Special Commemorative Supplement

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Editors’ Note

With the publication of this supplementary issue of SOJOURN, the Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute’s establishment. In preparing this issue, SOJOURN’s editorial team has selected nine previously published articles relating to the theme, “Approaches to Researching Southeast Asia”. If the sheer number of excellent articles that had appeared in the journal made the selection process challenging, the choice of who would write the introduction to these articles was immediately obvious to us. Professor Barbara Andaya is an established and respected senior scholar working on Southeast Asia, one well acquainted with both ISEAS and SOJOURN. She graciously accepted our invitation, and her splendid essay provides the formal introduction to this supplement.

In order to bring some order to the process of compiling a shortlist of articles from the hundreds of contenders published in SOJOURN since its first issue in 1986, we chose articles that appeared in different time periods, that had significantly contributed to the field of Southeast Asian studies, that had interesting themes, and that had been widely cited. We admit that these methods of arriving at a shortlist produce a bias in favour of our own research and teaching interests, but highlight that several of the articles were repeatedly nominated by different members of the SOJOURN editorial team.

The members of the team based their final choices on this shortlist; eight articles were selected on the basis of a formal set of criteria.

(i) What has been achieved and what still needs to be accomplished in the study of Southeast Asia?
(ii) What mix of perspectives and approaches provides insight into a geographical region or topic and suggests directions for future exploration?
(iii) What chronological spread among the articles chosen best captures *SOJOURN*’s contribution to the study of the region?

On the basis of these criteria, the editorial team read the shortlisted articles, provided recommendations, and reached a consensus on which articles would eventually appear in the supplement.

While the broad theme of the articles is “Approaches to Researching Southeast Asia”, several articles also reflect on the development of Southeast Asian studies and such themes and approaches as postmodernism and cultural studies that were influential at particular points in time in the past. As the work of fewer Southeast Asian scholars made it into the supplement than we had hoped, we asked Professor Andaya to select a ninth article from a Southeast Asian writer from the original shortlist. She gamely took us up on the offer and nominated Kasian Tejapira’s “Pigtail: A Pre-History of Chineseness in Siam”.

Readers will notice that the cover design of this supplement is the same as that of the very first issue of *SOJOURN*. This adds a touch of nostalgia and highlights how far we have come as a journal. In all, this special supplement showcases *SOJOURN*’s role in disseminating rigorous intellectual work treating social change in Southeast Asia. It reflects the contribution of ISEAS and its Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme to the study of this diverse and dynamic region.

Benjamin Loh
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