



ASEASUK NEWS

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STUDIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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ASEASUK NEWS

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The Association of Southeast Asian Studies in the United Kingdom is the national organisation of scholars of Southeast Asia in the UK. Its Research Committee funds individual and collaborative research projects across the social sciences and humanities. It is one of 15 learned societies funded by the British Academy <<http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/index.html>>

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ASEASUK

ASEASUK's aims and objectives are to facilitate cooperation and coordination between individual scholars and institutions in the development of Southeast Asian studies and research programmes. In particular, the Association is concerned with the circulation of professional information amongst scholars with Southeast Asian interests and the projection of Southeast Asia as an important field of study within the United Kingdom generally.

A brief history

Since its formation in 1969, ASEASUK has brought together academics in the UK specialising in Southeast Asia over the widest range of disciplines. It has over 170 members from more than 30 universities. But there are also postgraduate members of the association as well as members from the business and diplomatic communities. A third of members are based outside the UK.

ASEASUK's Research Committee has its origins in the Management Committee of the British Institute in South East Asia. The Institute was established in Singapore in 1976, and then operated from Bangkok from 1984 to 1986. After the Institute was dissolved, a British Academy Committee for South East Asian Studies was established to continue to fund individual research projects in the region. In 2005, with the support of the British Academy, this became the Research Committee of ASEASUK, under the chairmanship of the leading scholar of Burma, Professor Robert H. Taylor.

Since 2002, the Research Committee has funded 100 individual research projects across the social sciences and humanities. The average size of grants over this period was typically between £3,000 and £5,000. These have been allocated very broadly across the higher education sector (to scholars in over 38 institutions and some independent scholars) as well as across subject areas. In addition, the Committee has supported the publication of *Aseasuk News*, the newsletter, and its associated website, which plays a leading role in maintaining the profile of Southeast Asian studies within the international academic community. We have also supported conferences and workshops.

Research priorities and initiatives

Integration and Interaction in the Southeast Asian Region, the 5-year Strategic Research Plan adopted by ASEASUK in 2005, and agreed with BASIS (Board for Academy-Sponsored Institutes and Societies), is the largest joint initiative ever launched by Southeast Asianists in the UK.

It builds on the acknowledged strengths of scholarship in this country, and seeks to deepen our knowledge of the evolving contact, interaction and integration of Southeast Asia and the wider Asian region.

Southeast Asia has long been a region 'on the move'. Flows of people, commodities, ideas and capital have moulded the human and economic landscapes. There were significant trade flows and tributary relationships between China and Southeast Asia prior to the colonial period, as well as important cultural and trading links between Southeast Asia and the Indian

sub-continent as well as the Arabian Peninsula. These, however, were interrupted in the 19th century as the region was forced to look to the West. Consequently, trading links with the world beyond China and South Asia expanded rapidly and by the latter part of the 1930s, Southeast Asia accounted for almost one third of all commodity exports from the tropical world. Partly as a result of the rapid growth of the export economies, Southeast Asia also attracted increasing flows of migrants, mainly from China and the Indian sub-continent. Singapore, as a result, is effectively a Chinese city state while most of the countries of the region – and Malaysia particularly – have significant and economically influential Chinese minorities. Since the conclusion of the colonial era following the Second World War, exports from most parts of the region have continued to grow rapidly, and inflows of foreign direct investment have been larger than most other parts of the developing world. Thus the economic dynamism of the region has continued to be based on a deepening integration into the regional and global economies.

Moreover, several of the economies of the region have industrialised: agriculture and primary produce exports play a much smaller part in their trading profiles, and today the whole region, including the former socialist economies of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam), are now outward looking. The broadening and maturing of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has strengthened intra-regional links as well as associations between Southeast Asia and neighbouring regions and countries. In

particular, following the opening of China's economy to the world from the 1980s, trade and investment flows have resumed between Southeast Asia and its giant neighbour. Once seen as a competitor for inward foreign investment and a rival in the production of low cost goods, China's role in the future of Southeast Asia has resumed the prominence that it had before the colonial era. Now it is apparent that there is a process of integration taking place between China and Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia's dynamic and evolving integration into the wider regional and global contexts is recognised, but usually only in the context of particular economies and periods. There has been little systematic attempt to identify, in detail, the components and processes of integration in an historical context. Equally, there has been no attempt to see these components – which cross disciplinary divides – as interrelated and part of a wider narrative of change, encompassing social, political and environmental transitions, as well as economic change.

ASEASUK's research programme aims to examine this process of integration by focusing on the evolving links within Southeast Asia and between the region and the wider Asian realm. China seems to be making progress towards becoming a regional hegemon. Its political and strategic significance, rapidly expanding economic influence, diplomatic confidence and emergence as a military power have manifold implications for Southeast Asia's future. However, the multiple ways in which China and Southeast Asia's futures are being progressively enmeshed, and the

manner in which China is insinuating itself into the region are often only hazily understood. While South Asia's role in contemporary change in the region is less pronounced, historically it has been very great indeed.

The research aims to fill this gap by commissioning a series of linked, inter-disciplinary research projects. Each will have its own identified research aims that will have independent validity, but they will also contribute to a broader understanding of Southeast Asia's dynamic economic integration and political engagement with China. This latter aspect of the proposed initiative is seen as critical in distinguishing it from much of the existing work. A particular feature of the initiative is its broad, inter-disciplinary approach.

The programme of research consists of three components with ten sub-themes: areas that are at the cutting-edge of international research on the region.

1. Spaces of cross-border interaction: networks and borderlands
 - (a) Borderlands and cross-border interaction and integration
 - (b) Borders and borderland cultural landscapes
 - (c) Networks and the integration of Southeast Asia and the Greater Asian region
2. Flows and circuits: culture, capital and commodities
 - (a) Cultural contact: assimilation, representation and resistance/domination

- (b) The composition and direction of trade and investment flows over the 20th century
 - (c) Networks and the integration of Southeast Asia and the Greater Asian region
3. Security: trans-regional threats and cooperation
- (a) Historiographies of colonisation and resistance
 - (b) Southeast Asian perceptions of security threats
 - (c) Security cooperation in Southeast Asia and with the Greater Asian region
 - (d) Environmental security in Southeast Asia.

In many of these areas, UK researchers are playing a lead in Southeast Asian Studies in Europe and internationally. Furthermore, the Committee places emphasis on the sponsoring of fieldwork within Southeast Asia, which very often provides the basis of long-term collaboration with scholars from the region. We aim to be as proactive as possible in sponsoring new areas of enquiry across the spectrum of disciplines, and by encouraging scholars new to the field of Southeast Asian Studies.

ASEASUK is very committed to developing research into the global and transnational aspects of the Southeast Asian experience. Through our specific research agenda, and by sponsorship of workshops, we aim to draw this research much closer together in comparative publications. We aim to consolidate the strengths of Southeast Asian Studies in the UK to strengthen our understanding of the place of this

distinctive and hugely important region in relation to its neighbours and the world.

Recent initiatives

The Research Committee has always seen its central role as supporting scholarship on the Southeast Asian region, across the social sciences and humanities. As the primary marker of impact is academic publications, we have used scholarly published outputs as the principal means by which we have measured our effectiveness and efficiency in meeting our aims. Based on its tracking of 2002 research grants, we average around two publications per grant.

In addition to the work on human origins in Southeast Asia, and on tourism and culture, that is featured at this showcase, examples of other projects funded by ASEASUK over the past two years include:

- 'Urban middle class youth, consumption and political participation in South-East Asia: a comparative study of Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam'
- 'The Foreign and Security Policy of Burma/Myanmar'
- 'Diasporic histories: overseas Chinese identity in Southeast Asia'
- '*Dakwah* (Islamic revival) in Modern Indonesia: Transnational, National, and Local Dimensions'
- 'The Micro-foundations of Vietnam-China Relations: A Study of Flows Across the Lao Cai-Hekou Border'
- 'Forming an ASEAN Security Community: the ASEAN People's Assembly, civil society organisations & the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community'

- 'The Political Economy of Democratic Reform in Cambodia: National and International Perspectives'

ASEASUK was the principal supporter of a major international seminar hosted by the Royal Asiatic Society on the 17-18 May 2007, on 'Britain and the Malay World',

which marked 50 years of Malaysia's nationhood.

ASEASUK is looking to expand its sponsorship of workshops and publications to continue to map out a distinctive contribution to our understanding of Southeast Asia.

**ASEASUK RESEARCH COMMITTEE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIAN STUDIES
(formerly the British Academy CSEAS)**

Research Grants

The Committee invites applications to support advanced post-doctoral (or equivalent) research in the humanities and social sciences on South-East Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and the wider region in line with the Committee's strategic research plan 'Integration and interaction in the South East Asian region'. Grants are made either for individual research or for collaborative projects. The Committee is willing to consider support for workshops. Grants are not made to support doctoral research. Grants offered are normally in the range of £1,000 to £5,000 for a twelve-month period. Requests for additional funding and extensions of grants for a further twelve months are considered on submission of a satisfactory progress report. Applicants must be ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom .

Closing dates for applications: 30 September 2007, 15 January 2008

A summary of the Committee's Strategic Research Plan, application forms and guidance notes can be from obtained from Dr Tim Harper: tnh1000@cam.ac.uk or downloaded at <http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/cseas/>

NEWS

UK Southeast Asianists

News from **Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland (Swansea University)**:

As a result of restructuring at the renamed Swansea University, the department of Sociology and Anthropology no longer runs undergraduate programmes, but continues with taught masters and research degrees. The department has not been allowed to have an Anthropology RAE submission, but Dr Hughes-Freeland will be included in the Geography submission. One positive outcome of restructuring and being moved to the School of the Environment and Society is that she has been able to establish a South East Asian Network (SEANS) at Swansea which includes regional experts in Southeast Asia working in fields ranging from anthropology, forestry, aquaculture, health care, development, migration and international relations. Swansea is looking forward to hosting the ASEASUK conference in September 2009.

Felicia's book, *Embodied communities: dance traditions and change in Java* is in press for publication by Berghahn next summer, and the Indonesian translation is nearly ready for Gajah Mada Press. This marks the end of a long period of research, and she is currently developing a major new comparative project about performance and cultural politics in ASEAN. There are other projects in development, including a film with a colleague which will include material from Egypt and Indonesia.

Felicia has presented several papers in 2007 including one in April on 'Traditional performance and dance tourism' at a panel she convened called, 'Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being: spectatorship and participation through tourism' for the Association of Social Anthropologists conference, Thinking through Tourism, London Metropolitan University. As part of her ongoing research into vision and visuality across different media and social forms she delivered a paper in June on 'The ghost in the machine? On not being able to film a trance-possession performance' for the conference on Beyond Text at Manchester University.

In September 2007 Felicia convened a panel on 'Cultural Politics in the ASEAN Region' for the 7th EUROSEAS Conference, University of Naples, Italy. This topic is related to her new research, and the panel themes were developed with co-convenor, **Nora Taylor (Chicago School of Art)**. Nora was unable to attend the conference, but the convenors intend to publish the very lively and wide-ranging set of papers presented by scholars from Asia and Europe. Felicia also gave a paper at EUROSEAS on 'Tradition, innovation and social expectations: the case of the Indonesian performer Didiek Hadiprayitno' for the panel on 'Tradition and Innovation: issues in Southeast Asian performance' convened by Dr Margaret Coldiron and Dr Catherine Diamond (Soochow University, Taipei) with funding from the British Academy Overseas Conferences Grants.

Following her visit to Yogyakarta in July 2006, Felicia continues to collect money for

the victims of the earthquake (see the ASEASUK website).

Professor Roy Ellen (University of Kent) has been elected President of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Roy is also Director of the Centre for Biocultural Diversity at Kent.

The research interests of **Dr Rajindra K. Puri (University of Kent)** are centred on traditional knowledge of water management practices, and local knowledge, science and climate change in Borneo. He delivered two papers in 2007: one in April at the Symposium on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change, Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University on the topic 'Can ethno-ecological knowledge be used to adapt to climate change or even mitigate it? Some evidence from Penan and Kenyah responses to El Niño droughts in East Kalimantan', and the other in August on 'Local knowledge, science and the environment: how and why people respond to climate change' at the UNESCO LINKS International Experts Meeting: Indigenous Knowledge and Changing Environments, James Cook University, Australia. In 2006 Raj gave two co-authored papers: 'Concepts for investigating local knowledge of and response to climate change: A case of vineyard management practices in France' (S. Rafuse), International Congress of Ethnobiology, in November at Chiang Rai, Thailand, and 'A scientific conceptual framework and strategic principles for the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems programme from a social-ecological systems perspective', (with P.

Howard and L. Smith), GIAHS Forum, October, in Rome <<http://www.fao.org/sd/giahs/news.asp>>. He also gave a paper on 'Local priorities, the ecology of medicinal plants, and the future of rainforest' at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Festival of Science, in September in Norwich.

Raj has also been involved in consultancies for INTRAMED (Vienna/ Bandung) on 'Integrating Local Knowledge on Traditional Medicine into Rural Health Care System in Indonesia' and with FAO-Wageningen on GIAHS mentioned earlier. He has also been participating in international training courses such as Data Analysis in Ethnobiology. held in November 2006, University of Malaysia, Sabah, Global Diversity Foundation Training course in support of Darwin Initiative Project on Ethnobiology of Proposed Community Use Zones of Crocker Range Park, Sabah, and the 6th International Course in Tools and Methods in Ethnobiological Research, June 2007 held at Assling, East Tyrol for postgraduate students from the Institute for Organic Farming, Universität für Bodenkultur (BOKU), Vienna.

Dr Dario Novellino (University of Kent) has been awarded a research grant and a fellowship for 2007-9. The former is from the Christensen Fund for a project on 'Developing local global feedback for policy advocacy on biocultural diversity'. The project draws on a wide range of anthropological field methods, aimed at generating global awareness of indigenous ecological knowledge and sustainable land management practices through networking

and consensus-building with a view to mobilising supportive policies to help sustaining biocultural diversity. Specifically, it underwrites work with the shepherds in Central Italy (Mt Aurunci Regional Park), Batak swiddeners and hunters-gatherers of Palawan (Philippines), the Ese Eja of Western Amazonia (Peru and Bolivia) and other groups to establish digitally-mediated exchanges of spoken stories. The latter is a Royal Anthropological Institute fellowship in Urgent Anthropology on 'Enabling the "indigenous voice": beyond technocratic solutions to forest conservation on Palawan Island (the Philippines). The research intends to produce replicable models for enhancing the Batak peoples' counterstrategies and capacity to employ their own ecological knowledge for challenging top-down interventions. In particular, the RAI Fellowship grant will cover the compilation of an archive (consisting of a series of DVDs) on Batak ethnohistory and ethno-ecological knowledge to include non-material aspects of people's cultural heritage such as songs and narratives on land and sacred sites. The collected documentation will be given to the Batak as a means for upholding their traditional resource and tenure rights. The preparation and use of the digital archive will also help the Batak in the preparation of the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development & Protection Plan (ADSDPP) and the submission of people's ancestral land claims to the concerned government body (the National Commission on Indigenous People – NCIP).

Dario presented four papers at the recent EUROSEAS conference in Naples in

September 2007. These are: 'Straddling the domestic and the untamed spaces': the spatial, symbolic and 'dwelling' dimension of caves amongst some Pälawan communities of the Philippines'; 'Reinterpreting plant knowledge and cultural artefacts in the context of radical socio-environmental changes: the South-east Asia collection of the Paleo-Ethnobotanical museum, at the Botanical Garden of Naples'; 'Planting rice and "caring for the child". Eco-cosmologies and the transformation of swidden farming amongst the Pälawan of the Philippines'; 'Devolution or involution? Ambiguous policies and ambiguous strategies of land management on Palawan Island, the Philippines'.

Dr Susan Bayly is Reader in Historical Anthropology in the **Cambridge University** Department of Social Anthropology. An anthropologist originally trained in history, she has worked on the legacy of empire in Asia's former French and British colonies. She has been conducting ethnographic research in northern Vietnam since 2000. Her latest book, *Asian voices in a post-colonial age. Vietnam, India and beyond* published by Cambridge University Press will be out October 2007. It focuses on the remarkable mobility of Hanoi intelligentsia families whose career experiences have included war service and development work in a host of overseas lands including the former Soviet Union and former French colonies in north and sub-Saharan Africa.

Professor Jonathan Rigg (University of Durham) is in the final phase of a Danida-funded project (led by the University of

Copenhagen) examining rural-urban dynamics in Asia (Thailand, Vietnam) and Africa (Ghana, Tanzania). This year Jonathan began work in Sri Lanka with the University of Ruhuna on a project looking at migrants and issues of connection and disconnection. This is being funded by a small grant from the British Academy. Finally, Jonathan is involved in a major project led by Rodolphe de Koninck of the University of Montreal on agrarian transitions in Southeast Asia and funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Jonathan was invited to give the keynote lecture at the Regional Conference on Environmental Planning and Management Issues in Southeast Asian Countries, Hanoi Agricultural University in March 2007. Other papers that he presented this year include: 'An everyday geography of the Global South', University of Hawaii (April) in celebration of the University of Hawaii's centenary, and seminars at the Department of Geography, Gothenburg University, Sweden; the Centre for Asian Studies, Lund University; and the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

Dr Sandra Dudley (University of Leicester) was in Thailand in summer 2006 for a British Academy-funded field research with Karenni refugees. This was part of her follow-up work towards completing her AHRC-funded research project on 'Materialising exile: material culture and embodied experience among Karenni refugees in Thailand', which will culminate in a monograph. Sandra presented the following papers in 2006: 'Reshaping identities in displacement:

education, experience and being in the wider world' at the 'From Burma to Myanmar, and Beyond: Dynamics of Conflict and Displacement', Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (February), and two papers at the University of Leicester – 'The materiality of exile. Space, bodies and things in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma Border', School of Archaeology & Ancient History research seminar series (June), and 'Identities in exile: engagements across time and space amongst Burmese refugees in Thailand' at a seminar series on post-colonialism, School of Historical Studies.

Professor Robert Barnes (Oxford University) was Affiliated Fellow of the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, in July 2006 and March–April 2007 while working on a project titled, *Documentation pertaining to the political history of Nusa Tenggara Timur* in the Nationaal Archief, the Hague, and the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden. In July 2007, Bob was in China delivering 'Remarks on ethnic groupings in a region of Eastern Indonesia', at the Lanzhou International Conference on the Protection and Development of Ethnic Minorities' Traditional Cultures, Lanzhou, while he was a Famous Visiting Scholar at the Institute of North-West Ethnic Minorities at Lanzhou University.

Dr Monica Janowski will be leaving **University of Greenwich** in December 2007 and will be based at **SOAS** (2007-2008) where she will be teaching some of the BA and MA courses on Southeast Asia. In July and August, Monica made the first

field visit to the Kelabit Highlands with **Graeme Barker (University of Cambridge)**, Huw Barton, Lindsay Lloyd-Smith and a group of field archaeologists as part of our new AHRC-funded project on 'The Cultured Rainforest'. She delivered a paper on 'Pigs and people in the Kelabit Highlands' at the 5th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) conference in Kuala Lumpur in August. In September, she co-convoked a panel at the EUROSEAS conference with Graeme Barker entitled, 'Why cultivate? Understandings of past and present adoption, abandonment and commitment to agriculture in South East Asia'. Monica and Jayl Langub (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak) presented a paper at the panel entitled 'Footprints and marks in the forest: the Penan and Kelabit of Borneo'. The panel receiving funding of £6,800 from the ASEASUK Research Committee.

Dr Sam Ro is currently teaching Modern Asian studies at the **British American College** as well as assisting **Professor Chris Dixon (London Metropolitan University)** on his courses for Southeast Asian Development and Change, and Political and Economic Development in Pacific Asia.

Dr Annabel Gallop (British Library) curated the exhibition 'Spice of Life: Raffles and the Malay World' at the Central Library, Liverpool, from 8 August - 28 October 2007. This was to mark the successful acquisition of the Raffles Family Collection by the British Library with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund and other donors. The exhibition was organised in collaboration

with Liverpool Libraries and Information Services and the Merseyside Malaysian and Singapore Community Association.

Annabel was in Aceh in February to present a paper on 'Gold, silver and lapis lazuli: royal letters from Aceh in the 17th century' at the First International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. In May, she spoke on 'After Wilkinson: notes on Malay documents' at the Britain and the Malay World conference, Royal Asiatic Society, London. She was in Australia in June to give three papers. The first was the Dr Lee Seng Tee Annual Lecture in Asian Art and Archaeology 2007 at the University of Sydney, entitled 'Illumination: the art of the Malay letter'. The other two papers were on 'Migrating manuscript art: Sulawesi diaspora styles of illumination' delivered at the Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology, University of Sydney, and 'Illuminating the Word: the art of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia' at a symposium on 'The Arts of Islam', Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Professor V.T. King (University of Leeds) served as internal examiner for five PhD theses, three at Leeds and two at Hull, and as external examiner and as opponent attended the successful public defence by Henry Chan of his doctoral thesis, 'Survival in the rainforest: change and resilience among the Punan Vuhong of Eastern Sarawak, Malaysia' at the University of Helsinki, in June 2007. Victor, Michael Hitchcock (London Metropolitan University) and Michael Parnwell (University of Leeds) have been working on two edited volumes for NIAS Press,

Copenhagen and University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu. *Tourism in Southeast Asia: challenges and new directions* will be published in March 2008; they are currently working on *Heritage tourism in Southeast Asia* for late 2008. Victor's book: *The sociology of Southeast Asia: transformations in a developing region* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press and Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, xviii, 334pp.) is about to be published. He continues to keep his hand in with the more popular side of writing and publishing having just completed a 30,000-word booklet entitled *Culture Smart! Malaysia. A quick guide to customs and etiquette* for the Kuperard series of guidebooks. It expands and revises his *The Simple Guide to Malaysia. Customs and Etiquette* which he wrote for Global Books in 1998. He has also written a piece on 'Malaysian-UK educational relations: a personal view' for a commemorative volume entitled 'Transcending boundaries' to be launched at a special symposium entitled '50 Years of Malaysia-British Partnership: Moving Forward' at the Mansion House, London on 25 October, and a follow up meeting at St Catherine's College, Cambridge on 26 October organised by the Asia Strategy and Leadership Institute and the British Malaysia Society supported by the Malaysian High Commission, the Commonwealth Business Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Victor visited Malaysia and Thailand in June-July 2007 to undertake further work on his project on the middle classes in Southeast Asia, and also to carry forward a recently signed MOU between Leeds

University and Universiti Putra Malaysia. He attended an official signing ceremony of the **European Consortium for Asian Field Study** (ECAF) at the Ecole Française d'Extreme Orient in Paris on 3 September as the Executive Director of the White Rose East Asia Centre (Leeds/Sheffield). Senior representatives of the British Academy also attended. The Academy has kindly agreed to cover the subscriptions of all the UK members of ECAF for the first three years, and as a member it also represents its funded learned societies including ASEASUK which can take advantage of the facilities and networks provided by the Consortium.

Dr Margaret Coldiron (Reading University/ Durham University) organised a symposium at Royal Holloway and King's College London on 'The Body and the Mask in Ancient Theatre Space' in early May 2007. She gave a paper on 'Cross-cultural connections, confluences and contradictions in masked performance'. She was also the organiser for the 2007 conference of the Association for Asian Performance in New Orleans, Louisiana (USA). Margaret convened the seminar on 'The case for the globalisation of theatre studies' at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference, New Orleans and chaired a panel 'Regenerating Ancient Greek theatre in an Asian context: conflicts and connections' at the same conference where she presented a paper: 'Asian performers and Greek masks. At the EUROSEAS conference in Naples in September 2007 she co-convened a panel on 'Tradition and Innovation in Southeast Asian Performance' and delivered a paper on 'The Tantric roots of

Sidha Karya'. Margaret performed with Lila Cita Gamelan at the South Bank Centre 'Overture' weekend Gamelanathon in June 2007.

Adam Tyson who is reading for his PhD at the **University of Leeds** is currently a teaching assistant at Brock University's Department of Political Science, Canada.

Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen (Royal Holloway) is currently completing his book on international performances of Java and Bali during the first half of the 20th century. He made another trip to the US during the summer of 2007 in part to use the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts to collect data for this project. He has also been conducting research on artistic exchange and transnational Indonesian performance today, co-sponsoring a symposium-performance with the Javanese movement artist Suprpto Suryodarmo at Royal Holloway in October 2007.

In October 2006 Matthew was invited to give a lecture on 'The itinerant Indies, or "Java to Jazz"' at the Centre for South East Asian Studies, SOAS, and in December he spoke on 'The itinerant Indies: performing Java and Bali abroad, 1905-1952' at Fusion Cultures: Memory, Migration, [Re]mediation, Mobility, A Multi-Disciplinary Conference, Royal Naval College, Greenwich. In 2007 delivered the following four papers: 'Adult puppetry', a public lecture where he was panel chair at Puppet Animation Festival, Glasgow in April; 'British performances of Java, 1811-1822' at Britain and the Malay World Conference, Royal Asiatic Society in May; 'A

parliament of fools' at the Dynamics Festival, Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham, in June and 'Reflections on gamelan in Europe from RM Jodjana to the present' at the Gamelan Symposium, South Bank Centre, in London in September.

Dr Fiona Kerlogue (Horniman Museum) presented two papers in Singapore in April 2007: 'The batik of Jambi, Sumatra', at the Asian Civilisations Museum, and 'Southeast Asian collections in the Horniman Museum', National University of Singapore. In May she gave a paper on 'Where cultures meet: history of the Malay collections at the Horniman Museum' at the Royal Asiatic Society, in London and in September she convened a panel at the EUROSEAS conference in Naples, on Southeast Asian collections in European museums.

Centre for South-East Asian Studies, SOAS
Professor William Gervase Clarence-Smith presented 15 papers and gave an interview in the last academic year. For 2006 the papers were: 'The rise and fall of locally produced textiles on the Indian Ocean periphery, c.1500-c.1850,' Global Economic History seminar, LSE, October; 'From man-boy eroticism to female genital cutting: Islam, slavery, and sexual practices in Southeast Asia', Centre for Gender Studies Seminar, SOAS, October; 'Islamic science and technology in sub-Saharan Africa, c.1450 to c1850', African History Seminar, SOAS, November, and 'Identity and the spread of beverages around the globe', Centre for Food Studies Seminar, SOAS, December. In 2007 he spoke on 'Islam and slavery in Sub-Saharan Africa', Centre of African Studies Seminar, SOAS,

January; 'Trypanosoma evansi: the global spread of a disease of livestock', Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London, February; 'Theological approaches to slavery and the slave trade', interview on BBC Radio 4, Beyond Belief programme, Manchester, broadcast 5 March 2007; 'Elephants and Islam in history', Royal Asiatic Society, London, March; 'Trickster travels? Natalie Zemon Davis on al-Hasan al-Wazzân, or Leo Africanus', University of Warwick, May; 'Britain and the abolition of slavery in the Malay World', at the Britain and the Malay World symposium, Royal Asiatic Society, May; 'Gustatory habits: from betel chewing to Sufi coffee rituals in Southeast Asia,' at a workshop he co-organised entitled 'Towards a Sensory History of Southeast Asia', British Museum, May; 'Islamic abolitionism in Sub-Saharan Africa,' at a conference on 'African Trajectories of Slavery', SOAS, May; 'British officials and intellectuals in Islamic debates about slavery and its abolition,' keynote address at the 'Second Postgraduate Conference on Imperial and International History', University of Sheffield, May; 'From betel chewing to hot beverages in the Indian and Pacific Oceans: a religious hypothesis', at a workshop entitled 'Eating and Drinking in Culture and Politics', University of Edinburgh, June; 'The "Syrian" diaspora in the Philippines and the wider Indian Ocean', at a workshop on 'Migrants and the Making of Indian Ocean Cultures,' SOAS, July; and 'Islam and female genital cutting in Southeast Asia: the weight of the past', 4th FOKO Conference on Female Genital Cutting, Hanasaari, Finland, September. In October 2007, William spoke on 'Betel-

chewing in Southeast Asia: an ancient habit under threat,' at the Centre of South East Asian Studies seminar, SOAS.

Dr Elizabeth Moore is Head of the Art & Archaeology Department, from January 2007. Elizabeth made two research trips to Burma/Myanmar and Thailand in March and August this year. She presented the following papers in 2007: 'Early Myanmar', at Asia House, London in May, 'Archaeology in Burma', at the Britain-Burma Society, London in June, and 'The Bronze Age to Buddhist landscape: Upper and Lower Myanmar before 1000 AD', at the University of Hawai'i in August.

Dr Kostas Retsikas is on a two-term sabbatical to work on a book manuscript on processes of ethnicity in East Java. He spoke this year: on 'Exploring East Javanese conceptions of the person through Bourdieu's lenses' at 'The Transmission of Knowledge' SOAS Seminar Series, organised by Trevor Marchand, and at the Senior Staff Seminar, Department of Anthropology, Cambridge University. Kostas also gave a paper on 'Other hybridities away from the post-colony: body-persons and encompassment in East Java, Indonesia' at the ICAS conference in August 2007, Kuala Lumpur.

Professor Vladimir Braginsky's current research is on 'Islamic India and the Malay world: problems of literary ties', and 'Hamzah Fansuri and around: traditional Malay Sufi poetry'. In May 2007 he gave a paper on 'R.H. Wilkinson and his views of traditional Malay literature in the light of the present state of the field' at the international seminar on 'Britain and the

Malay World', Royal Asiatic Society, London. In June Vladimir spoke on 'Bersahut-sahatan sepanjang zaman: Perpaduan manusia dan laut dalam puisi Hamzah Fansuri, Kemala dan Latiff Mohidin (Unity of man and the sea in poetry of Hamzah Fansuri, Kemala dan Latiff Mohidin)' at another international seminar on comparative literature in Kuala Lumpur. And in September he attended the 5th EUROSEAS conference in Naples to deliver a paper on 'The sight of multi-splendoured radiance': Lighting effects in Malay love-and-adventure narratives and the Sufi concept of visuality'.

Dr Ben Murtagh convened the Britain and the Malay World international seminar at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, in May 2007. The seminar received funding of £5,000 from the ASEASUK Research Committee. Ben was in Surabaya and Jakarta in July to research queer film and literature. In September he attended the EUROSEAS conference in Naples where he presented a paper on the Indonesian movie, *Coklat Stroberi*.

Dr Justin Watkins is continuing with his work on the Wa-Burmese-Chinese-English dictionary with the manuscript due for completion in 2008. Justin is launching a half unit Basic Khmer language course at SOAS starting this session, signalling the return of Khmer to the SOAS curriculum. There are 14 students enrolled for this course.

PhDs

The following PhD candidates have successfully defended their dissertations: **Rebecca Schaaf (University of Bath)** on 'Developing as one: community groups in the construction of wellbeing in Northeast Thailand' (supervisors: Dr JA McGregor and Dr S Johnson); **Mulaika Hijjas (SOAS)** on 'Victorious princesses and virtuous wives: popular syair from nineteenth-century Riau' (supervisor: Prof Vladimir Braginsky); **Peter Sharrock (SOAS)** on 'The Buddhist pantheon of the Bâyon of Angkor: an historical and art historical reconstruction of the Bâyon temple and its religious and political roots' (supervisor: Dr Elizabeth Moore), **Simon Platten (University of Kent)** on 'The cultural dynamics of agricultural innovation in a Minahasan village' (supervisor: Professor Roy Ellen); **University of Leeds: Nani Suryani Haji Abu Bakar** on 'Brunei's political development between 1966 and 1984: challenges and difficulties over its security and survival' (supervisors: Dr Joern Dosch and Dr Ian Caldwell), and **Vu Le Thai Hoang** on 'The theory of hegemonic stability and Vietnam's quest for benevolent influence in Indochina since the end of the Cold War' (supervisors: Dr Joern Dosch and Dr Caroline Rose); **Wantanee Suntikul (University of Surrey)** on 'The role of political transition in tourism development: the example of Vietnam' (supervisors: Professor Richard Butler and Professor David Airey) and from **University of Hull - Sam Ro Soong Chul** on 'Naming a people: British Frontier Management in Eastern Bengal and the categories of the Kuki-Chin, 1760-1860' (supervisor: Dr Clive Christie), and **Azrai bin Abdullah** on 'From natural economy

to capitalism: the state and economic transformation in Perak, Malaysia, c1800-2000' (supervisor: Professor VT King)

Eds' note: Ro Soong Chul who successfully defended his thesis in September 2007 and Azrai Abdullah who submitted his thesis in late October were the last of the doctoral students registered in the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at Hull University.

CONFERENCE REVIEWS

Britain and the Malay World
Royal Asiatic Society, London
17-18 May 2007

Reviewer: Ooi Keat Gin
Universiti Sains Malaysia

On 31 August 2007 Malaysia celebrated its 50th anniversary of *Merdeka* or independence from British colonial rule. With support from the Research Committee of the Association of South-East Asian Scholars in the United Kingdom (ASEASUK), the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Malaysia and Southeast Asia Research an international seminar 'Britain and the Malay World' was organised by Dr Ben Murtagh and Professor Tony Stockwell at the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) in collaboration with the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS) to offer a forum for scholarly reassessment and discussion of Britain's impact and legacy on insular Southeast Asia. The 'Malay World' generally refers to contemporary Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and southern Thailand and southern Philippines. Some 30 working papers from various disciplines, viz. literature, history, anthropology, film and cinema were presented in 12 panels over this two-day seminar.

Ulrich Kratz's (SOAS) keynote address 'Malay Studies 50 years on' traced the development of Malay studies and

evaluated its impact, and concluded that the future was not encouraging. **Tony Stockwell**, RAS President in his plenary lecture 'Merdeka! Looking back at 31 August, 1957' retraced the steps that led to Malaya's independence. Anecdotal tales and behind-the-scene information provided an insightful perspective of these momentous events.

Simon Smith (University of Hull) spoke on Britain's role in the development of the modern Malay monarchy that has a unique political and social standing in present-day Malaysia whilst **Mary Turnbull** (University of Hong Kong) assessed Anglo-Johor relations from Singapore's establishment (1819) to *Merdeka* (1957). **Ooi Keat Gin** (Universiti Sains Malaysia) evaluated the legacy of the Brooke rajahs and the Colonial Office on the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. **Su Lin Lewis** (University of Cambridge) discussed how English-medium education and English newspapers in Penang spurred political consciousness amongst the multi-ethnic communities. **Nordin Hussin** (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) viewed the interpretation and misrepresentation of history in school textbooks before and after independence in Malaysia. British involvement in the trade union movement in 1950s Malaya was the focus of **Nick White's** (Liverpool John Moores University) presentation. **Hadijah bte Rahmat** (Nanyang Technological University) assessed the long-term impact of British colonial policy on Malay kampung in Singapore whereas Zahara Othman, a journalist based in London shared her 20-year interactions with the Malay sailor community of Liverpool

touching on their history, language, life stories, and sense of identity. **Ian Caldwell** (University of Leeds) appraised Alexander Dalrymple's confidential report, apparently the only British account about South Sulawesi of the mid-18th century. **William Gervase Clarence Smith** (SOAS) claimed that the abolition of slavery in Islamic insular Southeast Asia created heated debates amongst Muslims in contrast to conventionally held belief that it had scant repercussions. Moreover British colonial officials and intellectuals also entered the discourse.

Jelani Harun (Universiti Sains Malaysia) examined the concept of justice in *adat* laws drawn from Malay tradition and Islamic thought whilst **Svetlana Tkhor** (Russian Academy of Sciences) looked at the contribution of British scholars and colonial bureaucrats in the study of *Undang-Undang Melaka* and *Undang-Undang Laut*. **Seda Kouznetsova** (independent scholar) uncovered interesting features in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (BL MSS Jav. 29), a Mataram-Kartasura chronicle in the collection of Colin Mackenzie, an avid collector of Javanese manuscripts. Utilising a piece from a British scholar-bureaucrat and from two Malay writers, **Muhammad Haji Salleh** (Universiti Sains Malaysia; Harvard University) compared the narrative of Pahang (the largest state in West Malaysia) from various perspectives. **Jan van der Putten** (National University of Singapore) contrasted Malay images of the British in trips to Britain during the colonial and post-colonial period, from favourable comments to the unspeakable. **Robert Hampson** (Royal Holloway) looked at

western women travellers (accompanying women, solo travellers, and privileged tourists) in the Malay world.

Three papers dealt with the contribution and legacy of British scholars on Malay language and literature: Diana Carroll (Australian National University) on William Marsden (1754-1836), **Vladimir Braginsky** (SOAS) on R. J. Wilkinson (1867-1941), and **Rusli Abdul Ghani** (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Negara) on R. O. Winstedt (1878-1966). Returning to Wilkinson, Annabel Teh Gallop (British Library) utilised his 'Notes on Malay letter-writing' to analyse the formal structure of Malay documents. Ros Mahwati Ahmad Zakaria (Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia) turned to the contribution of Mubin Sheppard who helped transform Malay performing and decorative arts for Malaysia's national heritage.

Christina Granroth (University of Cambridge) in looking at 18th- and 19th-century discourse on the 'Malay race', argued that the emergence of 19th century racial theories was a consequence of Britain's colonial interaction with the Malay world. **Wan Zawawi Ibrahim** (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) provided a synthesis of the contribution of colonial and indigenous anthropologists in the analysis of a changing Malay peasantry. **Emma Reisz** (Queen's University Belfast; University of Oxford) contended that economic and development policy particularly in agriculture was an important concern amongst early left-leaning Malay nationalists in British Malaya.

'1957', the first docu-drama on Malaya's struggle for *Merdeka* from a Malaysian viewpoint was discussed by **Shuhalmi Baba** (Persona Pictures Sdn Bhd) and **Zawiyah Baba** (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia). Utilising Malay films of the 1950s and 1960s as historical source materials for the period **Timothy P. Barnard** (National University of Singapore) revealed the content and the influence of cultural activists and business concerns in the early development of the Malay film industry. **Hassan Abdul Muthalib** (formerly Malayan Film Unit) through four documentaries and docu-dramas showed how the cinema depicted a represented reality of the Malays that was absorbed into the collective memory and accepted as reality. Switching to theatre and to Java during the brief British occupation (1811-16), **Matthew Isaac Cohen** (Royal Holloway) used three stage productions to claim that these interpretations of Java not only offered entertainment and virtual travel for the western audience but also touched on pertinent concerns such as social class, human rights, gender, and systems of governance that remained relevant to the present.

Fiona Kerlogue (Horniman Museum) highlighted the Museum's collections from the Malay world (some 600 items accumulated over 150 years) that revealed a myriad of relationships and interactions between the British and the peoples of the region. The economic importance of non-timber jungle products in British Malaya and British North Borneo as well as the work of botanists, collectors and foresters

were examined by **Nicholas Martland** (SOAS).

A pre-seminar activity witnessed several participants being given a conducted visit to the British Library to view a variety of manuscripts in the Raffles collection. **Annabel Teh Gallop** who organised the visit gave a briefing on the history of the Raffles collection.

Narrating the nation: Thirty years of

A history of Singapore

Asian Studies Centre

St Antony's College

University of Oxford

9 June 2007

Reviewer: P.J. Thum
University of Oxford

The year 2007 marks the 30th anniversary of Professor **Mary Turnbull's** *A history of Singapore*, a landmark work which has defined the field of Singapore historiography since its publication. The conference sponsored by the Asian Studies Centre, St Antony's College, was held in order to both honour Mary Turnbull and to consider the past and future of the historiography of Singapore.

The conference opened with an informal evening reception attended by the conference participants, who came from Europe, North America, and Singapore. A convivial atmosphere pervaded the reception, which reflected the friendly and

constructive debate that would characterise the presentations the next day.

The conference proper was begun by Mary Turnbull herself, who reflected on the past 30 years and spoke briefly on the circumstances which surrounded the writing of the original edition of the book. Looking forward to the impending publication of the third edition of the book, she began by explaining why she retitled the book *A history of modern Singapore* to more accurately reflect the scope of her book in the light of growing research into pre-colonial Singapore. Professor Turnbull then discussed the main revisions to the book, going through the book period by period to discuss changes. The main foci of her revisions are on the beginning, ending, and World War II sections.

Karl Hack (Open University) responded by discussing the position of the book within the historiography of Singapore. Dwelling on the main theme of education in Singapore, he drew upon his own experience as a lecturer in Singapore to discuss how the book was used and how Singaporeans interact with the book, highlighting the importance of education in shaping post-1990s Singapore.

The second panel was opened by **Tim Harper** (University of Cambridge), who gave an overview of a panoply of voices excluded from the authorised national narrative of Singapore's history. In particular, he highlighted the voices of the left, arguing that the dominant narrative needed to be challenged and reassessed. He was followed by **Nicole Tarulevicz** (Cleveland State University) who provided

a modern examination of the use of history through a study of the website <yesterday.sg> **Seah Su Lyn** (University of Cambridge) concluded the panel with a leap back in time to attendance at the multi-racial nature of Anglican church attendance in Singapore.

After lunch, **Jason Lim** (University of Western Australia) and **Sikko Visscher** (University of Amsterdam) both presented Chinese perspectives on Singapore history. Keeping with the theme of Singapore as a regional and global city, Lim demonstrated the writing of Singapore history using non-English language and non-Singaporean sources, by delving into Chinese and Taiwanese archives to show the relationship of tea merchants in Singapore to China and Taiwan, and more broadly, the Southeast Asian tea trade. Visscher, on the other hand, looked at the rise and fall and rise again of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and its shifting role in Singapore.

The conference then took a turn into the physical world. **Lilian Chee** (National University of Singapore) took us through architectural history, cultural heritage and shifting notions of identity by discussing two site-specific historical projects – a Straits Chinese shophouse in Singapore's Chinatown, earmarked as a lived-in Peranakan museum and the colonial building of the Malayan Railway Station in Tanjong Pagar. **Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells** (University of Cambridge) followed with a short discussion of the convergence between natural science and history.

The final panel of the day again featured minority voices. **Yasuko Hassall Kobayashi** (Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore) discussed minority agency by looking at Malays in Singapore and Malay discourses in *Berita Harian* relating to the 'Ubah Sikup' (changing attitudes) campaign of the 1970s. **Laurent Metzger** (University of La Rochelle) also looked at Malay writing, analysing the novels of Shamsuddin Salleh in the 1930s to produce a new dimension to the historical record surrounding the Comintern agent, Joseph Ducroux. Through this case study, Metzger suggested ways in which historical novels can add to our knowledge of history.

Finally, Karl Hack concluded with a discussion of the newly re-opened Singapore History Museum. After a brief introduction of the renovations, Hack discussed the goals of the Museum's presentation, its methodology and the resultant impression of history, before concluding with a discussion of its failures and successes.

Hack's discussion formed, with Mary Turnbull's presentation, fitting bookends to the conference as they served as a reminder of the importance and difficulty of communicating and teaching history well, and that the ultimate purpose of history is to expand and broaden the horizons of those who encounter it. The papers presented at the conference and the discussion that ensued served that purpose well. The conference organisers, Emma Reisz (Queen's University Belfast) and P.J. Thum (University of Oxford) would like to thank all the presenters and attendees as

well as everyone who helped make the conference a success.

South-East Asia Library Group

Annual conference
14-15 September 2007
Naples

Reviewer: Jana Igunma
British Library

The 2007 SEALG annual meeting was at the University of Naples L'Orientale, in conjunction with the 2007 EUROSEAS conference.

The Friday programme began with a visit to the library of the Department of Asian Studies at the University L'Orientale. Dr Giuseppe De Marco from the Department gave us a very interesting tour of the library at the Palazzo Corigliano, which is certainly a highlight of Naples architecture. We were allowed to view a number of Thai manuscripts and rare archival material written and collected by G.E. Gerini, the father of Siamese archaeology.

The library tour was followed by the annual meeting at the Palazzo Mediterraneo, the main EUROSEAS conference site. This year we had two new participants: Christopher Miller (Arizona State University, Tempe) and Doris Jedamski (Leiden University). Other participants were: Sud Chonchirdsin and Jana Igunma (British Library), Nicholas Martland (SOAS), Louise Pichard-Bertaux

(CNRS/University of Marseille), Xiyi Huang (University of Leeds), Per Hansen and Erik R. Skaaning (NIAS, Copenhagen), and Giuseppe De Marco (University of Naples L'Orientale).

Presentations at the SEALG conference were given by Sud Chonchirdsin on 'Vietnamese newspapers and periodicals at the British Library – the Vietnam War period', Christopher Miller on his field research of 'ICT infrastructure and its affects on information exchange in Myanmar (Burma)', Louise Pichard-Bertaux on the 'Network of librarians working on Asia in France', an activity of French Southeast Asianist librarians running a useful information portal at <http://docasie.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/> and finally, Jana Igunma gave a short report of her trip to the National Library of Thailand last year, and that library's project on digitalising Thai rare books.

On Friday evening we were invited to the EUROSEAS closing ceremony and conference dinner at the University of Naples L'Orientale, where we had the opportunity to meet other scholars of Southeast Asian studies, and publishers. On Saturday we joined EUROSEAS members on an excursion to the archaeological site of Pompeii.

We thank Dr Pietro Masina and Dr Giuseppe De Marco from the University of Naples L'Orientale for their kind support in organising the meeting.

4th FOKO Conference

(Nordic Network for Research on
Female Circumcision)
Espoo
Finland
7-8 September 2007

Panel: Female Genital Cutting on the periphery: historical and contemporary discourses and practices in Islamic Southeast Asia

Convenors: Claudia Merli (Uppsala
University, Sweden) and William G.
Clarence-Smith (SOAS, UK)

Reviewer: Claudia Merli

The 4th FOKO Conference Female Genital Cutting in the Past and Today organised by the Finnish League for Human Rights addressed a number of issues related to female genital cutting and mutilation (FGC and FGM), such as policies in Africa and the West, changing perceptions, birth care and work against FGC/FGM in exile. As scholarly attention has traditionally focused on the practice of infibulation and clitoridectomy in Africa and the Middle East, the proposed panel analysing the less-known practice of FGC in Southeast Asia represented an interesting novelty, and it was therefore scheduled as a plenary session. Among the Muslim populations of Southeast Asia FGC is usually limited to puncturing, scratching, or slight cutting of the clitoris or genital area, amounting at times to a purely symbolic gesture. FGC is practised in Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Thailand and the Philippines, and usually

performed on small girls (and adult women who convert to Islam).

With 'Islam and Female Genital Cutting in Southeast Asia' **William G. Clarence-Smith** introduced the audience to the debate involving different Islamic schools of law on the interpretation of textual sources. The Sunni Shafi'i school (which predominates in Southeast Asia) recognises FGC as obligatory, in contrast with the position held by other schools for which it is either recommended or acceptable. Clarence-Smith situated the practice in the broader historical changes affecting religious discourses in the region. He pointed to the rising influence of the reformists on the one hand (questioning FGC as well as other local customary laws or *adat*), and the literalists or more 'fundamentalist' view on the other hand, possibly stressing a more extensive intervention based on the idea of reducing women's 'excessive lust'. As these two interpretations constitute an internal religious debate, external efforts to eradicate the local practice of FGC could be perceived by some as an attack against Islam *tout court*.

Basilica Dyah Putranti (Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia) presented the paper 'To Islamize, be a real woman or commercial practices? History, meanings, and challenges of FGC in Indonesia.' She analysed the development of the practice among the local populace in order to shed light on the presence of FGC in Javanese court traditions pre-dating the arrival of Islam. For both females and males undergoing genital operations, local Islamic and Javanese meanings stress the

idea of purification. In Islam this 'cleansing' entails the possibility to practice as a devote Muslim, in the Javanese syncretistic and mystic tradition it attains the removal of the negative influences originating from birth. The increasing medicalisation brings in changes in the performance of FGC; and the offer of a package of medical services introduces a new 'commercial' dimension.

In direct dialogue with the previous paper, **Subhani Kusuma Dewi** (Gadja Mada University, Yogyakarta) presented 'The role of ulama in Indonesia contesting FGC and advocating women's sexual identity', describing the vain attempts of medical personnel in Jetis village to either increase hygienic procedures of the traditional practitioners or end the practice. Two local *ulamas* support contrasting positions, both referring to Islamic texts. The first ulama, a *modin* leading the family celebrations following FGC, bases his support on *Hadith Abu Dawud* (on MGC.) The other, an *ustadz* and teacher in an Islamic boarding school, denies the existence of any reference to FGC both in the Qur'an and *Hadith*. The latter also considers the magic Javanese element of purification as extraneous to Islam. The research examines the intersection of different political discourses at the local level.

Claudia Merli closed the panel with a paper on "'Sunat for girls" in Satun Province, Southern Thailand: its relation to traditional midwifery, male circumcision and other medical practices'. Among the Thai- and Malay-speaking Muslims living in this area, the traditional midwife (alternatively called *mootamjae* in Thai or

bidan in Malay) performs a mild form of FGC on baby girls. Men question the practice considering it both un-Islamic and un-modern, whereas women generally uphold it. In evident contrast to this debate and to the privacy surrounding FGC ritual, large public male circumcision rituals take place once a year. Merli contextualised both practices in the stream of increasing medicalisation of birth, which while depriving traditional midwives and women of their agency and authority, performs in hospitals other forms of routine genital cutting without apparent contestation.

In relation to the interest that emerged from the panel for a combined analysis of the practices and discourses surrounding FGC and MGC, Claudia Merli screened her ethnographic film, *Religious rituals and anatomic theatres. A male public circumcision in Satun, Southern Thailand*.

CALL FOR PAPERS

24th Aseasuk conference
Liverpool John Moores University
21-22 June 2008

If you are interested in convening a panel or presenting a paper please contact Dr Ben Murtagh at bm10@soas.ac.uk for the former and panel convenors for the latter. Below is a list of proposed panels.

Convenor: Prof V.T. King

Email: V.T.King@leeds.ac.uk

**The middle class in Southeast Asia:
consumption, lifestyles and identities**

With the rapid economic development and modernisation in Southeast Asia, transformations in occupational structures and the increasing access to education and training, the new middle class is appearing ever more frequently on social science research agendas. The comparative research coordinated by Michael Hsiao on 'the middle classes' in East and Southeast Asia has provided us with a range of useful issues for investigation, including boundaries; social characteristics; lifestyles and identities; and political views and activities. An interesting dimension is that significant elements of the middle class are of relatively recent origin and from modest backgrounds. How do they express their middle classness? What are the world-views, identities and lifestyles of young middle class people and the second-generation middle class? Can we talk of 'a' middle class or 'multiple middle classes'? Are there differences between the middle class in different Southeast Asian countries, particularly with the emergence

of consumerism and the influence of the market and globalization in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos?

The focus of the panel is on consumption practices, lifestyles and identities and also seeks to develop certain of the themes raised by Richard Robison and David Goodman in their work on 'the new rich' and Joel Kahn's work on culturalisation and Southeast Asian identities.

Convenor: Dr Annabel Gallop

Email: Annabel.Gallop@bl.uk

Indonesian/Malay manuscript studies

Papers are welcomed on all aspects of the study of the writing traditions of maritime Southeast Asia. Of particular interest would be contributions on manuscript illumination and the art of book; documents and chancery practice in the courts of the archipelago; Islamic manuscripts from the southern Philippines and the majority-Buddhist states of mainland Southeast Asia; and previously undescribed manuscript collections.

**Convenors: Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen
& Dr Laura Noszlopy**

Email: Matthew.Cohen@rhul.ac.uk

**Southeast Asian arts in transnational
perspective**

Studies of the performing arts and visual cultures of Southeast Asia have until recently emphasised local origins and significance over international links and cross-cultural flows. This academic focus is at odds with the region's long history of intercultural exchange, and the interest of many Southeast Asian arts workers in

situating their practice in relation to extra-local configurations. This panel examines the arts of Southeast Asia and their dynamics of movement and exchange across national boundaries, with an emphasis on the period of WWII to the present. Possible topics include: cultural diplomacy, intercultural collaboration, local artistic practice in relation to the global arts market, performance and art for tourism, diasporic arts, the international circulation of mediated performance (via the internet, VCD etc), ASEAN art projects and teaching Southeast Asian arts outside the region.

Convenor: Dr Gerard Clarke

Email: G.Clarke@swansea.ac.uk

Civil society in Southeast Asia: new themes

Civil society has been a significant locus of concern in the field of South-East Asian Studies for almost two decades now and this panel will consider recent research which makes a theoretical or empirical contribution to this evolving literature. The panel organiser welcomes papers that look at civil society from one or more of the following perspectives, loosely interpreted:

- *Macro*: the changing nature of civil society across the South-East Asian region and the political, economic and social consequences that arise, for instance in the context of globalisation, economic integration, or political mobilization;
- *Meso*: the (changing) nature or structure of civil society in individual Southeast Asian nations, including the political, economic or social drivers behind any reported change;

- *Micro*: the activities of individual civil society organisations (CSOs) or groups of CSOs and their political, economic or social implications.

Convenor: Dr James Warren

Email: jameswarren23@googlemail.com

Sinful pleasures: attitudes towards and depictions of vices in Southeast Asia

Humans have long indulged in activities and substances that while stimulating and pleasurable also have detrimental effects upon the participant or user, especially if done to excess. These activities and substances include commonplace habits such as gambling, smoking, and drinking alcohol; they are often addictive and in the West are collectively grouped together as 'vices'. Most religions have injunctions against some or all of these forms of behaviour. Their dichotomous nature means secular attitudes towards these vices are diverse and often contradictory; ranging from tolerance, and sometimes even encouragement, to condemnation and criminalisation. In turn, these differing responses are conditioned by political, economic and cultural factors that change over time. Crucially, because of the potential for contradictory attitudes, vices frequently become areas of contestation between, for example, the state and its citizens or the colonisers and the colonised. Studies of attitudes and policies towards vices can thus reveal much about the society or culture in which they occur. South East Asia is no different in this regard but to date this topic remains a little explored area. This panel seeks papers dealing with any aspect, past or present, of attitudes to and portrayals of vices in

Southeast Asia.

Convenor: Dr Ben Murtagh

Email: bm10@soas.ac.uk

Emerging scholars panel

This panel presents a space for doctoral students working on any subject relating to South East Asia to present their research. It is an opportunity to try out new presentation techniques, to gain experience in presenting papers and also to meet colleagues working across the UK and beyond. All this is in a positive and supportive environment.

Convenor: Dr Nick White

Email: N.J.White@ljmu.ac.uk

Liverpool and Southeast Asia

2008 is Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, and the city's council has proudly identified Liverpool as the 'World in One City'. In both popular and academic discourse that 'World' is usually assumed to mean the 'Atlantic' given Liverpool's dominant role in the 18th-century slave trade, and its 19th-century centrality in European emigration to North America. This panel is not seeking to polemically downgrade 'Atlanticism' in Liverpool's modern and contemporary history. But the papers presented here do hope to emphasise another Scouse past and present, one which is intimately tied up with Asian trade, shipping and migration. In this context, it is apposite that ASEASUK's 2008 conference is taking place in Liverpool. Liberated from both the Atlantic slave trade and the East India Company's monopolies on trade to 'The East', Liverpool merchants had a central

impact in the 'opening up' and European colonisation of Southeast Asia from the early-nineteenth century. Here was a 'provincial' significance which challenges Cain and Hopkins's focus on the City of London in the expansion of British imperial interests. Admittedly, the grand Liverpool-Asia trading concerns shifted their centre of operations to London as the 19th century progressed. Nevertheless, Liverpool could still boast the headquarters of the leading British shipping companies to Southeast Asia as late as 1980. Southeast Asian imports – rubber particularly – have had a profound influence on Merseyside's economic life until very recently. Moreover, significant, if not marginalised and forgotten, Southeast Asian communities remain in Liverpool to the present day.

SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

Asia Research Centre, LSE

16 October 2007

Room S221, 4.00 to 6.00 pm

All welcome

Roundtable discussion on 'recent events in Burma'

Chair: Professor John Sidel, LSE

Participants:

Dr Jurgen Haacke, LSE

Dr Gustaaf Houtman, Anthropology

Today

U Thuyein Kyaw-Zaw, BBC World Service,
Burma Section

Asian Studies Centre, Oxford University

St Antony's College

Deakin Room, Founder's Building

Thursdays - 5.00 to 6.30 pm

All welcome
Email: asian@sant.ox.ac.uk
Tel/fax: +44 (0)1865-274559
Website: www.sant.ox.ac.uk/asian/

1 November
Prof John Sidel (LSE)
The Islamist threat in Southeast Asia:
Much ado about nothing?

8 November
Dr Ashley Thompson (Leeds University)
Forgetting to remember: Contemporary
interventions into Cambodia's terrible but
unfinished history

15 November
Prof Duncan McCargo (Leeds University)
Why Patani Muslims rebel: understanding
the Southern Thai conflict

29 November
Prof Janice Stargardt (Cambridge
University)
Cores and peripheries: Pre- and early
modern Asian maritime trade

**Centre for South-East Asian Studies,
SOAS**

G51, Main Building, Thursdays (unless
otherwise stated) 5.00 to 7.00 pm
All welcome
Contact: Ben Murtagh (bm10@soas.ac.uk)
or Jane Savory (js64@soas)

4 October 2007
Prof William Gervase Clarence-Smith
(SOAS)
Betel-chewing in Southeast Asia: an
ancient habit under threat
Tuesday, 9 October 2007, Room B102
Brunei Gallery

Dr Kullada Kesboonchoo-Mead
Sarit and US-led development in Thailand

18 October 2007
Dr Mulaika Hijjas
Women's literacy in the Malay World

25 October 2007
Dr Raj Brown (Royal Holloway)
The uniqueness of Southeast Asian Islam:
the view on the Awaqf

1 November 2007
Prof Anne Booth (SOAS)
The economic performance of the ASEAN
economies since 1997

15 November 2007
Prof Jonathan Rigg (Durham University)
Re-configuring rural spaces, re-making
rural lives: a view from mainland
Southeast Asia

22 November 2007
Dr Monica Janowski (SOAS/University of
Greenwich)
Title: TBC

29 November 2007
Dr Tess Do (University of Melbourne)
Le Hoang's (fallen) angels: women, gender
and power in *Bargirls* (2003), *Street
Cinderella* (2004) and *Thieves of heart* (2005)

Centre of Gender Studies, SOAS

6 December 2007
Dr Ben Murtagh (SOAS)
Lesbians in the metropolis: fatal attraction
in two Indonesian movies from the early
1990s
13 December 2007

Prof Stephen O'Harrow (University of Hawaii)

Title: TBC

25th Aseasuk conference

Swansea University

11-13 September 2009

Contact: Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland

Email: F.Hughes-Freeland@swansea.ac.uk

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BOOK REVIEWS



KYAW YIN HLAING, ROBERT H. TAYLOR & TIN MAUNG MAUNG THAN (eds)

Myanmar: Beyond politics to societal imperatives

Singapore: ISEAS, 2005. 192 pp. ISBN 981-230-300-6, US\$25.90.

<<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/>>

Reviewer: **Sandra Dudley**
University of Leicester

This useful book is the outcome of a workshop, 'Myanmar Issues and Myanmar Views: Searching for a Unified Perspective' held in both Singapore and Myanmar (Burma) in 2004.¹ It includes chapters on the historical development of the contemporary political situation (Taylor), Myanmar's foreign relations (Ganesan), ethnic politics (Smith), economics and society (Steinberg), health issues and development (Safman), civil bureaucracy (Mutebi), and a concluding chapter on the challenges for Myanmar's transition to a better future (Pederson). Its contributors and editors, with the exception of sociologist of health Rachel Safman, are principally political scientists and analysts: this is not the place to look if you are in search of anthropologically nuanced, detailed examinations of particular issues and views in Myanmar. Nonetheless, this volume makes an important and

¹ Throughout this review, I use 'Myanmar' rather than 'Burma', in accordance with the volume under discussion.

stimulating contribution to the more macro-level perspective with which it is concerned – a significance that is reinforced by the continuity of value of the book's discussions subsequent to the recent, 2007 demonstrations in Myanmar. Indeed, Robert Taylor's opening argument that without comprehending the historical processes by which Myanmar has come to be in the condition it is today it is impossible to understand the current situation and potential solutions to it, seems now to be even more pertinent than when it was written. Such renewed pertinence is especially applicable too to Ganesan's discussion, within his broader chapter on Myanmar's foreign relations, of the importance of the Myanmar-China relationship, and to the wider point made by most of this book's authors that the West's policy of isolating Myanmar has not been effective in bringing about positive political and socio-economic change.

Taylor's opening chapter sets a tone for the entire book, in which contributors seek both to explicate and historically contextualise aspects of Myanmar today and to explore potential sustainable solutions which go beyond the various simplistic, democratic or authoritarian 'recipes for change' that have caused so much strife and suffering in post-colonial Myanmar. Taylor's own chapter emphasises such factors as the politicised and misleading nature of the very language one chooses to discuss Myanmar's ethnic and cultural diversity (a point reinforced from a different angle in Smith's chapter on the ethnic situation), the experience of colonial rule, and various episodes in the post-colonial era. His

emphasis on the historical development of the language of ethnic politics and its associated problems over the past century or more is particularly important – though its analytical position is arguably closer to that of the Bamar majority rather than any ethnic minority perspective.

Indeed, ethnic issues and perspectives are arguably more marginal to this volume than is proportionate to the demographic, socio-political – and, as Smith's chapter makes clear, humanitarian – realities inside Myanmar. Smith's chapter centres on the ethnic minorities, and Pederson rightly and repeatedly refers to them in his more general paper, but within the remainder of the book the ethnic groups figure only briefly and tangentially. Yet in this book – and much other extant analysis on Myanmar and elsewhere, come to that – the important political science points would be deepened and strengthened by greater underpinning with anthropological and cultural historical insights into the formations and reformations of fluid ethnic and other 'identities'. Smith mentions Leach's seminal work, but he and the other authors ignore the increasing volume of more recent scholarship in this area. Other contemporary work that might have augmented arguments such as Pederson's on the social embeddedness and culturally constituted nature of political behaviour in Myanmar, and his separate points about information flows and relationships with the wider world, is also largely absent from the chapter bibliographies. To put it simply, it seems sad that political science on the one hand and social anthropology and cultural history on the other, are still so little interlinked. More such

interlinkages would greatly enrich this volume's – and many wider – attempts to understand the socio-cultural issues of Myanmar today.

Nonetheless, this remains a book of considerable merit. As Taylor writes, 'finding a solution to [Myanmar's extensive economic and social problems] will not be easy unless the politics of the past are overcome and a new approach to addressing Myanmar's critical issues' is found (p. 25). This book goes some way to seeking to do just this, and for that it is worth a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in Myanmar and her future.

MARY P. CALLAHAN

Political authority in Burma's ethnic minority states: devolution, occupation, and coexistence
Singapore: ISEAS co-published with East-West Center, 2007. xvi + 94 pp. ISBN 978-981-230-462-9, 978-981-230-463-6, US\$10.
<<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/>>

Reviewer: V.T. King
University of Leeds

Mary Callahan's booklet in the Policy Studies series of the East-West Center is a timely addition to the political science literature on this troubled country. The East-West Center was established by the US Congress in 1960 'to strengthen understanding and relations between the United States and the countries of the Asia Pacific', whilst the Washington Center, founded in September 2001, seeks to bring

forward the East-West Center's mission, specifically to build 'a peaceful and prosperous Asia Pacific community through substantive programming activities focused on the themes of conflict reduction, political change in the direction of open, accountable, and participatory politics, and American understanding of and engagement in Asia Pacific affairs'.

This publication on the ethnic minority states of Burma is part of a wider programme of study funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York which commenced in July 2005 to examine internal conflicts and nation-building across a range of countries and regions including southern Thailand, Nepal, northeast India, and Sri Lanka. It is in turn part of an even more ambitious programme which has also been examining minority issues and nation-state-building in China (Tibet and Xinjiang), Indonesia (Aceh and Papua) and the southern Philippines (the Moro Muslims). Callahan's work therefore finds company in an emerging literature on the ethnic minority 'hotspots' of Asia. Her booklet has a specifically policy or practical objective and it has to be read with that in mind; it is to explore strategies and solutions to address, manage and resolve political and military conflict. Her publication is also in an important sense a collective effort because as part of the programme, study groups of scholars and practitioners were established for each region. Each country or regional group met on two occasions to consider and debate the issues and also interacted with policy-oriented think-tanks and held a public forum. Callahan has brought these

collective deliberations together and provided an analytical context within which we can attempt to get to grips with Burma's depressing record of inter-ethnic strife.

Overall Callahan's analysis is a thoughtful attempt to understand the contemporary and current situation in some of Burma's constituent states. She is not attempting a comprehensive review rather she is trying to impose some sort of order and understanding on empirical confusion, even chaos. She finds Mark Duffield's concept of 'an emerging political complex' useful in this exercise. The sheer complexity, fluidity and endurance of ethnic conflicts in Burma make her task especially difficult. A measure of the difficulties is demonstrated in Callahan's preliminary discussion of the terminological and conceptual issues involved in analysing the Burmese situation: dispute surrounds the terms state or states, government, country, border regions or areas, periphery, margins, ethnic state, ethnic minority, nationalities, national races, and, as we know, even Burma and Myanmar. Callahan's vocabulary expresses this problem with constant references to not only 'complexity', but also 'variation', 'vagueness', 'ambiguity', and the 'shifting', 'flexible', 'multilayered' character of local political circumstances.

At times the reader is uncertain whether or not for Callahan Burma constitutes a state, though the brutal and vicious way in which the junta has been prepared to deal with recent popular protest suggests that it manages to control something even if it

does not have the legitimacy and authority to do so. Callahan notes that a common economic and financial system does not operate in Burma; nor, has there ever been anything approaching a national identity; nor, for obvious reasons, is there a commonly agreed way for administering and governing the country; nor has there been a regular system of conducting censuses and gathering data; and finally people's everyday lives and relations, especially in the ethnic minority states, are more often than not conducted outside rather than within Burma's borders. The lack of any effective form of border control and the substantial movement of people (traffickers, traders, workers, refugees, armed combatants, travellers, media and NGO personnel), goods and commodities, and capital across Burma's porous borders do not suggest a state-like presence. And yet Callahan argues that 'the central state flexes its muscles throughout much of Burma, changing the behaviour of elites and masses alike even in places where it has to negotiate with and accommodate nonstate actors' (p. 5). In addition a very large number of families in Burma have members who are employed in the armed forces, government agencies and the government-sponsored mass organisation (the Union Solidarity and Development Association, USDA) and thus presumably have some allegiance to those who provide them with some sort of livelihood.

In order to capture the circumstances of the ethnic minority states Callahan arrives at a three-fold classification of relations between 'the national state and locally-based, often nonstate actors' (p. xiii) which, she argues, has emerged or perhaps one

might say is emerging since 1988 and since the junta concluded ceasefires with various of the insurgent groups. These comprise (1) *near devolution* of power 'to networks of former insurgent leaders, traditional leaders, business-people, and traders' or 'warlord-like ceasefire groups' (in the Wa regions and in the Kokang region of Shan State) where the government presence is limited; (2) *military occupation* by the State Peace and Development Council, the armed forces, and various government agencies (in northern Rakhine State and the Kayah [Karenni] and Kayin [Karen] States), where the authorities are 'dominant and oppressive'; and finally (3) *coexistence* among a range of actors including religious groups, ceasefire groups (with current and emerging leaders), NGO personnel, international organizations, business leaders or operators, traders, local leaders of the state-sponsored USDA, and government officials (in the Pao region of southern Shan State and part of northern Shan State, much of Kachin State, and parts of Kayin [Karen] and Mon State) (pp. xiv-xv). For the purposes of conflict management and resolution Callahan argues that peace-makers and mediators, whoever these are but presumably they are primarily representatives of the international community, have to attempt to establish working relations with the leaders of these various groups. The patterns of authority 'will have to be addressed, accommodated, incorporated, or restructured in order to move from war and truce to sustainable peace' (p. 50). There would also seem to be better prospects in areas where there are already civil society groups operating.

Although I appreciate the difficulties of classifying and bringing order to these complexities, the various social, political and economic groups identified seem themselves to be somewhat indeterminate and ill-defined. Moreover, Callahan's three major categories of political relations seem not to be very clearly distinguishable, with that of *coexistence* shading into the other two, both in time and space. Of course, we would expect this of classificatory systems which are attempting to capture a complex and shifting reality on the ground. Given the recent events in the majority Burman areas of the country one cannot but be pessimistic, but Callahan has, in what is an informative, succinct and clearly written document given us some options and possibilities to ponder. She accepts that solutions, if they are to be found, need to be specific to particular circumstances in particular locations. Yet one major difficulty which adds to one's pessimism and with which Callahan concludes her analysis is that 'all of Burma is ruled by one armed group or another' and therefore 'any kind of sustainable peace will necessarily involve the disarmament and demobilization of large numbers of soldiers'. Even in the very unlikely event of this happening how could the economy 'absorb what will certainly be between 100,000 and 200,000 unemployed, demobilized soldiers'? (p. 53).

WIL O. DIJK

Seventeenth-century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680

Singapore: Singapore University Press and NIAS Press, 2006. xviii + 348 pp. (plus a CD-rom). ISBN 87-91114-69-1, pb £15.99; 978-87-91114-69-4.

<<http://niaspress.dk/>>

Reviewer: William G. Clarence-Smith
School of Oriental and African Studies

At the heart of this book there lies a CD-rom, containing a PDF file with a wonderful run of Dutch figures on Burmese maritime trade from 1634 to 1680. After this statistical feast, readers may find the main text somewhat of a disappointment. Wil Dijk is a mature scholar, who came to doctoral work late, after a childhood in Burma and Japan, internment in a Japanese camp in Sumatra, and a wandering life as a Dutch diplomat's wife. Her text is essentially a rambling and unfocused commentary on her statistics. She weaves backwards and forwards chronologically, periodically introduces extensive sections of 'background,' tucks away crucial substantive information in long end-notes, and indulges in sudden breaks in her logical or narrative flow. At times this almost reads like transcribed card-catalogue entries. There is much repetition, even of identical citations, and the text is peppered by infelicities of language, including the surprising appearance of 'moose' among the Burmese fauna (p. 23). There is no real central message or theme, and the author makes a number of dubious assertions and

contradictory statements. There are stridently revisionist claims, aimed mainly at the late D.G.E. Hall, but it is far from clear that they always hit their mark.

Thus, Dijk claims that the Dutch East India Company (VOC) did not sell firearms to the Burmese, and showed no interest in manufacturing gunpowder in Burma. Later, however, the reader learns that the Dutch gave firearms to Burmese monarchs as 'gifts and favours'. As such 'donations' were expected and regular preconditions for trading in other goods, Dijk's claim is greatly weakened. Moreover the Burmese eagerly imported saltpetre from the Dutch in Pulicat, to manufacture their own gunpowder. Surprisingly, Dijk says nothing about alleged Mughal pressure on the VOC to cease arming a competitor for control of Bengal and Assam, on pain of facing exclusion from a much larger market in India, even though this may have accounted for subterfuges in modes of supply.

There is a prominent argument that the VOC's trade with Burma was both substantial and beneficial, despite repeated Dutch jeremiads as to its unprofitability. And yet, Dijk herself abundantly documents the formidable and arbitrarily fluctuating political obstacles to trade that Burmese monarchs erected: high tariffs, administered prices, demands for gifts and extended credit, restrictive royal monopolies and monopsonies, prohibitions on dealing in certain goods, a ban on entering the overland trade to China, restrictions on travel, a cumbersome currency, royal controls over labour, delays in authorising departures from ports, the

routine disarming of Dutch ships in ports, and a prohibition on children of mixed unions leaving the country. With the removal of the capital to Ava, these problems generally worsened. Despite all this, Dijk argues that the company only closed down its Burmese installations because it ceased to be interested in intra-Asian trade as a whole. This is a considerable exaggeration, and it signally fails explain why the VOC sought to re-enter Burmese trade in the 1740s and 1750s.

Comments on currency and mining are also confusing. Dijk claims that there were no imports of silver, despite later showing that some came from Yunnan. She also insists that Hall was wrong in stating that silver did not circulate, but does not clearly explain for which transactions it was used. The section on ruby mines is detailed and interesting, but her account of the labour system is contradictory. At one point she states that workers were paid a percentage of the yield, but in other places she describes arbitrarily determined royal 'gifts' to workers, who were forced to turn out for six months on royal orders.

The author tends to reproduce Dutch prejudices regarding commercial competitors, while failing to sustain her timid critique of the VOC for the high costs incurred in maintaining forts and factories. She does show that the commercial initiative was increasingly passing to Indian merchants in her period, but asserts that the Dutch profited from lending Indian traders money and transporting their goods. In reality, it remains far from clear who benefited most from this

relationship. The reader finally learns that these Indian traders were mainly 'Coromandel Moors', but gets no further illumination on the long history of Muslim Tamil traders in the eastern Indian Ocean. Dijk eventually admits that the English proved better than the Dutch at servicing the needs of Indian traders, but only alludes to the English East India Company's liberality in authorising private trade. There is a throwaway remark concerning 'the odd Dutch private trader', but no details are forthcoming. Armenian and French traders appear only briefly, despite their later prominence, while the Portuguese are initially denigrated as also-rans, and yet suddenly appear as major rivals in the 1670s. Danish competition, also important in the 1670s, is given more weight.

Some of Dijk's revisionism is convincing, especially that relating to textiles. She shows that imports from India were not limited to expensive cottons, but included large amounts of middling and cheap fabrics. Even more important were the masses of imported Indian red yarn, incorporated into locally woven cloth, on which there are some scattered but useful comments. This fits with evidence from around the Indian Ocean, indicating that imports of Indian cottons were not limited to luxuries, and yet that they did not 'underdevelop' the textile industries of India's periphery. Following Vic Lieberman, Dijk also challenges Tony Reid's thesis that there was a severe mid-17th century economic crisis in Southeast Asia, for which the Burmese case provides no support.

Dutch reports reveal much about the wider social impact of economic factors, but here again confusion and literal readings abound in this book. Slavery is alleged not to have existed as a Burmese institution, possibly meaning that there were only forms of debt bondage and serfdom, and yet Dijk provides examples of what appears to have been indubitably chattel slavery, sanctioned by the Laws of Manu. At the same time, she unproblematically assumes that coercion resulted in 'cheap labour', without considering that the crucial advantage of servile workers may have been their availability rather than their cheapness. We are solemnly assured that there was no 'binding of feet', without being told why we might have expected the contrary. Above all, repeated generalisations about a higher standard of living in 'Burma' than in 'India' are unsustainable, in terms of the evidence advanced. Rather, Dijk's evidence indicates that prices were more stable in the sub-continent, because markets were larger, better organised, and less susceptible to political interference than those of Burma.

Overall, the greatest benefit of this thesis comes from its statistics and long extracts from Dutch reports, but these primary materials are open to explanations that differ from those advanced here. On the one hand, research is subverting cherished beliefs, long held by historians of both right-wing and left-wing persuasion, in the economic efficacy of the VOC as the capitalist world's first major joint-stock company. On the other hand, scholars are increasingly interested in possible *longue durée* explanations for the disastrous situation in which Burma finds itself today.

There is much valuable raw material in Dijk's book to pursue both lines of enquiry

MAURIZIO PELEGGI

Thailand: the worldly kingdom

London: Reaktion Books, 2007. 256 pp.
ISBN: 9781861893147, pb £16.95.

<<http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk>>

Reviewer: **Duncan McCargo**

University of Leeds

For many years, most observers and students of Thailand were signed up to a broad consensus: Thailand was unique because it had never been colonised, the Thai monarchy was benevolent and entirely laudable, everyone in Thailand was Thai, Thailand was a peace-loving Buddhist kingdom, Thailand was an economic success story, Thais were carefree people with a 'never mind' attitude, and Thailand was gradually progressing towards liberal democracy. Evidence to contradict such easy assumptions has been around for decades, yet all but a minority of dissident revisionists paid little attention.

In the ten years since 1997, much has changed. In that year, Thailand triggered a regional Asian economic crisis which illustrated structural shortcomings in the way the country was led and managed. A new 'people's constitution' was intended to institutionalise political reforms and ensure that stable, representative liberal politics were here to stay. What followed instead was the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra,

a police officer turned telecommunications billionaire, who used the vehicle of his formidable Thai Rak Thai Party to become Thailand's most powerful elected politician ever. Thaksin refused to kowtow to the monarchy, and created his own formidable networks of influence to rival those of the palace; only to succumb to a military coup d'état on 19 September 2006. During his time in office, he helped provoke a renewed civil war in the country's Muslim majority Southern border provinces. The Thaksin period and its aftermath leave us in urgent need of new readings of Thailand's modern history, readings which move beyond national myths and engage with some very messy social and political realities.

Maurizio Peleggi's book has much to commend it. Whereas other recent overviews of Thai history, for all their strengths, tend to synthesise their sources and so occlude rather than illuminate some central intellectual debates, Peleggi lays his cards on the table. He is a revisionist historian who believes that while Siam was never formally colonised, it was arguably even more exposed to western influences than were its Southeast Asian neighbours. Rather than trying to identify some primordial, quintessential 'Thainess' (as inane a notion as Gordon Brown's recent quest to define and celebrate 'Britishness'), Peleggi argues that Thailand is defined largely by its borrowings – it is a nation of highly innovative plagiarists. Thai identity was defined largely by its interactions with the West.

The argument is then sketched out in seven highly readable chapters, drawn mainly

from secondary sources in English. These deal with: landscapes, boundaries, institutions, ideologies, modernities, mnemonic sites, and others. Readers familiar with Peleggi's two previous books (*Lords of Things: The fashioning of the Siamese monarchy's modern image*, and *The politics of ruins and the business of nostalgia*) will recognise many of the themes and ideas in this new book, but they have been reworked into an eminently accessible narrative that can readily be assigned to students. The strength of the book lies in the fluid outlining of an alternative perspective on Thai history, rather than any particular depth of insight. Peleggi is an historian of Thailand who seems himself, not as an area specialist, but as a practitioner of comparative, cultural history. My main criticism is that Peleggi seems overly preoccupied by western influences on Thailand; like most other observers, he appears not to have noticed that Thai consumer goods, department stores, fashions and even popular culture are almost entirely Japanese in origin. Apart from Hollywood films and branches of McDonalds, there is practically nothing American to be found in Bangkok.

To a large extent, this is indeed a book about Bangkok and elite views of the Thai nation, rather than Thailand as a whole. We get little sense that Peleggi is very *au fait* with the Thai countryside, or the life of the streets. He reads Thailand with a certain lofty detachment, and this stance provides him with a sense of critical distance often missing in the work of scholars who are more closely immersed in their material. At times, he seems to be writing about 'The idea of Thailand' (to

paraphrase the title of Sunil Khilnani's seminal book on India) rather than about Thailand itself. In places, perhaps with an eye to local sales, he is a little coy. Peleggi fails to cite Paul Handley's *The king never smiles* (Yale, 2006), the first ever critical biography of the Thai King, and he holds back from exposing the monarchy to serious scrutiny. Handley's book has polarised both Thais and scholars of Thailand, and raises many themes that resonate with Peleggi's view of the country.

The rise and fall of Thaksin, the increasing critical scrutiny of the role of monarchy, the sustained insurrection in the Muslim-majority South, and the mixed emotions aroused by the anachronistic September 2006 coup: these four terrible fault-lines have fractured the old semi-consensus among scholars of Thailand. Anyone thinking about, or indeed teaching on, modern Thailand needs to be clear about these debates. Peleggi's very useful book is now one of the best places to start.

GRAHAM GERARD ONG-WEBB (ed)

Piracy, maritime terrorism and securing the Malacca Straits

Singapore: ISEAS, 2006. 266 pp. ISBN 978-981-230-391-2; 981-230-391-X, pb

S\$39.90/US\$29.90; ISBN 978-981-230-417-9; 981-230-417-7, hb S\$59.90/US\$39.90.

<<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/>>

Reviewer: *Jürgen Haacke*

London School of Economics and Political Science

This is the second edited volume to emerge from research collaboration between the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) on the topic of piracy and maritime terrorism. (The previously published title was *Piracy in Southeast Asia: status, issues and responses*). According to the editor, the objective of this collection is 'to counter both the dearth of newfound scholarship on the topic of piracy and robbery in the Asian seas and the lack of a coherent research programme... [and]... to catalyse research and to foster new and innovative approaches in these areas (p.xii)'. The book brings together a mix of established scholars and younger colleagues as well as practitioners. The volume comprises 13 chapters, which are based on conference papers written in 2004. The editor offers a useful albeit brief section on post-conference developments in his introduction.

Although the volume focuses on many themes, perhaps three stand out: first, the

phenomenon of piracy and armed robbery in Southeast Asia is best not merely explored in relation to the Malacca Strait; second, the debate about whether it is appropriate to consider a piracy-terrorism nexus still continues; and, third, it is important to recognize the continued significance attributed to sovereignty by littoral states, not least to understand patterns of maritime cooperation.

In the first part of the volume Jayant Abhyankar provides an overview of types of piracy and offers statistical data on the location of attempted attacks. Brian Fort then warns of the dangers to vessels in crowded and narrow shipping lanes. In a chapter that turns our attention to the Philippines, Eduardo Ma R. Santos focuses on the substantial number of acts of piracy/ armed robbery perpetrated against craft and ships in the waters off Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga. Significantly, in his comparison of piracy and maritime terrorism in the Straits of Malacca and the Southern Philippines, Stefan Eklöf Amirell also suggests that the focus has been biased in favour of the former.

Interestingly, Eklöf Amirell does not see a nexus of piracy and terrorism in practice. Indeed, he argues that the bombing of SuperFerry 14 was the outcome of extortion activities rather than the consequence of political goals. Benefiting from fieldwork conducted in Riau, Eric Frécon similarly contends that there is no local nexus between terrorists and pirates. He provides insights into the economic circumstances and social background of pirates, while emphasising that fishermen, pirates and the chief of the village are often

neighbours and sometimes even linked by marriage. Mark J.Valencia adds his weight to the same basic argument by suggesting that the possibility of linkages between pirates and terrorists has been overplayed. Building on previous work on the same topic, Valencia consequently focuses on the politics underlying the anti-piracy and anti-terrorism responses by Southeast Asian states.

In a well-researched and informative chapter Carolin Liss focuses attention on the role of Private Security Companies in safeguarding or responding to piracy incidents. In essence, she provides an overview of the services PSC offer, discusses at good length the challenges faced by PSC, and develops a persuasive argument why it is warranted to cast a critical glance at the record and promises of these companies.

J.N. Mak's chapter on security cooperation in the Malacca Straits is arguably the best in the volume. He succinctly spells out the variant interest structures of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, relying in the process on what to him is the crucially important differentiation between coastal and maritime states. In particular, Mak examines in historical perspective Malaysian and Indonesian efforts to avoid the 'internationalization' of the Malacca Strait. In this context, he explains the origins of the transit passage regime and also provides details on the past dispute over the management of navigational safety. He also highlights national differences in the positions adopted by Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta in relation to the Strait: whereas Indonesia's

considerations are directly linked to concerns about sovereignty, Mak maintains that Malaysia has been keen to protect economic resources in contested maritime zones. MALSINDO, the sub-regional response to the US Regional Maritime Security Initiative agreed by Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Singapore, is described as 'essentially a Malaysia-Indonesia public relations exercise' (p.156). Covering some complementary terrain, Tamara Renee Shie focuses on intra-ASEAN cooperation regarding maritime piracy. Mindful of the criticisms often made about ASEAN security cooperation, she argues that '[o]ne danger with writing off ASEAN as a major actor in reducing and controlling piracy is it can have the effect of relieving Southeast Asian nations from their responsibilities in addressing the problem'(p.167). However, the chapter in effect demonstrates the limits of ASEAN members' interest in dealing with the issue as a grouping.

The volume offers three further chapters. One is by Ahmad Ghazali Bin Abu Hassan who asks whether the Rhine Navigation Regime might be a model for the Straits of Malacca and essentially answers in the negative. Another is by Jose L. Tongzon, who analyzes the implications of the rise of new hub ports in the wider Asia. His focus on the potential of the ports of Shanghai, Laem Chabang (Thailand) and Tanjung Pelepas (Malaysia) suggests that challenges to the future strategic significance of the Malacca Strait are less likely than to the existing predominant hub port in Southeast Asia. The final substantive chapter by Xu Ke concentrates on the phenomenon of piracy in years past (1511-

1839). The relevance of this chapter to the contemporary situation is not entirely clear.

Overall, the volume offers a number of insightful chapters that are written from very different perspectives. In this sense, the volume arguably goes some way towards meeting one of its stated goals. Notwithstanding considerable scepticism voiced by several contributors about the alleged piracy-terrorism nexus, the editor concludes that there 'may still be some conceptual dividends for maintaining a link between piracy and maritime terrorism – no matter how hypothetical – not least because terrorism has helped to ratchet an unprecedented interest in tackling piracy at the levels of intelligence gathering and security policy-making' (p. 242). It will be interesting to see how in their respective further research the contributors to this volume will shape the research agenda on piracy in Southeast Asia.

PIERRE LE ROUX & BERNARD SELLATO (eds)
Les Messagers divins; Aspects esthétiques et symboliques des oiseaux en Asie du Sud-Est. Divine messengers; Bird symbolism and aesthetics in Southeast Asia
 Paris: Seven Orient & Connaissances et Savoirs, 2006. 862 pp. ISBN 2-7539-0059-0.

Reviewer: *Monica Janowski*
 University of Greenwich & SOAS

This is a valuable book bringing together chapters by scholars from a number of disciplines on the role of birds in Southeast Asia. Most of the chapters are by anthropologists/ethnologists but history, geography, archaeology, economics and zoology are also represented. Fourteen of the articles are in French and ten in English, the latter by scholars from throughout the world (though none from the UK). The book interprets 'Southeast Asia' in a wide sense, including a chapter each on Taiwan, Nepal, New Guinea and Madagascar as well as chapters covering the peoples of the countries of mainland and insular Southeast Asia.

The book is one of the publications deriving from a regional anthropology project based at the CNRS Institute for Research on Southeast Asia; other publications, as Bernard Sellato points out in his Foreword, have focused on representations of the sea, on salt, on weights and measures and on opium in the region.

A theme which Bernard Sellato highlights in his foreword, which Pierre Le Roux

emphasises in the title of his introduction, 'La femme et l'oiseau', and which is followed up in many of the chapters of the book is the gender association of birds, both through real birds and in the shape of composite mythical birds made up of elements of various real birds as well as elements from other creatures, including, as in the *garuda*, humans. Whilst Sellato suggests that in most cases birds represent femininity and snakes (and by implication *naga*) masculinity, femininity is of course commonly associated in Southeast Asia with the Underworld and the *naga*, and masculinity, with the Upperworld and birds. A number of the chapters in the book illustrate the fact that birds may represent male or female, or combine the two genders, and that the common theme is complementary opposition/combination between male and female, something which is highlighted by le Roux in his Introduction: '...l'important semble être essentiellement l'existence de ce système dualiste et l'utilisation métaphorique des figures de l'oiseau et du serpent, et non le détail de celle-ci qui, pour varier dans la forme, reste similaire dans le fond' (p. 79).

Other bird roles which are highlighted in the book include their role as messengers from the gods, as culture heroes and even as apical ancestors, and as expressions of spirits and the souls of the dead.

Various authors suggest that it is the physical characteristics and abilities of birds in general and specific birds in particular which have led to their being used as signs and symbols. Donald and Joan Gear's chapter looks at the possible bases for drawing on different birds to

express positive and negative qualities, suggesting, for example, that the mythical *hamsa* is associated with two birds, the bar-headed goose and the mandarin duck, and that the choice of these two birds is related to the breathing of the former bird, which suggests the word *hamsa* ("This am I" in Pali) and the beautiful plumage of the latter, which is linked to the colourful garments worn by those of high rank. The aggressive nature of the male of the jungle fowl, expressed through cock fights (on which there are two chapters by Peter Boomgaard and Bernard Pot covering Indonesia and the Philippines respectively) has resulted in its use as a symbol of aggressiveness and certain aspects of masculinity.

The book contains numerous drawings and illustrations including a section of colour photos.

BEA BROMMER

Johannes ten Klooster (1873-1940): A man with two lives

Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2007. 96 pp.
ISBN 9789068324860, hb €32.50.

KOOS VAN BRAKEL

Charles Sayers 1901-1943, Pioneer painter in the Dutch East Indies

Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2004. 158 pp.
ISBN 9068321870, hb €27.50.

<<http://www.kit.nl/publishers>>

Reviewer: **Matthew Isaac Cohen**

Royal Holloway, University of London

Amsterdam's Tropical Museum, formerly known as the Colonial Museum, came by the bulk of its collection of more than 2,200 original paintings, prints and drawings from colonial Indonesia almost by accident. At the time most of these works on canvas and paper entered the collection, European art from the Indies was considered well beneath the artistic standards of Dutch museums. 'Despite the differences in their artistic value,' a 1937 press release protests, 'these paintings are all important as illustrative material relating to the objects in the museum that evoke the way of life in the East Indies in all its diversity. These paintings thus fulfil the same role as the mannequins – correct from an anthropological viewpoint – slides and photographs that are sometimes exhibited in the museum' (cited in Brakel: 7). Since the 1960s, colonial painting has been re-evaluated as art with more than just ethnographic worth. Paintings by Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, Jan

Poortenaar, Isaac Israëls and others now command high prices on the international art market and, over the last two decades, the Tropical Museum has organised impressive exhibits of paintings by western artists resident in Indonesia. Two of the accompanying catalogues to these Tropical Museum exhibitions, solo exhibits of Johannes ten Klooster (1873-1940) and Charles Sayers (1901-1943), are reviewed here.

Johannes ten Klooster had a relatively brief career as an artist, actively producing and exhibiting for only about a decade, between 1919 and 1930. He is best remembered for his woodcuts of traditional Indonesia, many of them depicting traditional performing arts and scenes of nature, which retain their dynamism, sense of economy and wit today. Ten Klooster was born in 1873 in the small town of Kudus, on Java's north coast. His father was a low-ranking government employee, his mother was his father's Sino-Javanese housekeeper (*babu*). Ten Klooster's father did not marry his mother, but did legally recognise his offspring and sent the two-year-old boy to the Netherlands to receive a Dutch education. After completing secondary school, Ten Klooster joined the army and served in Java, Sumatra, New Guinea, and Europe for 30 years. In 1907, during a year's leave in the Hague, he took lessons in drawing and painting, and occupied much of his spare time in the army thereafter in sketching the scenery and people of Indonesia. After his honourable discharge in 1919, ten Klooster retired to rural Veere and occupied himself with turning his sketches into fully realised works of art. He

tried his hand at oil painting and other media, but quickly discovered he was most suited to woodcuts, a medium that had recently been revived in the Netherlands. Early works were overly derivative of Chinese and Japanese landscapes and seascapes such as Hokusai's iconic *Great wave off Kanagawa*, but it was not long before ten Klooster developed his own style, combining the elegance and flair of Art Deco with *wayang*-influenced iconography. Perhaps his most memorable images were illustrations for the Indonesian travelogues and fiction of Dutch author Augusta de Wit, stylised illustrations of Yogyakarta court dancers for the influential art journal *Wendingen* (1928), and his glorious depiction of a grand Yogyakarta royal court *wayang wong* performance framed against the streets and hills of Java, *Djokja* (c. 1930). There is a limit to how long an artist can mine a stock of sketches for inspiration. While Ten Klooster made a three-month trip to Sumatra and Java in 1927, he seems to have run out of inspiration and the desire to make art by 1930. The local scenery of Veere sparked none of the magic or mystery of the Indies. Trips to the museums and galleries of The Hague grew infrequent, and his works rarely were displayed or purchased in the 1930s. Ten Klooster died of a heart attack in 1940.

The graphics in Brommer's book, including a fully illustrated inventory of 175 woodcuts and a generous selection of oil paintings and brush and ink drawings, are beautifully presented. The text is written in serviceable English and tells ten Klooster's life style in a brisk and straightforward

manner, with only occasional analyses or descriptions of his artwork or its reception.

Van Brakel's book on Charles Sayers, in contrast, provides rich details about the European art scene of the Indies and subtle commentary about the art and career of his subject.

Charles Sayers was born in the residency of Semarang, the son of a sugar factory administrator of Jewish descent. At age 11, he was sent to be schooled in the Netherlands and studied painting in Amsterdam and Paris, developing a 'modest Expressionistic style' (p105). In 1927, Sayers returned to the Indies and lived there for most of the rest of his life, residing in Bali (1927-28, 1931-34), Batavia (1934-39) and Sumatra (1939-42). Sayers' father was wealthy from his work in the sugar industry and investments, but the Wall Street Crash of 1929 wiped out the family fortune, and Sayers by necessity survived from his art thereafter.

Sayers is primarily remembered as a painter of traditional Bali, and there is indeed a vibrancy and passion in his many Balinese paintings lacking in his other work. Visitors to the KITLV in Leiden will be familiar with his *Baris dancer representing King Erlangga*, which long graced the KITLV's reading room. Eerily-lit, with bulging eyes, splayed fingers and shoulders erect at an impossible height, Sayers' dancer is a perfect icon of the modernist romance of Bali. Sayers was a devoted collector of Balinese ethnographic art (his collection forms the core of the Tropical Museum's Balinese collection) and while his canvasses do not detail the

flotsam and jetsam of everyday life, he resists exoticising 'the Balinese' and emphasizing their bare breasts. Sayers was a minor member of the Bali's colony of expatriate intellectuals and artists, remembered for his love for hunting, his constant travels by foot and motorcar around the island in search of artistic subjects, his lack of regard for formal attire.

In his commissioned work, Sayers showed less imagination. He created large-scale murals for international exhibitions in Paris (1931) and San Francisco (1939) and a school in Medan (1941) that graphically affirmed Dutch paternalistic attitudes over the Indies. Portraits of governor-generals, mayors and prominent European citizens portray an elite happily ensconced in colonial positions of power and affluence.

Van Brakel speculates that Sayers moved to Sumatra in order to revitalise his art through studying the traditional cultures of Nias and Mentawai. His planned trip to these islands was interrupted by the invasion of Japan. Sayers was sent off to work on the Burmese Railway, suffered from malaria and malnutrition and died in 1942.

Van Brakel argues that Sayers should be considered as equal to Spies and the first rank of Indies artists. After studying the well-reproduced colour and black-and-white illustrations in his book, I am not convinced. While ten Klooster experiments boldly with hybridising Asian and European iconographic systems, Sayers remains very much a European artist looking at the Indies. Symptomatic of this are his still lives of *wayang* puppets and

topeng masks, which have the rounded forms of dolls and faces, rather than the angularity of performing objects. Part of the problem in appreciating Sayers' work is the craquelé and fading that afflict his surviving canvasses. As van Brakel details in an appendix, Sayers experimented with a number of painting techniques, not all of them well suited to the tropics. This compounds a sense of *tempo doeloe* nostalgia and detracts from the immediacy of the work. Another problem is the lack of surviving personal papers, which make it difficult to gauge Sayers' relation to Indonesia.

Neither ten Klooster nor Sayers might be artists of enduring significance, but KIT Publishers is to be congratulated for publishing these generously illustrated books, which bring new insights into the ways European artists visualised Indonesia in the decades leading up to World War II.

LEO HOWE

The changing world of Bali: religion, society and tourism

London: Routledge, 2005. 161 pp. ISBN: 10 0-415-36497-3, hb £65.

<<http://www.routledge.com>>

Reviewer: Michael Hitchcock

London Metropolitan University

The author makes very effective use of a wide range of published sources and his own ethnographic work to provide a lucid overview of why modern Bali might be like it is. The fact that the book is accessible and a pleasure to read belies the fact that this is an analytically sophisticated undertaking. The chapter entitled 'Colonialism, Caste and the Beginnings of Tourism' illustrates this very well since it takes on the task of simultaneously explaining how caste works in Bali and how it differs from India and how the colonial authorities attempt to mould Balinese society into something that they thought it should be. The shortcomings of anthropologists of the era are also sensitively examined, especially with regard to Geertz's notion of the 'theatre state'. This reviewer concurs with Howe's observation that many aspects of the 'theatre state' idea '...only make sense if it is seen as a description of Bali *after* the changes affected by colonial reforms' (p.37). In other words, what Geertz was observing was a society in which there had already been a great deal of colonial interference in how its culture was organised politically and presented to the outside world.

Another chapter that works particularly well is the fourth one dealing with the transformation of Bali's religion in the early 20th century and in the post independence era. Howe makes the important but often not widely appreciated point that the spectacular ceremonies for which Bali is renowned have a downside, especially with regard to the burden they place on the poor, an issue that has re-emerged in recent years in the tourism slump in the aftermath of the bombings. There is also a longstanding debate in Bali about the efficacy of rituals, especially among the young, and many are concerned with their practical implications, not least the impact that lengthy religious observances have on jobs in the modern economy. Employers, particularly if they are in the tourism sector and often not Balinese, are not invariably sympathetic when Balinese employees ask for time off to attend family observances.

Another tension that emerges in the following chapter is the need for Balinese religious practices to fit in with the definition of religion that emerged in the early years of independence and was designed to unite Indonesia's ethnically and religiously diverse peoples. The broad religious monotheism advocated in the state creed of *Pancasila* appeased Muslims since only religions similar to Islam would be sanctioned. Significantly, only those religions that possessed a high god, a holy book, a prophet and were not linked to a single ethnic group were deemed suitable for state support and recognition. Since Bali's religious practices clearly did not qualify, a rationalised and theological form of Hinduism had to be ushered in. Again,

the issues here are very complex, but the author takes the reader through them with admirable brevity and surefootedness.

This reviewer is very much in favour of the book and at the outset should have declared an interest, namely that he has joined the editorial team responsible for the series that published the book. But since the reviewer had agreed to do the review before becoming a series editor, he might be given a bit of leeway. It also provides an opportunity to turn some of the observations that a reviewer might make into editorial policy, and he would thus like to air the following issue. This reviewer works in a multidisciplinary field and has noted from time to time the scepticism and puzzlement that non-anthropologists have about writing in the first person, especially if they slip in and out of it like Howe does in this book. There is of course no hard and fast rule about this, but if a practice that is adhered to in one discipline, such as writing from time to time in the first person, inhibits interdisciplinary understanding then perhaps it is time for members of that discipline to reconsider their position. Writing in the first person to explain how one became involved in a particular study does not seem to worry non-anthropologists, but when it creeps in without warning in the main body of the text they tend to become scathing. This is of course not a criticism of Howe but a criticism of anthropology and one wonders what the non-anthropologists who are members of ASEASUK would have to say about this issue.

MATTHEW ISAAC COHEN

The Komedi Stamboel

Popular theater in colonial Indonesia 1891-1903

Leiden: KITLV Press co-published with Ohio University Press, 2006. xviii + 473 pp. ISBN 90 6718 267 2, pb €30.

<<http://www.ohioswallow.com>>

Reviewer: Alessandra Lopez y Royo
Roehampton University

This study of the Komedi Stamboel by Matthew Cohen is an impressive work of scholarship, which took him some seven years to complete and which began as a research project undertaken as part of Cohen's post-doctoral fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies, in Leiden. The result of painstaking archival research, which saw him sifting through old newspapers' articles and reviews, the book gives a thorough account of the golden years of the Komedi Stamboel, focusing on the figure of Auguste Mahieu, a Eurasian actor turned theatre director who was responsible for shaping the Stamboel into the most prominent popular theatrical form of Indonesia in the late 19th century. The name Stamboel derives from Istanbul, meaning 'Istanbul-style' theatre. It was a mixture of dialogue, song and dance, in the manner of a variety theatre, performed in Malay: a show biz production sometimes featuring, as its detractors censoriously would say, 'semi-nude' women. Alcohol was served in the outside buffet of Stamboel performances

and this contributed to the Stamboel being perceived as of dubious moral standard.

This is the first time that the Komedi Stamboel has been discussed in an English language full-length monograph. Prior to writing this book, Cohen published a few papers in a number of scholarly journals, on the topic of the Komedi Stamboel, and these reappear, with due alterations, in the book.

Colonial Dutch scholarship viewed the Komedi Stamboel as an inferior theatre, whose fault lay precisely in its hybridity, as opposed to the purity and authenticity of Indonesian traditional theatre arts such as *wayang wong*. This view lingered among later European and American scholars of Indonesian culture, Faubion Bowers and Clifford Geertz numbering among those who were not sympathetic to it (p. 352)

Whereas Mahieu became a figure of iconic status among second-generation Indische Nederlanders, the writings of post-independence Indonesian theatre scholars are filled with ambiguity: they all recognise the position of the Komedi Stamboel within the history of Indonesian theatre, but in the writing of the time of the New Order of President Soeharto the Stamboel was still regarded as a lesser form. Cohen ascribes such negative views to the New Order's suspicion of disorder (p. 375): the hybridity of the Stamboel evoked images of chaos and uncertainty and this could not but be disliked by the New Order. In the past two decades, the Komedi Stamboel has seen, if not a revival, certainly a change in the attitude of Indonesian dramatists and theatre writers

towards it, by way of a postcolonial recuperative action. This positive re-evaluation has exponentially increased in the post-Soeharto period.

The first form of Indonesian theatre ever performed on a proscenium using stage lighting and sets, the Komedi Stamboel, indisputably, had tremendous influence on subsequent modern theatrical forms. Seemingly derivative of European theatre, the culture of the Komedi Stamboel, says Cohen, was trans-regional, mass oriented and locally articulated. It brought together 'men and women of different backgrounds and social orientation—Chinese entrepreneurs, Eurasian and Malay performers, multiethnic audiences, moralistic newspapermen, sardonic European cultural observers, engaged Eurasian activists' (p. 346) resulting in a mixed and hybrid culture of its own, no longer dependent on European models.

Cohen reframes the Komedi Stamboel as an archetypal Indonesian modern 'trans-ethnic' theatre. He then links it with contemporary efforts such as the Teater Koma of Cirebon-born director Riantiarno, in Cohen's opinion 'the best approximation of a performative restoration of the theater of Mahieu and those who followed that trailblazer' (p. 379). Riantiarno has indeed articulated his sense of loss for the professional touring theatre of the colonial period, wholly absent in today's Indonesia, and his keen desire to re-establish such a theatre in contemporary times, bemoaning the lack of historical accounts: 'we have lost its tracks,' he says, 'for nobody has ever written about this period in detail. What was the process of production used,

its management, creative process and related matters?' (p. 379). As if on cue, Cohen states that he aims at providing, through his account 'a road map for future cultural production' in Indonesia, remarking 'the lost tracks of Mahieu and his generation of theatre makers' (p. 379).

Riantiarno and his colleagues are, in Cohen's mind, the ideal readers of his work. Where does that leave the rest of us, who may not be so actively involved in transforming contemporary Indonesian theatre, let alone a desire to do so? Overwhelmingly, at times tediously, detailed, with well over a thousand footnotes, this is not an easy book to read. Those who plough through it will achieve a deepening of their understanding of trans-regionalism and diversity in colonial Indonesia and, provided they are willing to work out their own links, globally. At times, they will be amused, as Cohen, being a good storyteller, has taken care to include a number of salacious stories and anecdotes in his narrative. Nevertheless, the length of the work is forbidding and its highly specialised subject matter requires some prior knowledge of Indonesian colonial history and the willingness to engage with the historical nuances of that period. Though it will be enthusiastically welcomed by Indonesian specialists, and fully endorsed by all those with a strong interest and serious involvement in Indonesian theatre, with the best will in the world, it will not be easy to make this book required reading in the context of broader, non-Indonesia-focused theatre and performing arts courses, certainly not at undergraduate level. The book, in other words, is not readily accessible and this

militates against it: a pity, really, because the book is theoretically sophisticated and engaging.

PETER G. SERCOMBE & BERNARD SELLATO (eds)
Beyond the green myth: hunters-gatherers of Borneo in the twenty-first century
 Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007. xiv, 384 pp. ISBN 8791114845 (hb £45)
 <<http://niaspress.dk/default.asp>>

Reviewer: V.T. King
University of Leeds

This is an excellent edited volume and one which will become part of the standard anthropological literature on Borneo. As the editors indicate detailed anthropological studies of the hunting-gathering populations of Borneo, commonly but not exclusively referred to as 'Punan' and 'Penan', are relatively recent and there is much about these peoples which is still unknown or little known. They indicate that 'a comprehensive inventory of present-day nomadic groups still remains to be undertaken' (p. 9). This current book is not a comprehensive compendium, but in the breadth of its coverage, drawing on the expertise of several researchers who have worked on nomadic groups during the past 50 years or so, it manages to present a substantial amount of important and interesting material. A nice touch is the decision to include a reprint of the earlier ethnographic summary of the Sarawak Penan by the late Rodney Needham,

written at a time when vast areas of tropical rainforest remained relatively intact, and the more recent article by Peter Brosius which charts recent Penan experiences in the face of widespread commercial logging and rapid deforestation. Sadly it seems that with Needham's recent death we shall not now see his monograph on the Penan which many of us had waited and hoped for.

A positive feature of the book is the inclusion of ethnographic material gathered in a diverse range of locations in Brunei, Sarawak and Kalimantan mainly since the 1980s, and 1990s with broad, general and comparative chapters on the Punan and Penan and others across the island (Sellato, Seitz), as well as pieces on the Eastern and Western Penan in Sarawak and Brunei (Brosius, Sercombe, Voeks), the Bhuket (Bukat, Ukit) of Sarawak and West Kalimantan (Thambiah), the Punan Vuhang (Busang) of Sarawak (Chan), the Punan of the Malinau and Tubu' regions of East Kalimantan (Kaskija, Klimut and Puri) and the Punan Hovongan of the Upper Kapuas region of West Kalimantan (Mering Ngo). There are contributions from established and well-known scholars of Borneo hunter-gatherers and from younger researchers.

Of special importance is the editorial introduction in which Sellato and Sercombe take stock of studies and knowledge of forest nomads, consider issues of ethnic identity, classification and nomenclature (though I am not especially attracted to their proposal for a general exonym 'Pnan' [pp. 29-30]), and the origins and historical development of hunting and

gathering economies and cultures, and recent changes which have affected them; they therefore provide some comparative treatment of different nomadic populations. Debates about the origins of hunting-gathering in Borneo and the relations between more mobile and more settled populations will no doubt continue, but Hoffman's thesis on nomads as specialist collectors of rainforest products for the purposes of trade now seems discredited. Sellato and Sercombe argue appropriately that it is problematical to distinguish clearly between the categories of settled, swidden cultivators, horticulturalists and hunter-gatherers. However, they and other contributors also point out that there is something about the hunting-gathering outlook, value system or ideology which is distinctive and despite various transformations tends to persist. Sellato and Kaskija characterise this in terms of flexibility, opportunism, self-sufficiency, autonomy, individualism, pragmatism, mobility, sharing, immediate return and external inferiority.

Importantly the editors dispel, as does Sellato in a separate chapter, various popular and NGO ideas about the Penan and Punan, captured in their words as 'the neo-romantic environmentalist myth of wise "traditional peoples"' (p. 1). Although they have their fair share of problems to face, Sellato argues that, at least in Kalimantan, the Punan 'are generally not, and by far, the poor, helpless wretches that they are often portrayed as or that they themselves want to be viewed as' (p.62). They also do not necessarily practise sustainable exploitation of forest resources, or at least those which are destined for the

market-place, and they are active agents not passive victims in their interaction with outsiders, including government agencies. They 'exploit their social environment in exactly the same way that they do their natural environment' (p. 86). However, it seems that the effects of environmental destruction and relocation on Sarawak as against Kalimantan nomads have been more severe.

Many of the chapters give us valuable and basic ethnographic data on nomadic economies, social organization and cultures. Important themes that emerge are the significant variations between different groupings, seen especially in Brosius's examination of the different responses to logging by the Eastern and Western Penan. Several chapters also focus on the processes of sedentarisation, nomadic responses to and the consequences of environmental change, and the interaction of hunter-gatherers with both the natural and the outside world.

This is a well-edited volume. It is nicely integrated and the chapters are generally of a high standard. There is a substantial bibliography and a workable index. For those of us with an interest in Borneo anthropology and a commitment to the understanding of the rich cultural mosaics of the island, and for those who have a wider comparative interest in hunter-gatherers this is an essential compendium. It is also an important reference work. It gives voice to the problems and issues which minority populations encounter and have to address in Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. Puri captures this nicely when he says 'Sometimes we just need to listen to

what our informants are trying to tell us, rather than thinking of everything they say in terms of theory' (p. 113). The book is much more ethnographic than theoretical, which I like.

HEW CHENG SIM (ed.)

Village mothers and city daughters. Women and urbanization in Sarawak

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007. x, 150pp, ISBN 978-981-230-415-5 (pb), 978-981-230-416-2 (hb), 978-981-230-572-5 (e-book).

Reviewer: V.T. King

University of Leeds

There is not a great deal of good literature on urbanization processes in Sarawak, nor in the wider Borneo region; still less is there good material on the gender dimensions of urban life. This edited book by Hew Cheng Sim, who has previously worked on various aspects of women and work in Sarawak and has relatively recently written an excellent book on female labour migration and family structure, is therefore a most welcome publication. In an informative editorial introduction Hew indicates that the majority of rural migrants, who are in turn mainly Iban and Bidayuh, are unmarried and 45 per cent of them are female with more than half aged between 15 and 34 years of age. Most of them go to four main urban centres: Kuching, Sibu, Bintulu and Miri and they end up predominantly in the service sector and in small to medium-

sized manufacturing industries as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Like much of the literature on rural-urban migration in developing countries Hew points to the difficulties of differentiating 'the urban' from 'the rural', and therefore I suppose it begs the question of what constitutes a 'city' in Sarawak. The tendency for single women to migrate may justify the title of the book – 'village mothers and city daughters' – but there is also a chapter by Ling How Kee on elderly women's experiences of urbanization.

Hew provides us with a useful conceptual orientation in her introduction and her concluding comments, and we encounter the usual kinds of analytical consideration in addressing gender issues, particularly issues to do with male-female inequality and whether or not women are victims of change or active agents in giving shape to their circumstances, experiences and futures. Some useful empirical and statistical data in several of the chapters provide substance to the arguments that rural transformations and the accompanying urbanisation process have had variable impacts on women, depending on such criteria as socio-economic background, education, age, family circumstances and marital status. Hew in another chapter in the book gives us some most valuable insights into the plight of single mothers, for example. She also argues that single motherhood does not result in a breakdown of family values because of the support networks that are mobilized by the extended family of grandparents, parents, siblings, cousins and other relatives.

Other chapters address various dimensions of the urban experience for women: employment status, occupational mobility and income (Goy Siew Ching and Low Kuek Long); urban health issues, medical services and health education (Adela Baer); mental health, psychiatric services and the values and attitudes held by practitioners (Sara Aschencaen Crabtree); elderly urban women, dependence and support mechanisms (Ling How Kee); and the female (Kelabit) experience of migration (Poline Bala).

The weight of the volume tends to be rather more towards the general survey and questionnaire method of social investigation rather than the ethnographic. Perhaps this is to be expected in that much of the research work has been funded by government agencies, specifically the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment and the Ministry of Social Development and Urbanization and is oriented to more general policy issues and questions.

Hew's book is a most worthwhile endeavour and it gives us a useful basis for future research. However, the overall conclusions of the volume are perhaps rather predictable when Hew proposes that women's encounters with urbanization are 'ambivalent, contradictory and fraught with difficulties' (p. 141). The urban experience brings new opportunities and dangers and, whether a woman succeeds or fails depends on a range of social, economic and cultural criteria. What is also clear in the Sarawak context, and more widely in the developing world, is that in the absence of

effective state welfare provision, individuals usually fall back on their own family networks for support and sustenance.

JEYAMALAR KATHIRITHAMBY-WELLS

Nature and nation. Forests and development in Peninsular Malaysia

Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2005. 526 pp.

ISBN 8791114225 (hb £55), 8791114497 (pb £19.99) <<http://niaspress.dk/default.asp>>

Reviewer: **Emma Reisz**

Queen's University Belfast

This long-awaited and path-breaking history of forestry on the Malaysian peninsula is an important work of scholarship, reaching in impressive detail from the 18th to the end of the 20th century, and skilfully charting a course from colonial forestry to the rise of sustainable development. Though most familiar to scholars as a historian, Kathirithamby-Wells has devoted the final hundred pages of her lengthy study to the years since the Second Malaysia Plan. Like the best histories of environment, such as Guha and Gadgil's *This fissured land*, this book succeeds in connecting historical and contemporary concerns in ways which will be as illuminating to scholars studying the present as it will be to those focused on the past.¹ As such, *Nature and nation* is one of

¹ Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, eds., *This fissured land: an ecological history of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

the most important environmental histories of Southeast Asia to appear so far.

The book is written with efficient elegance, neatly entwining a mass of detail drawn from 40 close-printed pages of bibliography. The broad outline of the argument will be familiar to anyone interested in the history of either Malaysia or (post-)colonial forestry. Life in the pre-colonial forest was influenced increasingly by international trade, and colonialism led to the assertion of state domination over the forest and provoked scattered nationalist resistance. The post-colonial pursuit of development perpetuated rather than resolved the tensions between the state and forest communities which had emerged in the colonial period. However the text of this long book always seems fresh, as the reader is led by a strong narrative thread across varied terrain, including the structure of gutta-percha trading in 19th-century Johor, colonial game hunting in the Federated States, policies toward the Orang Asli during the Emergency, and the politics of sustainability in the 1990s.

Of the many insightful and occasionally provocative suggestions lurking within the dense prose, a number deserve particularly close attention. The book's most important methodological contribution is its twinning of human efforts to exploit the forest and to preserve it. There is no crude dichotomy drawn between tree-hugging Orang Asli and axe-wielding imperialists. Instead, the forests in pre-colonial, colonial and independent peninsular Malaysia alike are seen as subject to both extractive and conservationist impulses. Reinforcing a

position taken in earlier work, Kathirithamby-Wells declares that the pre-colonial sale of forest goods for long-distance trade 'reinforces scepticism over Oriental perceptions of nature as environmentally sensitive' (p.xxx). For Kathirithamby-Wells, forest-dwellers' attitudes to resource use served to maintain ecological balance only where demand was low. She argues that as the global economy reached deeper into the forest during the 19th century, culture alone was no match for commerce. The lure of trade, not the undermining of indigenous control, is presented as the force responsible for the destruction of so much Malayan forest. Similarly, the reader is regularly reminded that fiscal prudence can stimulate resource conservation just as well as can an ideological commitment to environmental preservation.

Aspects of this argument are undermined elsewhere in *Nature and nation*, which in many of its most original passages offers us a more complex view of the marketisation of the forest. The Temenggung of Johor, we learn, monopolised trade into his forests in the mid-19th century, inflating the prices paid by indigenous groups for key goods such as salt, cloth and rice. In consequence, the Orang Sabimba 'became virtual serfs of the Temenggung' (p.45), extracting dammar, rattan and other forest products as rapidly as possible in fruitless attempts to escape debt. The Singapore marketplace provided new economic opportunities, but the link to global trade networks also served to increase the rewards for exploiting those at the bottom of the commodity chain; and while greed or gullibility may have

influenced Orang Asli responses to traders from the mid-19th century, so too did coercion. Though Kathirithamby-Wells does not give a detailed verdict on the relative degrees of control over the forest enjoyed by Malay rulers, commercial interests and forest communities in the decades immediately before British suzerainty, her work certainly draws attention to the importance of that question.

The colonial chapters contain both the most impressive and the most plodding material of the book. Colonial government radically reshaped the forest, encouraging plantations which cleared far more forest than were ever razed by the much-vilified practice of shifting cultivation, while also introducing both sweeping controls on forest collection practices and a forest service to enforce the rules. Once prodded out of *laissez-faire* in the forest, the colonial system oscillated between policies of rent-seeking, scientific resource management, and environmental conservation, though the changing trajectory of forest policy is not always adequately explained, and the different policies generally appear in isolation from the wider imperial networks which sustained and promoted them. By contrast, the consequences of forest management are brought out splendidly. Alongside a useful chapter on the role of environmental considerations in shaping colonial land use policy, excellent and highly original treatments of Orang Asli marginalisation and of wildlife protection shed new light on the impact of colonial rule.

The book is highly innovative also in its flirtation with examining the role of the forest in defining the nation. Consideration of the forest sometimes encouraged broad and tolerant visions of Malayan life. The Wild Life Commission of 1930-31 took evidence from the public, mostly speaking in favour of animal conservation and articulating a role in Malayan life for wild animals alongside humans. One witness commented, 'I like seladang, elephant and tiger who all do good in the jungle as men do good outside', while another argued that 'the rich should not devour the poor, the great should not harm the humble, nor should man oppress the beast' (p.209). The idea of the forest as an inclusive space re-emerges briefly in the discussion of wartime 'back-to-nature' cooperation between Chinese, Orang Asli and Malays (p.239). Unfortunately this analytical trajectory is not fully explored, and tails off just as it becomes most interesting, as the forest becomes a site for the contestation of rival national identities. Wartime resistance, the Emergency, squatter relocation and the restoration of state control, development strategies, Malay economic aspirations, and even images of nature in Malay nationalist literature are crammed into 20 pages, an indicative rather than exhaustive treatment of what Kathirithamby-Wells rightly calls 'the seminal years of forest politics'.

The final section, on independent Malaysia, focuses on logging, emphasising the competing priorities of export volumes, social development and conservation. The section works best when read in the light of the earlier parts of the book, since the continuities with and divergences from the

colonial period are intriguing but are rarely made explicit. A more serious weakness is the decision to focus on policy formulation at the expense of attention to the social consequences of those policies. Malaysia's federal political system is given centre stage, and Kathirithamby-Wells describes the extensive powers of individual states as 'the Achilles heel of Malaysian development' (p.267), with state forestry often running counter to national strategies and frequently guided by the pursuit of revenue or by staff corruption. This is all useful, but a fuller treatment of the popular politics of forest use in recent years would have allowed readers a deeper understanding of the sources of forest policy. One major contribution of this section, however, is the emphasis on international organisations. The author argues that the decision to neglect environmental policy in the headlong rush for development was 'partly the outcome of policy advice from international agencies' (p. 272). She then links the reversal of that attitude 30 years later, and the increasing prominence of the environment in Malaysian strategy, with rising international pressure on environmental issues around the time of the Rio 'Earth Summit' of 1992.

Nature and nation makes a pioneering contribution to the environmental history of Malaysia and it is an important addition to the growing historiography of Asian forests. The breadth and detail of Kathirithamby-Wells's research allow her to present insights which will be of value in disciplines beyond history, including anthropology, politics and development studies. It should be essential reading for anyone interested in land use in Malaysia in the modern period, and will be read with profit by anyone concerned with environmental history and sociology in Southeast Asia and beyond. It could also find a ready place in postgraduate reading lists for all these fields. The sheer scope of this book means that it cannot live up to all the hopes it raises. Simultaneously a history of forest trade, of forest-dwelling peoples, of state regulation of the forest, of the politics of the forest, and of the forest environment, *Nature and nation* dips in and out of these different stories without finishing any of them quite satisfactorily. Since it raises more questions than it answers, *Nature and nation* is a fitting founding text for Malaysian environmental history, and should provoke further research for many years to come.