

## CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND SEMINARS

### **Conference on Thailand: Aspects of Thai Identity, 1939–89, 8–9 September 1989, Melbourne**

On 8–9 September 1989, the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies at Monash University, Melbourne, sponsored a two-day conference entitled “Aspects of Thai Identity, 1939–89”. The conference was planned to coincide with the visit to Australia of Mr Sulak Sivaraksa, the noted Thai scholar, who served as the keynote speaker. Other speakers from Thailand were Professor Chai-Anan Samudavanija and Dr Hans-Dieter Bechstedt, of Chulalongkorn University.

The theme of Thai identity, chosen by *achan* Sulak, was timed to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Thai Government’s decision to change the name of Siam to Thailand.

Eighty-one people registered for the conference, and after a hectic day and a half, sponsors, speakers, and registrants agreed that it had been a success. In the Centre’s 25-year history, it was the first conference to deal with Thailand. The papers will be edited by Dr David P. Chandler, the Research Director of the Centre, and Dr Craig Reynolds of the University of Sydney. They will be published in 1990 by the Centre, as a volume in its monograph series.

#### *Opening Remarks*

David Chandler  
Director, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies  
Monash University, Melbourne

eldest adult female), thus ensuring that biologically identical families will be classified consistently (p. 12).

The book's organization is unusual, to say the least. About half of the total number of pages contained therein (pp. 3–135) is devoted to text and the remaining half to appendices (pp. 139–235), bibliography (pp. 237–74), and index (pp. 275–82). The appendices are useful for the technical grounding of the simulations. Besides the six appendices, the book also contains abundant lengthy footnotes and references, some unduely long, rambling, and often a distraction to the reader's train of thought. By the same token, the book is also very informative for a newcomer into the area for the abundant background materials, references, and wide overview provided. The author, however, tends to be too apologetic, and even appears to be making excuses, for some of the technical decisions that he made in carrying out the runs. On other occasions, he also tends to lapse into colloquialism and melodrama (see, for example, p. 59).

YAP MUI TENG

*Keynote Address*

“Aspects of Thai Identity, 1939–89”

Sulak Sivaraksa

Director, Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute

Bangkok

*Papers*

“Authority Structures and Changing Identities”

Hans-Dieter Bechstedt

Lecturer, Sociology of Development Research Centre

Bielefeld University *and*

Visiting Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

“Thai Identity in the Astrological Tradition”

Nerida Cook

Tutor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology

Monash University, Melbourne

“Is Thai a ‘National Language’?”

Anthony V. Diller

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Asian Studies

Australian National University, Canberra

“Thailand: What Kind of Democracy?”

John Girling

Senior Fellow, Department of International Relations

Research School of Pacific Studies

Australian National University, Canberra

“What Is *the* Thai Village?”

Phillip Hirsch

Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography

University of Sydney, Sydney

“Re-Interpreting the *Traiphum Phra Ruang*: Contemporary Political Uses of Buddhist Symbolism in Thailand”

Peter A. Jackson

Senior Project Officer, Thai National Curriculum Project  
Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority, Canberra

“Did the CPT’s ‘Chinese-ness’ Cause the Student Activists to Leave the Jungle?”

Somsak Jeamteerasakul  
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Politics  
Monash University, Melbourne

“‘Thailand’ as a Cultural Construct”

Craig Reynolds  
Senior Lecturer, Department of History  
University of Sydney, Sydney

“State Identity Creation, State-Building, and Civil Society, 1939–89”

Chai-Anan Samudavanija  
Professor of Political Science  
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok *and*  
Senator, Thai Parliament

“The Confrontation between ‘Lua’ and ‘Thai’ Identities”

Cholthira Satyawadhna  
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Anthropology  
Research School of Pacific Studies  
Australian National University, Canberra

“Chamrat Sarawisut’s *Chat Thai* — Popular Themes of the 1930s”

Baas Terwiel  
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Asian Studies  
Australian National University, Canberra

“The Frontiers of Thailand”

Gehan Wijeyewardene  
Senior Fellow, Department of Anthropology  
Research School of Pacific Studies  
Australian National University, Canberra

## **Workshop on The Urban Future of Southeast Asia, 9–10 November 1989, Singapore**

In December 1988, the Social Issues in Southeast Asia (SISEA) programme of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) embarked on the pilot phase of a project on “Challenge of the Future: The Urban Ecology of Southeast Asia” with support from the Volkswagen Foundation. In the execution of the pilot phase, the Institute adopted two separate but related action plans:

1. the initiation of a study of the lacunae, problems, and issues in the planning of a city — specially suited to the tropics — of the future, as well as the preparation of a discussion paper on major issues in urbanization in Southeast Asia; and
2. the convening of a workshop on The Urban Future of Southeast Asia, to identify the key issues in the elucidation of the urban future of Southeast Asia.

In pursuit of the first of the above activities, a fellowship was awarded to Mr Tay Kheng Soon, a practising architect and ecologist in Singapore, with undertakings in Malaysia, Thailand, Mauritius, Brunei, and elsewhere, to conduct a study of the problems and issues in city planning in the tropics. This study has been completed and published as a book with the title *Mega-Cities in the Tropics: Towards an Architectural Agenda for the Future* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989). *Mega-Cities in the Tropics* reviews inherited town-planning doctrines and concepts which have led to the unregulated growth of mega-cities and dense urban environments in the tropics. It proposes alternatives for the development of architectural identity appropriate to modern Asian states in rapid transformation in which city planning can act as an active vehicle for not only city but economic development.

A fellowship was also awarded to Mr Wong Tai Chee, a Malaysian geographer, to write a discussion paper on major issues in urbaniza-

tion in Southeast Asia, which would serve as a basis for further reflections on research topics on the Urban Ecology of Southeast Asia.

It was intended that *Mega-Cities in the Tropics* and the discussion paper on major issues in urbanization in Southeast Asia would serve as background material to the Workshop on The Urban Future of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, it was hoped that they would serve to stimulate discussion, leading to the identification of critical problems in the study of urbanization and urbanism in Southeast Asia, and the research that could be undertaken.

The Workshop on The Urban Future of Southeast Asia was held at the Institute on 9–10 November 1989. The participants included a number of senior scholars, namely, Professor Paul Wheatley (Chairman, Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago, USA); Professor Hans-Dieter Evers (Head, Sociology of Development Research Centre, Universität Bielefeld, Federal Republic of Germany); Professor Emeritus N. John Habraken (Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA); Dr Manasse Malo (Inter-University Center for Social Sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia); Dr Goh Ban Lee (Centre for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia); Mrs Netnapi Nakavachara (Department of Geography, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand).

At the workshop, presentations were made by Professor Paul Wheatley, Mr Tay Kheng Soon, and Professor Hans-Dieter Evers. These generated considerable discussions and a number of issues were identified as of critical importance in the ecology and urban future of Southeast Asia. These included the following:

1. Decision-making processes in Southeast Asian cities
2. Financing Southeast Asian urban systems
3. Changing job structures and manpower requirements in Southeast Asian cities
4. The Southeast Asian city: Public ideals and political realities

5. How much control do urban governments have over resources?
  - (a) How are “strategic groups” formed in Southeast Asian cities?
  - (b) What are the limits and strengths of “strategic groups”?
  - (c) What happens to the “losers”?
6. The presuppositions of urban planning
7. Symbolic structures in Southeast Asian cities
8. Middle-sized cities in Southeast Asia
9. Protest movements in Southeast Asian cities
10. The role of multinational corporations in urban development
11. Technology in urban development
12. Technology and urban development: Transport and communications
13. Poverty in Southeast Asian cities

The Workshop was of the opinion that if anything meaningful and worthwhile were to be gained in terms of research on the urban future of Southeast Asia, then the investigations would need to be both sharply focused as well as of practical significance. Accordingly, it was the recommendation of the Workshop that the Institute, upon the completion of the current pilot phase of work, should launch a fully fledged research project under the rubric “The Dynamics of Urban Management in Southeast Asia”. In order to allow for sufficient depth of analysis, that this project should extend over twenty-four months and focus on a carefully selected set of related topics, particularly those pertaining to the need to devise effective urban policies. And in doing so, to bear in mind Manuel Castell’s warning, that such policies are easily subverted if they “fail to identify with sufficient accuracy the political processes underlying urban management” (*The City at the Grassroots* [London: Edward Arnold, 1983], p. xv).

The Workshop also recommended that as a first step in this direction, as well as a wrap-up of the pilot phase of the work on the Urban Ecology of Southeast Asia, a set of papers be prepared to more

sharply delineate the potential research areas and questions under the proposed project on "The Dynamics of Urban Management in Southeast Asia" and that this undertaking be completed by the latter part of 1990. Finally, that this activity would not only complete the first pilot phase of "Challenge of the Future: The Urban Ecology of Southeast Asia", but also lead to the launching of the research project on "The Dynamics of Urban Management in Southeast Asia". It was also the view, expressed at the workshop, that the work emanating from the latter project should not only be scholarly but also serve as a benchmark in the study of urbanization in Southeast Asia, in addition to being of practical use to decision-makers in search of viable solutions to the myriad problems of urban Southeast Asia.

ISEAS is pleased to have been able to initiate the pilot phase of the project on "Challenge of the Future: The Urban Ecology of Southeast Asia" and would like to express its appreciation of the support it has received from the Volkswagen Foundation.