

ASEAN NEWS



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OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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Cover: Family looking out at work or dump site – Payatas landfill rubbish dump, Manila (2008); photo by Jonathan Rigg.

NEWS

UK Southeast Asianists

Dr Tilman Frasch (Manchester Metropolitan University) presented a paper on 'Gebaut für eine Ewigkeit: Die buddhistische Architektur von Bagan, Birma' (Built for eternity: the Buddhist architecture of Bagan) at the Department of Asian Art History, Bonn University, in May 2014 and another on 'Gruß aus der Ferne. Empire, Tourismus und Bildpostkarte, c.1890–1930' (Greetings from afar: empire, tourism and the picture postcard, c.1890–1930) at the conference on Fernweh, University of Hagen in October 2014. Tilman was invited by Unesco to its consultation meeting Towards World Heritage Nomination of Bagan, Bagan, Myanmar, 10–12 October 2014. He had also collaborated with the Munich Ethnological Museum (now Museum Five Continents) in its preparation of the the exhibition 'Myanmar. Von Pagoden, Longyis und Nat-Geistern' (Myanmar. Of pagodas, longyis and nats), on display 19 Sept 2014 – 3 May 2015.

Dr Rebecca Elmhirst (University of Brighton) is currently involved in two projects, both in Indonesia, and both taking a political ecology approach. She has a research consultancy with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) on the 'Gender Dimensions of Oil Palm Investments in East Kalimantan', Indonesia, and is working with Bimbika Basnett (CIFOR), Mia Siscawati (Anthropology and Kajian Gender, Universitas Indonesia), and a team of local researchers in five communities (Dayak, transmigrant and Malay) in Berau and East Kutai. Becky is wrapping up a project on the impact of urban flooding on migrant communities in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, as part of an ASEAN-wide study funded by Rockefeller and led by Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Sub-projects in Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines are also ongoing, and findings are due to be published by Earthscan early next year.

Dr Jem Price (University of Brighton) delivered the following two papers at conferences: 'It happens a lot here at this time of year: thoughts on social

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- *Contemporary Islamic discourse in the Malay-Indonesian world: critical perspectives;*
- *Regional dynamics in a decentralized Indonesia*
- *Debating democratization in Myanmar*

work purpose, motivation and identity', 28th Aseasuk conference, University of Brighton; and 'Making connections between the Philippines and England: reflections on social work purpose, motivation and identity in the international context', Joint Social Work Education conference, Royal Holloway, London, 23–25 July 2014.

Dr Tallyn Gray's (University of Westminster)

current research covers the Khmer Rouge trials and Cambodian society, Cambodian Buddhism and Cambodian Islam. He is also consultant for the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC). He was awarded his PhD on 'Transition and justice in Cambodia: process, meaning and narrative 1979-2014' by the University of Westminster in July 2014.

Dr Carool Kersten (King's College London) gave a paper on 'Bourgeois Islam and Muslims without mosque: Islamic liberalism and its discontents in Indonesia' at the workshop Beyond Muslim Liberalism, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 14 March 2014. Carool was also a panelist at the international conference of the World Forum of Muslim Democrats, Sasakawa Foundation, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia 2–3 November 2014.

Dr Robert McKenzie (Northumbria University) is currently writing up a journal article, from large scale empirical research conducted in Thailand entitled 'Speech perception and the internationalisation of Thai higher education' as part of a special issue on 'The Internationalizing University' for Higher Education. Robert will be on research leave from January to July 2015 to undertake fieldwork at universities in Thailand. In addition, he would like to request from Aseasuk members any contacts to conduct quantitative sociolinguistic fieldwork at universities in Myanmar/Burma. If you can help with access to groups of university learners of English in Burma, please contact him at robert.mckenzie@northumbria.ac.uk

Robert gave the following papers this summer: 'The sociolinguistics of UK university students' variety classifications and naming of the geographical origin

of speakers of "local" and Asian forms of English' at the Names and Naming in the Post-colonial English World Conference, University of Calabria, Rende, Italy, on 26 June, and 'UK university students' perceptions of Japanese, "local" and other Asian forms of English speech', at the plenary lecture, Kyoto Prefectural University Japanese English Symposium, Kyoto, on 2 August.

Jun Zubillaga-Pow (KCL) a doctoral candidate, is also researching sexual cultures in Singapore, focusing on the history of Malay lesbians and transwomen from late British colonial rule to the Sinicization of the nation-state.

Dr Lee Jones (Queen Mary, University of London)

is on research sabbatical exploring two projects: rising powers and state transformation; and governing through markets. In late November, Lee will be presenting a paper co-authored with Shahar Hameiri on 'Murdoch International: the "Murdoch School" in international relations', at the conference on the Politics of Asia under Multipolarity, City University of Hong Kong, 20–21 November 2014. Lee will be the Lee Kong Chian Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the National University of Singapore and Stanford University from January to April 2015.

Dr Helen Godfrey (independent researcher) is researching commodity trade in Southeast Asia in the colonial era, 19th-century Borneo economic history, and telegraphy and its commercial impact.

Dr Annabel T. Gallop's project to digitise all the Malay manuscripts in the **British Library** is approaching completion, with over 70 manuscripts digitised and fully accessible online, and 30 more to follow. Annabel gave a paper on 'The art of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia' at the conference on The Illuminated Word: Codicology, Technology and the Conservation of the Qur'an, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, 21–22 April 2014. She also presented a paper on 'Malay seals as historical sources: the use of sovereign titles in the Malay world' at the conference organised by Universiti Teknologi Petronas, at the KLCC in Kuala Lumpur, 4 June 2014. On 4 September

2014 she gave a talk at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, on 'The new catalogue of manuscripts from the Malay world in British collections', and on 6 September spoke at TEDxUbud in Bali on 'Why we digitise Malay manuscripts'. From 16–17 September, Annabel gave a two-day workshop on Malay manuscripts in Jambi, organised by Jurnal Seloko and hosted by KKI Warsi. At the MANASSA Symposium on Indonesian Manuscripts in Padang, 18–20 September, she delivered a paper on 'The codicology of Minangkabau manuscripts'.

Dr Andrew McLeod (University of Oxford), is researching on the following topics: constitutional transition in Burma/Myanmar and the Myanmar Contract Act in comparative perspective. Andrew gave a paper at the recent Aseasuk conference at the University of Brighton on 'Constitutional review and political transition: the role of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union of Myanmar in constitutional politics', 13 September 2014 (see conference report).

Professor Matthew Cohen (Royal Holloway, University of London) is currently putting the finishing touches on a monograph with the working title 'Inventing the Performing Arts: Modernity and Tradition in Colonial Indonesia'. He edited a special issue of *Asian Theatre Journal* (vol 31, no. 2, Fall 2014) on global encounters in Southeast Asian performing arts that emerged from an international symposium at Bangkok University in February 2013; a return visit to Bangkok in the summer of 2013 allowed him to work closely with authors and offer mentorship to new Thai scholars. Puppetry remains Matthew's central preoccupation. He co-organised the Big Grin Symposium: International Perspectives on Puppets, Popular Culture and Heritage (Centre for Creative Collaboration, London, 1–2 March 2013) together with his colleague Cariad Astles. He has also begun work on a new project concerning the global diffusion of shadow puppets and shadow play. Another current research interest is the endangered rod puppet theatre tradition of *wayang golek cepak*. The research is practice-led and has resulted in a series of performances in Indramayu (West Java, Indonesia) and London's Southbank Centre.

Matthew presented the following 11 papers, this and last year: 'India and the performing arts in colonial Indonesia', SEA ArtsFest at the panel on Indian Influences in Southeast Asian Performing Arts, SOAS, 25 October 2014; 'Wayang in colonial Indonesia: tradition in modernity', Indonesia Kontemporer Festival, SOAS, 18 October 2014; 'The heyday of popular theatre in Indonesia', IFTR/FIRT conference, Warwick University, 31 July 2014; 'Shadow puppetry and its global reinventions: a millennium of change and continuity in a nomadic art form'. University of Sussex, 29 May 2014; 'Traditional and post-traditional shadow puppetry in modernity', University of Loughborough, 26 February 2014; 'Historical perspectives on the dynamics of ethnicity, nationalism and modernity in the performing arts of Indonesia', at Contemporary Cultures of Opposition in Southeast Asia, SOAS, 19 February 2014; 'Shadow puppetry in the media age: tradition and post-tradition in modernity', University of Cologne, 9 December 2013; 'Modernity, the Chinese and the performing arts in Southeast Asia', at the Transcultural, Intercultural and Intergenerational Performance: True Heart Theatre's Production of *Golden Child* Discussed, University of East London, 7 October 2013; 'Theatre and vernacular modernity in late colonial Indonesia', 7th EuroSEAS Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 2–5 July 2013; 'Puppets in the UK, Indonesia and on global stages.', Puppet Talk, University of Sussex, 15 June 2013, and 'Southeast Asian performance across borders', World Symposium on Global Encounters in Southeast Asian Performing Arts, Bangkok University, Thailand, 1–3 February 2013.

Centre of South East Asian Studies, SOAS, University of London

Dr Michael Buehler has been recently appointed as Lecturer in Comparative Politics. Specialising in Southeast Asian politics, his teaching and research interests revolve around state-society relations under conditions of democratisation and decentralisation. Previously he taught at Columbia University and Northern Illinois University. From 2013 to 2014, he was a Research Fellow at the Equality Development and Globalization Studies (EDGS) programme at Northwestern University in

Chicago. From 2008 to 2010, he was the Postdoctoral Fellow in Modern Southeast Asian Studies at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute in New York City, USA. In 2008, he was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies in Leiden, The Netherlands. He has been an Associate Research Fellow at the Asia Society in New York City, since 2011. Michael gained his PhD from LSE.

Dr Louise Tythacott is Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in Curating and Museology of Asian Art. She was Lecturer in Museology at the University of Manchester, and also a curator of Asian Collections and head of ethnology for the National Museums Liverpool. Louise has worked as the curator of a private Burmese textile collection, and as an exhibitions officer at the Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery & Museums, Brighton. She holds a first class degree in Social Anthropology with Southeast Asian Studies from the University of Kent at Canterbury. Her post-graduate research was based at the University of Hong Kong where she undertook fieldwork on Chinese folk deity imagery and temple iconography. She studied Chinese at the University of Westminster and holds a PhD from the University of Manchester. Louise is also one of the managing editors of the peer-reviewed journal, *Museum and Society*.

Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland presented a paper on 'Back to grass roots: performance and resistance in the heritage site', at the panel on Exploring the Complexity of Heritage Practices through Cooperation, European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) conference, Tallinn University, Estonia, 31 July–3 August 2014. She also co-organised with Beate Engelbrecht an EASA panel on Collaboration in Visual Work: With Whom, How, What For?

Professor William G. Clarence-Smith is continuing research on Middle Easterners in the colonial Philippines. As part of this project, he made a research trip to Washington, DC, 11–28 August 2014, to consult documents in the Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, and the National

Archives & Records Administration - II, College Park, Maryland. He also made a research trip to Paris, 3–13 September 2014, to consult the records of the French consulate in Manila, in the Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de La Courneuve. William's other research interests cover mules in early modern global history, c.1400-1850 CE, equids in World War I, rubber and World War II, and Islamic slavery. William gave the following eight papers since May: 'Animal power as a factor in Ottoman military decline, 1683–1918,' at the conference, War Horses of the World, SOAS, London, 3 May 2014; 'Mules in Britain: a forgotten history,' Donkey Week, Donkey Sanctuary, Sidmouth, 7 May 2014; 'Industrialisation across the "Global South", 1840s–1945,' Postcolonialism Seminar, Queen's University, Belfast, 13 May 2014; 'Les mulets en Asie de l'est et du sudest dans la longue durée,' Séminaire, Institut de l'Asie Orientale, École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, 5 June 2014; 'Animals in the campaign for Egypt and Greater Syria,' at the conference, on Perspectives on the Great War, Queen Mary University of London, 2 August 2014; 'Slavery in global history', ENIUGH, 4th European Congress on World and Global History, École Normale Supérieure de Paris, 5 September 2014; 'The role of export processing industrialization in the manufacturing history of the Global South, 1840s to 1950s,' at a conference on Economic Institutional Change and Global Labour Relations, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 26–27 September 2014; and 'The conquering Balkan mule, c.1400–1914,' at the 4th Donkey and Mule Conference, Hydra, Greece, 10–12 October 2014.

Dr Russell Jones is continuing his research and teaching on the paper and watermarks of Malay manuscripts as the most effective means of dating them.

Professor V.T. (Terry) King has been appointed for a further two years as Professorial Research Associate at the Centre. He has also been recently appointed as Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and from June 2014 he has been Visiting Professor at the Regional Centre for

Sustainable Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Centre for Tourism Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University. He continues as Emeritus Professor at Leeds University and Honorary Fellow of the White Rose East Asia Centre there. He has presented the following papers since late June: 'Intellectual discourse, UNESCO in Southeast Asia: comparative perspectives', Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 27 June, 2014; special lecture, 'Tourism and research', Department of Tourism/ Centre for Tourism Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University, 25 August 2014; keynote address, 'Tourism research and multidisciplinary studies: issues and problems', international conference on Tourism and Development, Centre for Tourism Studies, Chiang Mai University, 29–30 August 2014, and 'Tribute to Professor Erik Cohen' on his receipt of a special award from Chiang Mai University, 29 August 2014; special lectures, 'Whither the sociology of Southeast? Some reflections on 40 years of sociological research', 3 September 2014, and 'Southeast Asian Studies: the conundrum of area studies and methodology', Regional Center for Sustainable Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, 10 September 2014.; seminar paper, 'UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia: issues, problems and prospects', Centre of South East Asian Studies, SOAS, 11 November 2014. He will be presenting a keynote address, 'UNESCO and World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia: issues and concepts', 4th international conference on Tourism Research, Kota Kinabalu, organised by the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA and Sustainable Tourism Research Cluster, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 9–11 December 2014; as well as a lecture on 'ASEAN and tourism' and a workshop overview on 'Academic writing and publishing', Centre for Tourism Studies and Academic Services, Chiang Mai University, 13–15 December, 2014. From June to September 2014 Terry assisted Dr Ploysri Porananond of Chiang Mai University on a research project on 'Human Resource Development in the Hospitality Sector', comparing staff development and training programmes in hotels in Phuket and Bali. From 2009 to 2013 Terry has been coordinating a major Aseasuk Research Committee/British

Academy-funded project on UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia. His co-researchers are Michael Parnwell recently at Leeds University and the Macau University of Science and Technology, Michael Hitchcock previously at the IMI University Centre Lucerne and the Macau University of Science and Technology and now at Goldsmiths College, London and Janet Cochrane at Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University); with research assistance provided by Sigrid Lenaerts, Goh Hong Ching, Jayesh Paranjape, and Joanna Fross, and involving local researchers including Kannapa Pongponrat (Mahidol University, and now at the Asian Institute of Technology), Jayum Jawan (Universiti Putra Malaysia), I Nyoman Darma Putra (Universitas Udayana), Erik Akpedonu (Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila), and Kusmayadi Husein (Sahid Institute of Tourism). Several publications have resulted from the project as well as conference panels, workshops, seminar papers and public lectures. Eight of the main contributors to the research have since contributed chapters to a book, along with other researchers associated with the project (which contains 17 chapters in all) edited by Terry entitled *UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia: issues, problems and prospects*. The volume has recently been accepted for publication by NIAS Press, Copenhagen. This is intended to complete a trilogy of publications on tourism in Southeast Asia published by NIAS Press; the first two *Tourism in Southeast Asia: challenges and new directions* (2009) and *Heritage tourism in Southeast Asia* (2010), which Terry has co-edited with Michael Hitchcock and Michael Parnwell.

Abroad

Dr Koh Sin Yee (City University, Hong Kong) is currently researching 'Alpha-territoriality in Hong Kong and London: the local implications of transnational real estate investments by the super-rich'. She delivered the following papers: 'Tracing (education-)migration geographies: Malaysian diasporas and returnees', at the 9th International Malaysian Studies Conference, Universiti Malaysia Trengganu, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, 18–20

August 2014 and 'Race, education, and citizenship: mobile Malaysians and a culture of migration', Anthropology Department Seminar, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 24 October 2014. As of June this year, Sin Yee is also Field Editor for the diaspora and migration studies sector of Dissertation Reviews (www.dissertationreviews.org).

Professor Nicholas Tapp (ANU and Research Institute of Anthropology, East China Normal University, Shanghai) is working on a China Ministry of Education 3-year research project on ethnic minority migration to Shanghai, which ends this year. His newly commenced China '93 society' 18-month archival historical research is about the missionary to the Miao (Hmong and A Hmao), Samuel Pollard, for a local culture museum to be established in Guizhou province.

Dr Ku Kun-hui (National Tsing-hua University) is working on vernacular architecture in Timor. She presented the following two papers 'Indigenous citizenship in Asia', at the Faculty of Archaeology, IAS, Leiden University, 18 June 2014 and 'Evangelical outreach: Burning Bush Mission from Taiwan to Borneo' at the 2014 international conference on Formosan Indigenous Peoples: Contemporary Perspectives, 15–17 September in Taipei.

Dr Lim Peng Han (University of Malaya) presented two papers co-authored with Mohd Salley Aman recently: 'The Badminton Asian Confederation (BAC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: building an information centre for badminton research and excellence in the world', at the *international conference on Information: Exploring the Future*, Universiti Teknologi MARA/Persatuan Perputakaan Malaysia, Johore Bahru, 10–11 September 2014, and 'A study of the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) Library in post-colonial and post-war Singapore, 1974–2014: issues and challenges in the provision of information sources for sports and leisure', *5th international conference on Libraries, Information and Society 2014*, Department of Library & Information Science, Faculty of Computer Science &

Information Technology, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, 4 – 5 November 2014. At the same conference he also gave a paper on 'The history and development of the Institute of Southeast Asian Library, Singapore, 1967–2012: future issues and challenges'.

Swansea University & University of Philippines Diliman

Swansea University staff joined colleagues from the University of the Philippines Diliman and from Mahidol University in Thailand in presenting the results of collaborative research at conferences in the Philippines and Malaysia in October 2014.

With funding from the British Academy, Swansea University researchers, led by Dr Gerard Clarke from the Department of Political and Cultural Studies, are collaborating with colleagues at the University of the Philippines Diliman on a three-year project to study the evolving human rights mechanism of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in the context of debate in human rights scholarship around the concept of 'cultural relativism'. The project brings together academics in each university from the fields of political science, international relations and international law and also involves leading human rights academics from other Southeast Asian universities.

Following a successful conference in Swansea in March 2014 hosted by the Research Institute for Arts and Humanities and a successful panel at the Oxford Colloquium on Southeast Asian Studies at Keble College, Oxford, the team met again in Southeast Asia in October.

On 13 October, they convened a one-day conference at the College of Law at the University of the Philippines, Diliman (UPD), hosted by the College's Institute of Human Rights Studies, presenting papers to students from the UPD College of Law and the Department of Political Science and to trainee diplomats from the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Papers were

presented by Dr Gerard Clarke, Swansea University Department of Political and Cultural Studies, Dr Helen Quane, Swansea University College of Law, Professor Elizabeth Aquiling-Pangalangan, University of the Philippines Diliman College of Law and Director of the Institute of Human Rights Studies, Herman Kraft, University of the Philippines Diliman Department of Political Science and Dr Sriprapha Petcharamesree from the Institute of Peace and Human Rights Studies at Mahidol University in Thailand.

They then travelled to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia where they convened a panel at the third biennial conference of the Southeast Asian Human Rights Studies Network (SEAHRN), 15 – 16 October, presenting to an audience of over 70 human rights activists and academics from Southeast Asia and beyond.

Two other academics from Swansea University and two from the University of the Philippines Diliman, along with a colleague from another Southeast Asian university will present papers at further conferences in Swansea and Manila in 2015 as part of the project.

For further information on the project, contact Dr Gerard Clarke: g.clarke@swansea.ac.uk or + 44 (0)1792 513525.

CHARLES FISHER: NOTE

I was very interested to see the article on the life of Professor Charles Fisher carried in *Aseasuk News* no. 55 by Terry King as a contribution to academic history, particularly to the development of Asian Studies in Sheffield. I only came to know Charles for a short time in SOAS towards the end of his life, when we were colleagues in SOAS, and sadly he was no longer in robust health.

Having read and heard a great deal over the years about the prisoners of war made to work on the Burma-Thailand railway by the Japanese during World War II, I naturally steered our conversation toward his wartime experiences. It soon became apparent that Charles was one of the small select group I have come to know from that time whom I admire infinitely, those who endured atrocious hardships of years of Japanese captivity and who in time were able to rise above it and play very positive roles in building bridges with a Japan which had abandoned its aggressive ambitions.

He narrates his experiences in his excellent book *Three times a guest*. When I asked him to endorse my copy he wrote ‘To Russell Jones, with all best wishes from one unreformed jail bird’ (and to my relief stopped short of ‘to another’). Charles Fisher was more than a distinguished academic professor. He was a distinguished human being. To know him was a privilege.

*Dr Russell Jones
SOAS, University of London*

CALL FOR PAPERS

Conferences

2015 ISEAS/BUFS international conference
Institute for Southeast Asian Studies
Busan University of Foreign Studies
Namsan-Dong, Geumjeong Gu, Busan,
South Korea

Themes:

(a) Regional characteristics of Southeast Asia and its comparison with others

(b) Approaches to Southeast Asian Studies: methodological quests

For further information see

<<http://www.iseas.kr/conferences/7199>>

Or contact:

KIM, Dong-Yeob Ph.D.

HK Professor / Coordinator for Research
Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Busan
University of Foreign Studies

Email: kimdy@iseas.kr (or) dykim@bufs.ac.kr

3rd Congress of the Asian Association of World
Historians
Nanyang Technological University
29–31 May 2015

The Asian Association of World Historians (AAWH) invites proposals for panels and papers. Proposals must be submitted by 1 December 2014 in order to receive full consideration.

Theme: Migration in global history: peoples, plants, plagues, and ports.
Understood in the broadest sense, 'migration' brings into focus questions about the movement of peoples, businesses, capital, ideas, goods, diseases, technologies, diverse forms of knowledge, artistic styles, ecologies, as well as medical and scientific discoveries and practices across global borders. Ports such as Singapore's facilitated these movements, which enmeshed the globe in profound change. The 2015 AAWH Congress considers these subjects in their global, world, transregional,

interdisciplinary, comparative, international, and big historical contexts, and welcomes proposals related to the Congress theme. In addition to the conference theme, we also welcome all proposals related to big, world, and global history.

Participants are eligible to apply for grants to subsidise the cost of attending the 2015 AAWH Congress. Priority will be given to scholars from late developing countries that receive no or limited financial support from their home institutions.

The 2015 meeting will include three keynote addresses, and will feature Patrick Manning, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of World History at the University of Pittsburgh; Haneda Masashi, Professor of History at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia and the Vice President of University of Tokyo; and Wang Gungwu, University Professor and the Chairman of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore.

All proposals should be submitted to <2015AAWH.Congress@ntu.edu.sg> with the subject line '2015 AAWH Congress Proposal'.

For information on conference, visit: <http://www.theaawh.org/html/3_conference_2015.htm>

For information on grants, visit: <http://www.theaawh.org/html/3_conference_2015b.htm>

ICAS 9

International Convention of Asian Scholars
Adelaide Convention Centre, Australia
5–9 July 2015

See: <<http://www.icas.asia/icas-9-adelaide-2015>>

8th Euroseas conference

University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of
Sciences in Vienna
11 – 14 August 2015

Keynote speakers: Benedict Anderson and Ayu Utami.

Students and low income fee: €140; Early bird fee (registration until 28 February 2015): €200; Full fee (1 March–15 May 2015): €240 **plus** EuroSEAS membership fee to be paid by **all** participants: €30. Official registration at the EuroSEAS website <www.euroseas.org> will be from 1 November 2014 onwards.

Journals

Southeast Asian studies journal: TRaNS

TRaNS: Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia, is open for submissions. Produced by the Institute for East Asian Studies, Sogang University Seoul, and published by Cambridge University Press, this journal was launched in January 2013. The fourth issue has the theme ‘Asia(ns) on the Move: Globalisation, Migration, and Development’, with an introduction by Brenda Yeoh of the National University of Singapore.

Professor Shin Yoon Hwan is the co-chair editor, and associate editors are Lindsay Lloyd-Smith, Lee Sang Kook, Suh Jiwon.

For further information see:

<<http://journals.cambridge.org/TRN>>

Email: Journal@sogang.ac.kr

Institute for East Asian Studies: <http://eastasia.kr>

EXHIBITIONS

British Museum, room 91 (free)

Pilgrims, healers and wizards: Buddhism and religious practices in Burma and Thailand

2 October 2014 – 11 January 2015

Curator: Dr Alexandra Green

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/pilgrims_healers_and_wizards.aspx>

SOAS, Brunei Gallery (free)

Arts of Southeast Asia from the SOAS collections

28 May 2014 – 2 July 2015

Curator: Dr Anna Contadini; Deputy Curator: Dr Farouk Yahya

<<http://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/sea-art-soascollection/>>

REPORTS

28th Aseasuk conference
University of Brighton, UK
12–14 September 2014

More than 140 people attended the conference, including a large number of postgraduates, and its vibrancy was also enhanced by a record number of participants from Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. The 20 panels over two days provided a showcase of current scholarship in Southeast Asian Studies, with a wide range of disciplines represented. Whilst everyone was disappointed that artist-in-residence Agus Nur Amal (PM Toh) was unable to attend, delegates were able to engage with his work in a virtual sense as the conference opened on Friday evening with a screening of Leonard Retel Helmrich’s documentary film *Promised Paradise*, in which Agus Nur Amal is followed in his search for answers to the vexing question of the rise of religious fundamentalism and violence in Indonesia.

The publishers’ exhibition, which featured recent titles from 28 international publishers, was expertly overseen by Gerald Jackson from NIAS Press. It included the launch of Monica Janowski’s new book *Tuked Rini, cosmic traveller. Life and legend in the heart of Borneo*, published by NIAS Press and Sarawak Museum. The highlight of the conference came on Saturday evening, which began with a drinks reception at Brighton Dome, followed by a series of Thai classical and folk dances by Phakamas Jirajarupat and her colleagues, Pawinee Boonserm, Krailas Chitkul, Cheerawat Wanta, Manissa Vasinaron and Purita Ruangjirayos. The conference dinner after the dance was held in the opulent Orientalist surroundings of the Royal Banqueting Hall in Brighton’s Royal Pavilion, made possible through the generous support of the James Henry Green Charitable Trust.

Dr Sarah Posey, Head of Collections at Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove, gave a welcome address, enabling us to make sense of the colourful history of the Pavilion, as we looked on at George IV’s banqueting table, laid as it would have been during his reign. On Sunday there was also a well

attended annual Aseasuk general meeting. The conference closed with a memorable performance of Thai dance by workshop participants, who had been taught by Thai dance experts.

The Aseasuk committee offers massive thanks to Becky Elmhirst (University of Brighton), Helen Mears, Keeper of World Art, Royal Pavilion & Museums in Brighton, and the Brighton University Conference Office, particularly Clare Hodgson and Emily Bretnall, for organising this recent conference.

Panel reports below have been provided by the respective convenors unless otherwise stated.

Southeast Asian performing arts: tradition in modernity

Convenors: Margaret Coldiron, University of Essex & Matthew Isaac Cohen, Royal Holloway, University of London

The panel brought together 11 scholars and scholar-practitioners from Indonesia, the UK, Thailand, France, Belgium, the US to examine together past and current developments in the mutual constitution of contemporary and traditional performance practices, institutional arrangements and discursive arrangements.

Tito Imanda (Goldsmiths, University of London) showed in his presentation and a preview of his documentary film that the Javanese performance ensemble Tjipta Boedaja is networked with cosmopolitan artists while maintaining the impression of remoteness; its non-commercial ethos and mountain location give exotic cachet. **Jonathan Roberts (University of Oxford)** argued that amateur gamelan players in the Central Javanese city of Solo are motivated by a desire to maintain tradition, validate wealth and access institutions or individuals with power. **Phakamas Jirajarupat (Royal Holloway)** discussed the freezing of Thai dance due to traditionalist ideology and institutional resistances to innovations proposed by younger artists, who are often more travelled and attuned to modern media and global culture via YouTube than their seniors. **Suppya Hélène Nut (Leiden**

University) examined Cambodia's famed Apsara dance as a modern tradition and mytho-historical construction that is a synonym for lost heritage, a symbol of unity and communality, an antidote to the trauma of loss. **Marie-Pierre Lissoir (Free University of Brussels)** showed how the tradition of *khap Tai-Dam* singing in Laos has resisted standardisation—though song lyrics are sometimes collected from elders and written down, these notes are quickly discarded; VCDs are sometimes imitated but never slavishly as verbal creativity and novelty are prioritised. **Jennifer Goodlander (University of Indiana)** analysed an international mask and puppet festival in the West Javanese suburban development Kotabaru Parahyangan as an instantiation of the democratisation of traditional arts and the development of a middle class audience. **Chanya Hetayothin (University of the Arts London)** showed her animated film *NUNUI* (2013) based on the Thai shadow theatre tradition *nang talung*, which she described as both the antithesis of live performance as empty of dialogue and music, as well as respectful of the puppet ontology as it retains joint positions. **Margaret Coldiron** outlined a raft of work by international artists who have interpreted Balinese *topeng* (masked dance-theatre) since the 1970s, attuning and 'translating' the tradition to non-Balinese contexts.

While older generations of cosmopolitan artists who professed to represent Southeast Asia in the public sphere were often very distant from their objects of purported expertise, the 'post-traditional' artists of today often are fully versed in both traditional aesthetics and contemporary codes of artistic practice, as **Matthew Cohen** discussed in his paper. English impresario John Coast, discussed by **Laura Noszlopy (Royal Holloway)**, began his career in promoting Indonesian and other ethnic arts due to a serendipitous encounter with Indo artists in a POW camp during World War II. The panel was concluded by **John Emigh (Brown University)**, who argued that contemporary performance has allowed Balinese artists opportunities to take liberties with the strictures of culture, while non-Balinese artists can reinvent themselves like one does when learning a foreign language. He attended to the ethics of

practice: while the spectacular *Bali Agung* (2010) purports to be 'designed to enchant' and support the conservation of wildlife, it has acted to supplant local myths.

Political ecology and environmental justice

Convenor: Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

This panel aimed at exploring tensions and contradictions around environment and development concerns in Southeast Asia in the context of new challenges associated with climate change, corporate investment strategies and the rescaling of environmental governance through political decentralisation. The panel included 12 empirically rich papers of very high quality that covered a diverse but interconnected set of themes such as dispossession and land grabbing associated with crop booms, corporate social responsibility and the development of equitable supply chains, climate change and responses to environmental disasters, land grants and post-conflict development, environmental governance, pre- and post-war landscape dynamics, and urban political ecologies. Papers by **Bianca Capasso (University of Leeds)** and **SiuSue Mark (International Institute of Social Studies/Erasmus University)** explored dispossession in northern Laos and Chin State (Myanmar) respectively, both arguing that ethnicity and the history of land access and use in each context are critical factors in either heightening or mitigating vulnerability to dispossession by private investors or through 'state simplifications'. **Petra Mahy (Oxford University)** provided a critical discussion of corporate social responsibility in Indonesia's mining sector, which is a way of controlling communities and quelling unrest, but is subject to the vagaries of local government rent-seeking. She also discussed how this project had developed into her more recent work on the normative effects of formal law norms in other dimensions of Indonesian business. **Robin Biddulph (University of Gothenburg)** discussed his work on rural-urban links and the difficulties in extending the benefits of tourism to small-scale farmers in Siem Reap in Cambodia, where livelihoods tend to be migration or remittance-based, rather than connected to the tourism

economy. Papers by **Sandra Pandey Modh (Umeå University)** and **Achmad Uzair Fauzan (Flinders University/UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta)** both dealt with the politics of anthropogenic environmental disasters, albeit in different ways. Sandra Pandey Modh's paper looked at the ways in which national and regional measures to implement climate change adaptation strategies (effectively, outsider perspectives) could link better with the (insider) perceptions and experiences of swidden agriculturalists in highland Flores, Indonesia. Achmad Uzair Fauzan's work looked at the political dynamics and personalities involved in discourses around 'natural' disaster and corporate culpability (of Aburizal Bakrie's gas mining company Lapindo Ltd) associated with the mudflow eruption that since 2006 has devastated livelihoods and displaced more than 10,000 families in Sidoarjo, East Java, and the implications of this for compensation to victims. Compensation to victims was also a theme explored in **Mohamad Shohibuddin's (University of Amsterdam)** paper on land grants for peace building and post-conflict development in Aceh, where eligibility for assistance was controversial and ambiguous, with various kinds of exclusions apparent. A complex picture of exclusions around land grants emerged, shaped by peoples' position in the war, intercommunal exclusions, hostile ecology, and the power of district heads, and the nature of different kinds of cash crops/natural resources (oil palm, sugar cane and forestry). Post- and pre-war landscapes was the subject of a paper by **Amelie Robert-Charmeteau (UMR CITERES CNRS/Tours University)**, which used aerial photographs and satellite imagery to compare pre- and post-war landscapes to consider the impact of war (both military and civilian practices) on landscape dynamics in Vietnam. Papers by **Gianluca Bonanno (Kyoto University)** and **David Blake** (independent scholar) took rather different perspectives to look at water governance in mainland Southeast Asia. Bonanno's paper focused primarily on governance experimentation and change adaptation in the context of tensions around regionalisation and natural resources management in the greater Mekong sub-region. This was contrasted with Blake's paper that provided a critique of the ideology of irrigationism in Thailand and Cambodia,

seen as ‘performing a transformative function in an elite-based project of socio-natural domination’. Attention was then turned to urban contexts, where a paper by **Creighton Connolly (University of Manchester)** explored the intense social conflict over the cultivation and harvesting of edible bird’s nests (swiftlet farming) in heritage areas in Georgetown and Melaka, Malaysia, questioning the class and racial dynamics of conflict, along with ideas about the meanings of heritage, conviviality and co-existence. **Elizabeth Rhoades (King’s College London)**, also considered the meanings attached to urban spaces with a study of civil society resistance to the privatisation and enclosure of green spaces in Yangon, Myanmar, where notions of heritage are being invoked – to some degree – to challenge formulations of land control and state crime. Throughout, the panel was well-attended, and lively debates ensued, which continued well into the coffee and lunch breaks.

Gender, migrations and racialisation in Southeast Asia

Convenors: Julien Debonneville, University of Geneva, Switzerland; Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium & Gwenola Ricordeau, University of Lille 1, France

The panel questions how racialisation is framing migration and specifically how social and symbolic boundaries produce races and *Otherness*. The panel points out different ways to understand how supposed and imagined differences are (re)produced during the migration process. The four panellists mobilised various approaches on this theoretical question and different sorts of empirical data on mobility. Based on different disciplines (sociology, history, psychology, ethnography), the speakers underlined different ways to explain how race is (re)produced through migration in various Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore). The first speaker was **Geetha Reddy (LSE)** who investigated how ethnicity and race are constructed and are significant for Singaporeans and Malaysians from a psychological perspective. Her qualitative research showed that mixed ethnicity individuals face distinctive challenges from structural influences in negotiating

their ethnic identities. The second speaker, **Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot**, drew from her sociological research. She explored in her presentation how “mixed” children of Filipino-Belgian and Thai-Belgian families are viewed in the societies of origin of their migrant parents, and how these children react in return. She particularly emphasised how the notion of *whiteness* plays a key role in this experience. The third speaker was **Darinee Alagirisamy (University of Cambridge)** who discussed race in colonial Singapore from 1880 to 1939 by focusing on the racialisation of toddy (a liquor). She explained how toddy had slowly transcended race (it was for long the only alcohol that the Tamil male migrants were allowed to buy) to become the poor man’s champagne. Finally, **Frauke Kandale (Goethe University, Frankfurt)** examined the migration of African Muslim students to West Malaysia which experienced a boom in the post 9-11 context. She showed that although they share the same religious belief as native Malaysians, African Muslim students develop strategies to cope with their being viewed as *awang hitam* (black guys) and stereotyped as involved in illegal activities. The four presentations and the vivid discussions between panellists and participants that followed underscore the numerous research perspectives in the field of gender and racialisation in Southeast Asia.

Open panel: Family, migration, and the state I & II

Report by Christianne Collantes (SOAS)

This panel featured both statistical and qualitative insight into trends on gender, class, the institution of the family, and migration within and from Southeast Asia. **Huong-Ly Chu (City University, London)** commenced the panel with her doctoral fieldwork data that reveal how social inequalities and systems of class are reproduced based on a young person’s family background in the Red River Delta Region of Vietnam. **Jem Price (University of Brighton)** shared his research on the social and cultural differences that professional social workers from the Philippines experience after migrating and working in the United Kingdom. The narratives of Price’s informants bring newer insight into how practices

and expectations of social work are constructed contextually, and change through experiences of migration. **Valentine Becquet from (University Paris Decartes)**, provided demographic insight into the sex ratios between males and females in three Vietnamese provinces and indicate linkages to patriarchal descent systems and patrilineal traditions that have been in place for centuries. Additionally, Becquet's data show disparities in birth masculinities that are impacted by regional context, fertility levels, and differences in prosperity. The second part of the panel featured presentations by **Christianne Collantes** and **Andy West** (independent scholar) who has worked in international organisations in Southeast Asia for more than 15 years. Using Ara Wilson's 'intimate economies' as a conceptual framework, Collantes presented an ethnographic case study in a small compound in Cavite (Philippines) and how external remittance arrangements from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) affected the reproductive decisions (e.g. litigation) of the women in the compound. West discussed research on children's migration within and around Southeast Asia and how these movements challenge discourses and definitions of migration and trafficking, especially among the international organisation communities. Both panels provided new understandings of state policies or activities and their impacts on how families are being reconfigured and redefined in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Culture, arts and language in Southeast Asia

Report by Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

Four rich and fascinating presentations comprised the content of this open panel. The first was presented by independent scholar **Denise Heywood**, who spoke about 'Alix Aymé, French artist at the royal palace, Luang Prabang, Laos'. It discussed the life and works of this under-appreciated artist, who created the evocative 'primitive' style murals in the reception hall of the Luang Prabang royal palace, which depict daily life in Luang Prabang. Poorly labelled, the murals' artist is only briefly acknowledged and although the paintings underwent restoration in 2004, they need further conservation. Alix Aymé was influential

between the world wars, composing sensual portraits and captivating landscapes that fused exotic Southeast Asian styles with Paris-inspired modernism, sometimes compared to Paul Gauguin. Exhibiting in Saigon, Paris and Florence, she was then commissioned by the Lao royal family to paint the reception hall's murals. The second paper was by **Sarena Abdullah (Universiti Sains Malaysia)**, who spoke on 'Installation and beyond: alternative art making in Malaysian art'. Sarena Abdullah traced 'alternative practices', such as installation and conceptual art back to the 1970s, and described how such practices had proliferated since the 1990s. Younger artists are engaging in new media, performance art, works that are executed and produced at alternative sites and spaces that require audience participation. The paper discussed how the current 'contemporary art' has influenced the direction of Malaysian artists. **Mas Rynna Wati Ahmed (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)**, delivered the third paper on 'Closure: an appropriated technique in Malay Absurd plays'. It described how the period of experimental theatre in the 1970s dealt with different styles and techniques that shared characteristics with absurd theatre techniques. In Malaysia, western techniques were appropriated by presenting a sense of hope through the closures presented at the end of the plays. It looked at the work of Dinsman in his play, 'Protest and the late Anuar Nor Arai's play, Vacuum', where closure is utilised. The final paper in this panel was presented by **Tom Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden)**, who spoke on 'Peranakan heritage through digitised Sino-Malay texts'. The paper covered the literary heritage of Indonesia's localised Chinese communities, based on recently digitised Sino-Malay novels published from 1880 to the mid 1960s, revealing the mixed culture of this group and its effects on the rich and diverse body of literature they produced. Intriguingly, such literature features lexical and grammatical influence from Dutch, Min Nan (Hokkien) and Javanese, thus uniting the idioms of three ethnicities systematically kept separate in the colonial setting of the Dutch East Indies. The presentation argued that Sino-Malay literature contains valuable insights and perspectives on popular culture in late modern

Southeast Asia, from which historians, social scientists, literary scholars, linguists and other researchers can benefit in a variety of ways. The panel was ably chaired by the panel participants as the scheduled chairperson had to withdraw at the last minute.

Civil society, governance and the state

Chair: P.J. Thum, University of Oxford / National University of Singapore

Report by Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

Four very rich presentations broadly connected to concepts of civil society, governance and the state were presented. **Pingtjin Thum** presented a paper on 'Democracy, dissent and debate: Nature of governance in independent Singapore', which discussed the longstanding tension within democracy between the desire for efficient and expedient decision-making and the need to consult the people and create consensus among diverse views, and how this tension plays out in Singapore. The paper re-evaluated the nature of Singaporean governance over the course of Singapore's first 50 years, and argued that contrary to official belief, Singapore's success is based upon democracy, debate, and dissent; rooted in an indigenous model of citizenship and participation. Singapore's future success thus depends on a return to Singaporean democracy. **Vu Cong Giao** presented the second paper in the panel, based on his work with Professor Nguyen Dang Dung (both from **Vietnam National University Hanoi**) on 'Prospects of institutional change in Vietnam, reflection from the 2013 constitution'. The paper introduced the main features of the constitution and how its provisions differ from the 1992 constitution. They suggest that the constitution offers an expansion of reform orientations, rather than a turning point, and many challenges remain for creating institutional change in the country. Also from Vietnam, **Le Bach Duong** and **Khuat Thu Hong (Institute for Social Development Studies, Hanoi)** spoke on 'HIV/AIDS and social change in Vietnam: historical construction of social movements in the national response to the epidemic'. The paper showed the hidden vulnerabilities of individuals and collectives in

tackling the disease, and the rise of civil society organisations to provide social support for needy groups in the context of weakening state capacity. This case allowed the authors to consider broader issues concerning progressive changes in state-society relationship, nature of civil society and social justice in a transitioning Vietnam, and the role of civil society in shaping health policy and practices in post-socialist countries more generally. Continuing this theme of non-state actors, **Claudia Dolezal's (University of Brighton)** paper was on 'Understanding the meaning and possibilities of empowerment in community-based tourism in Bali', which presented empirical findings from field work that explored community-based tourism (CBT) as a tool for increasing agency, resilience and control for communities in rural Bali. She argued that understanding how far CBT can really 'empower' people and who ends up having more control than others is key insofar as it helps unravel the complex power relations between the various stakeholders as part of tourism systems. This presentation discussed findings of the ethnographically oriented fieldwork, including obstacles to empowerment in Bali, issues of dependency, and relationships with key players such as the government in order to maximise tourism's benefits for host societies and increase control and resilience in times of change.

Shan studies: manuscripts, arts, beliefs and current affairs

Convenors: Susan Conway (SOAS) & Aggasena Lengtai (SOAS)

Report by Jotika Khur-Yearn (SOAS)

This panel received financial support from the Oxford Buddha Vihara and Wat Buddharam London. Six papers were presented and the first was from **Ven. Dr Khammai Dhammasami (Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies and Abbot of the Oxford Buddha Vihara)** whose paper entitled 'Saving the immoral! A paradox in the Shan funeral texts' discussed the variety of Shan rhymed Buddhist writings especially composed for making donations or recitations at Shan Buddhist funerals and memorial services. Ven. Dhammasami illustrated his talk with funeral texts that he brought. His emphasis

was that these texts reconcile the self-responsibility of the Buddhist theory of kamma (karma) with saving a ghostly relative through the practice of merit sharing. **Aggasena Lengtai** delivered the next paper on the Shan word 'death' covering the periods of pre-Buddhist and Buddhist beliefs in relation to Shan words for 'death'. He selected four particular words as examples: *non phe* (literary: sleep in silk), *Lap taa luem moeng* (close the eyes, forget the country), *lap loi nguen loi kham* (beyond the silver and golden mountains) and *khao son mawk hark kham* (enter the golden roots garden). **Alexandra Green** (British Museum) spoke the on Shan collections in the British Museum which include more than 2,800 objects that are registered as being made or found in Thailand and nearly 4,000 found or made in Burma. Many of these art objects are believed to have Shan origins or connected with Shan regions. Next, **Jotika Khur-Yearn**, presented a paper on the 'World of Shan manuscripts: creation, practices and preservation', focusing on the centuries-old tradition of producing manuscript books that has brought about thousands of Shan manuscripts found in monasteries and houses in Shan communities and beyond. A project of cataloging and conservation of these collections is being undertaken and some progress was also reported. In the absence of **Susan Conway**, Srilaksana Kunjara Na Ayutthaya read her paper on 'Conserving cultural identity in a Shan context' which was on the preservation of material culture. Using individual case histories, the author examined current attempts to conserve some surviving material culture in the Shan States. The final speaker **Khuensai Jaiyen (Shan Herald Agency for News)** spoke on 'The current changing political situation in Shan State' with special focus on the peacemaking process between the government and the armed groups, as part of ongoing political reforms in Myanmar/ Burma. According to Khuensai, in order to achieve the true peace, a change of mindset from both sides is necessary and that peace is not like war as there are no winners or losers in peace, only winners. The sooner both sides accept the idea, the sooner peace and harmony will be achieved for all those concerned, both at home and abroad.

Constitutional politics in Burma/Myanmar

Convenor: Andrew McLeod, University of Oxford

This panel took three different standpoints to examine the constitutional transition underway in Burma/Myanmar. **Herve Lemahieu (Research Associate, Institute for International and Strategic Studies)** offered an analysis of how constitutional arguments have shaped politics in Myanmar since independence in 1947. He posited the thesis that the current focus on legal aspects of governance reform undermines progress on political settlement. The present constitutional debate, he argues, is not self-contained but rather a continuation of political disputes that stretch back to the colonial period and require political and not necessarily legal solution. **Andrew McLeod** explored constitutional transition through the decisions and actions of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union of Myanmar, a new body established in 2011 to adjudicate disputes about constitutional interpretation. His analysis of the work of the Tribunal suggested that its decisions were only a small part of the role it occupies within the political establishment. Members of the Tribunal, he said, are actively avoiding controversial cases in order to secure the place of the Tribunal ahead of the 2015 elections and instead using informal channels to recommend political compromises. **Matthew Walton (Aung San Suu Kyi Senior Research Fellow in Modern Burmese Studies, University of Oxford)** employed a set of proposed laws regulating Buddhist – Muslim relations to illustrate how religion forms a significant but poorly understood part of Myanmar's constitutional arrangements. Drawing on interviews with Buddhist monks in Myanmar and an historical analysis of previous enactments, he argued that laws touching on religion – and constitutional recognition of the place of Buddhism in Myanmar society – have and will continue to have little impact on the relationship between Myanmar's people and their majority religion. He countered suggestions that the laws currently under consideration mark a departure from the supposed historical separation of religion and state.

Religion, ethnicity and politics in Southeast Asia

Chair: Claudia Dolezal, University of Brighton

Report by Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

There were four papers for this panel – three focused on questions around Islam and politics in Indonesia, and one on Islamic leadership in Singapore. The first one, presented by **Tomáš Petrů (Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences)**, was entitled ‘Indonesia’s controversial image (-building): between ostensible pluralism and the harsh realities of intolerance’. It considered competing rhetorics that depict Indonesia either as pluralistic and democratic, or as exhibiting deepening inter-religious tension and intolerance and growing (Islamic) radicalism and ultraconservatism, which leads to intimidation of religious minorities. The paper suggested that the former image is used by the government (SBY government) to keep up the country’s moderate face on the international stage and in dealing with foreign subjects, but that this has the effect of ignoring or even deepening trouble at home. The second paper by **Syahrul Hidayat (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter University)** considered Islam and politics in Indonesia, with a focus on ‘Indonesia’s Islamic parties in the 2014 elections: between ideology and pragmatism’. Syahrul explored the roots of the poor performance of Islamic parties in electoral politics, and in Indonesian democracy more broadly. Part of the issue lies in the Indonesian political system, which requires Islamic parties to support a particular presidential candidate in order to obtain ministerial positions. Thus, Islamic parties, despite their ideological standpoint, tend to make pragmatic political decisions as seen in the power struggle between candidates in building political coalitions prior to the 2014 election. **Dina Diana (Southeast Asia Studies Passau University, Germany)**, continued with the theme of Islam and politics in Indonesia in her paper on ‘Religious-based violence: tension between freedom of religion and religious doctrine in Indonesia: the case of religious-based violence against the Ahmadiyah sect’. She described how religious-based violence is directed against Ahmadiyah as a deviant sect, and therefore its

members do not have the right to claim to be Muslims. This is in contrast to the recognition of freedom of religion guaranteed in the Indonesian constitution, and is emblematic of the problem of interpretation or definition of freedom of religion. From a legal viewpoint, violence against members of Ahmadiyah represents a failure on the part of the state to uphold the constitution. The next presenter **Tuty Raihanah Mostarom (King’s College London)**, spoke on ‘Weber’s tripartite classification of legitimate authority on the Islamic religious leadership in Singapore: which type of (religious) authority?’. She explored the sources of authority of religious leaders to help establish a deeper understanding of the nature of this group in Singapore. She presented her findings from text analysis, in-depth interviews and participatory observations, which showed the various religious leaders in Singapore in fact draw legitimacy from different sources and in different configurations, which incorporate all three Weberian types, including the legal-rational.

History, heritage and remembering in Southeast Asia

Chair: P.J. Thum, University of Oxford / National University of Singapore

Report by Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

This panel comprised five fascinating papers. The first presentation was by **Nazirah binti Lee, (SOAS)** on ‘“Modern” Malay women through the lens of Malay newspapers, 1930s–1940s’. She showed the response of the Malay Muslim community to the cultural transitions evident in Malaya in the 1930s and 1940s, as women began to detach traditional values and ethics in order to be a part of ‘civilised society’. Scrutiny of Malay newspapers from this period revealed idealised images and characteristics of women that were circulating during this period. The second paper by **Frances Tay (Manchester University)**, also looked at colonial Malaya, but this time focused on ‘The forgotten war: the Japanese Occupation of Malaya (1941–1945) in contemporary Malaysian historiography’. She argued that despite the enormity of events associated with the Japanese invasion of British Malaya, this has been a ‘forgotten’ war within the annals of contemporary Malaysian

history. This process of forgetting is revealed through consideration of 'sites of memory', including Muzium Negara (National Museum) and Nilai Memorial Park, and within history textbooks and memoirs. Collectively, these sites of memory emphasise that history and historiography are contested landscapes in Malaysia, wherein state-sponsored narratives clash with individual and communal memories. A similar theme was explored by **Xiaorong Fong (Royal Holloway, University of London)**, in 'Myth and heritage on Singapore's Chinese language television'. Here, the focus was on the role of television productions linked to the National Heritage Board in Singapore, and the selective process of representing 'heritage' in a country made up of immigrants coming from three big traditions (Chinese, Malay, Indian), with a heritage and culture that is full of antagonisms. Ultimately, heritage is a complex performance in which not only media producers and politicians, but also academics and publics are caught up. The fourth paper by **Tran Kien (University of Glasgow)**, considered 'The copyright law of Vietnam: 1945–1989: a revised history'. The presentation used historical analysis and black letter law to unlock the meanings of regulative and legislative provisions found in law, and finds a unique regime underpinned by both censorship rules and remuneration mechanisms that compromise the exclusive rights of authors to control their literary works. Further analysis using socio-political methods unveils the possibilities that the system reflected conditions in Vietnam during this period, and the influence of Soviet law and socialist ideology. Finally, **Nazry Bahrawi (Singapore University of Technology and Design and Middle East Institute-National University of Singapore)**, delivered a paper on 'Nusantara translates heritage: imaginings of place and progress in Suratman Markasan's *Penghulu* and Andrea Hirata's *The Rainbow Troops*'. Nazry looked at two novels that centre on 'place-making' in a globalised world: Andrea Hirata's *The Rainbow Troops* (Laskar Pelangi), which pits a group of impoverished Indonesian children against a national tin corporation vying to demolish their makeshift school compound for mining purposes, and Suratman Markasan's *Penghulu*, which imagines the

pangs of an island village chief forcefully relocated to a high-rise flat on mainland Singapore. Debates about place-making and progress are used to look at this question in a Nusantara context, and the links this might have with civic discourses on heritage.

Framing Southeast Asia: the role of the museum

Convenor: Helen Mears, Keeper of World Art at Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove

This panel explored the role of the museum collection and the museum institution in promoting the preservation and understanding of Southeast Asian cultural heritage. It sought to address the opportunities created by museum activities such as collecting, documenting, conserving and displaying as well as the limitations. **Susan Conway (SOAS)** opened the panel with a consideration of the 'Problems of conservation and display: the significance of certain 'soiled' ritual textiles in a Shan and Lan Na context'. Conway's paper concerned cotton cloths used by the Tai people of the Shan States and Lan Na (northern Thailand) during funeral rituals. Powerful talismans, such cloths are often printed with 'supernatural formulae composed of incantations, illustrations and diagrams' and reveal the dual influences of Buddhism and spirit religion. **Alexandra Green (British Museum)** also addressed the role of religion in the creation and use of material culture in her discussion of curating the British Museum exhibition, 'Pilgrims, healers and wizards, Buddhism and religious practices in Burma and Thailand' (opens 2 October 2014). In her choice of exhibits, which will include popular printed posters and plastic flowers on a re-created shrine, Green noted that she hoped to reflect the diversity of ways in which Buddhism is practised, both canonical and heterodox. In her paper 'Fashioning the nation: Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles and Thai National Dress' **Eksuda Singhalampong (University of Sussex)** highlighted the relationship between museums and national identity. The newly-established museum under discussion was created to preserve and promote Queen Sirikit's self-styled forms of national dress as well as her ongoing support of traditional Thai textile manufacturing. In Singhalampong's assessment, the Museum used 'dress to address the nation' and to present a

national identity with carefully constructed links to 'an appropriate historical past'. **Gumring Hkangda (Royal Pavilion & Museums)** developed this notion of the museum as a site of/for national politics in his discussion of the importance of a collection of Kachin material culture at Brighton Museum & Art Gallery to the ongoing political struggles faced by the Kachin community of Burma. In his paper, 'Museums and ethnic struggles' Hkangda suggested that museums can 'offer not just cultural heritage but also social and political resistance'. **Andy West** (independent scholar) also discussed some of the challenges facing museums with collections of material culture from the borderlands of Southeast Asia, particularly that of reconciling colonially (in)formed collections with modern political contexts. West's paper 'Marking time: museum collections and the north-west periphery of South-East Asia' questioned the 'haphazard' museum collecting practices of the past and speculated on new forms of collecting which might better reflect the changes taking place within the region. **Monica Janowski (SOAS)** closed the panel with her discussion of a museum exhibition project which sought to build understanding of life in the Kelabit Highlands (Sarawak, Malaysia). In her paper, 'Framing longhouse and landscape: the Cultured Rainforest Exhibition', Janowski talked about the development and realisation of the exhibition (shown at the Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge in spring 2013 and at Sarawak Museum in autumn 2014) which developed from an interdisciplinary research project involving archaeologists, anthropologists, botanists and geographers to better understand the relationship between people and environment in the Kelabit Highlands. A highlight of her presentation was the demonstration of a series of online 'Cultured Rainforest Panoramic Tours' (<http://www.z360.com/sara/index.htm>) which offered a literal demonstration of how museums can and do 'frame' perspectives on Southeast Asia.

Illiberal pluralism in Southeast Asia's economic reform experience

Convenor: Thomas Jandl, American University, Washington DC

This panel brought together three papers on Vietnam, one of which also encompassed a comparison of Vietnam's emerging civil society to Singapore's. **Thomas Jandl's** 'Illiberal pluralism: Vietnam's economic reforms and the one-party state' suggested that in a certain, early development stage, economic assistance can do more good when not conditioned on political opening. Using the example of Vietnam, the paper claims that most of the goals of political liberalisation are achieved in Vietnam by an economically developmentalist elite, even in the absence of a liberal political system. **Veena Nair and Jason Morris-Jung's (ISEAS, Singapore)** 'Othering and re-embedding liberalism in the Southeast Asian context' takes a constructivist angle, arguing that in Singapore (and other Southeast Asian countries), Western liberalism was presented as a concept alien to the values and culture of Southeast Asians – an approach now emulated by Vietnam's leadership. By 'othering' the political aspect of liberalism, while adopting the economic one, the ruling elites attempt to maintain their position in at the top of the political hierarchy. Also from **ISEAS, Le Thu Huong's** presentation, 'Beyond or within? Vietnam in the Southeast Asia region and its changing identity', discussed the transformation of Vietnamese foreign policy in the context of a Southeast-Asia-focused outlook. The paper refers to a growing influence of regional identity in Vietnam's integration in the regional political and economic architecture. The papers showed, in different contexts, that elite interests and discourses are and remain crucial factors in policy making in Southeast Asia. While forces of globalisation are without any doubt sweeping the region, elite players continue to contest these forces in what they perceive to be a mix of their own and their economies best interest.

Rethinking Gender and Development in Southeast Asia

Convenor: Becky Elmhirst, University of Brighton

The aim of this panel was to consider the changing context of gender and development studies in Southeast Asia amidst geopolitical tensions, resurgent religious identities and gender 'universalism', not only as topics for research, but as themes that challenge collaborative arrangements between researchers from within and outside the Southeast Asian region. The panel comprised seven papers which explored questions such as empowerment and gender mainstreaming, gender in the workings of Islamic law, and critical reflections on research collaborations and the power dynamics that manifest in research relationships. **Philippe Doneys and Donna L. Doane (Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok)** presented their work on empowerment in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, which explored the difficulties in applying a concept that appears steeped in the language of individual autonomy in contexts where interdependence is regarded as positive and where empowerment is given meaning through how people feel in relation to others. **Bernadette P. Resurreccion (Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok)** also provided a critique of the ways gender concepts carry simplifications, with unintended consequences in the case of disaster risk management in the Philippines. She showed how such simplifications cast women as particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable, and in ignoring women's mobility, re-traditionalise gender roles, to the detriment of women's well-being and empowerment. **Ari Darmastuti (University of Lampung, Indonesia)** presented a study of gender in the development planning of forest and watershed management in West Lampung. She showed how a lack of awareness of the concepts of gender mainstreaming, empowerment and participation was particularly evident in local government institutions, whilst in some community groups, levels of awareness were very strong. Taken together, these three papers prompted a lively

discussion of why gender programmes are so disconnected from life on the ground, and how they can inadvertently create further tensions when poorly framed. In the second part of the panel, attention turned to the specific challenges for Muslim women raised by the practice of Islamic law in Malaysia and elsewhere. Based on her systematic observations and focus group discussions, **Noraida Endut (KANITA, Universiti Sains Malaysia)** presented an analysis of situations where justice may be hindered for Muslim women due to underlying gendered interpretations of Islamic law. In her paper, **Naoko Kuwahara (Fukuyama City University)**, looked at debates over gender issues in Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries, and how the codifications and applications of shari'ah law are products of negotiations. Discussion centred on the wider implications of this for gender justice for Muslim women, and on gender and Islam elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The final part of the panel shifted attention towards the practice of research, and in particular, the collaborative arrangements in which researchers engage. **Shanthi Thambiah (University of Malaya)** discussed her long-term work with the hunter-gatherer Bhuket of Sarawak, and her reflections on the inherent difficulties in navigating intersubjective and reciprocal framings of 'gender' as a concept. Also taking a very personal and reflective approach, **Liz Cunningham (University of Brighton)** provided an almost forensic analysis of her experiences working in collaboration with a Cambodian psychology lecturer on the role of psychology in Cambodia. Both of these papers resonated loudly with the audience, as discussion centred on the importance of reflective research practice, the unexpected power dynamics that can reveal themselves in the course of research, and the ways in which research collaborations are rarely as tidy and smooth as the final products of research seem to suggest. This was a very well attended panel, which engaged with many of the most pressing issues associated with gender and development research and practice in Southeast Asia; and it was a particular pleasure to welcome so many presenters from the region.

Digital/ritual: Southeast Asia and the new global media

Convenor: Deirdre McKay, Keele University

Papers in this panel explored the interface between digital and ritual forms in contemporary Southeast Asia, broadly considered. The premise underlying the panel was that Southeast Asian cultures, both localised and diasporic, have adopted new information and communications technologies, particularly social media and Skype. Panellists took a polymedia approach (Madianou and Miller, 2013), exploring the use of film, mobile phones and social media to map an emergent series of sites where Southeast Asia's now global communities explore their own traditions and rituals, identities and forms of belonging. Panellists noted various forms of innovation and extension, conservation and nostalgia enabled by both digital and analogue technologies. Indeed, where older technologies prevailed, they were expressing important forms of knowledge in ritual life. Thus media technologies map the political and social implications of global mediation and mediatisation for the category of 'tradition' itself. **Roy Huijsmans (ISS, The Hague)** spoke on 'Digital capitalism and the reconfiguration of belonging: mobile phones, youthfulness and the performativity of belonging in a Lao-Vietnamese borderland.' Roy's paper traced the geopolitical and state-making agendas behind mobile phone networks. He explored the ways networks, their marketing and the everyday use of mobile phone technology create both a sense of youth culture and a sense of national belonging on the border. He found youth nationalism, and an identification with Vietnam, to be an increasingly digitised artefact among Lao youth, with the digital mobilities of young Lao people contributing to the reconfiguration of ethnic belonging. **Richard MacDonald (Goldsmiths, University of London)** delivered a paper on open-air film performances: 'Screening for the spirits: ritual practice, analogue film projection and the digital transition in Northeast Thailand.' Richard's paper asked the vital question: what does it mean when performances

remain analogue in a digitally mediated world? With a close analysis of everyday space and the practices of film screenings, Richard unpacked the ways ritual screenings express religious belief and reinscribe Thai culture through appropriation of global artefacts, like 'Twilight' to particular spiritual ends. **Deirdre McKay** spoke on 'Weddings, wakes and vehicle blessings: the global, digital mediation of Filipino ritual life.' Deirdre's paper examined social media and the interaction between Facebook and ritual practice. Her research explored various ways rituals are being documented on Facebook within sending and receiving nations in a diasporic community. In some instances, ritual forms are being enhanced or elaborated on in order to produce particular kinds of Facebook postings and comments. Thus media are shifting the meanings attached to rituals at the same time as digital technologies enable people to remake their subjectivities and intimate ties on a global scale. **Mirca Madianou (Goldsmiths, University of London)** joined the panel by Skype – very fitting, given the theme! Her paper 'Humanitarian technology? A critical assessment of communication environments in the Typhoon Haiyan recovery' returned to mobile phone technology, this time examining the 'digital divide' in a disaster-recovery process. Here, lack of access to a mobile phone, money to pay for call time, or signal meant delays in securing assistance and access to recovery programs. This was particularly acute for the poorest people living in the communities worst affected by Haiyan. Lack of access to mobile phones among the poorest enabled aid to be redirected and distributed in patterns that further marginalized them from recovery efforts. Rather than being of benefit to all, mobile telephony reinforced a pre-existing social geography of economic and cultural exclusion after Typhoon Haiyan. The four presentations all spoke to the idea of tradition in different ways: national, ritual, social and economic. In each case digital engagements – or the lack thereof – marked an intensification or reworking of local understandings of self and society in a global frame.

Contemporary architectural and urban practices in Southeast Asia

Convenors: Ofita Purwani, University of Edinburgh & Wido Prananing Tyas, University of Sheffield

This panel explored the contemporary architectural and urban practices in Southeast Asia. The papers focused on empirical studies on architecture or urban planning, urban policies, architectural and urban discourses of Southeast Asia. Rully Damayanti (University of Sheffield) presented her PhD research on one kampong in Tunjungan area of the city of Surabaya, Indonesia. Using mental mapping, she concludes that the significances of spaces in the kampong are based on the social activities conducted in them. **Arif Budi Sholihah (University of Nottingham)** reached a similar conclusion, that activity is the most significant thing in mental map building. She based such a perception on her research into the space attachment of Pecinan street in the city of Magelang, Indonesia, as the street has suffered from changes in its modernisation. The next presenter, **Kristanti Dewi Paramita (University of Sheffield)** spoke on informal space being a result of informal activities. Basing her research on the theory of social space, she argued that informal space consists of layers of collective structures in which there is a practice of space sharing between the informal vendors. **Yohannes Firzal (Newcastle University)** presented his research on the invention of tradition in the architecture of the city of Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. He highlighted the role of the Board of Culture in defining the architecture of Pekanbaru, which is not based on the history of the city. The role of the Board has been used for power by using architecture as its medium. **Wido Prananing Tyas (Newcastle University)** focused on the development of Home Based Enterprises in Kasongan Village, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The Home Based Enterprises located in the village vary in scale; however, they create mutual relationships instead of competition. The small enterprises present themselves as subordinates of larger enterprises, so creating a network in which the biggest enterprise is responsible mainly for building the market, while the small ones are responsible for producing the crafts.

Conceptualising political modernity in Southeast Asia

Convenor: Carlo Bonura, SOAS

Discussant: Su Lin Lewis, University of Bristol

This panel featured papers analysing contemporary and colonial formations of political modernity in the region. It was intended to examine the utility of the concept of political modernity and encourage a variety of approaches toward its study. **Jonathan Saha (University of Bristol)** presented a paper entitled 'The political modernity of corruption in colonial Burma'. **Chris Chaplin (University of Cambridge)**, delivered 'Cultivating an "Indonesian" Salafism: Wahdah Islamiyah, Islamic modernity and national belonging.' 'Mopping up modernity: domestic workers as modern citizens or fictive kin?' was presented by **Mary Austin (SOAS)**. **Carlo Bonura**, presented the essay 'Comparisons of Islamic political modernity in the Southeast Asian debates over liberal Islam'.

Malay/Indonesian manuscript studies

Convenor: Mulaika Hijjas, SOAS

Farouk Yahya (SOAS), presented a paper on 'The set of eight animals in Malay divination', demonstrating the connection between their representation in the Malay texts and in other South and Southeast Asian traditions. **Liyana Taha, (Centre for Manuscript Studies, University of Hamburg)**, gave a paper entitled 'On the brink: the role of scribes at the decline of the Malay manuscript tradition', focusing in particular on the 'master scribes', i.e. Munsyi Abdullah, Husin bin Ismail and Tun Siami. **Mulaika Hijjas** gave a paper on 'Sufism, syncretism and orthodoxy: where to place Hikayat Rabi'ah?', considering the apparent marginalisation of Sufism in current historiography of Islam in Southeast Asia with reference to a little known Malay version of the life of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya. **Zanariah Noor (Sultan Idris Education University, and SOAS)**, discussed 'Daud al-Fatani's thoughts on marriage in *Idah al-bab li Murid al-Nikah*'. Zanariah explained how these conservative views on the role of women were challenged in modernist Malay periodicals of the early 20th century. **Alex Wain (University of Oxford)**, re-examined 'The date and authorship of Raffles Malay

18', proposing that only the second half of this manuscript, dealing with the rule of Sultan Mahmud Syah, can be regarded as having been written close to that ruler's time, whereas the rest of the text should be dated to the early 17th century. Although a smaller group than in previous conferences, the panel boasted a diverse selection of papers and enjoyed a lively response from audience members. Of note is an emerging focus on manuscripts as art objects (Farouk) within a social and historical context (Liyana), with a continuing interest in manuscripts as texts (Mulaika and Zanariah), along with a promising new perspective on an old philological problem (Alex). Vladimir Braginsky and Uli Kozok, who appear in the published programme, were unable to attend.

Contemporary politics in Cambodia

Convenor: Jörn Dosch, University of Rostock, Germany

Widespread protests against the Hun Sen government in the aftermath of the 2013 national elections, violent crackdowns on dissent and recent protests in the garment industry have been indicative of a changing political culture in Cambodia. The panel took stock of recent events and developments in the politics and society and delved into the analysis of domestic and international factors which are shaping contemporary Cambodia. In the first part of the panel, which focused on domestic politics, **Astrid Norén-Nilsson (KITLV Leiden)** explained that practices of gift-giving are an integral part of domestic discourses of democracy. Engaging in such practices has been a key approach for the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to link to the electorate and receive electoral support in return. Building on her ethnographic research in post-election Cambodia she demonstrated that the July 2013 electoral outcome has been transforming citizen practices of claiming access to state resources and the popular political values that guide such practices. In his presentation on environmental norm contestation in Cambodia's hydropower sector **Oliver Hensengerth (Northumbria University)** outlined how environmental norms are contested in Cambodia's hydropower sector, using the example of the Kamchay Dam. He painted a complex picture of

decision-making procedures, involving several layers of domestic and external actors, which fundamentally challenged the mainstream view that such processes are best described as hierarchical conflicts between local and global norms. The second part of the panel looked at Cambodia's international relations. **Jörn Dosch** described Cambodia's foreign policy as highly personalised and a tool used by Hun Sen and the CPP to sustain regime legitimacy and existing power structures. At the same time the government has found it difficult to develop a comprehensive approach to unite often conflicting approaches of bilateralism (particularly in Cambodia's relations with China) and multilateralism (ASEAN). **Chu Ta-Wei (University of Leeds)** compared Cambodia's and Indonesia's approaches and contribution to the emerging ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). He concluded that despite official support, the Hun Sen regime had not set a good example as it had failed to provide for the Cambodian people's human security needs. Furthermore, according to Chu, the government has constantly opposed the participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the APSC building process.

Engaging with change in Burma and Thailand in the 20th century – panel in honour of Dr Bianca Son (1968–2014)

Convenor: Thomas Richard Bruce (SOAS)

This panel was put together by the friends and colleagues in the SOAS History Department of Bianca Son who passed away in May of this year. Like the presenters, Bianca was supervised by Dr Michael W. Charney, who was instrumental in bringing the panel to fruition. Bianca's doctoral dissertation had just been accepted and she was about to embark upon a very promising academic career. Her research explored the formation of Zo identity and the relationship between these peoples and surrounding states. Her loss will be keenly felt by those in the field and her people. The papers presented touched upon some of the issues addressed by Bianca in her research: the engaged responses of local actors to the institutional changes as they penetrated the social fabric of Burma and Thailand in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Maung Bo Bo presented a paper on the emergence of a modern literature in Burma under the influence of colonial regimes and in the context of rising anti-colonial nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. He gave a number of examples of writing and pictorial representations based upon themes from the pre-colonial chronicles, poetry, drama and art contained within the modern context of the mass-produced magazine. Bo Bo highlighted a pervasive inward orientation which was to have implications for the shaping of political nationalism. A discussion followed on the adaptation of traditional Burmese themes to modern ideologies, such as Marxism; that this was a vibrant era for Burmese literature because of the influx of international influences and saw Burmese literature integrated into a global network; and on the conflict between older and younger literary generations. **Thanyarat Apiwong's** paper examined the Burmese community in Chiang Mai as a variety of geopolitical reconfigurations took place in Northern Siam from the late 19th century. She focused on the indispensable role of Burmese merchants in not only facilitating the Northern Siamese teak trade but in initiating it as well. She showed how the community negotiated access and control of the trade between competing nodes of authority using the various identities accessible to them, from British Burmese subjects, to the less formal client-status of the Lords of Chiang Mai, to subjects of the Siamese state. Relations between the Burmese teak traders and Chiang Mai locals through marriage and religion alongside their knowledge of the teak trade gave them an advantage over other outsiders, such as Western agents. Discussion followed on the relative freedom of labour movement of subjects in British Burma and absolutist Siam and the extent to which the interaction between the Burmese and Siam had been one-way. Finally, **Thomas Bruce's** paper examined the emergence of the footwear industry in Thailand as a function of ethnic Chinese migration. Whilst an indigenous Thai handicraft shoe making 'industry' existed it could not form the basis for a modern industry due to the nature of the footwear, the limited market and the locally held dim view of the craft. In contrast, the Chinese arrived with a shoe-making and trading tradition and a ready market. With their control of the Siamese tanning industry

they were better placed to take over the supply of leather and eventually other types of Western-style shoe demanded by modern institutions. The industry was harmed by attempts from the late 1930s to indigenise it and arguably led to a drag on the industry's long-term development, preventing it from acting as bridge to a capital goods industry. A discussion followed on the use of rubber in shoe production and on the similarities and differences with the experiences of other industries.

British Academy-Aseasuk ECAF Visiting Fellow



In 2014 I was awarded a British Academy-Aseasuk ECAF Visiting Fellowship to undertake research at the EFEO centre at Siem Reap, Cambodia, investigating the economic, social and roles of the religious institutions of the greater Angkor area, from the 6th to the 13th centuries CE. Having specialised in South Asian archaeology, particularly the archaeology of Buddhism and monasticism, the Fellowship provided the opportunity to broaden my perspectives on the roles of religious institutions in past societies with access to comparative archaeological and epigraphic data from Southeast Asia.

The Fellowship was a unique opportunity that facilitated independent research at a world class research centre. Residence in the EFEO provided access to a vast archival and library resource and also the opportunity to participate in field visits to

the monuments of the UnescoWorld Heritage Site of Angkor, as well as several other archaeological sites in the surrounding area. The Fellowship also provided contact with leading international experts and students of the archaeology of Cambodia, from the EFEO as well as institutions and organisations affiliated with the Centre. This not only led to many engaging and stimulating academic discussions that developed and enhanced my Project, but also provided future collaborative research opportunities beyond the duration of the Fellowship.

Dr Christopher Davis
Post-doctoral researcher
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BOOK REVIEWS

AZHAR IBRAHIM

Contemporary Islamic discourse in the Malay-Indonesian world: critical perspectives

Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2014

xx + 315pp. ISBN 978-967-5832-97-0 RM50.00

Reviewed by Kevin W. Fogg
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Studies of Islam in Southeast Asia over the last 30 years, especially by foreign researchers, have largely focused on the way the religion is lived out in politics, society, and history. A minority of studies, although a larger percentage of those written by Southeast Asian Muslims themselves, have addressed the more purely intellectual and theological sides of the religion. Azhar Ibrahim's collection of six essays aims to speak to both of these traditions, writing on theological and intellectual debates with an eye to their social and political implications and outcomes. Unfortunately, the reader is left feeling that the book has not quite managed to bridge the gap between the two approaches.

Each of the chapters is a free-standing essay, and although they provide studies on related themes they should not be taken for a cohesive whole. The first two chapters are critiques of theological groups in Malay (both Malaysian and Singaporean) society. First, Azhar Ibrahim writes against 'religious traditionalism', not in the theological sense used in Indonesia (those who adhere to a specific Islamic school of jurisprudence), but in the more general sociological sense of those whose approaches to religion are unwilling to entertain any innovations. The critique is hard and thorough, but focused on works mostly dating from the 1970s and early 1980s – the most recent work cited is from 1999. Most troublingly, Azhar Ibrahim tends to reproduce some of the tendentious argumentation that he himself seeks to critique in the 'traditionalist' school of thought. For example, he writes that traditionalism promotes 'inadequacies in understanding the changes taking place in society'

(p. 23) and it 'inevitably poses grave consequences for society in general' (p. 6); these sound much like conclusions 'held in an attitude of faith' and 'dogmatic assertions' (p. 2) that the chapter identifies as a methodological failure of traditionalism. In Chapter 2, the focus is 'dakwah revivalism', attacked on 14 specific points ranging from intellectual mediocrity and anti-intellectualism to their calls for the implementation of sharia law. Although this critique feels just as flat as the pro forma approach to traditionalists, it does include perhaps the most evocative definition of revivalists I have seen: 'The revivalist is someone who pays homage to the historical achievements of Muslims from Andalusian Spain to Mughal India, yet is not embarrassed to know nothing about Malay Islamic intellectual traditions of the past' (p. 69).

The third chapter stands apart from the others as a study based on Muslim organisations and activity rather than debate. The main thrust of the chapter is to map out the networks of authority among Islamic leaders in Singapore, not only between major organisations and bureaucracies like PERGAS and MUIS but also thinking about the congregational and community levels. Pursuing these latter points, how authority plays at lower, local levels, is very well taken and could be productively pursued further.

The final three chapters each discuss a major challenge to Islamic debate in Southeast Asia: democracy and democratisation (Chapter 4), pluralism (Chapter 5), and liberalism (Chapter 6). When discussing democracy, Azhar Ibrahim describes three main camps: apologists who insist that Islam and democracy are compatible, exclusivists who insist they are incompatible, and reconstructionists who actually analyse the challenge of democracy to Islam and try to build in useful directions for both concepts. Within this last group, the author adds the interesting dimension of how democratic ideals might change the process of formulating theology, which is a promising direction for further theological study. Turning to pluralism in the fifth chapter, Azhar Ibrahim recognises the plurality of religions and cultures in both Malaysia and Indonesia, but notes a very different approach

to the idea of pluralism (apart from religious tolerance) in each. Generally, the chapter condemns Malaysian discourse for recognising plurality but rejecting and trivialising pluralism; Indonesian religious discourse is presented as showing 'concern, interest, and intellectual commitment to pluralism' (p. 188).

The final chapter of the book, and also the longest, discusses the spectre of 'Liberal Islam' that appeared in Southeast Asia around the turn of the millennium. The chapter lavishes much attention on the critiques of liberal Islam, especially in Malaysia, with the aspiration that studying these critiques will provide a window through which to study the conservative groups that levy them; this aspiration is not fully achieved. Additionally, because liberal Islam is reflected in this chapter largely through its critics, many of the more recent developments among the more liberal actors of Indonesia's Islamic public sphere are missing, like Ulil Abshar-Abdilla's run for NU president and the new wave of post-traditionalism. Notably, in all three of these chapters, the author presents Indonesia especially through rose-tinted glasses, looking at the pro-democracy, pro-pluralism, and admittedly liberal Muslims there while discounting anti-democracy, anti-pluralism, and illiberal voices. Discounting the Majelis Ulama Indonesia fatwa against Secularism, Liberalism, and Pluralism (p. 191) is just the most flagrant example of this tilt.

Throughout the book, all of these studies are perfectly encapsulated by the book's title. The concerns are certainly about the 'contemporary' discussions (in this case, running from roughly the last two decades of the last century into the middle of the first decade of this century). They are also very focused on discourse: the argumentation, the unthinking assumptions, and the debates at work among these Muslim societies. The theoretical orientation towards Karl Mannheim rather than Foucault does not make this any less true. The framing of 'Malay-Indonesian world' is well taken, because Malay is certainly normative here. Even in studies like chapter six on 'liberal Islam', where the Indonesians coined the term and Malaysians spent

much of their debates reacting to (and often rejecting) Indonesian ideas, still the Malaysian scholars come first and receive more time than Indonesians. Finally, the book brings a 'critical' eye to these discussions, but critical only after a fashion.

This question of 'critical perspective' is another way in which the book feels betwixt and between: it is neither wholly an academic work, providing dispassionate evaluations of the mechanisms at play, nor a strictly normative work, engaging directly with the arguments and providing an applied opinion. Instead, Azhar Ibrahim structures the essays as objective, academic studies, but engages in heavily normative judgments throughout. This is most obvious in chapters one and two, which border on being polemics against Malaysia's religious establishment, but because the chapter is structured in a way that aspires to objectivity one is left unsatisfied in terms of knowing the author's alternative, preferred model. This liminality, a book that is neither neutral enough (or, if you prefer, self-conscious of its own biases) to be academic nor bold enough to enter the debate directly and propose new ideas, is the fundamental disappointment of this reader.

Still, Azhar Ibrahim presents a few ideas and critiques that can be appreciated by experts on Islam in Southeast Asia. His presentation of plurality versus pluralism in chapter five provides an interesting, local view of the general stagnation of Malaysian Islamic thought. His unpacking of the figures of Islamic authority in Singapore points to a field that should be developed much more. Furthermore, his willingness to engage and synthesize across borders – not only in South-East Asia between Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, but also referring to other models around the Islamic world – should be commended.

This book is unlikely to gain a large audience beyond the field of Islam in Southeast Asia, but for us happy few it provides a local voice on the current state of debate.

HALL HILL, ed.

Regional dynamics in a decentralized Indonesia
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014
517 pp, ISBN 978-981-4459-84-6, \$45.58

Reviewed by Michael Buehler

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This book provides a comprehensive account of Indonesia's experience with decentralisation over the past 16 years. After the collapse of the New Order dictatorship in 1998 and within only a few months of Suharto's demise, the successor government under Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, shifted most authority to districts (*kabupaten*) and municipalities (*kota*), the administrative layer below the province. This not only turned Indonesia into one of the most decentralised countries in the world but the devolution of political and fiscal authorities has shaped the country in profound ways ever since. At the time of writing, Indonesia's territory was divided into more than 500 districts and municipalities, with no end in sight as to the creation of new jurisdictions. It is in these subnational entities that the future of Indonesia will be decided.

In the book under review here, the 20 chapters written by more than 40 authors are divided into five parts. The chapters in the first part situate Indonesia's post-1998 decentralisation initiatives in a historical context. The heavily centralised state structure during the New Order created local tensions towards the end of the Suharto era and fuelled local secession movements, some of which had been simmering for decades. The decentralisation of powers prevented the country from breaking apart after 1998.

However, while the devolution of political and fiscal authority may have saved the territorial integrity of the country and therefore have been a positive force overall, subsequent chapters show that the decentralisation of power has failed to deliver with regard to many of Indonesia's other pressing problems. For instance, after almost two decades of decentralisation, socio-economic inequality within the country has barely changed. While overall

poverty levels have stabilised after 2002, inter-regional inequality has remained high. In fact, the provinces and districts that were poor before decentralisation remain comparatively poor today. Yet, the authors of the last chapter in this section also find evidence that creation of new jurisdictions in the context of decentralisation has improved the socio-economic outcome of districts and municipalities that have split.

The chapters in the second part revolve around the quality of local governance, the relationship between the centre and the periphery as well as the local government framework. Again, the authors find that the impact of decentralisation has been mixed at best. The quality of services delivered by local governments has barely improved since 2001, despite hopes that decentralisation would bring government closer to the people the authors of one chapter conclude. In another chapter, authors present findings that service delivery has improved but argue that there has not been much progress with regard to the efficiency of government spending and the quality of budget composition.

Local level perspectives presented in Part 3 of the book add more mixed reviews still to the debate about the impact decentralisation had on politics in the country. The authors of one chapter, for instance, describe how local level regulations interfere with development programmes, while another chapter sets out to assess the impact of decentralisation on the management of natural resources and concludes that it is too early to tell whether the devolution of powers to the subnational level has had positive or negative implications for the protection of the environment. A final chapter examines poverty reduction initiatives at the local level and concludes that regional patterns are uneven and that processes are still in transition.

The chapters in the fourth part pay close attention to the linkages between the centre and the periphery and the flow of goods and people within and across government layers. Again, the findings are not clear cut. Dynamics of out-migration from poor regions to more affluent parts of the archipelago are similar to

migration patterns prior to decentralisation. At the same time, migration within provinces seems to be on the rise. Changing migration patterns have also affected the labour market, another chapter finds. Persisting low out-migration in combination with high population growth and low levels of education is responsible for most Indonesian workers being trapped in low-productivity agriculture. At the same time, decentralisation seems to have resulted in a greater formalisation of the workforce by bringing poorer provinces into the fold of the formal labour market. Finally, the rapid urbanisation of Indonesia, particularly in Java, has created new challenges for the decentralised political system. Many cities have expanded across existing jurisdictional boundaries, making it difficult for local governments to coordinate and implement government programmes.

The final part of the book examines challenges Indonesia is facing in its peripheries. Two chapters on Papua show how the creation of new jurisdictions that followed the decentralisation of power has destabilised the situation in Indonesia's easternmost province considerably. In addition, governance indicators for Papua look discouraging across the board. Decentralisation had more positive effects across the country in Aceh province. There, the decentralisation of power has allowed former fighters to entrench themselves in the local government apparatus and to profit from rent-seeking opportunities that control over the local state provides. This has led to a 'predatory peace', which has improved the relationship between Jakarta and Aceh. However, the lives of ordinary Indonesians in the province have not improved remarkably, as above poverty figures above the national average show.

This is an ambitious book that tries to cover a lot of ground. Yet, despite the accumulated wisdom of leading experts of Indonesian politics who have studied the country for decades, no clear picture emerges as to the impact decentralisation had on Indonesian politics, economics and the lives of ordinary citizens. Throughout the book, authors state that the decentralisation process is 'still in

transition' and that it is therefore 'too early' to make conclusive assessments. To add to the confusion, many chapters are directly contradicting one another. For instance, the creation of new jurisdictions is alternatively seen as having a positive impact for socio-economic development or responsible for rising poverty, ethnic conflict and a decline in human development indicators.

While the cacophony of voices emerging from within the scholarly community may make this book a rather confusing and frustrating read, it may at the same time be a sign for the very success of the decentralisation process. The devolution of political and fiscal powers to the subnational level has set free the tremendous heterogeneity across the archipelago that was suppressed during the New Order years and has made this diversity more visible. Furthermore, the difficulties of scholars to grasp the essence of the process and to predict its future trajectory show that the decentralisation process has acquired a dynamic of its own, not least because it is increasingly driven by local forces and no longer national elites in Jakarta. The dogs bark but the caravan moves on.

NICK CHEESMAN, NICHOLAS FARRELLY & TREVOR WILSON (eds)

Debating democratization in Myanmar

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014
381pp., ISBN 978-981-4519-13-7 pb S\$39.90/US\$29.90
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Reviewed by Robert H. Taylor
SOAS

Like similar volumes derived from the previous 'Update' conferences on Myanmar held at the Australian National University, the volume under review is rather like the curate's egg, good in places depending upon your taste. Some are two-and-a-half cheers for the economic and political reforms introduced by the government of former general Thein Sein, some are advocacy pieces by activists posing as analysts, others are the reigning international ideology, and a few are just vacuous. You pay your money and you take your chance.

The fact that the conference was held in March 2013 of necessity means that much of the political analysis and speculation is now superseded by events or policy changes. Other essays, however, will better stand the test of time.

Debating democratization in Myanmar contains 16 separate papers, two by editors Wilson and Cheesman, gathered after three introductory chapters, on positive, anticipatory and critical perspectives on Myanmar in early 2013. Following an ebullient foreword by Winston Set Aung, a Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar and a deputy minister in the Thein Sein government, unsurprisingly giving a bullish view of Myanmar's present and future, Trevor Wilson provides a solid summary of developments since the end of the rule of the military State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in early 2011 until 2013 as noted in the following papers. Those two years were full of surprises and Morten Pedersen's succeeding article provides an analytical gloss on developments. Not all will share his analysis, but he raises a number of important points and provides alternative arguments, unusual in this volume.

The 'Encouraging Signs' contributions commence with a discussion by the editor of the *Myanmar Times*, Thomas Kean, on the rise of the union (central) bi-cameral *Hluttaw* (legislature), and particularly the role of the speaker of the *Pyithu* (People's) *Hluttaw*, former general Thura Shwe Mann. Kean sees the role of the legislature growing as a check on the presidential executive, as it becomes increasingly powerful and inclusive. Some might question his analysis but, at least in early 2013, this view was widely accepted. The following four articles deal with what might be described as the 'civil society' side of the post-2011 reforms. Tamas Wells and Kyaw Thu Aung, respectively aid consultant and civil society coordinator, describe new roles in the new Myanmar, providing a largely positive account of the growth of village 'grassroots' organisation since 2008. Than Than Nu, daughter of former Prime Minister U Nu, and now Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Myanmar, describes her return to electoral politics from years in exile. She raises many questions which deserve

further historical treatment, but her and her colleagues' ability to do what they have done, even if not achieving power, is testimony to some of the change that has taken place in Myanmar in recent years.

The following two contributions deal with other new actors in the political scene. One, by Kerstin Duell, formerly of a German NGO, is about former exiled political activists who have chosen to return to Myanmar either to pursue their former occupations as activist-journalists, or to join with persons who remained to work with the former military regime to create new research and peace seeking institutions, often with foreign assistance. Kyaw Soe Lwin, an expert on trade unionism in Myanmar, discusses the growing labour protests and strikes since 2011 and the underlying forces which generate them.

Part IV, 'Anticipating Reforms' is divided between two essays discussing economic policy and two on institutional developments and prospects. Anders Engvall and Soe Nandar Linn, is light on data and heavy on prescription. Sean Turnell's subsequent contribution makes up for that deficiency. Both essays advance the arguments favoured by the World Bank and other international lenders, the so-called Washington consensus, now rather shop worn, but which finds little traction among major economic interests within the country. Reform of the economy has proven more difficult than many imagined and Myanmar will, if it is to develop quickly, will probably opt for the developmental state model.

Andrew Selth provides a rare analysis of the new approaches to policing in Myanmar as the army withdraws from its previous role in day-to-day domestic security and allows the police not only to function more on its own but more as the civilian institution that it normally is in most societies. A committee of four provide the next essay on the discussions which took place between 2011 and 2013 on possible reforms to the electoral system,

looking at alternatives to the 'first past the post' system which provided the National League for Democracy a landslide in 1990 and the State Peace and Development Party the same in 2010. The complexities to change which they assess will probably end any chance of change for the moment, though by the time this review is published, we shall probably know whether a new system will be in place by the 2014 elections.

While the previous two sections 'ac-cent-tchu-ate the positive and (largely) eliminate the negative', the next three authors reverse the thrust of the old Johnny Mercer song. Renaud Egreteau once more rehearses his arguments about, at least to this reviewer, to be expected salience of the military in contemporary Myanmar's governance. However, he largely overlooks what has changed in the army's perception of its role. Seng Maw Lahpai, an 'independent researcher' in Sydney, restates the Kachin Independence Organisation's justification for its support for the weakening of the Union of Myanmar as envisaged in the current constitution. The lack of formal political power by women, and the daily struggle of the poorest of them to support their families, provides the subject of Ma Khin Mar Kyi's account of life in Myanmar as it is now lived. The volume concludes with one essay in a section all its own discussing the ongoing issue of violence in the midst of political change by editor Cheesman.

While the Cheesman chapter does address the idea of a debate about democratisation in Myanmar, there is little discussion about what democratisation actually is. Without a clearer definition of the terms of the debate, one is rather at a loss to draw up a balance sheet from this volume. That should not be surprising, however, as democracy, if it exists, is a moving target and one must look closer at the institutions which make up a society in order to understand what it might mean in any particular context. Perhaps, in the case of Myanmar, it is too soon to tell.