

SOJOURN

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Editors' Note

This issue of *SOJOURN* appears simultaneously with a special supplementary issue of the journal, released to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in 1968. The supplementary issue carries nine articles previously published in the journal, chosen to reflect changing “Approaches to Researching Southeast Asia” over the course of the decades since *SOJOURN* first appeared in 1986. It also includes an introductory essay by Barbara Watson Andaya.

Professor Andaya’s perspective on and assessment of the concerns that have motivated Southeast Asianists in the past thirty years also frame the selection of research articles that feature in the present issue of the journal.

First among those articles is Philip Holden’s exploration of the place of Asia, its study, and Asian students in the history of Singapore’s Raffles College in the years before the onset of the Pacific War. Holden draws on this exploration to offer ideas about developments in higher education in Singapore and the region today, and it is a great privilege for *SOJOURN* to publish his work.

Joseph Scalice’s article treats one of the most influential volumes on the history of Southeast Asia to appear in recent decades, Reynaldo Clemeña Iletto’s Benda Prize-winning 1979 book, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines 1840–1910*. Scalice works with a wealth of recent scholarship on literature and performance in the Philippines to assess the effectiveness of Iletto’s attempt to capture mass, rather than elite, consciousness at the time of the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

In the first of two articles on Thailand, Mitchell Tan presents what is apparently the first major study in any language of the career of Field Marshal Plaek Phibusongkham’s associate Sang Phatthanotai. Tan offers path-breaking research on Sang’s journalism and his international contacts to put into fresh ideational perspective

his role in Bangkok's relations with Beijing during the 1950s. Katja Rangsviek subjects the notion of "the Thai regime of images" to critical scrutiny in her article on the practice of polygyny and the performance of monogamy among members of Thailand's political elite. She draws in this article on extensive contact with members of the country's political class and a well-developed understanding of the dynamics that structure their conduct.

In the final research article in this issue of *SOJOURN*, Martin Großheim considers the treatment in Vietnamese history textbooks of the collapse of socialism in Russia and Eastern Europe and of historical relations between China and Vietnam. He places that treatment in the context of both Hanoi's policy of *Đổi mới* and of strains in Sino-Vietnamese relations resulting from tensions over the South China Sea.

Arnika Fuhrmann's *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema* is the subject of this issue's *SOJOURN* Symposium. The book considers Thai cinema and Thailand's sexual politics in the period after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. That period saw renewed engagement with Thai culture and heritage and their integration into politics and into Buddhist-coded economic programmes. Fuhrmann's book calls attention to the new role of sexuality in public discourse and policy rhetoric, against the backdrop of a revival of national cinema. It uses feminist and queer readings to reveal the relationships among film, sexuality and the Thai state's regulation thereof, and Buddhism. Megan Sinnott and Rachel Harrison offer comments on *Ghostly Desires*. The former focuses on the idea of "circularity" in binding Buddhist negativity, queerness, and melancholy and on the ontological compatibility between queer and psychoanalytic theories on the one hand and vernacular Buddhism on the other. The latter addresses the nuances of femininity and the theorization of temporality in contemporary Thailand. Fuhrmann responds to Sinnott and Harrison.

Writing on Hildred Geertz's *Storytelling in Bali*, Michel Picard leads off the book review section of this issue of *SOJOURN*. Other

reviews include those of Peter Jackson on Patrick Jory's *Thailand's Theory of Monarchy: The Vessantara Jātaka and the Idea of the Perfect Man* and of Carine Jaquet on the volume edited by Mandy Sadan on *War and Peace in the Borderlands of Myanmar: The Kachin Ceasefire, 1994–2011*.

The Notes & Comment section of the March 2018 issue of *SOJOURN* presents an account of the historical and institutional factors behind the emergence, significance and decline of the distinctive Teochew Catholic subculture that long defined the Hougang area of Singapore. Like Professor Holden's research article, this note testifies to the vibrancy of contemporary historiography on Singapore. Its publication also underlines the special place that the study of social change in Singapore has in the pages of our journal.

Mr Tan Chin Tiong has stepped down from the post of Director of ISEAS and chairperson of the Editorial Committee of *SOJOURN*. We thank him for his interest in and support for the journal, and for the many other initiatives at the institute that have come to fruition under his leadership. ISEAS's new Director, Mr Choi Shing Kwok, has agreed to assume the post of chairperson of the journal's Editorial Committee. We are pleased to have him on board, and we look forward to working with him to chart the journal's future direction. Su-Ann Oh, who now joins *SOJOURN* as Deputy Managing Editor, has already begun to play a strong role in that latter capacity.

Benjamin Loh
Michael Montesano
Su-Ann Oh

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