ifan Wu—Ph.D. candidate, anthropology, for fieldwork in Malaysia

FULBRIGHT FELLOWSHIP 2013-2014

Rebecca Townsend—Project Title: Floating in “Stagnant Water”: Thai Film and National Development, 1950’s to 1970’s

FULBRIGHT-HAYS 2012-2013

Keenan McRoberts—Project Title: Nutrient Management in Small Holder Crop-Livestock Systems in Vietnam

Cornell University

Master's Theses on Southeast Asia

DEGREE GRANTED

DISCIPLINE/CHAIR/THESIS

May 2012

Jennifer Elaine Goodman

Asian studies / T. Loos

Testing Thais: Establishing the Ordinary in Thai National Exams

Thane Gavin Maxwell

City and regional planning / N. Kudva

Timothy M. Gorman

Developmental sociology / W. Wolford

Moral Economy and the Middle Peasant: The Dynamics of Land Privatization in the Mekong Delta

Kankan Xie

Asian studies / A. Willford

Contesting Equality: A History of the Malayan People's Socialist Front, 1957-1965

August 2012

Alison M. Remillard

Education / S. Villenas

Activating Agency, Constructing Identities: Burmese Refugee Youth Narratives of Life and Education in the United States

January 2013

Diego Fossati

Government / T. Pepinsky

John Matthew Sova

Asian studies / T. Pepinsky

A History of Indonesia's Armed Forces and Analysis of Military Reform during the Reformasi Period (1998-2012)

May 2013

John Chang Hoon Lee

Asian studies / T. Pepinsky

A Spirit of Destruction: The Origins of the Indonesian Military's Institutional Culture

Alicia Lyn Freedman

Public administration / R. Christy

Moodjalin Sudcharoen

Asian studies / T. Loos

Commodifying Karma: Abortion Discourses and Kaekam Practices in Thai Society

Mirabelle Tinghui Yang

Development sociology / L. Williams

Romance, Dating and Marriage in Singapore: Youth Attitudes, Ideals and the "Checklist Syndrome"



SEAP alumna Nora Annesley Taylor was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013

SEAP Alumna Awarded Guggenheim:
congratulations!

SEAP alumna Nora Annesley Taylor, professor of art history, theory and criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago was awarded a John Simon Memorial Foundation Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013. Fellows are appointed on the basis of achievement and promise. Taylor has been studying Vietnamese painting and art for more than twenty years. A few years ago, she turned to researching the rise in experimental art in Vietnam, especially performance art. About what she will do with her fellowship, Taylor wrote, "I will be looking at performance art practices in Singapore, Vietnam, and Burma, as a strategy for survival—not a reaction against mainstream art practices, but rather, the only medium possible in environments that are hostile to contemporary art. Specifically, I will be examining performance as narrative and an alternative to official political discourse; performance as event, as time-specific punctuations based on oral traditions of transmissions and as a medium for community-building. The purpose of this project is not meant to privilege performance art. Rather, it is part of an overall goal to bring Southeast Asian artists into the greater discussion about contemporary art worldwide."

LAURISTON SHARP PRIZE 2011 AND 2012

Rose Metro and Claudine Ang were awarded the Lauriston Sharp award for 2011 and 2012, respectively. Metro's thesis is titled, "History, Curricula, and the Reconciliation of Ethnic Conflict: A Collaborative Project with Burmese Migrants and Refugees in Thailand," and Claudine Ang's thesis is "Statecraft on the Margins: Drama, Poetry, and the Civilizing Mission in Eighteenth-Century Southern Vietnam." The prize, named for the founder of SEAP, is awarded to the graduate student who has contributed most outstandingly to both scholarship and the community life of the Southeast Asia Program.

Lauriston Sharp (1907-1993), for whom the award was named, began his Cornell career as an instructor of anthropology in the Department of Economics. From 1942 to 1945, he served as chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Cornell. Subsequently, from 1945 to 1946, he was assistant chief of the Division of the Southeast Asian Affairs in the Department of State. Sharp spent many years researching Thailand, setting up the Cornell-Thailand Project, and eventually founding the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program in 1950.



Rose Metro (Ph.D., education) was co-chair of the graduate student committee 2008-2009 and served on the committee in 2007-2008. She is an international educational consultant and middle school teacher in Columbia, Missouri.

Rose Metro

About Metro's dissertation, the prize committee commented as follows: "[It] not only provides an excellent window on the state of history teaching in Burma, and in the refugee camps along the Burma/Thailand border, but also includes highly constructive suggestions for curricular reform that might help overcome ethnic tensions that are currently solidified in the existing curricula on both sides of that divide. In the dissertation, she also discusses her own careful and measured intervention and advocacy. This took place through the organization of teaching workshops and discussions in the camps. In an innovative and admirable way, these interventions form an integrated part of her research. Another related chapter is a highly interesting discussion of the difficulties arising in her work with regard to the current human subjects supervision regime, and here, too, she similarly contributes highly constructive observations, analysis, as well as suggestions. Overall, her dissertation is a formidable and in several ways unusual contribution both to knowledge, and at least potentially, to bettering the world in several regards."

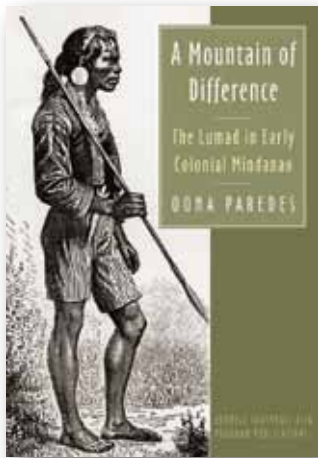


Claudine Ang (Ph.D., history) served on the student committee from 2005-2012. She took a position in history at Yale-NUS College (National University of Singapore).

Claudine Ang

The award committee commented, "Particularly noteworthy are the originality of Ang's topic and the analytical and linguistic heft employed in conveying her story. The scholarship is impeccable, the writing clear and engaging, and the subject fascinating. Ang discusses two civilizing projects that diverged from traditional forms in that the targets of the projects were ethnic insiders and not minority frontierspersons. She also uncovers important intellectual aspects of 18th century southern Vietnamese life not previously understood, taking on the assumption that northern cultural traditions set the foundation for southern ones at the time, and persuading her readers otherwise. The committee was impressed by her expert handling of history, politics, and literature in explaining state-building along the political and cultural peripheries in early Qing China and what eventually became Vietnam. The organization of the thesis into two contemporary manifestations of this is sophisticated, elegant, and compelling."

SEAP Publications



Just Released!

A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao
by Oona Paredes

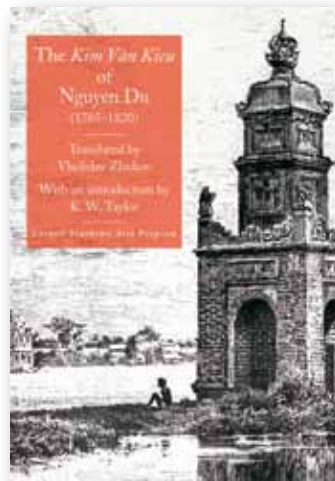
A Mountain of Difference recasts the early colonial encounter between the indigenous Lumad and Christian missionaries in the southern Philippines. This groundbreaking study of the Lumad—the non-Muslim native peoples of Mindanao—draws on Spanish archival sources and indigenous oral traditions to reconceptualize the political and cultural history of the island’s “upland” minorities. Vignettes of Lumad life prior to the nineteenth century show different communities actively engaging colonial power and mediating its exercise according to local priorities, with unexpected results. The interactions explored in this book illuminate the surprisingly complex cultural and power dynamics at the peripheries of European colonialism.

Visit us at

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The Journal Indonesia Online: http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/indonesia_journal

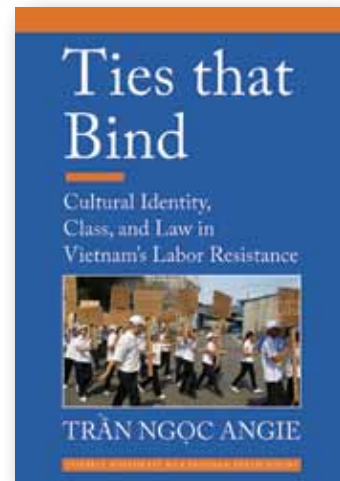
SEAP Data Paper Series: <http://seapdatapapers.library.cornell.edu/s/seap/index.html>



Just Released!

The Kim Vân Kieu of Nguyen Du (1765–1820)
translated by Vladislav Zhukov
introduction by K. W. Taylor

The Kim Vân Kieu of Nguyen Du, written in the early nineteenth century and commonly considered to be a defining masterpiece of Vietnamese literature, is the story of an educated and beautiful young woman who suffers misfortune and degradation before obtaining justice and peace. It is a long poem in a complex metric and rhyme scheme that is distinctively Vietnamese. Vladislav Zhukov has written the first English translation that perfectly conveys the poetic form of the original work, thereby producing a literary creation in English that is equivalent to Nguyen Du’s genius in Vietnamese and that can be appreciated as poetry in English.



Just Released!

Ties that Bind: Cultural Identity, Class, and Law in Flexible Labor Resistance in Vietnam
by Trần Ngọc Angie

Ties That Bind explores Vietnamese labor history from the French colonial period to the contemporary era, tracing a vibrant tradition of workers’ resistance to oppressive conditions. Through interviews with employees, organizers, journalists, and officials, as well as evidence from government reports and underground protest materials, this study analyzes a broad range of workers’ experiences, on the factory floor and in their dormitories. Evidence demonstrates that, at critical times, shared cultural ties have propelled Vietnamese workers toward “class moments” inspiring them to fight collectively for their rights. Trần’s detailed investigation shows that labor activism is a hallmark of modern Vietnam. This work addresses key questions about global commerce and the factory workers who sustain it.

The Echols Collection and the Library Annex

Gregory Green

Curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia, Kroch Library



Cornell University Library's offsite storage facility, the Library Annex, houses approximately one-third of the Echols Collection, nearly 500,000 titles and counting.

Just how much of the Echols Collection resides in the Library Annex? While giving tours of the collection, Echols staff usually answer that question with an estimate of around one-third of the nearly 500,000 titles in the Echols Collection. This answer usually satisfies most people; however, we wanted to take this opportunity to explain in a little more detail what the Annex is, why we send books there, how we decide which books go, what other material formats are stored there, and what that means for accessing the significant portion of the Echols Collection housed in the Annex.

The Library Annex is Cornell University Library's offsite storage facility, basically a warehouse for material we cannot fit into the on-campus libraries. While it is technically an "offsite" storage facility, in reality it is not far offsite at all, sitting next to the apple orchards just across highway 366 from the Vet school and the B-Lot parking area.

The Annex is fairly close to central campus when compared with other universities' offsite storage; however, the decision to send material to the Library Annex is not an easy one to make. We are mindful of and sympathetic to the fact that browsing is an important discovery tool. We are also very concerned that some books simply might not be very findable in the Annex. Sometimes only perusing a book directly will reveal what it has to offer. In an ideal world, everything would be easily accessible in one place where a researcher could wander at leisure through endless stacks happily discovering the hidden gems of the collection. Unfortunately, that is not the world we live in; the Kroch Library stacks are both limited and full, so managing a divided collection has become our reality.

The criteria for sending a book to the Annex seem simple enough. If a book is older than ten years and has never circulated, it is a candidate for removal to the Annex. However, in practice, the decision-making process is quite complicated. Because the human resources available to physically move the books and assimilate them into the Annex are limited, the first step in the process is to get to the front of the line for an Annex move. With the recent transition of several libraries on campus from physical to virtual, this has not been an easy task as books from their stacks must be moved to the Annex before the library can be closed. This means that the Asia Collections in Kroch Library, which is not closing, must show a pressing need. This need comes along every three years or so when the stacks become so over-crowded that we have books stored on the floor, at which time managing the stacks becomes untenable. At that point, we are bumped to the front of the line, and the Library IT department generates a list of books meeting the above criteria for each of the Asia Collections. For the Echols Collection, the list is usually several hundred pages long and includes thousands of books. Each year, over 9,000 titles are cataloged for the Echols Collection, so after three years we would need to send nearly 30,000 books out to the Annex just to keep pace with new receipts.

Once we have a list in hand, we remove any titles that we deem inappropriate for the Annex using a secondary set of criteria and our own judgment. This secondary set of criteria includes the language of the book. In particular, the Romanization systems used for Khmer and Burmese in the Library catalog can make searching for books in those languages difficult, so we are slow to send them to the Annex where they could only be found through the catalog. Another characteristic we look for is a book's relevance for quick reference queries, where it may be regularly consulted but not necessarily checked out. We also take into consideration current research interests of students and faculty, holding back sections of material that clearly relate to current inter-

ests. Another consideration includes volumes where contents have not been adequately described in the catalog, such as edited volumes. These criteria, among others, help guide the more subjective stage of the process. It is tedious work, made worse by the fact that we would much prefer the collection be housed together in stacks where browsing is possible, but it is certainly important work in that we must make the best possible use of our limited space on central campus.

We have focused so far on books, but there is material in many different formats held in the Library Annex. All of our newspapers from Southeast Asia are stored only briefly in Kroch Library before being transferred to the Annex. Some microfilm is also stored in the Annex as well as many journals. Journals that are candidates for the Annex are mainly those that have been digitized, or those that have ceased publication and have good indexes available for researchers to locate individual articles. We also use the Annex to store much of the Echols archival material held in the Rare and Manuscripts Collections.

Even though we attempt to only send material to the Annex that we feel will not likely be needed any time soon, inevitably, some of it will be needed and used. If you find yourself in a situation where you need books from the Annex, the process for retrieving them is generally easy and quick. The "Annex Requests Information" page gives a good overview of the service (<http://annex.library.cornell.edu/content/annex-requests-information>). Books are delivered within 24 hours of the request (Monday through Friday only), and articles can be scanned and sent electronically. If you need access quicker than that, you can go to the Annex and request material be retrieved as soon as possible for use in the Annex Reading Room. One thing you cannot do is browse the stacks, because the material is stored on thirty foot tall shelving stacks in boxes. All of the books are retrievable only through a system of barcodes that note the exact location of the item within the large warehouse units.

The Library Annex is an increasingly important location for Echols Collection material in almost every format. As time goes on, a larger percentage of the collection will be found there. If you have any feedback about the selection process or any issue related to the Annex, please contact us. We are constantly considering options to alleviate the space issues in our stacks, and we appreciate your feedback as we work to deliver the services that you want. In the end, whatever choices we make, we should all remember that the Echols collection is a national treasure that is deserving of the very best care and attention. Please drop us a line.

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Above: Children had several craft activities to choose from at this year's International Dragon Boat Festival held in Cass Park in Ithaca.

Right: Parents, children, and racers alike worked on dragon-boat related crafts.



Collaborative activities have been at the heart of outreach programming this year. SEAP outreach joined forces with the Karen-Burmese American Advocates (KBAA) group, Ithaca College's Education Department, and other Cornell area programs through Cornell Educational Resources for International Studies (CERIS) to plan programming to serve teachers and administrators in New York's upstate region. SEAP's new outreach coordinator, three student assistants, and many volunteers worked behind the scenes to coordinate the events and programs that reach teachers, students and community members in Ithaca and beyond.

Three recent efforts are worth noting: a day-long workshop on Global Islam (with CERIS) held in the fall targeted community college faculty and high school teachers; the Refugee Educators' and Administrators' Summit (with KBAA and Ithaca College Education Department), held at Ithaca College this past spring, gathered together experts on refugee education from many fields; and the annual International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI), a professional development workshop for teachers in K-12 (with CERIS) brought an array of teachers and experts together to explore the cultural geography of water. A new collaboration with history professor Timothy LaGoy at Jefferson Community College in Watertown, New York, to include curriculum on Indonesia in the classroom stems from the Global Islam workshop. SEAP graduate students Inga Gruss, Marjorie Mosereiff,

Hobart and William Smith Colleges Professor Etin Anwar answers a question during her presentation on Indonesia at the ISSI.



Teachers peruse items from SEAP and other CERIS area programs during the ISSI.



The Cornell Gamelan Ensemble played for a gymnasium full of Caroline Elementary students this spring.

Emily Hong, Mariangela Jordan, and SEAP Associate Director Thamora Fishel presented “Changes in Myanmar in the Context of the Refugee Experience” at the summit. Other familiar faces included Ithaca High School Karen/Burmese refugee students presenting a documentary film, *Our History, Our Life, Our Freedom*. Other projects continue to build the Karen/Burma Project as well, including professional development workshops for teachers and other educators (one held via Skype for a group of ESL teachers and case workers in Fort Worth, Texas, and another upcoming in Buffalo). And finally, Southeast Asia was well-represented during this year’s ISSI, in ways large and small, most notably by SEAP Ph.D. candidate Pamela Corey, who presented, “The Mekong as Art World: Artist Communities in Mainland Southeast Asia,” and Etin Anwar, Professor, Religious Studies, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, who presented “Cultural Ecology of Water in Indonesia.” Teachers also



Two Ithaca High School students from the Burmese-American community answered questions about their educational experience in the United States and in refugee camps in Thailand along the border with Myanmar.



Left: SEAP collaborates regularly with teachers at the Greater Ithaca Activity Center to provide programming for students in the after school program, at festivals celebrating Asian heritage, and for summer campers. A summer camper explores authentic cultural objects from the Philippines. Cornell student volunteer Thanh Nguyen shows students how to play *banh dua*, a traditional game from Vietnam.

Below: A Karen-American woman demonstrates her weaving at the annual new year festival.



had a chance to try their hands at writing pantoums, a poetry form originating in Malaysia. Forty-five teachers and five pre-service teachers attended the conference, many from underserved districts, both urban and rural.

As part of the Rural Schools Initiative through the After School Language program (a CERIS collaborative effort), SEAP's graduate students and student assistants taught Burmese, Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, and Tagalog. Other highlights of the year included a Cornell Gamelan Ensemble visit to Caroline Elementary, where the group played for all of the students in the school, about 350 students. Classroom visits, SEAP presence at community events such as the International Dragon Boat Festival in Ithaca, the annual Elephant Extravaganza in Syracuse, Lunar New Year celebration, and other events continue to round out outreach offerings, even as SEAP turns to exciting new and long-term projects. Beginning in the fall at Newfield Elementary, a group of fourth graders will create their own Filipino rondalla, Orchestra Sin Arco, making their own instruments and focusing all year on the music, language and culture of the Philippines. SEAP outreach looks forward to another exciting year. Volunteers are always welcome.



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Arnika Fuhrmann

Arnika Fuhrmann is an interdisciplinary scholar of Thailand working at the intersections of the country's aesthetic and political modernities. After completing her Ph.D. in South Asian languages and civilizations at the University of Chicago in 2008, she took up postdoctoral fellowships at the Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry and the University of Hong Kong.

Fuhrmann's scholarly interests center on the study of Southeast Asian

visual and literary cultures, minority citizenship, and the quotidian manifestations of religious pedagogies and practices. She is especially concerned with understanding the logics and theoretical implications of modes of belonging that are simultaneously constituted by religious and secular notions. Within this context, she investigates the ways in which affect and aesthetic form shape contemporary political cultures.

Her book project *Ghostly Desires* examines how Buddhist-coded anachronisms of haunting figure struggles over sexuality, notions of personhood, and collective life in contemporary Thai cinema. By analyzing the mainstream and independent cinema and contemporary digital avantgarde that originates in Thailand after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, this project highlights the fundamental ways in which Theravadin and other Buddhist concepts, stories, and imagery inform contemporary

understandings of sexuality.

Fuhrmann's new research about Buddhist-Muslim coexistence in Thai and Malaysian cinema extends her interests in sexuality and cinema into the domain of interreligious conflict. It seeks to complicate recent discussions of the relation of religion to gender and sexual freedoms and further proposes a reframing of understandings of Buddhist-Muslim antagonisms through the analysis of their everyday, affective dimensions and through concentration on the ways in which non-state actors approach coexistence.

At Cornell, she is looking forward to collaborating with colleagues and working with students on a broad range of topics in Asian studies, film and media studies, and gender and sexuality studies. Fuhrmann is planning a conference on the aesthetics and politics of new media in Southeast Asia for the 2014-2015 academic year.

SEAP WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

Victoria Beard's first encounter with Southeast Asia was when she traveled to Makassar, Indonesia as an American Field Service high school exchange student in 1987. She subsequently studied at Gadjah Mada University for a year as an undergraduate and returned to Yogyakarta as a Fulbright Scholar.

After completing her Ph.D., she was a fellow at RAND for two years, before accepting a position as an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she taught from 2000-2004. She subsequently moved to the University of California, Irvine where she taught from 2004-2012. In 2007, she expanded her research in Southeast Asia to include a comparative component in Thailand and Cambodia, while continuing her research in Indonesia.

Much of Beard's research in Southeast Asia focuses on urban informal or squatters settlements. She examines

a range of collective efforts from how people plan to meet their basic needs to how they plan for broader social and political transformation. Her research seeks insights into the processes of community-based planning. Beard's research analyzes the conditions that accompany public participation, collective action, social movements and elite capture. This research engages several academic fields: planning and policy studies, urban and community studies, human geography, political science, history, anthropology, development studies, and Southeast Asian studies.

For the past fifteen years, Beard has also been active as a professional urban planner and development practitioner in Southeast Asia. She worked for several years on one of the World Bank's most ambitious community driven poverty alleviation projects in Indonesia (PNPM, formerly KDP and UPP). In 2010, she took a leave of absence from



Victoria A. Beard

the university and worked with the World Bank and the National Ministry of Development Planning (Bappenas) in Indonesia.

SEAP FACULTY 2013-2014

Benedict R. O. Anderson, Aaron L. Binenkorb professor emeritus of international studies, government and Asian studies

Warren B. Bailey, professor, finance and Asian studies

Randolph Barker, professor emeritus, agricultural economics and Asian studies

Victoria Beard, associate professor, city and regional planning

Anne Blackburn, associate professor, south Asia and Buddhist studies

Thak Chaloentiarana, professor of the Graduate School

Abigail Cohn, professor, linguistics and Asian studies, interim Director of the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program (Spring 2013)

Magnus Fiskesjö, associate professor, anthropology (on leave spring 2013)

Arnika Fuhrmann, assistant professor, Asian studies

Greg Green, curator, Echols Collection on Southeast Asia

Martin F. Hatch, professor emeritus, music and Asian studies

Ngampit Jagacinski, senior language lecturer, Thai

Sarosh Kuruvilla, professor, industrial and labor relations and Asian studies, interim Director of the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program (Fall 2013)

Fred Logevall, professor, history; Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and Vice Provost for International Affairs

Tamara Lynn Loos, associate professor, history and Asian studies (on leave 2013-2014)

Andrew Mertha, associate professor, government (on leave fall 2013)

Kaja M. McGowan, associate professor, art history, archaeology and Asian studies (on leave fall 2013)

Christopher J. Miller, lecturer, music

Swe Swe Myint, teaching associate, Burmese

Stanley J. O'Connor, professor emeritus, art history and Asian studies

Jolanda Pandin, senior language lecturer, Indonesian

Thomas Pepinsky, associate professor, government

Hannah Phan, senior language lecturer, Khmer

Maria Theresa Savella, senior language lecturer, Tagalog

James T. Siegel, professor emeritus, anthropology and Asian studies

Eric Tagliacozzo, associate professor, history and Asian studies

Keith W. Taylor, professor, Vietnamese cultural studies and Asian studies (on leave spring 2013)

Erik Thorbecke, H.E. Babcock Professor Emeritus of Food Economics and economics

Thúy Tranviet, senior language lecturer, Vietnamese

Marina Welker, assistant professor, anthropology (on leave fall 2013)

Andrew Willford, associate professor, anthropology and Asian studies

Lindy Williams, professor, development sociology

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

NEW Southeast Asia Acquisition at Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art

At a time when many areas of Thailand were coming under Cambodian Khmer domination, the kingdom of Haripunjaya remained under the influence of Mon-Dvaravati culture and art through its contact with the Burmese kingdoms of Pagan and Pegu. Haripunjaya ceramics included elegant earthenware vessels with delicate slip inlays, and Buddhist votive plaques and sculptures. Some of the earthenware sculptures are quite large, made for installation in the niches of pyramidal structures, such as those at Wat Ku Kut, Lamphun. Artisans made many of these images using molds, for efficiency and consistency of appearance. The broad, squarish face, continuous undulating eyebrows, serene smile and naturalistic cranium that lacks a pronounced ushnisha, are all features that distinguish the elegant Haripunjaya Buddhas. This head was acquired from the estate of Konrad and Sarah M. Bekker, who worked for the U.S. Foreign Service and formed their collection while living in Burma and Thailand in the 1950s and 1960s.

Thai, Lamphun, Haripunjaya
Head of a Buddha, early 13th century
Earthenware with stucco coating
Height 9 inches
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art
*Acquired through the George and
Mary Rockwell Fund for Asian Art*



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Southeast Asian Textile Student-Curated Installation at the Johnson Museum

This spring, Professor Kaja McGowan's seminar "Threads of Consequence" culminated in the installation of an exhibition at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, entitled *Materiality of Motion: The Vibrant Lives of Southeast Asian Textiles*. Working with themes of trade, spiritual and physical travel, gender, as well as the act of weaving, this exhibition illustrated the multi-valent nature of "motion" as embodied in these textiles. Representing many different cultures from island and mainland Southeast Asia, as well as two different private textile collections and three collections from Cornell University's campus, this seminar and exhibition provided an excellent example of the possibilities of interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

Malaysian, Sarawak, Saribas River area, Iban
Pua kumbu with design of confronted crocodiles
(buah baya ngelanggan), 19th or early 20th century
Cotton, warp ikat woven. Herbert F. Johnson
Museum of Art. *Gift of Dr. Joel Confino. 2009.052.001*

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