

Report of 26th Aseasuk Conference, Magdalene College, Cambridge University, 2011

9–11 September 2011

This conference was the largest that Aseasuk has hosted with more than 110 participants from the UK, Europe, Asia, Australia and North America. Aseasuk thanks Dr Tim Harper and Dr Christina Skott for organising the conference, helpers Mary-Rose Cheadle and Maddie Lee during registration, the Centre of History and Economics at Magdalene College as well as Alan Fuller and his conference team, and our guest speaker Professor Sir Christopher Bayly at Magdalene College's candlelit dinner.

Aseasuk also thanks the Shan Cultural Association UK for the enjoyable and colourful dance performance at Magdalene College and, publisher Routledge, who was the main sponsor of the conference pack. The next Aseasuk conference will be at Durham University, 7–9 September 2012, and organised by Professor Jonathan Rigg.

Panel A: Shan culture and Theravada Buddhism Convenor: Dr Susan Conway (SOAS)

Aseasuk thanks the MacArthur Foundation and the British Academy for funding **Professor Sai Aung Tun**, Yangon University and Nang Voe Seng, Shan Literature and Cultural Association, Yangon, Myanmar. This is the second year that Aseasuk has included a panel on Shan Buddhism and Culture. There were nine papers. Professor Sai Aung Tun (Yangon University) presented a paper on the history of Shan religious observance which highlighted religious movements that impacted on the belief systems of the Tai Shan. Ancestor worship and spirit propitiation rituals, the study of Daoism and Confucianism among the intellectual class and contact with Mahayana Buddhism through Tibet precluded the introduction of Theravada Buddhism with Pyu, Mon-Khmer, Burmese and Yuan (northern Tai) traditions. **The Ven. Dr Khammai Dhammasami (Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Oxford University)** spoke on Tai Shan funeral rituals in Myanmar (Burma) based on *lik-long*, Buddhist poetry written in Shan language in his paper on 'Even the Buddha asks a Shan Saray to save a couple from a ghostly life'. The text *sutta woe-geng* (*sutta of the Bull*), focuses on the importance of the Five Precepts of Buddhism as core ethics and the role of Shan wise men (*saray*). **Dr Susan Conway**'s was on 'Shan astrology, numerology and time-period systems'. It focused on two prescriptions for supernatural power, composed of illustrations, mystical diagrams and incantations (*gatha*) written in indigenous Shan script and Pali. They are currently used by monks and lay experts (*sara*) in rituals that heal, protect and bring good luck. In the current climate of poverty, insecurity and lack of medical care, there has been increased demand for their services.

'A brief history of Sa-thung, a Southern Shan State' presented by **Charles K. Sao** (Independent Scholar) documents the political history of the ruling dynasty of Satung, a small sub-state in the Southern Shan States. Sao Hkun Kyi (ruled 1929–1948) helped organise the First Panglong Conference, pre-cursor of the Second Panglong Conference when the Shan States were declared a single unified polity. Involvement ended with the last meeting between Sao Hkun Kyi and Sao Shwe Thaik, first President of the Union of Burma, on 4 January 1948. **Farouk Yahya (SOAS)** delivered a paper on 'The rotating naga: a comparative study of the Malay and Shan traditions' where in Southeast Asia the rotating naga is a popular divinatory technique. The naga (a mythological serpent) rotates four times a year (every three months) through the cardinal directions. Its movement and the subsequent locations of its body parts determine whether human activities at a given time will be auspicious or inauspicious. **Jotika Khur-Yearn's (SOAS)** paper was on 'Burmese loan words in Shan *Lik Long* literature'. In Shan classical poetic literatures of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the inclusion of Burmese words has become a fashion among Shan writers. Shan classical authors known as *Zao Khu Maw* use Burmese words and phrases for the composition of poetic works. This has political undertones in the context of modern tensions between the Shan States and the Union of

Burma/Myanmar. The textual analysis is based on Mahasatipahana, written by Zao Amat Long of Mueang Naung in 1875.

Nang Voe Hseng Phayar Yang, (Shan Literature and Culture Association, Yangon) spoke on Tai Shan ceremonial drums used in rituals for ancestor worship, Buddhist festivals, funerals and merit making and also for performance. This paper focused on many forms of Shan drum in the context of history and folk mythology and their role as a model for citizenship and harmonious community relations. **Zuliskandar Ramli's (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)** presentation co-authored with Nasha Rodziadi Khaw, Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, and Nazarudin Zainun was a paleographical analysis of the Buddhist inscriptions of Bujang Valley. These inscriptions between the Muda River to the south and the Sala River to the north include the Mahanavika Inscription, Sungai Mas Inscription I, Sungai Mas II Inscription, and Kampung Pendi Inscription, and contain Buddhist stanzas, the majority from the Madhyamika sect of Mahayana. The research is significant to the history of Kedah in terms of the early expansion of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. The final paper was by **Jun Gao (Independent Scholar)** on the influence of Buddhist thought in democratic movements led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Khun Toon Oo. The presentation explored the Burmese tradition of engaged Buddhism and Shan Buddhism, providing an analysis of the influence of Suu Kyi's discourse on Buddhism and Khun Toon Oo's democratic movement in the Shan States, and an analysis of their role in solving the problem of ethnic secession.

Panel B: Emerging scholars

Convenor: Dr Fiona Kerlogue (Horniman Museum)

By its nature, the emerging scholars' panel always includes a wide range of different topics and disciplinary approaches. Nevertheless, participants found a great many themes in common and there was a lively exchange of views and contact details, making for a very successful gathering.

The first paper was from **Alex Grainger (LSE)**, who examined contested social hierarchies based on resistance era legacies in Baucau district, Timor-Leste. Alex argued that while the state has helped to generate these hierarchies by distributing pensions to those who participated in the resistance movement, political elites have also used their superior social positions to co-opt and exploit material resources. **Lesley Pullen (SOAS)** focussed on textile motifs in statuary of Java of the classical period, comparing the designs with those found in surviving Indian textiles dated to the 14th century as well as to textiles being produced in Indonesia today. **Muh Arif Rokhman (SOAS)** discussed representations of the relationships between Indonesian and western characters in Galang Lufityanto's novel Bule Celup (Dipped White), and the messages suggested by the results of the encounters between the three couples at the heart of the narrative. **Tamara Aberle (Royal Holloway)** analysed recent performances by two Indonesian theatre companies, Bandung-based Teater Payung Hitam and Serang-based TeaterStudio, investigating whether and in what ways their work could be seen in the larger context of strengthening civil society in Indonesia. **David Blake (University of East Anglia)** challenged recent views on the development of water supply in Southeast Asia. His paper focussed on Thailand and argued that Wittfogel's theory of hydraulic despotism should be reconsidered in the modern context. **Le Tanh (Polish Academy of Science, Warsaw)** took an unusual approach to the question of how national identity in Vietnam can best be formulated, drawing ideas from lengthy travels in the country and using the image of the road as the metaphorical core of his paper. **Veerayooth Kanchoochat (Cambridge University)** examined institutional change in Thailand, proposing that struggles between three competing coalitions have shaped institutional and policy outcomes, resulting in inefficient bureaucratic structures which have had a profound impact on the economic development of Thailand. **Bo Bo's (SOAS)** paper drew its data from historical documents from the popular press in Burma, showing how the army, political forces and intelligentsia have interacted in forming a nationalist, xenophobic and oppressive state.

Our first speaker on Sunday was **Ofita Purwani (University of Edinburgh)**, who discussed the north alun-alun of the Surakarta and Yogyakarta kratons, revealing how since their transformation from

royal to public spaces they have continued to be sites of power and struggle. **Stefani H.S. Nugroho (National University of Singapore)** looked at ideas of the nation culled from interviews with young people in three different sites in Indonesia: Jakarta, Kupang and Banda Aceh, showing how differently people related to the concept of Indonesia, and suggesting some reasons why this might be so. **Daniel Bumke (University of Leeds)** presented findings from his research in West Java and Bengkulu into the changing fortunes of incumbents in Indonesia's local elections, which reveals that while incumbents may have experienced setbacks following institutional changes in 2005, a number of factors have meant that in recent elections they have regained their advantage. Finally, **Kevin H. R. Villanueva (University of Leeds)** considered how language and discourse help ASEAN, as a regional inter-governmental organisation, to open opportunities for non-state actors to influence political action because it represents an alternative socio-political and discursive space.

Panel C: Malay/Indonesian manuscript studies **Convenor: Dr Annabel Teh Gallop (British Library)**

The sixth panel on Malay/Indonesian manuscript studies to be held at an Aseasuk conference was attended by 7 paper presenters, with a strong contingent from Malaysia. **Ruzy Suliza Hashim (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)** opened the panel with her paper on 'Doxological traditions of Malay court narratives: negotiating faith and royal aura', exploring how Malay scribes combined the conflicting demands of upholding royal prestige within an Islamic milieu, while having to narrate incidents of royal behaviour contrary to Islamic beliefs. A little-known Bugis literary genre was highlighted by **Roger Tol (KITLV, Jakarta)** in his paper on 'Élong: short Bugis songs', based on published and manuscript sources dating from 1872 to 2008. Élong are three-line metrical poems which cover a wide range of topics and often possess a powerful poetic vision. **Awang Azman Awang Pawi (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak)** gave a paper on 'Hikayat Banjar: the antecedents of Nusantara material culture', focusing in particular on references to textiles, clothing and architecture in this text.

Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin (University Kebangsaan Malaysia) spoke on 'The portrayal of joys and tears in Malay classical texts: a cognitive semantic analysis', contrasting the conventional image schemas and conceptual metaphors used to depict happiness and sadness in Malay texts. **Annabel Gallop** gave an overview of 'Malay silverware with Jawi inscriptions', based primarily on the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. **Haji Wan Ali Wan Mamat (International Islamic University Malaysia)** returned to the subject of his MA study at UCL under the supervision of Russell Jones, with his paper on 'Malay palaeography: a preliminary survey'. In view of the paucity of advanced studies of Arabic palaeography, he suggested that Western palaeographic terminology and methodology may be useful models for the study of Malay palaeography. The final paper was by **Russell Jones (SOAS)** on 'Watermarks in Indonesian and Malay manuscripts, some developments in theory and practice', emphasising the relative importance of words and letters over icons in the study of watermarks in post-1800 European papers, which would account for the majority of Malay manuscripts. Russell also demonstrated some new technological tools for studying watermarks in the form of light sheets which can be inserted between the folios of a manuscript.

Panel D: Heritage tourism and heritage sites in Southeast Asia, with reference to UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) **Convenor: Professor V.T. King (University of Leeds)**

The three sessions in the panel with ten papers covered all seven countries in Southeast Asia which have UNESCO-inscribed World Heritage Sites (WHS): Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The panel emerged from a British-Academy/Aseasuk-funded research project entitled 'World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia: Cross-cultural and Management

Perspectives' (which runs from 2009 to 2012). The research team comprises Victor King, Janet Cochrane, Michael Hitchcock, Michael Parnwell, with research assistance provided by Sigrid Lenaerts and Goh Hong Ching, and among others, local researchers coordinated by Dr Kannapa Pongponrat, Mahidol University and Professor Jayum Jawan, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Four of the research team presented papers in the panel, and another member, Michael Hitchcock, was unable to attend but sent in an abstract and a brief paper, and there was also a proposed paper by David Berliner who could not attend. The possibility of bringing together the papers in an edited volume is currently being explored. The same issues and concerns emerged in several of the papers to do with the tensions between conservation and development and in particular between heritage protection (both tangible and intangible) and the pressures generated by tourism; the influence and role of UNESCO in this process; the effectiveness or otherwise of the management of the sites; the role of national governments and the ways in which they deploy these sites for nation-building and other purposes; the perspectives of the various stakeholders and users of the sites including tourist and visitor views and those of local people; and the advantages and disadvantages of UNESCO inscription for local communities and livelihoods.

Session 1 was chaired by Michael Parnwell. **Annabel Vallard (CNRS and EHESS, France)**, delivered a paper on 'Heritage sites and tourism: through a focus on the textile industry in Luang Prabang (Lao PDR)'. She argued that UNESCO's policies not only impinge on buildings, urban structures or natural and urban spaces but also on the entire 'ecology of relations' between humans, places, objects and materials. It has particular effect on economic activities associated with heritage management and tourism. With her focus on the textile industry in the WHS of Luang Prabang she demonstrated how weaving and its products have undergone considerable transformations through the internationalisation of trade, the emergence of new private workshops of textile production for the world market and through the increasing presence of tourists. Textile production, distribution and consumption have been reconfigured since UNESCO inscription in 1995, providing new economic opportunities from the local to the global scale entailing processes of cooperation and negotiation as well as rivalries and tensions.

Sigrid Lenaerts (Leeds Metropolitan University and the Living Stone Centre for Intercultural Entrepreneurship, Belgium) on 'Visitors' perceptions of Luang Prabang as a World Heritage Site' examined the results of interviews with international and domestic visitors which were held to better understand their motivations in visiting Luang Prabang and their appreciation of their visit there. A wide range of WHS managerial aspects were discussed with a specific focus on the interpretation of the cultural heritage. **Robert Gozzoli (University of Siam, Bangkok)** on 'A holistic approach to Ayutthaya World Heritage Site' discussed the consequences of UNESCO inscription of the former Thai capital in 1991. While the registration certainly produced an increased number of visitors, more recently the site has been marred by a series of problems: deficiencies present on the site with a decline in the tourists' experience as well as conflicts between the Fine Arts Department and local stakeholders. The paper emphasised restoration and interpretation issues, which emerged from onsite fieldwork and revealed actual limits and possible improvements relative to archaeological management, tourist information and interpretation, as well as social and economic development issues. It is argued that this full scale, holistic approach will be particularly relevant for future planning of the WHS, and in creating partnerships and collaboration for anyone involved with the site at a time when there is renewed interest in the city.

Session 2 was chaired by Janet Cochrane. **Adèle Esposito (l'Ecole d'Architecture de Paris Belleville, Paris VIII University)**, and **Philippe Peycam (IIAS)** presented a paper on 'Angkor and its "marginal" surroundings: a world heritage site as an arena of tactics, competition and connivances'. UNESCO inscription in 1992 established a regulatory institutional framework in heritage conservation, tourism management and urban development. One of the main normative and operational instruments used was that of zoning which created two geographically delineated entities distinguished by status, competent authorities and programmes: (1) an archaeological park which included the most prominent monumental remains; and (2) the remaining territory of the Siem Reap Province. The paper examined tensions between the two zones and criticised a general assumption surrounding the evolution of Siem Reap-Angkor in the last 20 years. The way Angkor is managed is a

far cry from the positive model of international collaboration on conservation presented by UNESCO and its national supporters, while the town is not irremediably destined to be the uncontrolled ground for irresponsible private, indigenous initiatives as it is portrayed by the same institutional actors. An intimate knowledge of the field reveals that 'underground' tactics, competitions and connivances preside over the decision-making processes and the implementation of projects both in the park and in the town.

In 'Lessons from Vigan: a comparative analysis of successful urban heritage rehabilitation', **Erik Akpedonu (Ateneo de Manila University)** demonstrated that the Philippines still has a relatively rich and diverse architectural heritage from the Spanish-American colonial period and the immediate post-war years. It is a unique blend of Malay, Chinese, and Spanish building traditions with US-American overlays and influences from Mexico and Japan. Yet, this remarkable building tradition is little known within or without the country. Worse, the social, political and environmental conditions for preserving this unique heritage are suffering from a general lack of appreciation, political apathy and disinterest, and an absence of visionary planning and imagination, which has resulted in decades-long neglect and decay. However, the historic core of Vigan in Ilocos Sur stands out as a rare example of comparatively successful urban rehabilitation. A UNESCO WHS since 1998, the ensemble of late 18th to mid 19th century urban stone houses of the Mestizo District has come a long way to its current status as the internationally most well-known cultural tourism destination of the country. The paper sought to identify and analyse the underlying factors that have enabled a successful rehabilitation in Vigan in comparison with other sites in the country where such efforts were less successful, failed, or not even attempted.

Victor King in his paper entitled 'Melaka as a World Heritage Site: cultural politics and identity in Malaysia' argued that as the origin of the Malay-Muslim sultanate system in Peninsular Malaysia and more widely, Melaka has been a crucial element in the Malaysian government's nation-building policies since independence. It symbolises a 'golden age' in the development of Malay civilisation and in that regard the emphasis on Malay and Islamic culture in the construction of a national identity has played an important part in the ways in which Melaka has been represented and developed as a historical site. However, the post-independence focus on the necessity for economic growth and modernisation has generated a tension between the protection and conservation of national heritage and the need to transform urban landscapes to realise modernity and development. This tension presents particular difficulties for those bodies responsible for the management of a UNESCO-inscribed site with the multivocal heritage discourse and the conflicting political, economic, social and cultural pressures on global heritage.

In her paper 'George Town – one half of the Melaka and George Town, World Heritage Site: the challenges of serial inscription, economics of heritage and cultural tourism', **Gwynn Jenkins** (Architect LLA, Penang] demonstrated that in the three years since inscription, George Town's cultural landscape has undergone rapid change, and the site has been, and still is challenged by development and investment, mainly for the tourism industry and the demands of cultural tourism. High returns for investment have also brought interest in the traditional heritage building stock, predictably by both foreign investors and speculators, and less predictably by the swiflet-breeding farmers for the birds' nest industry. So lucrative is the latter's investment that, threatened by closure of their farms within the WHS, they took their protest to UNESCO's door. Not long after inscription, an English-language newspaper queried the approval and appropriateness of four high-rise hotel projects in the site. This alarm brought about a joint UNESCO/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to George Town in 2009. George Town's Chinese press also ran an article on the near complete destruction of a row of Category II shop-houses to be remodelled as a boutique hotel. In parallel to the physical changes, the few remaining communities that remained after the Rent Control Repeal of January 2000 have been and are being evicted to make way for sales to new owners of boutique hotels, second homes and other tourist-related venues.

In the final session chaired by Victor King, **Michael Parnwell's (University of Leeds)** 'Swimming against the tide of convention: intangible cultural heritage, whale worship and tourism development in and around Hoi An, Central Vietnam' addressed the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the

Intangible Cultural Heritage (CSICH) (2003) which requires that each State Party should 'take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory' (Article 11a). They should 'ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned' (Article 1b) in a way that is compatible with 'sustainable development' (Article 2:1). Safeguarding involves 'measures aimed at ensuring the viability of intangible cultural heritage' (Article 2:3), and should involve 'the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management' (Article 15). The paper examined whale worship among coastal communities in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, particularly in the vicinity of the UNESCO WHS of Hoi An and the Cham Islands, as an illustration of intangible cultural heritage that has been brought under considerable pressure as a consequence of rapid tourism development. More recently (2009), the Cham Islands (Cu Lao Cham) have been designated by UNESCO a Global Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere Reserve (MBR) programme. However, as with Hoi An, the enhanced status as a globally significant MBR has brought the local authorities an additional marketing angle to encourage further tourism growth and a means of diversifying attractions to spread the burden of tourism development starting to swamp the Hoi An WHS. There is an obvious and uncomfortable tension between measures which are intended to protect and preserve heritage and efforts which seek to mobilise heritage values for tourism and local economic development. Whale temples, which are the physical manifestation of the worship of the whale as an ancestor of fishers, are coming under increasing pressure, not so much because they have become a tourist attraction but because tourism development is rapidly displacing coastal communities as the authorities and influential business actors rush to build resorts and villas in seaside areas. The result is a transformational reality which appears to go against both the spirit and the legal provisions of the three UNESCO Conventions to which the local authorities are party.

In 'From Ho Chi Minh Trail to World Heritage: the Phong Nha-Ke Bang Nature Reserve of Vietnam', **Vu Hong Lien** (retired BBC journalist) examines the recent circumstances of the natural site of Phong Nha-Ke Bang, inscribed by UNESCO in 2003. It invokes a peaceful image of a spectacular national park and, yet, not so long ago, this area was the heart of the notorious Ho Chi Minh Trail. Under the UNESCO natural criterion viii the park's importance was stated as follows: 'This vast limestone landscape is extremely complex, with many notable and spectacular geomorphic features, including 65 km of caves and underground rivers.' The park is one of the largest areas of intact forest habitat on limestone karst still found in Southeast Asia but now faces new threats: poaching, indiscriminate stone quarrying and haphazard building of facilities for tourists.

In the final paper by **Janet Cochrane (Leeds Metropolitan University)** in 'It's a jungle out there: contestation and conflict at Indonesia's natural World Heritage Sites', there was discussion of the consequences for the environment following the process of political democratisation and allied decentralisation of resources after the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998. One aspect was a fragmentation and contestation of control over resources, and the consequent mosaic of administrative areas has challenged sustainable resource management and resulted in the breakdown of coordinated planning and management systems. The tendency towards localism has also meant that countervailing efforts by national government agencies to retain centralised management of resources have caused local resentment, local attempts to claw back jurisdiction over natural resources, and widespread disregard for national-level government institutions. Weak governance has also fostered and been undermined by the spread of various forms of corrupt and nepotistic practices. In the case of natural resources, this is illustrated by struggles over valuable resources and practices such as over-harvesting while frail institutional arrangements continue to threaten the effective management of protected areas. The paper focused on the management of Indonesia's four natural WHS with on-site research carried out into three of the sites in 2009 and 2010: the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra, Ujung Kulon National Park, and Komodo National Park.

There were two papers that unfortunately the authors were unable to present. **David Berliner (ULB-Brussels)** on 'The UNESCO-ization of Luang Prabang (Lao PDR)' looks in particular at the pioneering role played by UNESCO conservation experts in turning Luang Prabang into the

'nostalgiascape' it is today and asks how local people perceive these nostalgic politics on the ground. **Michael Hitchcock (IMI University Centre, Switzerland)** and **I Nyoman Darma Putra (Universitas Udayana)** submitted a paper on 'Prambanan and Borobudur: negotiating tourism, conservation and stakeholders' with its focus on the contemporary management of these sites as attractions for many millions of domestic and international visitors. While one site is Buddhist (Borobudur) and the other is Hindu (Prambanan), they are different kinds of structures with entirely different layouts. To complicate matters there is a third site, Ratu Boko that is on the tentative WHS list for Indonesia, run by the same body that manages Prambanan and Borobudur. Since 1980 a state-owned company has had overall responsibility for these sites, but reforms in 2010 altered this management structure. There are fears that the unclear boundary arrangements could be exploited by developers to build inappropriate structures for tourism within or close to these important sites.

Panel E: Migrant labour policies, regulation and law: past and present **Convenor: Dr Carol Tan (SOAS)**

Dinh Vu Trang Ngan (Harvard Kennedy School) co-authored with Jonathan Pincus and John Sender Patterns of migration and employment on child welfare in Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces

Yuri Hosono (Yokohama National University) Accepting nurse and certified care worker candidates in Japan: how a bilateral policy decision is implemented at the administrative level

Anisa Santoso (University of Nottingham) Migrant workers policy making in ASEAN: new viewpoints on the analytical framework of two level games approach

Tobias Rettig (Singapore Management University) Temporary trans-continental labour migration for WWII: French imperial and post-colonial policies towards Vietnamese workers, 1930s to present

Tharapi Than (SOAS) The movements of commodities along Burma-China, Burma-Thailand borders in the 21st century

Panel F: Laos: historical and contemporary transitions **Convenor: Dr Katherine Brickell (Royal Holloway)**

The session was a wonderful 24-hour marathon of 12 papers diverse in scope that honed in on historical and contemporary transitions in Laos. Given its size, space does not allow me to explore individual papers in any depth but I do wish to draw out some interconnected key themes that emerged, many of which Jonathan Rigg kindly highlighted in his discussion role to the session at the end of the two days together. The first is economic transition, the role of foreign investment and the change this is having particularly in rural environs of Laos. This was aptly covered in individual papers by **Anna-Klara Nilsson (Uppsala University, Sweden)** and **Wasana La-Orngplew (Durham University)** on the rubber trade. **Pon Souvannaseng (LSE)** extended this economic focus providing a largely theoretical take on the market-based logic of changes occurring in the country whilst **Robin Lambert (Université de Paris)** vividly brought to life the resultant changes occurring in the urban history of one street in urban Vientiane. Different types of political transformations were also discussed including a detailed analysis by **Richard Taylor** (independent researcher) of governmental power dynamics; the development of Laotian language nationalism by **Junko Yano (Hitotsubashi University, Japan)**; the marginalisation of the Lanten Daoist rituals by **Joseba Estévez (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany)** and the significance of political distinctions made by leaders between the plains and mountainous regions of Laos by **Marianne Blache (Sorbonne University)**. The final theme is that of community-level change to, and interpretation of, modernisation through the eyes of women in **Katherine Brickell's** study of employment in Luang Prabang; through the experiences of children in **Roy Huijsmans (University of**

Amsterdam) research on the politics of childhood; and through the sounds of community radio in **Mary Traynor's (Cardiff School of Creative and Cultural Industries)** original paper on the history and current direction of media in Laos. In sum, the session illuminated the wealth of work now being conducted in Laos and by scholars from across the world.

Panel G: Colonialism, decolonisation, and post-colonial legacies in commemoration

Convenor: Tobias Rettig, Chair and report: Karl Hack

This panel focused on World War II in Southeast Asia, and the postwar conflicts that followed in Malaya and Vietnam, and on their memory and commemoration.

Agnes Khoo (Leeds) talked about her oral history work with women of the Malayan Communist Party. She shared both the issues of memory this had brought up – as the women recalled events that happened several decades earlier – and themes that arose such as separations (from loved ones, babies, etc), regrets (at party purges), and the importance of recording emotions. She also placed her oral history in the context of vibrant, contemporary Malaysian discussion of the country's communist figures and past.

Marina Mouda (SOAS) continued the theme of analysing memory, by talking about the disjunction between the memory of Ho Chi Minh and his old village dwelling place fostered by the Vietnamese state, and the way locals remember him, his family, and his dwelling place near Hue. She emphasised how secular, state attempts to model him as 'Uncle Ho' from simple peasant stock, contrast with local realities and memories, and how his death without children renders him an imperfect figure for reverence in a society where ancestral halls are important.

Michael Leigh (SOAS) then tore us away from memory, and plunged us back into the actual events of World War II: namely the British defeat and evacuation of Burma in 1941–42. He provided detail on who the British did – or in the case of many Indians in Burma did not – help to evacuate, and on the chaos fuelled by colonial infighting and revolving chair leadership in civil planning. In so doing, he provided fascinating statistical breakdowns of the British colonial population of the time. Discussion was then enlivened by the contributions of Sai Aung Tun. Now Emeritus Professor of History at Yangon University, he recalled witnessing the events described as a child living around Myitkyina, right up in the north of Myanmar.

Tobias Rettig (Singapore Management University) completed the ensemble with an analysis of the commemoration of the Indian National Army (INA), which the Japanese raised mainly from surrendered British Indian Army soldiers. He noted the recent increase in public celebration of the INA in Singapore and Malaysia, and discussed possible reasons for this. He also provided a brutally clear and stimulating chart of 'wartime heroes', noting for each their actions, allegiances, whether they had a monument and if so what.

Taken together, the four papers and the lively discussion they provoked demonstrated just how relevant, and at times raw and controversial, the memory and commemoration of war and postwar conflicts remains in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Panel H: Southeast Asian environmentalism: frameworks, discourses and networks

Convenor: Dr Liana Chua, (Brunel University)

This panel sought to interrogate different forms and meanings of environmentalism in the context of Southeast Asia. Approaching the topic from different disciplinary angles and over different time-

scales, the papers pushed beyond a conventional definition of 'environmentalism' as a predominantly Western, urban/middle-class movement, showing how analogous modes of relating to the environment (broadly defined) could be identified in Southeast Asia – sometimes to surprising effect.

Historian **Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells (Cambridge)** opened the proceedings with a paper on the genealogy of Euro-American environmentalism and its dissemination – but also transformation – across Southeast Asia in recent decades. Linking 18th–19th century European understandings of the stewardship of nature with contemporary debates about sustainable development, she depicted environmentalism in Southeast Asia today as a multiplicitous, potentially empowering, phenomenon that transcends national, ethnic, class and other boundaries.

Palaeoecologist **Chris Hunt (Queen's University Belfast)** took the panel into the realm of prehistory, with a discussion of three Sarawak-based projects on which he has worked: excavations at Niah, Loagan Bunut, and the Kelabit Highlands. Drawing on his analysis of pollen and other vegetation samples, he showed how, far from being pristine and untouched, the forests in these areas were in fact artefacts bearing a long history of human use and management. In conclusion, he discussed how archaeological findings from the Kelabit Highlands were being used as legal evidence in Kelabit land claims, particularly in response to the recent encroachment of logging companies.

If Hunt sought to insert humans back into nature, historian **Greg Bankoff (Hull University)** revealed the impossibility of extracting nature from human society. Expounding on the notion of 'deep forestry', Bankoff argued that scholars might 'think more like a forest' by acknowledging the agentive role of the climate, soil and different animal species (among other things) in shaping the Philippine forests over an extended time period, from prehistory up to the present. Like Hunt, then, Bankoff made a strong case for recognising the confluence – and mutual dependence – of humans and forests across history and social formations.

Liana Chua's paper brought the panel back to the 2000s through a study of the complex and shifting manifestations of 'environmentalism' in a dam-construction project in Sarawak. Based on recent social anthropological fieldwork, it revealed how the Bidayuh inhabitants of four villages around the dam have become entangled in various environmentalist and indigenous rights campaigns. Despite seeming to be in natural sympathy with the environmentalist cause, however, these people also have their own concerns, hopes, agendas and means of apprehending the situation. Drawing on their stories, Chua suggested that environmentalism could be fruitfully studied in terms of processes and effects rather than in terms of shared origins and intentions.

Jonathan Rigg (Durham University) drew together the themes and debates of the four papers in his discussion. This led into an intense and productive question and answer session, during which participants grappled with several related issues, including the potentials (and pitfalls) of multi-disciplinarity, the politics of environmentalism and academic research, the delicate balance between socio-economic survival and sustainability, and the differences between past and present modes of environmentalist thought.

Panel J: Violence and trauma in Southeast Asian memoryscapes **Convenor: Dr Christian Oesterheld (Mahidol University International College, Thailand)**

This panel was one of the last to convene during the conference, but despite the fact that many conference participants had already left Cambridge, an intensive and constructive discussion followed the three papers presented. **Napakadol Kittisenee** (Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development, **Chiang Mai University**) discussed various forms of commemorating World War II in contemporary Thailand, focusing on the way in which memories are inscribed into the memorial landscape of Kanchanaburi in contrast to the war's representation in Thailand's intangible cultural heritage of literature and cinema. **Paul Sorrentino (Université Paris Descartes)** took a

different turn on memoryscapes by focusing his paper on spaces where memories are constructed: 'Phông Vong, the "Ghost Room": the dead, science, and the state in contemporary Vietnam'. The last paper of the panel, by **Christian Oesterheld** was concerned with the selective presence of memorial structures in the reconfigured Cambodian memoryscape and discussed its impacts towards the current Cambodian accountability process in the context of the Khmer Rouge tribunals. This threefold conceptualisation of memoryscapes in contemporary Southeast Asia introduced intriguing issues for possible future research, which resounded vividly during the ensuing discussion of the panelist's ideas, well into the time of the closing afternoon tea.

Panel K: Intercultural exchange in early modern Southeast Asia Convenor: Dr Christina Skott, University of Cambridge)

This panel examined the diverse levels of interaction and exchange which took place as a result of European expansion in Southeast Asia in the long early modern era. The nine papers touched on themes ranging from the visual arts, photography, literature and music to anthropology and botany. **Michael W. Charney (SOAS)** presented a paper on the meeting of the cartographical regimes of the English East India Company and Burmese cartographical approaches and understandings of the world in the late 18th century. In a paper on musical exchanges **David R. M. Irving (King's College London)** examined publications initiated by Protestant missionaries in the Malay world, through an analysis of how cultural exchanges led to the printing of psalms and hymns in Malay. Focusing on early religious images in the Philippines, **Imke Rath (Universität Hamburg)** used the case study of a depiction of the Last Judgment as a reflection of how missionary strategies and conversion processes adapted to local conditions, as it was argued that the conventional scheme of this familiar composition was altered in order to accommodate indigenous religious concepts.

Two papers then looked at exchanges involving the natural world. **Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells (University of Cambridge)** presented a survey of European engagement with naturalia, and materia medica in particular, and described a process whereby inter-Asian collaboration and exchange had to give way to a more intrusive European participation. Through the case study of the cultivation of nutmeg, **Nicholas Martland (British Library)** showed how, in the early 19th century, the British settlement of Penang became an important centre for plant collecting and botanical research and horticultural knowledge, thus illustrating the East India Company's attempts to utilise and access regional botanical knowledge.

In a case study of the classification of humans in the work of the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus, **Christina Skott** showed how Europe's encounter with the region shaped emerging European theories of race, and pointed to the ways in which European understanding of the region's diversity was shaped by ambivalent relationships between different ethnic groups.

The panel then moved on to the 19th century, first in a paper on European engagement with indigenous literature, where **Martin Müller (European University Institute, Florence)** examined the evaluation of Malay and Javanese literature as historical sources in the writings of the British scholar-administrator John Crawfurd. **Lim Peng Han (Loughborough University)** described how British sports, such as football and cricket, was transmitted to Malaya, in a case study of cultural transmission and local adaptation of European pastimes. **Andrew Jarvis (University of Cambridge)** looked at the activities of two 19th century photographers in Burma, drawing parallels between European photography and the collecting of botanical specimens. The paper also considered the role of local assistants.

Although the panel touched on exchanges on a variety of levels and through varying mediums, it became clear that common themes were found, in particular with regard to the crucial role of intermediaries, and the ways in which Europeans were able to both adapt to and make use of knowledge.