

SOJOURN

Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia

Volume 29, Number 2

July 2014

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Editors' Note

With articles treating Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore, this edition of *SOJOURN* presents research on an exceptionally broad swathe of the region. It also introduces a major new feature of the journal, *SOJOURN* Symposium.

The work of two talented ethnographers in the prime of their careers launches the issue. An article by Erik Harms, recipient of the 2014 Benda Prize of the Association for Asian Studies for his book on the outlying Ho Chi Minh City district of Hóc Môn, draws on his ongoing research on that same city's planned New Urban Zone of Phú Mỹ Hưng. It explores the relationship between Vietnamese notions of civility and questions of urban sustainability with relevance across Southeast Asia and beyond. Hjorleifur Jonsson revisits the controversy over the alleged role of American anthropologists in Thai counterinsurgency, which bitterly divided the American Anthropological Association in the early 1970s. He provocatively and revealingly relates the way that that controversy unfolded to a witchcraft scare that broke out during the Second Indochina War among the Iu Mien of Laos, the group that is the focus of his most recent book.

The article by Patrick McCormick of the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient in Yangon examines the various influences that have shaped the modern practice of Mon historical scholarship. It argues that these influences help explain both the anachronistic understanding of ethnic relations in Myanmar history and the discomfort with competing historical interpretations that characterize that scholarship. Sinae Hyun's contribution to this edition of *SOJOURN* forms part of her large project on Thailand's paramilitary Border Patrol Police (BPP). Focusing on the schools established by the BPP to serve members of highland minority groups in northern Thailand and thus to create a "human border" for the country during the Cold War,

her article suggests the diminished effectiveness of that continuing project of national consolidation in the post–Cold War era.

Nankyung Choi's study of the life stories and career paths of politicians active in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, charts the broadening of post-Soeharto Indonesia's political class. It tempers its treatment of that encouraging development in "middle Indonesia" by noting the important roles of money politics and patrimonialism in the emergence of the country's new provincial elites. Addressing the much discussed matter of recent immigration to Singapore, Peidong Yang explores Singaporean attitudes towards athletes and students from China to propose the emergence of a Singaporean national identity grounded in notions of inauthenticity and in a "relative and negative" logic. Also focused on Singapore, Peter Tan's research note uses a study of signboards to explore the country's "geosemiotics". His analysis of the interaction of state language policy and the determinants of language status suggests questions to motivate further research not only in Singapore but also on other parts of the region.

Conceptualized and spearheaded by Book Review Editor Benjamin Loh, *SOJOURN* Symposium makes its debut in this issue of the journal. Intended to foster critical discussion of the most important new scholarship on Southeast Asia and thus to complement traditional research articles and book reviews, *SOJOURN* Symposium will henceforth be a regular feature of the journal. We will invite, typically, two scholars to write review essays on a recently published monograph and then ask the author of the monograph to respond to those essays. We will urge reviewers to use their essays to evaluate the work under review in its broadest possible context and thus to stimulate further discussion of that work both among specialists in the field in question and among the broader community of Southeast Asianists.

We are particularly pleased to launch this new feature of *SOJOURN* with a discussion of Mandy Sadan's monumental new work, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in*

the Borderworlds of Burma, and to publish reviews of this work by Nicholas Farrelly and La Raw Maran. Through rigorous ethnography and the use of a dazzling range of sources, Sadan's book explores the social and cultural dynamics of Kachin ethno-nationalism and speaks at the same time to debates about materiality among anthropologists and historians. As Sadan remarks in her response to our two reviewers, "The physical, the material, the visible in history has a tangible importance in the communities in which I research, which have until recently been largely overlooked as sites of serious historical exploration."

Further, Sadan's scholarship offers an extraordinarily thoughtful and boldly conceived history of an important Southeast Asian "borderworld" at a time in the evolution of scholarship on the region when the importance and nature of borders — intellectual, ideological, physical, ethnic, social, cultural and other — have never merited more attention but when the study of borders seems often to recycle predictable themes and tropes.

We hope that this inaugural *SOJOURN* Symposium sets an example for those to follow, not least in enabling the journal to push research on Southeast Asia well beyond its current borderworlds.

Terence Chong
Benjamin Loh
Michael Montesano

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