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Editors' Note

The present issue of *SOJOURN* features five research articles bearing on religion, on archaeology and heritage, and on the on-the-ground realities of ASEAN integration. The contributions touching on religion treat extra-regional contacts, official accommodation of beliefs long concealed as unorthodox and the intersection of religious practice and ethnic identity.

With great erudition, John Chen examines Chinese Muslims' interest in Southeast Asia as an important part of the wider Islamic world during the first half of the twentieth century. Focusing on scholarship on *materia medica* and on the remarkable story of the Chinese Islamic South Seas Delegation's visit to Malaya, Chen illuminates a clear interest among Chinese Muslims in Islamic lands beyond just those of the Arab Middle East. He understands that interest in "civilizational" terms.

Philippe Peycam's article examines the history and dynamics of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Historic Site of Angkor and assesses its negotiation among international, national and local interests as those interests intersect at a UNESCO World Heritage Site. He focuses on the interaction with Cambodian authorities of the representatives of France and Japan, which have co-chaired that committee, and expresses scepticism about the usefulness of the Angkor committee as a model for effective stewardship of World Heritage Sites in other parts of the world. In a second article on Cambodia, Emiko Stock offers a lively and iconoclastic treatment of the Cham rituals of the Imam San Mawlid and the *Mamun* possession ceremony to interrogate the ethnic categorization that would distinguish Cham from Khmer. Her article makes an important, and extremely enjoyable, contribution to our efforts to rethink conceptions of identity, ethnicity and history in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Equally fresh is Peter Jackson's study of the depiction on recent special-issue Thai postage stamps of images relating to supernatural cults of prosperity. Jackson argues that the release of these stamps reflects official, political and royal elites' embrace of religious forms very different from the established Theravada Buddhism with which they have long been so strongly associated. Indrė Balčaitė's research article draws on an ethnographic survey of border regions in the Greater Mekong Subregion both to document widespread awareness of ASEAN Economic Community at the grass-roots level and to argue that that initiative has left in place the obstacles that ASEAN governments use to check the mobility of low-skilled migrants. The article thus argues vividly that the ASEAN project is one of a narrow and elitist nature.

The subject of the latest *SOJOURN* Symposium is Janet Alison Hoskins's book *The Divine Eye and the Diaspora: Vietnamese Syncretism Becomes Transpacific Caodaism* (2015). The book's rich and sympathetic ethnography examines the emergence and development of a Vietnamese "new religion" often described as "outrageous", "eclectic" and "least understood" — in part because it builds on the strengths and beliefs of both Eastern and Western philosophies. In her book Hoskins revisits these and other perceptions of Caodaism and seeks to offer a new interpretation of its emergence as a reflexive re-synthesization of Vietnamese religious traditions in the context of colonial cultural and political domination, nationalism, diaspora and transnational globalism. She traces the religious biographies of five people from the founding generation of Caodaists in the 1920s and 1930s — a period that believers call the "Age of Revelations" in French Indochina — and connects them with their diasporic successors from 1975 to the present. In their reviews of Hoskins's book, Hue-Tam Ho Tai and Justin McDaniel engage with her on controversies over the use of the term "syncretism" that is central to the book's analysis, on the diasporic perspective on Caodaism and on the dialogic nature of ethnographic research.

In our book review section, Danielle Labbé contributes her thoughts on Annette Miae Kim's *Sidewalk City: Remapping Public Space in Ho Chi Minh City* (2015), while Hans-Dieter Evers and Erick White contribute rewarding assessments of Donald Nonini's "*Getting By*": *Class and State Formation among Chinese in Malaysia* (2015) and Brooke Schedneck's *Thailand's International Meditation Centers: Tourism and the Global Commodification of Religious Practices* (2015), respectively. The section also includes a review of Federico Ferrara's monumental new work, *The Political Development of Modern Thailand* (2015).

The Notes & Comment section of the November 2016 edition of *SOJOURN* includes three contributions intended to prod, further and shape the study of the region or of specific parts of it.

Erick White calls for renewed scholarly interest in the Thai sangha, once the focus of most research on religion in Thailand. He offers a nine-point programme of research that takes into account the changes in Thailand and its religious life that have occurred since that earlier focus faded. In calling attention to the neglect of a wide range of issues relating to organized Buddhism in the country, White thus suggest opportunities for important new scholarship, not least on the part of younger researchers.

Alex-Thai Vo introduces and presents a translation of "Preliminary Comments on Mobilizing the Masses", a 1953 document prepared by the senior advisor to the Communist government in Hanoi despatched by the People's Republic of China. The availability of this document opens up new perspectives on Sino-Vietnamese relations during the early 1950s and on the background to Hanoi's controversial land reform campaign during the middle years of that decade.

Finally, Andrew Hardy outlines the huge volume and broad range of scholarship resulting from the joint European-Southeast Asian SEATIDE initiative under the auspices of the European Commission between 2012 and 2016. This scholarship treated virtually every one of the areas of research on the region in which *SOJOURN* is most interested. And we are privileged to introduce readers to such

a body of new work on Southeast Asia and to Hardy's discussion of the common themes that emerged from SEATIDE.

Michael Montesano
Benjamin Loh
Terence Chong

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