

SOJOURN

Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia

Volume 32, Number 2

July 2017

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Editors' Note

The Editorial Committee under whose leadership this issue of *SOJOURN* appears reflects change at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. Dr Ooi Kee Beng has stepped down from the post of Deputy Director of ISEAS and chairperson of the Editorial Committee to become Executive Director of the Penang Institute. Dr Ooi has been a resourceful and thoughtful chairperson of the journal, and a genial colleague whose advice to our editorial team has proved invaluable. We would like to thank him for his guidance and assistance, and we wish him every success in his new role in Penang. Dr Ooi will remain involved with *SOJOURN* as a member of the Editorial Committee. ISEAS Director Mr Tan Chin Tiong has now assumed the post of chairperson, effective with this issue of the journal. We are pleased to have him on board at *SOJOURN*.

Leading off this issue of *SOJOURN* is Andrew Carruthers's research article on the migration of ethnically Bugis Indonesians to the East Malaysian state of Sabah. The article considers the use that residents of that state make of hearing and listening in policing "illegal" immigration. It thus brings linguistic anthropology to the study of migration, one of the central foci of the journal. Demography and the changing Southeast Asian family are another such focus. Ann Marie Leshkovich's article here addresses the ascendance of the market economy and the naturalization of the middle-class biological nuclear family in urban Vietnam as these relate to the narratives, often marked by secrecy, created by families that have adopted children. Attention to these narratives allows Professor Leshkovich to highlight questions of class, of gender roles and of political economy in the country. In taking inventive approaches to contemporary social dynamics in two very different Southeast Asian contexts, these articles exemplify the journal's commitment to and pursuit of its core mission.

Francis Hutchinson's article on processes of recent political and administrative decentralization in Indonesia and on patterns of deepening centralization in Malaysia calls attention to the common victim of these developments: "meso-level" governments at the provincial or state level. Arguing for more attention to governments on that scale in scholarship on decentralization, Dr Hutchinson suggests an important field of research for students of Southeast Asian politics and society. Chin Yee Whah and Benny Teh Cheng Guan untangle four decades of efforts to foster a "Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community" in Malaysia — an important regional case of ambitious social engineering. And Meredith Weiss proposes in her article a framework for the study of engagement with and protest against political regimes in Maritime Southeast Asia, one that incorporates activists' choices concerning resource use, alliance formation, and participation or non-participation in electoral politics.

In the book review section of this issue of *SOJOURN*, Keith Taylor contributes his thoughts on Christopher Goscha's *Vietnam: A New History*. Professor Taylor notes that the historiography of Vietnam has been confined, for too long, to linear narratives in the service of a united "Vietnam". He commends Professor Goscha's book for advancing multiple possibilities that vie with the regnant orthodoxy in defining the future of the nation. He also asks probing questions about the constraints that the close relationship between the contemporary ruling elites of China and Vietnam has imposed on the latter state. Nir Avieli offers a critical and delightful review of *Food, Foodways and Foodscapes: Culture, Community and Consumption in Post-Colonial Singapore*. His review explores the issues at stake in approaching the study of food in a country whose government has managed to exert substantial cultural control. Other new titles, including James Hoesterey's *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* and Erik Davis's *Deathpower: Buddhism's Ritual Imagination in Cambodia*, are the subject of thoughtful and rewarding reviews by, respectively, Norshahril Saat and John Marston.

The Notes & Comment section of this issue of the journal is particularly rich and varied. Its first item is Mary Callahan's

important and trenchant criticism of the treatment of ethnicity in Myanmar's 2014 Population and Housing Census. Both the Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi governments have failed to release the data on ethnicity collected in that census. And we expect Professor Callahan's account of the design and execution of the question in the census concerning ethnicity and her consideration of the possible consequences of the flaws in those processes to prove both widely read and influential.

Igor Selivanov's research note, made available to *SOJOURN* in translation from the original Russian, traces the course of relations between Tirana and Hanoi between the late 1940s and the end of the Cold War. It uses the unlikely case of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's and then the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's relations with Albania effectively to highlight that Southeast Asian country's place in the world during a period that was not so long ago. We are grateful to Professor Olga Dror of Texas A&M University for putting the journal in touch with Professor Selivanov and making the publication of his note possible.

The section's third note, Suriya Smutkupt's vivid account of the lives of Thai transnational migrant workers in Taiwan, serves as a companion piece to his 2014 *SOJOURN* research note on Thai workers in an industrial zone of the Republic of Korea. We are once again proud to publish work that, like Dr Carruthers's and Professor Leshkovich's research articles in this same edition of the journal, bears so directly and concretely on patterns of social change in Southeast Asia.

Benjamin Loh
Michael Montesano

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