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Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Vol. 4, No. 1

April 2015

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# Intergenerational Land Transfer in Rural Cambodia since the Late 1980s: Special Attention to the Effect of Labor Migration

Yagura Kenjiro\*

Using primary data collected from three villages in Prey Veng and Pousat provinces, this study describes how land has been transferred from parents to children in rural Cambodia since the late 1980s. While equal division among all children is the most favored practice—thus further farm fragmentation is anticipated in the near future—parents with very small land endowment are unable to divide land equally among all their children and some children are unable to receive land from their parents. The expansion of migration opportunity has not caused fundamental changes in land transfer practices, but the premarital migration experience of children is negatively associated with land transfer, especially when children settle in the migration destination or marry a person from another province whom they met at the migration destination and move to their partner's place of origin. The data indicate that, taking advantage of labor migration experience, children of land-poor parents choose to leave their home province and make a living without land. However, landless children are in a disadvantaged economic situation because they are also less likely to receive non-land assets from their parents and farmland from their spouse's parents.

**Keywords:** land transfer, migration, family, marriage, Cambodia

## I Introduction

Farmland under family farming is generally transferred from parents to their children in societies where the private ownership of land is established. While the way in which land is transferred intergenerationally varies according to societies and times, inheritance is basically classified into partible and impartible. In the former, parents' land is divided among their children, while in the latter, land is given to only one heir. Scholars have argued that land inheritance rules exert an important influence on rural society and

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economy (Platteau and Baland 2001). How land is transferred between generations naturally affects agricultural production since it determines farm size (Ram *et al.* 1999) and brings about changes in land distribution and rural class structure (Khera 1973; Wiegandt 1977). It has also been found to shape family structure and social interaction among kin (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971; Khera 1972) and determine the rate and the timing of marriage (Emigh 1997) and birth rate (Habakkuk 1955). Furthermore, some scholars argue that land inheritance rules can influence the development of the manufacturing industry since it affects labor mobility from rural areas (*ibid.*; Wegge 1999).

Although the empirical data on intergenerational land transfer<sup>1)</sup> in Cambodia is scarce, partible transfer seems to have been common practice. For example, Ebihara (1971) found that in a village in Kandal province in the late 1950s, farmland was divided among children in a basically equal manner (*ibid.*). Land became collective property under the Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) regime and subsequently the People's Republic of Kampuchea in the early 1980s, but was distributed among households after the dissolution of collective farming groups (*krôm samokki*) in the 1980s. Since then, parents distribute land to their children. In fact, some studies show that children who got married after the land distribution of the 1980s received land from their parents (Amakawa 2001; Yagura 2005; Kobayashi 2007). However, these studies do not examine whether partible (and equitable) land transfer is still a common practice in rural Cambodia because they do not use data from the parents' side.

In this regard, we must note that socio-economic changes experienced in rural Cambodia since the 1980s have had a considerable influence on land transfer practice. First, population is increasing rapidly while unexploited land is diminishing—in other words, land is becoming a scarce resource. In fact, while there remains untapped land in some regions, such as the northwestern and the northeastern provinces, there seems to be little land left for agricultural use in regions with a high population density such as the provinces surrounding Phnom Penh.<sup>2)</sup> On the other hand, the baby-boomers of the 1980s have started to get married in the first decade of the twenty-first century. According to custom, parents should give land to all these married children, yet this may not be possible where land is becoming scarce. Second, labor migration from rural areas is increasing, which can also be regarded as a response to land scarcity. Since the middle of the 1990s, the migration of rural youth to urban areas, especially Phnom Penh, has

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1) In this paper, the term “transfer” is used instead of “inheritance” to refer to the giving of land by parents to their children, because it is generally conducted while parents are still alive.

2) For example, in the eastern part of the Treang district, Takeo province, a vast area of dry season rice fields was reclaimed in the 1980s, but the reclamation has stopped as unreclaimed land has almost run out (Yagura 2008).

increased with the development of sectors such as the garment industry, construction, and commerce in urban areas. Increased opportunities to earn a living outside rural areas make farmland less necessary.

Both these changes ought to promote a transition from partible to impartible transfer of land. The change to impartible land transfer then raises the question of who will be deprived of access to land and how these landless children should make a living.

On the other hand, increasing employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors may actually make it possible to sustain partible land transfer because the non-agricultural income can compensate for a small agricultural income (Platteau and Baland 2001). This means that the direction of the effects of labor migration on land transfer practice cannot be assumed a priori.

The objective of this study is to describe how land has been transferred from parents to children in rural Cambodia since the late 1980s. Special attention is placed on whether the practice of partible and equitable land transfer is giving way to unequal and impartible land transfer, and whether and how the increasing labor migration from rural areas affect the changes in land transfer practice. Because there is no nation-wide survey on intergenerational land transfer in Cambodia, this study uses data collected by the author in three villages of Prey Veng and Pousat provinces in 2009.

Examining changes in land transfer practice and the effect of rural out-migration is important because it provides us with clues to understand whether and how land distribution in Cambodian villages has changed in recent years as well as predict changes in land distribution in the near future.<sup>3)</sup> Land distribution itself is a fundamental factor determining income distribution, prevalence of poverty, and production organization, as well as the efficiency of agriculture. But studying land distribution is beyond the scope of this study and will be left for further research.<sup>4)</sup> This paper is limited to the presentation of implications of changes in land distribution or stratum structure within a village, from the findings of an empirical analysis of intergenerational land transfer.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In the next section, after presenting factors determining intergenerational land transfer practice in general, I discuss expected changes in Cambodia since the 1980s. Section III describes sample villages and Section IV reveals the normative aspects of the equal division of land by presenting parents' plan

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3) Yagura (2005) examines factors determining land distribution in two Takeo villages, but changes in land distribution in the long run are not fully captured because data used is basically cross-sectional. In addition, the effect of changes in land transfer practice is not addressed.

4) See Yagura (2015), which, using the same household data as the present paper, is focused on the effect of intergenerational asset transfers on land distribution in the three villages surveyed. (This note is added after the acceptance of the present paper.)

of land transfer. Section V describes the actual situation of intergenerational land transfer in the villages surveyed, with a focus on the extent to which equitable and partible land transfer is maintained and its relationship with parents' land endowment. In addition, I estimate the degree to which children are unlikely to receive land from their parents based on the current land endowment of their parents. Section VI investigates the effect of the premarital migration experience of children on land transfer from their parents after their marriage. Section VII sheds light on the economic situation of married children who have not received land from their parents, by examining land transfer from their spouse's parents as well as transfer of non-land assets from their own parents. In the last section, after summarizing the findings of the previous sections, I discuss possible effects of the recent trends in intergenerational land transfer on the stratum structure of rural society in Cambodia.

## II Factors Determining the Mode of Intergenerational Land Transfer

As discussed above, there are two basic modes of intergenerational land transfer: partible and impartible. As long as the land is an indispensable asset and a major means of making a living in an agricultural society, partible transfer seems to be the natural choice and impartible transfer is adopted only in exceptional cases.

Based on previous studies, Platteau and Baland (2001) argued that impartible transfer is likely to be selected for the following reasons or under the following circumstances: (1) to save administrative costs of tax collection (in cases where tax is levied on land);<sup>5)</sup> (2) agricultural production has economies of scale; (3) to maintain patriarchal relations by not dividing symbolic assets; (4) there are rules to restrict membership at community level (for restrictive use of commons); (5) farm size becomes too small to be economically viable if land is divided among children (*ibid.*).

These circumstances are practically absent in Cambodian (Khmer) rural society and therefore partible transfer is more likely to be selected. First, tax has not been levied on the farmland of peasants. Second, traditional rice farming without mechanization is unlikely to benefit from economies of scale. Third, the Khmer family, as indicated by previous studies, is not characterized by patriarchal relationships (Ebihara 1971; Ledgerwood 1995; Takahashi 2001). Fourth, rules to restrict community membership are not known. Finally, population density is relatively low and unexploited land existed

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5) For example, under a manorial system where the lord of a manor imposes tax and labor on tenant farms and sets the rules for transfer of the rights to land between tenants (Platteau and Baland 2001).

until recently.

Among these points, the first four are still relevant. Only the last point is less valid in rural Cambodia today, as the population continues to rise while the frontier has been diminishing since the 1980s. When farm size becomes too small, parents may stop giving land to all their children and cases of impartible transfer may increase.

On the other hand, labor migration from rural to urban areas or between rural areas has increased since the late 1990s in Cambodia. The increase in labor out-migration in recent years can facilitate the transition from partible transfer or equal division of land to impartible land transfer in two ways. First, as migration opportunities provide rural youth with the means to make a living without land, parents may not give land to migrating children and may decide to give only to children who stay in their native village. Second, the increase in youth labor migration can also affect the selection of a marital partner and the place of residence after marriage. At migration destinations, migrants meet other migrants of the opposite sex from diverse locations, who might emerge as prospective spouses. Therefore, an increasing number of youths might marry a person from a remote place (such as another province) and settle in the place of origin of their spouse, far from their home village. Parents might then not give land to these children because they cannot cultivate land in their home village.

As for the selection of marital partner, as Yagura (2012) indicates, migrating children who have little expectation of receiving land from their parents may consciously search for their partner at the migration destination because they have little incentive to return to their home village.

On the other hand, increasing opportunities of migration may preserve partible land transfer. As argued by Platteau and Baland (2001), abundant off-farm employment opportunities may actually sustain partible inheritance rule because small-scale farmers are able to make a living by combining off-farm income. This argument also holds true of migration opportunities. Furthermore, recent improvements in land productivity in Cambodian rice farming may contribute to sustaining partible land transfer by enhancing the viability of small-scale farmers.<sup>6)</sup>

Though changes in the economic environment can cause a shift in intergenerational land transfer practice, empirical studies also show that longstanding practices, especially the equal division of land, tend to persist even in the face of major socio-economic changes (Salamon 1980; Takeuchi 2000; Platteau and Baland 2001). Where the equal division of land is a longstanding custom, children may regard receiving land from their parents as

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6) In rural villages in northeastern Thailand, the practice of partible land inheritance has largely been maintained in the 1980s and 1990s even though farm size has shrunk. Takeuchi (2000) attributes this phenomenon to productivity improvement in rice farming.



their right; therefore changing this custom could entail much friction among family members.<sup>7)</sup> This fact cannot be ignored in analyzing land transfer practice in rural Cambodia, where the equal division of land has been common practice.

### III Villages Surveyed

#### III-1 *Outline of the Survey*

Data used in this paper was collected through a field survey in August 2009. Using a questionnaire, members of the research group, consisting of Cambodian postgraduate and undergraduate students, college graduates as well as the author, conducted interviews in Khmer with heads of sample households or their spouses.

The survey was conducted in three villages, which we shall call S, K, and Y. Village S is located in Ba Phnom district, Prey Veng province. K is also part of Prey Veng province, but is located in Peam Ro district. Village Y is located in Bakan district, Pousat province (see Maps 1, 2, and 3).

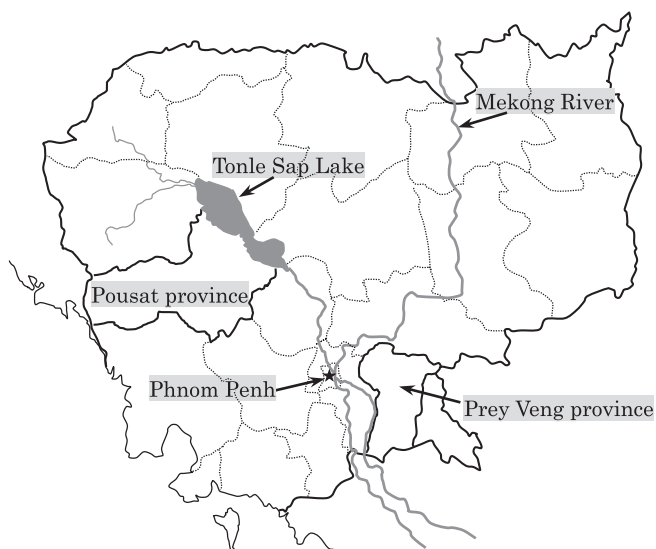
Before settling on the villages, I first chose as the survey area two provinces that have experienced a relatively large scale of population outflow in recent years.<sup>8)</sup> This condition is very important for studying the effect of out-migration on intergenerational land transfer. In addition, the two provinces have a different population density, which enables us to examine the effect of farm size. Farm size was expected to be larger in Pousat than in Prey Veng, where the population density is higher.

After choosing these two provinces, I conducted a preliminary survey in various parts of each province to select villages for the main survey. The three villages were eventually selected for the following reasons. First, a certain proportion of villagers in all three villages have experienced labor migration. Second, the three villages have different agricultural conditions. While all three have only rice fields (no upland fields), farmers in S and Y can grow rice only in the wet season while farmers in K can grow rice in both wet and dry seasons, thanks to a lake near the village that provides water

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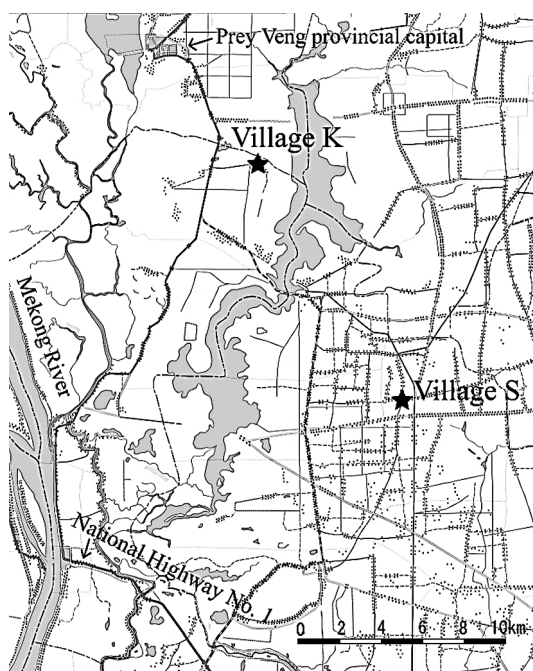
7) The reverse can also bring about discord. André and Platteau (1998) show that in a Rwandan village, a change in land inheritance practice from primogeniture (all land given to the eldest son) to division among sons brought about intra-family dispute, provoked by the eldest son who was deprived of his privilege.

8) According to the population census conducted in 2008, population outflow due to inter-provincial migration for five years up to 2008 was 70,357 for Prey Veng and 12,508 for Pousat (Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics 2010b). The ratio of the outflow to total population as of 2008 is 7.4 percent for Prey Veng and 3.1 percent for Pousat, which respectively rank 1st and 7th among 24 provinces including Phnom Penh.



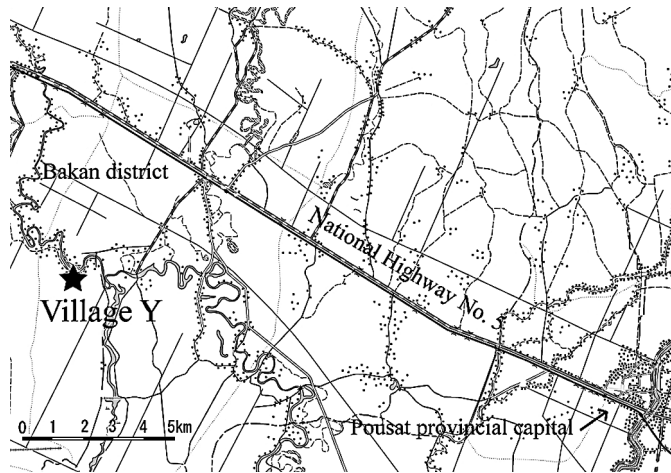
**Map 1** Prey Veng and Pousat Provinces

Source: Prepared by the author.



**Map 2** Villages S and K

Source: Prepared by the author.



Map 3 Village Y

Source: Prepared by the author.

even in dry seasons. The rice fields for the wet and dry seasons are, however, different (double cropping is not possible).

The difference between S and Y lies in farm size: on average, farmers in Y have much larger lands. We can examine the effect of land scarcity by comparing S and Y, and the effect of dry season farming (that is, the availability of employment in farming throughout the year) in K.

The number of households surveyed was 187 in S, 208 in K, and 179 in Y. We interviewed all the households in S and Y, except those whose heads were absent during the period of our survey. In K, we only visited the households in the southwestern part of the village so that the number of households surveyed would be about the same in all three villages. As such, statistics derived from whole sample have little bias without adjustment (that is, weighting according to the number of sample households in each village).

In the survey we collected information on land transfer to household heads and their spouse from the two sets of parents, as well as land transfer from the same household heads and their spouse, as parents, to their children. Information on the transfer to their children is used in this paper because it includes data on whether and how land is divided among children. In the following sections, “parents” refers to the head (and his/her spouse) of sample households, and “children” refers to children of the household head, unless otherwise noted.

### III-2 History

According to villagers in the three villages, S and K existed even before the French colonial period. As for Y, its establishment dates back to at least the 1920s because a villager who was in his nineties was born in Y.

The continuity of village society before and after the era of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) seems strong in S and K. Under the DK era, some of villagers in S were assigned to reclaim land in Peam Chor district in the province. They were not relocated but commuted there from S. People in K were moved to the western part of the same commune to reclaim land just before the collapse of the regime, but they returned en masse once the regime fell. Villagers of Y were all relocated to Veal Veng district (the western part of Pousat province), but after the regime collapsed, most of them returned to Y, though some fled to the Thai border area. On the other hand, some people who had been relocated from Takeo and Kampot to the western part of the country settled in Y after the regime collapsed and did not return to their original provinces. Furthermore, some villagers had moved to Pousat from Takeo and Kampot on their own initiative even before 1975.

After the collapse of the DK regime, *kröm samokki* were formed in all three villages.<sup>9)</sup> Farming was conducted under *kröm samokki* for only one season (1979) in Y and for three seasons from 1979–81 in S and K. After the last farming season under *kröm samokki*, farmland was divided among households.

Methods of land distribution differed according to villages. In S, each household received an area of wet season rice field based on the number of household members and their work capacity. Villagers were classified into three categories based on their work capacity: *kâmlăng muoy* (those who can plow rice fields), *kâmlăng pi* (those who can uproot and transplant rice seedlings), and *kâmlăng bey* (those who can only tend cattle; basically children). Allocation of rice field per person for each of these categories is 0.25, 0.20, and 0.15 hectares, respectively.

In K, each household received 0.13 hectares of wet season rice field and 0.10 hectares of dry season rice field per person, without taking into account members' work capacity. As mentioned earlier, in K, wet season rice and dry season rice are grown in different fields. Nevertheless, some villagers told the author during the interview that villagers also reclaimed dry season rice fields by themselves.

In Y, rice fields cultivated by each *kröm* were divided among the member households of that *kröm*, and each household received a uniform area of land within a *kröm*, irrespec-

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9) The *kröm samokki* is a group composed of about 10 households organized to practice collective farming in rural Cambodia under the People's Republic of Kampuchea regime. As is the case of the three villages in this paper, *kröm samokki* were mostly dissolved by the mid-1980s (Amakawa 2001).

tive of the number of household members. However, the area of rice field per household varied from one *krôm* to another because each *krôm* also reclaimed rice fields independently in 1979. This also indicates that a vast area of unexploited land in Y still remained in the early 1980s.

As for residential land (*dey phoum*), people in S and K basically occupied plots they had used before the DK era, though some households in S received residential land from the local authority. In Y, all households received a uniform size of residential land (30 meters by 80 meters) from the local authority.

### III-3 *Population*

Comparison of the Population Census in 1998 with that in 2008 reveals demographic changes in the three villages. During this decade, both S and K experienced a large increase in the number of households (from 170 to 207 in S and from 295 to 369 in K), but the population of S increased only slightly (from 751 to 778) and the population of K even decreased (from 1,475 to 1,418). In Y, while almost no change was found in the number of households (from 182 to 186), the population decreased by as much as 10 percent (from 1,039 to 933). Population in these statistics do not include family members who were absent at the time of the census due to, for example, labor migration. Therefore, the population decrease during the decade indicates an increase in out-migration from these villages. In addition, it is highly likely that the fertility rate in these villages decreased in this decade, as is observed in national- and provincial-level data (Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics 2010a). As a result, average household size became smaller in all three villages. Even so, the number of households increased in S and K, probably because baby-boomers of the early 1980s married and established their own household during this period.

### III-4 *Agriculture*

Table 1 shows the distribution of farmland at the time of the survey.<sup>10)</sup> In S and Y, almost all the farmland is wet season rice field, while in K, around half of the farmland is dry season rice field. Smallness of farm size in S is evident from the table. On the other hand, the larger the average farm size, the higher the landholding inequality among households.

Besides receiving land from the government as mentioned above, some acquired land through reclamation (especially in Y), and younger generations received land from

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10) In this paper, land that the informant considered as his/her own is regarded as being owned by the informant (or his/her household), whether the plot is officially registered or not.

**Table 1** Land Distribution

Size of Farmland Owned		S	K	Y
Hectares		Number of Households		
0		6	19	25
0 <	<0.5	69	32	10
0.5 ≤	<1.0	57	37	16
1.0 ≤	<1.5	33	45	29
1.5 ≤	<2.0	15	26	16
2.0 ≤	<2.5	1	27	31
2.5 ≤	<3.0	2	8	9
3.0 ≤		4	14	43
Total		187	208	179
Average Area (hectares)		0.73	1.27	2.13
Gini Coefficient		0.42	0.45	0.53

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

their parents. Parents mostly give land to their child at the time of the child's marriage or within a few years after the marriage. Land acquisition through purchase is also prevalent. Among households in which parents gave land to their children after 1979, 32 percent had purchased farmland before and 15 percent had sold the land since then. Land rental markets also exist. Among 574 sample households, 26 households rent out farmland and 56 households rent farmland in the last farming season.

Based on the estimate of village chiefs, yield of wet season rice (unhusked) is 1.5–2.0 ton/ha in S, 2.0 ton/ha in K, and 3.5 ton/ha in Y. Yield of dry season rice in K is 2.0–2.5 ton/ha. The village chief of S conjectured that rice yield in his village had been increasing in the last decade, while the chiefs of the other two villages did not think that the rice yield in their villages had increased.

Although farming in these villages still relies very much on manual labor and draft animals, farm machines such as power tillers (*kō yon*), threshers, and harvesters have been gradually introduced in recent years in the villages surveyed, especially in K and Y.

### III-5 Labor Migration

Table 2 shows the incidence of labor migration in the preceding 12 months by family members of the sample households. Labor migration refers to working outside the village, excluding cases in which workers commute from their own house in the village. In the table (and hereinafter), “husband” and “wife” refer to the household head and his/her spouse. In cases where household heads are currently unmarried (widows, widowers, and the divorced), they are also referred to as “husband” or “wife” according to their sex.

**Table 2** Prevalence of Labor Migration in the Preceding 12 Months (%)

		S	K	Y
Husband				
Aged	20–29	53.6	30.6	9.5
	30–39	55.8	29.6	13.3
	40–49	48.3	18.4	11.1
	50–59	40.9	0.0	7.1
	60–69	18.2	0.0	0.0
Wife				
Aged	20–29	18.2	4.2	6.7
	30–39	18.6	9.6	3.3
	40–49	10.3	12.8	4.7
	50–59	4.2	5.6	3.2
	60–69	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unmarried Children				
Aged	15–19	31.6	23.2	16.4
	20–24	44.4	55.7	38.2
	25–29	44.1	31.8	47.6

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Note: Figures indicate the percentage of those who migrated for work in the preceding 12 months.

Migration data of husbands and wives in Table 2 indicates that: husbands are more likely to migrate than wives; migration is more prevalent among younger generations than among older generations (except in village S); and prevalence of labor migration is higher where land endowment is smaller. Table 2 also shows that labor migration is more widespread among unmarried children than among their parents. Interestingly enough, inter-village differences in migration prevalence are much smaller among unmarried children. This suggests that labor migration has become widespread among rural youth irrespective of the land endowment of their villages.

Phnom Penh is the top destination of labor migration, accounting for around 80 percent of migrants' destinations. Migrants from Y, however, are more likely to go to Thailand, probably because of its geographical closeness. A large portion of male migrants works as construction workers or motorbike taxi drivers, and female migrants work at garment factories.

Table 3 allows us to see whether labor migration has been increasing in recent years. It shows the premarital migration rate, or proportion of husbands and wives who experienced labor migration before marriage, by age group. In this table, only the data of husbands and wives who come from the villages surveyed are used so as to detect changes in the prevalence of labor migration from the three villages. Though this data is biased in the sense that it does not include those who have not returned to the village

**Table 3** Premarital Migration Rate

Age	Husband			Wife		
	S	K	Y	S	K	Y
20–29	54.5	38.7	45.8	43.8	28.9	19.4
30–39	22.7	29.5	0.0	15.4	12.8	10.0
40–49	23.8	7.7	0.0	0.0	4.9	0.0
50–59	14.3	14.3	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0
60–69	17.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Note: Percentage of natives of the villages surveyed who experienced labor migration before marriage.

after emigrating from the village, it does inform on the basic trend of labor migration in the last decades.

As is evident from the table, the premarital migration rate is much higher among husbands and wives in their twenties and thirties. In particular, around half of the husbands in their twenties in all three villages experienced labor migration when they were single. While few of the wives in their forties or older have migrated before marriage, 20 to 40 percent of wives in their twenties have experienced labor migration. In S, the premarital migration rate is relatively high even among middle-aged husbands. In contrast, in Y, no husbands in their thirties or older experienced labor migration before marriage, but nearly half of the husbands in their twenties migrated when they were single.

The data indicate that labor migration used to be characteristic among males of villages with small land endowment like S, but it has become widespread in recent years among young people, irrespective of their gender and land endowment.

## IV Parents' Land Transfer Plan

### IV-1 *Inclination toward Partible and Equal Land Transfer*

Before examining the actual situation of intergenerational land transfer in the three villages, this section shows parents' plans for distributing land to their children.

In the interview, we asked household heads (or their spouse) who owned farmland at the time of the interview but had yet to give farmland to all their children, whether they planned to distribute land to all their children. Among 489 respondents who had more than one child, 84.5 percent answered “yes,” 7.4 percent “no,” and the rest (8.2 percent) responded “do not know.” There is no significant difference in the distribution of responses between the villages. Then, we asked those who answered “yes” to the



question above whether they planned to give farmland to their all children in equal portions. Among 408 respondents, 93.4 percent answered “yes,” only 5.6 percent responded negatively, and 1 percent responded “do not know.” No significant difference was found between villages in this category as well. These responses indicate that most of the couples plan to divide their land equally among all their children.

We proceeded to ask those who indicated the equal division of land among children their reasons for doing so. The top answer was: “we should treat our children equally,” cited by 70 percent of the respondents. “In order not to cause dispute or envy among children” was the next most popular reason, cited by 13.8 percent of the respondents. These answers indicate that fear of dispute underlies parents’ inclination toward equal division, although I did not hear of actual cases of dispute related to land transfer. In addition, both parents and children seemed to regard receiving land equally from parents as children’s rights.

On the other hand, there are some differences according to generation. The older generations tended to answer “no” to the question of partible land transfer and equal land division. Among household heads in their sixties, 21 percent responded negatively to the question of giving land to all their children. To the question of equal division among children, 12 percent of those in their fifties and 10 percent of those in their sixties answered “no.” Such a tendency seems to reflect the difficult situation of some older parents who have only a small piece of land left and for whom buying land to give to their children (a practice adopted by affluent parents) is also difficult. On the other hand, as high a rate as 16 percent of household heads in their twenties answered “do not know” to the question of partible land transfer. This would reflect the fact that they need to decide on this question only some 20 years later and thus are still very uncertain about what to do.

#### *IV-2 Relationship with Land Endowment*

Next we examine the relationship between land transfer plan and farm size. How much land parents can give to their children depends very much on how much land parents own at present and the number of children yet to receive land. As an indicator of the availability of land to children, we define “transferrable land endowment” (TLE, hereinafter) as the area of farmland owned by parents at the time of the survey, divided by the number of their children aged below 40 (including both married and unmarried children) yet to receive land from them. The relationship between TLE and the land transfer plan is presented in Table 4. The denominator of TLE does not include children aged 40 or older because the older children are mostly married and have established their own households by the early 1980s, and hence would have received land from the local authority.

**Table 4** Parents' Plan of Land Transfer to Their Children

TLE (hectares)	(N)	Divide Land among All Their Children (%)			Divide Land in Equal Amount (%)*		
		Yes	No	Undecided	Yes	No	Undecided
<0.2	(107)	74.8	11.2	14.0	92.4	5.1	2.5
0.2 ≤ <0.4	(123)	91.1	3.3	5.7	90.8	8.3	0.9
0.4 ≤ <0.6	(84)	86.9	7.1	6.0	95.9	4.1	0.0
0.6 ≤ <0.8	(39)	92.3	5.1	2.6	91.7	5.6	2.8
0.8 ≤ <1.0	(14)	100.0	0.0	0.0	93.3	6.7	0.0
1.0 ≤	(91)	90.1	3.3	6.6	95.1	4.9	0.0

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: Data of parent(s) who have farmland and more than one child but who have yet to give land to all their children.

\* Percentage of those who plan to divide land among all their children.

TLE=[size of farmland owned]/[the number of children aged below 40 who have not received farmland from their parents].

Parents generally did not give land to these children.

As is evident from Table 4, parents with small land endowment (especially those with TLE < 0.2 hectares) are more likely to plan to give land only to some of their children. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that around 75 percent of those with TLE < 0.2 answered that they would give land to all their children. On the other hand, inclination toward equal division is just as strong among those who planned to give land to all their children regardless of their land endowment. This again indicates the normative aspect of the equal division of land.

The data presented above reveal that most parents want to divide land equally among their children because they feel that their children should be treated equally. This inclination is widely shared, even among those who have very limited land endowment, which suggests that further farm fragmentation is anticipated in the three villages in the near future.

## V Land Transfer in Practice

### V-1 Basic Situation of Land Transfer

Parents' plans of land transfer presented in the previous section may merely reflect their wishes; whether they can do as they desire would depend on their socio-economic environment as well as their children's life course. In this section, actual transfer of land from parents (household heads and their spouse) to their married children aged below 40 is examined. We only take into account land transfer to married children because giving

**Table 5** Land Transfer to Married Children under 40 Years of Age

		(N)	Proportion of Those Receiving Farmland (%)*	Average Area of Land Received (hectares)**
Whole Sample		(582)	78.5	0.46
Female		(311)	79.7	0.46
Male		(271)	77.1	0.45
(Village)	S	(227)	81.1	0.22
	K	(172)	70.9	0.43
	Y	(183)	82.5	0.76
(Birth Order)	Eldest	(153)	77.1	0.51
	Youngest	(52)	67.3	0.43
(Year of Marriage)	2009	(38)	50.0	0.46
	2006–08	(143)	72.0	0.48
	Before 2006	(365)	83.3	0.46

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: \* Proportion of married children under 40 who have received farmland from their parents.

\*\* The average of those who received farmland.

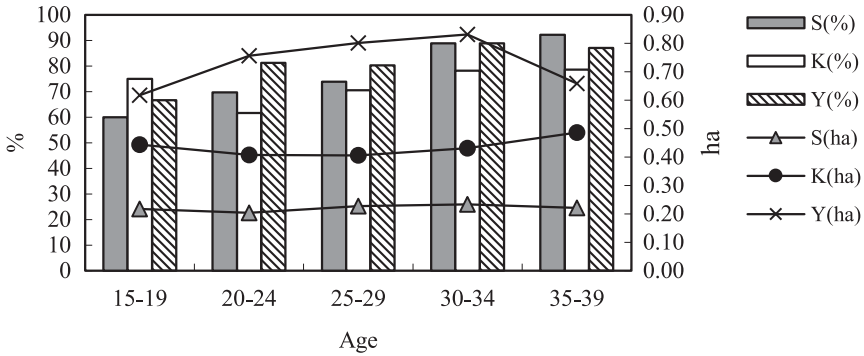
land to unmarried children is very rare in the three villages (and probably in Cambodian villages in general). Children aged 40 or older are excluded for the same reason mentioned in the previous section. Our analysis focuses on the transfer of farmland because almost all children who received residential land from their parents also received farmland.<sup>11)</sup> In other words, residential land is not given to children as a substitute for farmland. For this reason, the term “land” refers to farmland (rice field) hereinafter unless otherwise mentioned.

Note that the land transfer situation presented here is not the final one in the sense that parents may give land in future to children who had yet to receive land at the time of the survey, especially children who had got married very recently.

Table 5 shows the proportion of married children aged below 40 who received land from their parents. As we can see, 79 percent of the children received land from their parents. The proportion of children receiving land is unrelated to land endowment of each village, as the proportion in K is lower than in S. Nevertheless, the average area of land given to children (the average derived from those who received land) is clearly proportional to the average farm size of the village; thus the differences between villages are very large.

Table 5 also shows that land is principally divided among children regardless of gender and birth order, which is consistent with the argument by Ebihara (1971) that

11) Among 582 married children aged below 40, 72 persons received residential land from their parents and all but 4 of them also received farmland from their parents.



**Fig. 1** Proportion of Those Who Received Farmland from Parents (%) and the Average Area of the Land Received

Notes: Data of married children under 40.

The size of land is the average of those who received land from parents.

there is little difference in land transfer according to gender. Though the eldest child tends to receive more land than average, the probability of receiving land is not especially high. The probability of receiving land is a little lower for the youngest child, but this is probably caused by the fact that the youngest children are more likely to live with their parents or their spouse’s parents.<sup>12)</sup> The proportion of those who received land is lower for those who married in recent years. This may reflect the fact that in some cases land is transferred from parents to children a few years after their marriage.

To check whether there is any change in land transfer practice, Fig. 1 shows the proportion of those who received land from their parents and the average size of farmland received according to the age group of children. We can observe that in all the three villages younger children are less likely to receive land.<sup>13)</sup> However, we may not conclude that the practice of partible transfer has been weakened because, as mentioned above, some younger children might not have received land yet because they had only just got married. Though the average size of land received tends to be smaller for the younger generation in Y, the average size of land received for each age group is falls within a very narrow range: around 0.2 hectares in S, 0.4 hectares in K, and 0.8 hectares in Y.

12) Among married children under 40, the proportion of those who live with their parents or their spouse’s parents is 54 percent for the youngest children and 30 percent for the other children.

13) The age group 15–19 of village K is exceptional in that it includes only four persons. Thus no overall trend can be drawn from it.

V-2 *Is Land Divided Equally among All Children?*

In this subsection, in order to grasp the prevalence of partible and equitable land transfer, we check whether parents who have more than one married child aged below 40 gave land to all these married children. The data is presented in Table 6. As shown in the fifth column of the table, nearly two-thirds of parents gave land to all their married children aged under 40. The difference between villages is large, as only 53.2 percent of parents in K did so. The difference according to age is also significant. The proportion of those who have not given land to any of their married children under 40 is higher among the younger parents. Younger parents are unable to give land to their children probably because they themselves tend to have limited land; or because their children have only very recently got married (and thus will receive land from their parents in the near future).

The figures in the sixth and seventh columns of Table 6 reveal the prevalence of equal division. The sixth column shows that among those parents who gave land to all their married children under 40 (corresponding to 102 households), 73.5 percent distributed the land equally. The prevalence of equal division over the whole sample amounts

**Table 6** Land Transfer Practice from Parents to Married Children Aged under 40

	Number of Couples	Farmland Was Given to: (%)			Of Which Equal Division	
		None of the Children	Some of the Children	All the Children [A]	% to [A]	% to Total
Total	(158)	10.8	24.7	64.6	73.5	47.5
Village						
S	(61)	8.2	23.0	68.9	64.3	44.3
K	(47)	17.0	29.8	53.2	84.0	44.7
Y	(50)	8.0	22.0	70.0	77.1	54.0
Age of Household Head						
-49	(24)	16.7	20.8	62.5	66.7	41.7
50-59	(66)	12.1	25.8	62.1	70.7	43.9
60-69	(51)	7.8	23.5	68.6	77.1	52.9
70-	(17)	5.9	29.4	64.7	81.8	52.9
OLE (hectares)						
0 < <0.2	(9)	15.0	35.0	50.0	80.0	40.0
0.2 ≤ <0.4	(20)	5.5	29.1	65.5	75.0	49.1
0.4 ≤ <0.6	(55)	4.8	28.6	66.7	78.6	52.4
0.6 ≤ <0.8	(21)	0.0	11.1	88.9	87.5	77.8
0.8 ≤ <1.0	(18)	12.5	0.0	87.5	57.1	50.0
1.0 ≤	(8)	0.0	22.7	77.3	58.8	45.5

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: Data of parents as household head who have more than one married child aged under 40, excluding landless parents.

OLE=[farmland owned by parents before first land transfer]/[number of children under 40].

to 47 percent (seventh column). We can also observe that equal division is less common for younger parents.

Overall, the data presented in Table 6 indicate that equal division of land is not implemented as much as parents might have wished, though the observed difference in the size of land between siblings may reflect an adjustment to the quality of land in some cases.

As in the case of parents' plan of land transfer, their land endowment is assumed to affect the actual land transfer.<sup>14</sup> But it is not parents' current land endowment but the size of land owned before giving land to their children that determines whether and how they distribute this land. In addition, the number of children also matters. Therefore, we have constructed an indicator "original land endowment" (OLE), defined as the size of farmland owned by parents at the moment they give farmland to their child for the first time after having received land from the local authority in the 1980s, divided by the number of children aged below 40 (including both married and unmarried children). For parents who have not given land to any of their children, the size of farmland they currently own is used as the numerator. We examine the relationship between parents' land endowment and the actual land transfer using this OLE.

As shown in Table 7, among married children under 40, the proportion of those who received land from their parents tends to increase with parents' land endowment—except in village K. Table 7 also shows a more obvious positive relationship between OLE and the average size of land received by children, though the link is very weak in S.

**Table 7** Receipt of Farmland from Parents by Married Children Aged below 40

OLE (hectares)	Number of Children under the Category			Proportion of Those Receiving Farmland from Parents (%)			Average Area of Farmland Received from Parents (hectares)		
	S	K	Y	S	K	Y	S	K	Y
0 < <0.2	(58)	(16)	(11)	81.0	56.3	54.5	0.20	0.26	0.27
0.2 ≤ <0.4	(115)	(59)	(31)	76.5	86.4	77.4	0.22	0.26	0.39
0.4 ≤ <0.6	(23)	(19)	(33)	95.7	63.2	87.9	0.26	0.40	0.59
0.6 ≤ <0.8	(16)	(22)	(25)	100.0	86.4	96.0	0.28	0.39	0.70
0.8 ≤ <1.0	(0)	(11)	(13)	N.A.	63.6	100.0	N.A.	0.79	0.85
1.0 ≤	(5)	(26)	(54)	100.0	73.1	94.4	0.26	0.84	1.12

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Note: N.A. indicates no children in the category.

14) Though the size of land plot can have an effect on parents' land transfer decision, we are unable to explore this factor because of the lack of plot-level data. Nevertheless, the effect of plot size in the surveyed villages is probably negligible because parents can divide a plot up when distributing land to children.

The effect of parents' land endowment on their land transfer practice is presented in the lower part of Table 6 (only for parents who have more than one married child aged below 40), which shows that a larger OLE is associated with higher probability of giving land to all their married children (the fifth column). Among those who gave land to all their married children, around 80 percent gave in equal size if OLE is less than 0.8 hectares. Interestingly, parents with OLE of 0.8 hectares or more are less likely to practice equal division. A possible reason for this is that even if they give a disproportionately larger piece of land to some of their children, they can still afford to give large areas of land to their other offspring because of their rich land endowment situation.

Though Table 6 shows that parents with small land endowment are less likely to give land to all their married children, it is noteworthy that half of the parents with OLE as small as less than 0.2 hectares, still gave land to all their children, and that 80 percent of them divided this land equally. This again suggests the durability of the practice of equal division. Let us now turn to some examples of parents who gave farmland to all their married children even though they owned very little land.

Household No. 150 in Y is headed by a woman. The 60-year-old household head, whose husband is deceased, has five married children. She gave 0.18 hectares of rice field to each child and, as a result, was landless at the time of the survey. The eldest child (son, 29 years old), the second child (daughter, 26 years old), and the fourth child (son, 23 years old) each married a local introduced by their parents. Their partners also received land from their own parents. These children now live in the same commune or the same district and earn a living by farming without migration. The third child (daughter, 24 years old) married a man from Battambang province and also received farmland from her husband's parents. This daughter lives with her mother but had also worked in Thailand with her husband as an agricultural wage laborer in the last 12 months. The fifth child (daughter, 21 years old) married a man she met from another district in the same province. The couple also worked in Thailand as agricultural wage laborers, using the house of the husband's parents as their basic place of residence. The third and the fifth children migrated in the last 12 months as well, but stayed abroad for only one month, probably because of their seasonal agricultural wage laborer job at the destination. Therefore they also need farmland to make a living, and that is probably why their mother gave them land, even though the size of the land distributed is very small. Or, we could infer that equal division is possible thanks to migration opportunities, such that children can make a living even though land given from their parents is very small.

The second example is household No. 43 in S. It is a family of five composed of a couple and their three children. The eldest child (son, 22 years old) had worked in Phnom Penh as a construction worker for 1 month in the last 12 months, and the other two

children (a daughter, 15 years old and a son, 10 years old) still go to school. Even though none of their children are married, the parents have already decided to give 0.15 hectares of farmland and one cow<sup>15)</sup> to each child. This case demonstrates the normative aspect of the equal division of land—parents decide to divide land equally among their children even when it is not clear at all what their children might become and where they might live in the future.

On the other hand, especially when land endowment is small, some parents decide not to give land (at least for the time being) to children who can make a living without land from their parents. Household No. 150 in K is an example. The parents currently own only 0.48 hectares of land. Among their three children (all sons), the first two are married. The parents gave land, albeit small (0.12 hectares), only to the eldest son, aged 38. This son married a woman from the same district when he was 22, and lives in his wife's village (information on whether his wife received land from her parents is not available). His major occupation is farming, though he had also worked in Phnom Penh as a construction worker for 1 month in the last 12 months. The second son (28 years old) married a childhood friend from K. Though he has not received land from his parents, his wife received land from her parents. The couple resided in K at the time of the survey and makes a living by farming without migrating. Their mother (as a respondent of the interview) answered that she would give farmland to all her children in future. However, it is unlikely that land will be given to the second son in the near future because eight years had already passed since he got married—it is unusual in the villages surveyed to give land to children many years after their marriage. Judging from the fact that the second son and his wife can support themselves without labor migration, his wife seems to have received enough farmland from her parents. This is probably why the parents have not given land to the second son so far.

In other cases, parents give land to a limited number of their children even though they have enough land to divide among all their children. A couple in K (household No. 200) have four children, all of whom are married. But the couple gave all their farmland (2.5 hectares) to the eldest child (daughter) and are now landless. This means that their other three children will never receive land from them. The eldest daughter married a relative from the same commune as K. She and her husband currently live in K and make a living by cultivating the land she received from her parents (her husband did not receive land from his parents); they do not engage in labor migration. The second and third children (both sons) found partners from the same district as K and each lives in the village of his wife. While they cultivate land received from their wife's parents,

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15) "Cow" here indicates either male or female and castrated or uncastrated cattle.



they also go to Phnom Penh seasonally to work as construction laborers. The youngest child (daughter) had worked at a garment factory in Phnom Penh before marrying a relative from the same commune as K. She now lives in the village of her husband and makes a living by farming (with land her husband received from his parents) and running a grocery shop. While one possible reason these three children did not receive any land from their parents is that they inherited land from their spouse's parents, we cannot ignore the possibility that their parents gave them a large sum of money as a substitute for land.<sup>16)</sup> This example suggests that children would accept impartible land transfer if they receive a sufficient amount of other assets as a substitute for land. But this also means that ordinary parents who do not have major assets other than land, must divide land among all their children, even if it causes farm fragmentation, if they want to maintain equality among children. In fact, of those children who have not received land from their parents, only a small proportion has received non-land assets, as we shall see in Section VII-2. It is also rare for parents to give financial assets to their children as a substitute for farmland, as in the example above.<sup>17)</sup>

### *V-3 Children's Prospect of Receiving Land in Future*

As mentioned above, married children yet to receive land at the time of the survey stand the chance to receive land in future as long as parents still own enough land. In other words, the prospect of receiving land in future is small if parents' current land endowment is small. Thus the distribution of parents' current land endowment is an indicator of how many children are unlikely to receive land from their parents.

In this subsection, we estimate the proportion of children who are unlikely to receive land from their parents in future, among children yet to receive land at the time of the survey, by the following method.

We assume for simplicity that parents will not buy or sell land in future. Parents own land of size  $T$  (hectares) and have  $N$  children to whom they have not given land. Let  $t$  (hectares) be the size of land parents will give to each child, or "land transfer size." So the number of children to whom parents can give land in future is formed by  $T/t$ . If  $N < T/t$ , parents can give land to all of the  $N$  children, but if  $N > T/t$ , then  $N - T/t$  of their children cannot receive land. By calculating  $N - T/t$  for all households with positive

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16) The amount of money given to each of the three children is 4 million riels, 3 million riels, and 9.5 million riels, respectively. These amounts are comparable with one to two hectares of wet season rice field, as one hectare of wet season rice field in K is priced at 3–5 million riels as of 2009.

17) Of 39 households (couples) with more than one married child aged under 40 and who gave farmland to only some of these children, just 4 gave financial assets exclusively to those children who did not receive any land.

**Table 8** Simulated Proportion (%) of Children Unable to Receive Farmland from Their Parents

Land Transfer Size (hectares)	S	K	Y
0.2	16.5	16.4	23.2
0.4	39.1	28.4	29.9
0.8	63.4	48.4	43.9

Source: Simulation by the author.

Note: Proportion among children (both married and unmarried) under 40 yet to receive land from their parents.

$N$ , we can estimate the proportion of children who are unlikely to receive farmland from their parents in future, among children yet to receive farmland at the time of the survey (including both married and unmarried children but limited to those aged below 40).

Because this is a simulation,  $t$  can take any value, but we run our estimation on  $t=0.2, 0.4$ , and  $0.8$  hectares. This is because these values are close to the average size of land that children received from their parents in S, K, and Y respectively (see Table 5). The proportion of children unlikely to receive land estimated based on  $t=0.2$  can be regarded as the minimum estimate because there are very few cases in which land transfer size is less than  $0.2$  hectares in the villages surveyed. Even in land-scarce village S, such cases account for only 9 percent of land transfer. This suggests that parents avoid dividing land to such a small scale from the standpoint of economic viability.

The simulation results are presented in Table 8. The important point to note is whether the proportion of children not receiving farmland from their parents will increase if the current level of land transfer size is maintained. For village S, under the current transfer size of around  $0.2$  hectares, the simulated proportion is 16 percent, which is slightly lower than the proportion of those who have not received land from their parents among married children under 40 (19 percent). Therefore, as long as parents maintain the current level of transfer size, though it is already the minimum level, the proportion of children not receiving land will not increase in the near future. Village K is in the same situation. Under the current transfer size of around  $0.4$  hectares, 28 percent of children will not be able to receive land from their parents. Though the value is high, it is comparable to the current level (29 percent). If land transfer size is reduced to  $0.2$  hectares, the proportion will even decrease to 16 percent.

The situation in Y is different. If parents give their children land up to  $0.8$  hectares, as they have done so far, as much as 44 percent of children will be unable to receive land, which is much higher than the proportion of married children under 40 currently not receiving farmland from their parents (17 percent). Though the proportion of children

not receiving land will be smaller if the transfer size is reduced to as small as 0.2 hectares, the simulated value is still 23 percent, which is higher than even S and K. The high value in Y reflects the fact that a larger proportion of households (parents) in Y are landless.

These results indicate that the proportion of children who do not receive land from their parents could increase to a greater extent in land-rich villages rather than in land-poor villages. In the case of Y, the negative prediction is a result of significant inequality in landholding (there are many landless households). It also suggests that this landholding inequality may increase further in the near future.

## VI Does Migration Experience Matter?

### VI-1 *Relationship between Migration and Land Transfer*

As presented in the previous section, a number of married children have not received farmland from their parents. In this section we examine whether children's lack of access to their parents' land is related to their migration experience. To investigate the effect of migration rigorously, we pay attention to children's labor migration experience before marriage because their migration decision after marriage is highly influenced by whether they receive land from their parents and how much.

Table 9 shows the difference in proportion, among married children aged under 40 who received land from their parents, between those who migrated before marriage and those who did not. According to the table, the proportion is around 30-percentage point lower for those who migrated before marriage, irrespective of the village and the gender of the child. One possible reason is that those with migration experience are on average younger than those without, as migration has become more widespread recently. Being young, many of the children have just got married and have not received land from their parents yet (although they will a few years later). However, even discounting the age factor, we still observe a negative effect of premarital migration experience on land transfer (the lower part of Table 9).

We should also take note of the effect of land endowment. Children of parents with small land endowment would be more likely to migrate before marriage to supplement family income; such children would be less likely to receive land from their parents simply because their parents do not have much land. However, Table 10 shows that, even after taking into account parents' land endowment measured by OLE, in S and K villages, children with premarital migration experience are still less likely to receive land from their parents. In Y, on the other hand, migration experience does not cause a significant difference. The exact reason is not known, but it might be because labor migra-

**Table 9** Effect of Premarital Migration Experience on Receiving Farmland from Parents

	(N)	Children Receiving Farmland from Parents (%)		Difference	Sig.
		With Migration Experience	Without Migration Experience		
Whole	(576)	55.7	86.8	-31.1	***
Gender					
Female	(308)	51.9	88.7	-36.8	***
Male	(268)	59.3	84.5	-25.2	***
Village					
S	(227)	61.0	92.4	-31.4	***
K	(172)	46.2	81.7	-35.5	***
Y	(177)	58.3	85.6	-27.3	***
Age					
15-19	(13)	60.0	62.5	-2.5	
20-24	(137)	51.9	83.1	-31.3	***
25-29	(196)	49.2	86.7	-37.5	***
30-34	(121)	77.3	87.9	-10.6	
35-39	(109)	62.5	91.4	-28.9	***

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: Data for married children under 40.

\*\*\* indicates the difference is statistically significant at 1% level (chi-square test).

**Table 10** Proportion of Married Children under 40 Receiving Farmland from Parents by Premarital Migration Experience (%)

OLE (hectares)	S		K		Y	
	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM
0 < <0.2	55.0 (20)	94.7 (38)	0.0 (5)	81.8 (11)	N.A. (0)	54.5 (11)
0.2 ≤ <0.4	53.5 (43)	90.3 (72)	73.7 (19)	92.5 (40)	75.0 (4)	72.7 (22)
0.4 ≤ <0.6	90.9 (11)	100.0 (12)	20.0 (5)	78.6 (14)	83.3 (6)	88.9 (27)
0.6 ≤	100.0 (2)	100.0 (19)	64.3 (14)	80.0 (45)	100.0 (5)	95.3 (86)

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: "M" and "NM" respectively indicate those who have premarital migration experience and those who do not. Figures in the parentheses indicate the total number of children under the category.

"N.A." indicates "not applicable."

tion from Y is a more recent phenomena and the rate of migration in Y is lower than in S and K. The difference between Y and the other two villages suggests that premarital migration experience begins to exert an influence on parents' land transfer decision when migration becomes very common among young people.

Why does migration experience deter land transfer? One factor that links land transfer to migration experience is children's postmarital place of residence. As argued in Section II, some of the children who migrated when they were single continue to live

at the migration destination even after they get married. In addition, if migrating children marry migrants from other regions whom they met at their migration destination, they might settle in the home province of their spouse. Parents would then withhold land from children who leave their home province because they cannot (and do not need to) cultivate land in the village.

Therefore, in the following subsection, we examine whether children's premarital migration experience leads to provincial exogamy (marriage with a person from a province other than the home province) and residency in another province. We define place of residence by whether children live in their home province or another province, because it is generally very difficult to cultivate land in the home village while living in another province. This is not the case for children living in other districts of the same province, as districts are close by in some cases.<sup>18)</sup> In fact some children living in others districts of the home province cultivate their land in their village of origin. Distinction in the place of residence by province leads to distinction between provincial exogamy and provincial endogamy (marriage with a person from their home province) simply because provincial exogamy would be more likely to result in residency in another province (= the place of origin of their spouse).

#### VI-2 *Premarital Migration Experience, Marriage, and Postmarital Residency*

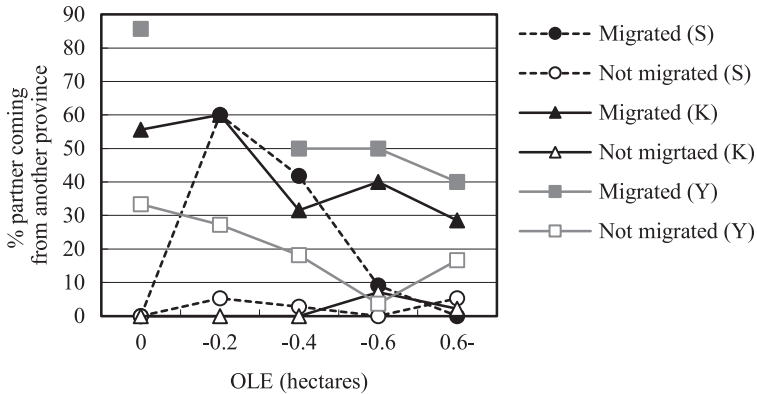
Fig. 2 illustrates the relationship between premarital migration experience and the prevalence of provincial exogamy, with controlling for parents' land endowment (OLE). This figure indicates that, in all three villages, those with migration experience before marriage are more likely to marry a person from a province other than their home province. Interestingly, parents' land endowment is also associated negatively with the prevalence of provincial exogamy, except for those without premarital migration experience in S and K.

Among the cases of provincial exogamy, some couples were matched through inter-provincial kin ties. Such matching is not unusual, especially in Y, because there are many villagers who originate from Takeo or Kampot province, as mentioned above. People living in neighboring provinces may also come to know each other from interactions in daily life.<sup>19)</sup>

Nevertheless, the reason why those who have premarital migration experience are

18) Kampong Leav district, which is very close to village K (in Prey Ro district), is such a case. It would have been preferable to measure the remoteness of residency by calculating the distance from the home village, but the necessary information was not available.

19) For example, many villagers from Y paired up with people from Battambang province through such interactions.

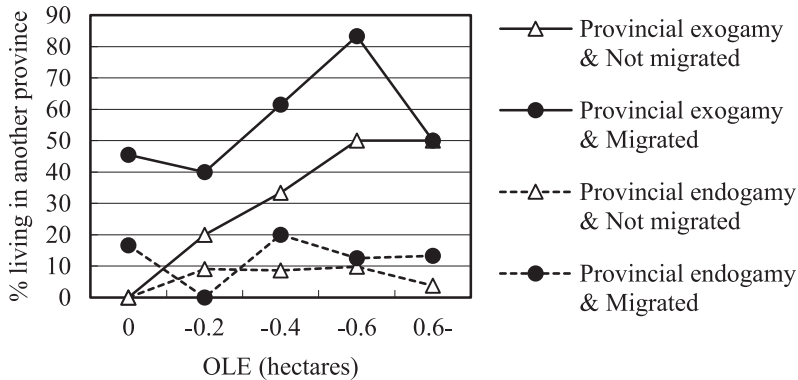


**Fig. 2** Prevalence of Province Exogamy among Married Children under 40  
 Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

more likely to marry with a person from another province is that they met their partner at the migration destination. We asked parents how their children aged below 40 got to know their partner and found that out of 158 children with premarital migration experience, 56 percent married a person they met at the migration destination, 75 percent of whom are from other provinces. By comparison, among 415 children with no premarital migration experience, there are 33 cases of provincial exogamy, but in 24 of them (73 percent), the couples met at the time of engagement (in marriages arranged by parents), or they already knew each other as they are relatives.

Next, we examine the relationship between migration experience and the current place of residence of married children. Children’s residency is not an unambiguous concept if we take account of labor migration. In this paper, even if a child works in a remote place (such as Phnom Penh) for most of the year, his/her home village is regarded as the place of residence as long as he/she has a house in the village or is still considered as a member of the household by the household head (=the parent).

Fig. 3 shows the relationship between premarital migration experience, the origin of the spouse, and the current place of residence of married children aged under 40, with controlling for parents’ land endowment. The data is the total of the three villages because some categories have too few samples if we were to divide the data by village. This figure indicates that even if children experienced migration before marriage, only a very small fraction of them live in another province after marriage if they are married to a person from their home province (“Provincial endogamy & Migrated”). It also demonstrates that while children married to a person from another province (“Provincial exogamy”) are more likely to live in another province, such a tendency is stronger for



**Fig. 3** Prevalence of Residency in Another Province among Married Children under 40  
Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

those who have premarital migration experience.<sup>20)</sup> Furthermore, out of 29 children who married a person from another province after experiencing migration and who currently live in another province, 23 live in the home province of their partner.

In summary, children's premarital migration experiences promote provincial exogamy by providing young migrants with opportunities to meet migrants from various provinces. This provincial exogamy in turn increases the number of children who do not return to their home village but move to the place of origin of their spouse in another province.

### VI-3 *Effect of Migration Experience on Land Transfer*

Finally, we examine whether and how provincial exogamy and residency in another province promoted by premarital migration experience affects land transfer from parents to their children. Before presenting the compiled data, we give examples of children who apparently do not receive land because of their premarital migration experience, so as to understand concretely how the migration experience can affect intergenerational land transfer.

The eldest son (37 years old) of a couple in Y (household No. 164) is an example of a child who did not receive land probably because he can make a living at the migration destination. The couple has nine children, six of whom are married (one of them is divorced). They gave 0.27 hectares of land to all six of these married offspring, except

20) Incidentally, the prevalence of the residency in another province tends to increase with OLE for the cases of provincial exogamy. This is because a large portion of children marrying under provincial exogamy are from land-rich village Y.

the eldest son, who was also the only one out of the six to have migrated before marriage. He was employed in waste materials collection in Phnom Penh,<sup>21)</sup> and at the age of 27, he married a woman who also did the same job in Phnom Penh. In fact, both husband and wife are from the same district and have known each other since they were children. Neither husband nor wife has received farmland from their parents and both continue to make a living by collecting disused articles in Phnom Penh. Apparently, this is not because his parents do not have much land; in fact they still have 1.5 hectares of rice field. When asked about their land transfer plans to their children in the future, the parents responded that they would not give land to children who lived in a remote place. In other words, the eldest son would receive land if he returned to the village, which is unlikely to happen as he can make a living, albeit a difficult one, in Phnom Penh.

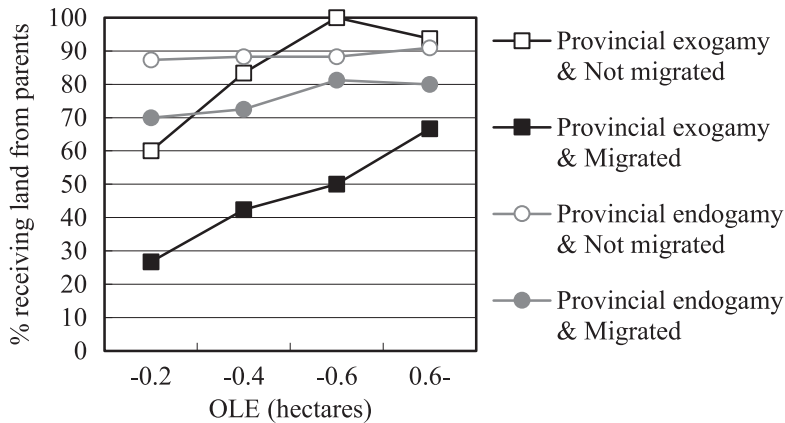
The second example (household No. 122 in S) is a case in which children married a person from another province whom they met at the migration destination, then moved to the place of origin of their partner after marriage. The couple has nine children, five of whom are married. Among these five married children, only the first child, a son, has received land (0.18 hectares) from his parents, with the remaining 0.8 hectares of land being cultivated by the parents. The eldest son migrated to Phnom Penh to work but married a childhood friend from S (who also migrated to Phnom Penh). Though his wife also received land from her parents and the couple lives with the husband's parents (household No. 122), both of them also migrated to Phnom Penh to work. Of the other four married children, three sons migrated to Phnom Penh or Siem Reap when they were single and all married someone from another province whom they met at the migration destination. The three sons have not received land from their parents as mentioned above and currently live in Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, and Siem Reap provinces respectively, which are probably the place of origin of their wives. Though information on whether their wives received land from their parents is unavailable, the three sons all engage in farming in their place of residence. Another married child (daughter) had worked at a garment factory in Phnom Penh before marriage and settled down with a man from another province whom she met in Phnom Penh. Her husband had worked at an NGO in Phnom Penh and has also not received land from his parents. The couple continues to work at the same jobs in Phnom Penh as before their marriage.

These examples demonstrate that premarital migration experience of children lead to settlement in another province such as the migration destination or the place of origin of their spouse, and that such children are less likely to receive land from their parents.

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21) This involves collecting waste such as cans, bottles, and paper by cart around the city to sell to junk dealers.





**Fig. 4** Effect of Migration Experience and Province Exogamy on Land Transfer

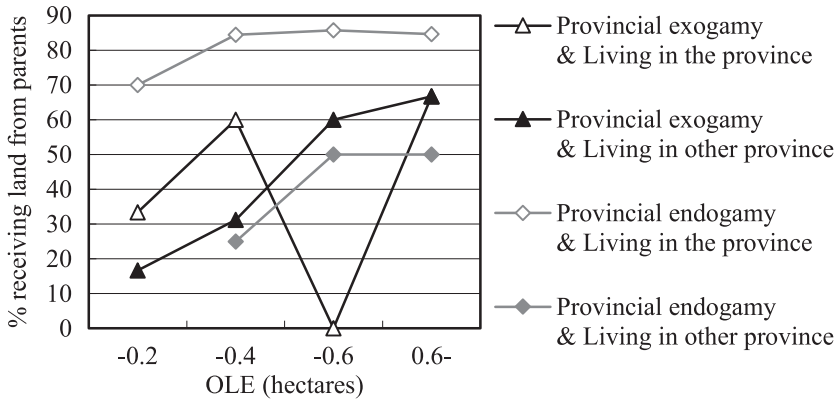
Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Note: Excluding those with parents with OLE=0.

However, there is another possibility that children move to another province precisely because they cannot receive land from their parents. In other words, in some cases, children decide where they settle subsequent to marriage, based on whether they will receive land or not from their parents. With this possibility in mind, I merely confirm here that the lack of land transfer from parents to children is closely associated with children's moving out of the home province, which is promoted by their premarital migration experience.

To ascertain whether the above examples are exceptions or the norm, we examine the data of our sample as a whole. Fig. 4 illustrates the relationship between migration experience of married children aged under 40, the place of origin of their partner, and land transfer from parents, with controlling for land endowment of parents. The following is demonstrated. First, marrying a person from another province (provincial exogamy) does not have a great effect on the probability of land transfer for children with no premarital migration experience, but it does have a large impact for children with migration experience, especially among those whose parents' land endowment is small. Second, while the negative effect of migration experience is found even among children married with a person from their home province, its effect is much greater among children married with a person from another province. In conclusion, provincial exogamy after migration experience is negatively associated with land transfer from parents, especially when parents' land endowment is small.

The data presented in Fig. 4 does not, however, take account of the effect of the place of residence. As argued above, if provincial exogamy tends to lead to residency in



**Fig. 5** Effect of Province Exogamy and Place of Residence on Land Transfer for Children with Premarital Migration Experience

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Note: Excluding those with parents with OLE=0.

other provinces, the effect of the marital partner’s place of origin demonstrated by Fig. 4 may be superfluous and merely reflect the effect of the place of residence.

To check whether this is the case, we prepared Fig. 5, showing the relationship between place of origin of spouse, the current place of residence, and land transfer from parents for married children under the age of 40 with premarital migration experience. Examining the findings, especially the category of  $OLE < 0.6$  because the samples in the  $OLE \geq 0.6$  categories are scarce,<sup>22)</sup> we notice the following points. First, while children living in other provinces are less likely to receive land from their parents, among these children, there is no considerable difference depending on the place of origin of spouse. In other words, irrespective of the place of origin of spouse, those who live in other provinces are less likely to receive land from their parents. This indicates that it is the place of residence rather than the place of origin of spouse that greatly affects the land transfer decision.

Living in another province need not necessarily deter land transfer if the renting out of land were possible. In fact, land rental exists in the surveyed villages, even if it is not widely prevalent, as 11 percent of sample households rent farmland from other households. In addition, migration is one of the major reasons prompting landowners to rent out their land, accounting for 11 out of 66 cases of rental of farmland. Therefore, the observed negative association between residency in another province and land transfer by parents suggests that the renting-out of land is not a preferred option for farmers in

22) These categories include only a few cases each.

the surveyed villages for some reasons, though examining the validity of this supposition is beyond the scope of this study.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, it is also highly likely that some of the children who moved out to another province did so precisely because they did not expect to receive land from their parents. In such a case, the possibility of land rental in their home village is irrelevant to their decision.

Second, among children who live in their home province, those who married a person from another province are less likely to receive land from their parents compared with those who married a person from their home province. If all land-endowment groups are combined, while 77 percent of the latter received land, only 38 percent of the former have been given land. There are 18 such children in the sample. It seems that some of them have yet to receive land because they got married very recently, but the majority of them are children of land-poor parents: among the 18 children, 6 are children of landless parents and the other 6 are children of parents with OLE of less than 0.2 hectares (though not zero). Household No. 1 of K is an example. The parents of this household own only 0.3 hectares of farmland, though they also rent land from another household. Among their five children, the first three (all daughters) are married but have not received any land from their parents. These three daughters had migrated before marriage and had met their spouses, who were also from other provinces, at the migration destination. The eldest daughter worked at a garment factory in Phnom Penh. While working in the capital, she met her future husband, who was a monk at that time, and married him in 2007. The second and the third daughters went to Koh Kong province to work in fishery-related jobs. The second daughter still lives in Koh Kong, after getting married in 2004 to someone she met there and who is probably from Koh Kong. The third daughter got married in 2007 to a man who had left his own province to work in fishery in Koh Kong. Their husbands have not received land from their parents either. Currently the eldest and the third daughters, as well as their husbands, live with their parents in K without migrating to other places, and help the parents with farming (and supposedly also engaging in agricultural wage labor in the village).

What does this mean? One possible inference is that children who cannot expect to receive land from their parents, who have small land endowment, try to find their marital partner at their migration destination. This is supported by the findings of Yagura (2012) that among young unmarried migrant workers in Phnom Penh, those who do not expect to receive land from their parents are more likely to hope to marry someone they meet in Phnom Penh, rather than someone from their place of origin. This finding is also consistent with the finding of this paper that among children with premarital migration experience, the smaller the land endowment of parents, the higher the prevalence of

provincial exogamy (Fig. 2).

Yagura (*ibid.*) proposes two possible reasons why the availability of farmland from parents affects marital partner selection. First, those who do not have farmland feel handicapped in their search for a potential partner in their locality because they are regarded as less desirable a marital partner (at least from the economic standpoint); therefore they have to find their partner at their migration destination. This choice can produce an economically better outcome if the partner comes from a more affluent region than their own place of origin; in such a case, their living conditions can be improved by relocating to the partner's place of origin.

Second, if a child does not have farmland in his/her home village and thus does not engage in farming, marrying a local is of lesser importance, economically speaking. Farming often requires support from family members (parents and sibling), thus if one engages in farming in one's place of origin, it is to one's advantage to marry with a local because support from the spouse's family is also easily available.<sup>23)</sup> There is no such advantage in marrying with a local if one does not engage in farming.

## VII Is Lack of Land Transfer Compensated for?

### VII-1 *Land Transfer from Spouse's Parents*

Even if a child does not receive land from his/her own parents, he/she can still expect that his/her spouse be given land from his/her parents because both sons and daughters usually receive farmland from their parents, as is evident from Table 5. One might also suppose that parents would give more land to their child if the spouse of their child does not receive land from his/her parents.

What happens in reality is the opposite. Among married children aged under 40, the proportion of those who received land from the spouse's parents<sup>24)</sup> is 89 percent for those receiving land from their own parents, but only 52 percent for those who do not receive land from their own parents (the difference is statistically significant at 1 percent level). Such differences are present even if the sample is divided according to village, age, gender, place of residence, and year of the marriage of children.

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23) According to the data collected through the survey for this study, parents tend to help their children in farming if the child lives in the home village, irrespective of the gender of the child. From the perspective of a married couple, this means they can count on the help of both sets of parents (the husband's and the wife's) if their parents live in the same village.

24) In the Cambodian context, parents give land to their own child, not to the couple. But in this paper, I use statements such as "children received land from their spouse's parents" for simplicity.

**Table 11** Land Inheritance by Spouses of Married Children

Premarital Migration Experience	Marital Arrangement	Receiving Farmland from Their Own Parents		Sig. [C–D]
		Yes [C]	No [D]	
Not Migrated	Province Endogamy [A]	93.0 (328)	61.2 (49)	***
	Province Exogamy [B] Sig. [A-B]	59.3 (27) ***	60.0 (5)	
Migrated	Province Endogamy [A]	87.1 (62)	54.2 (24)	***
	Province Exogamy [B] Sig. [A-B]	72.0 (25) *	37.8 (37)	***

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: Figures indicate the proportion (%) of married children under 40 whose spouse received farmland from his/her parents. Figures in parentheses indicate the number of children under the category.

“Sig.” indicates whether the difference between the categories is significant.

\* and \*\*\* respectively signify the significance level of 10% and 1%.

This gap is not caused by a bias in the distribution of parents’ occupations. If parents engaging in non-farm activities as their major occupation tend to marry their children off to children from other non-farming family, parents of both the groom and the bride would not give land to their child as they do not have land, or land is not important for the newly-wed couple who will engage in non-farm activities like their parents. In reality, however, such couples account for only 7 percent of couples who have not received land from either the husband’s or wife’s parents. Rather, the positive association between land transfer from the husband’s parents and the wife’s parents implies that children who are unable to receive land from their parents are less likely to be chosen as a partner by those who can expect land from their parents. In short, “positive assortative matching” takes place in the three villages.<sup>25)</sup>

In fact, married children aged under 40 who have not received land from either their own parents or their spouse’s parents constitute a very small minority: they account for only 9.8 percent of married children under 40, while 70.9 percent received land from both their own parents and their spouse’s parents (the rest received land either from their own parents or their spouse’s parents). But these compositions differ according to premarital migration experience and the place of origin of spouse, as presented in Table 11. This table reveals the following two points. First, even if they receive land from their own parents, children married to a person from another province are less likely to receive land from their spouse’s parents, regardless of their premarital migration experience (93.0 vs. 59.3; 87.1 vs. 72.0). This is probably because provincial exogamy tends to lead

25) Existence of the positive assortative matching in the surveyed villages is more rigorously examined by Yagura (2015). (This note is added after the acceptance of the present paper.)

to settlement in another province on the part of their spouse.

Second, of children with premarital migration experience and a spouse originating from another province (most of them meet their partner at the migration destination), only 38 percent received land from their spouse's parents if they have not received land from their own parents. This makes sense if the children marry a person they had met at the migration destination, for the very reason that they did not expect to receive land from their parents, as argued above. Because the situation of their partner is similar (otherwise he/she would not consider searching for a mate at the migration destination), couples formed at migration destinations are less likely to receive land from either the husband's parents or the wife's parents.

In summary, the data presented above clearly indicate that for children not receiving land from their parents, their spouses are also unlikely to receive land from their parents, and that such a tendency is especially evident among couples who meet at migration destinations.

#### VII-2 *Transfer of Non-land Assets*

Children who do not receive land from their parents need not face great difficulty in making a living if they were to receive other assets in lieu. In the villages surveyed, major non-land assets given by parents to their children include draft animal (cattle and buffalo) and financial assets (cash and gold). Though we do not have information regarding the transfer of such non-land assets from the spouse's parents, we collected data on whether and how household heads and their spouse (as parents) gave non-land assets to their children.

Paradoxically, however, the data demonstrate that most children who did not receive land from their parents did not get non-land assets either. While the proportion of children receiving draft animals is 60 percent for those receiving land, the proportion is only 15 percent for those not receiving land. Similarly, while 29 percent of those who received land also received financial assets, only 18 percent of those not receiving land were given financial assets.

Migration experience is also associated with the transfer of non-land assets. As shown in Table 12, the likelihood of receiving non-land assets is especially small for those who have premarital migration experience and who did not receive land from their parents. This is probably because parents of these children are poor in the first place (that is why their children must migrate to support their family) and thus do not have many assets to bestow on their children. Whatever the reason, the data suggest that a large proportion of children not receiving land from their parents, especially those with premarital migration experience, cannot aspire to receive other assets from their

**Table 12** Transfer of Non-land Assets to Married Children

Premarital Migration Experience	Receiving Farmland from Own Parents	(N)	Receiving Assets (%)	
			Draft Animal	Financial Assets*
Not Migrated	Yes	(362)	62.4	28.2
	No	(55)	27.3	27.3
Migrated	Yes	(88)	47.7	31.8
	No	(70)	5.7	11.4

Source: Field survey by the author in 2009.

Notes: Figures indicate the proportion of married children aged under 40 who received the respective assets from parents.

\* Financial assets include cash (riel or USD) and gold.

parents and are therefore forced to start their married life under difficult economic conditions.

## VIII Concluding Remarks

As is evident from parents' plans and actual land transfer, equal division among all children is the most favored practice in the villages surveyed, despite the intensifying scarcity of land and increased labor migration in recent years. This implies that there will be further farm fragmentation in the villages surveyed. At the same time, however, parents with very small land endowment are unable to divide land equally among all their children, and some of them choose not to give land to children who can make a living without land. Though this situation leads us to expect an increase in the proportion of children unable to receive land from their parents in the near future, the data also suggest that the increase would not be very dramatic.

The recent increase in migration opportunities helps parents to maintain equal division to a certain extent, by enabling children to make their living with only a small piece of land. Partly for that reason, expanding migration opportunity has not caused fundamental changes in land transfer practices, but it has indeed affected intergenerational land transfer. Especially in villages S and K, where youth labor migration has been widespread, children with premarital migration experience are less likely to receive land from their parents even after controlling for parents' land endowment. Premarital migration experience of children is negatively associated with land transfer, especially when children settle in the migration destination or when they marry a person from another province whom they met at the migration destination, then move to their partner's place of origin.

On the other hand, children who migrated before marriage and then married a person

from another province—mostly with partners encountered at the migration destination—are less likely to receive land from their parents, even if they live in their home province after marriage. This indicates that children who had little expectation of receiving land from their parents try to find their partner at the migration destination.

Given this perspective, the argument that expansion of labor migration opportunities increases the number of children not receiving land is not very accurate. A more realistic description of the current situation of the villages surveyed is that, taking advantage of labor migration experience, children with little prospect of receiving land from their land-poor parents, choose to leave their home province and find means to make a living without land. To put it from a different perspective, as long as parents have enough land, their children are inclined to settle in their home province even if they migrated when they were single; such inclination on the part of the children also leads their land-rich parents to give land to all their children.

The contrast between land-poor families and land-rich families—in the emigration of children of land-poor families and the division of land among children of land-rich families—is very similar to the situation in a rural village in Tokugawa Japan outlined by Hayami (1983).<sup>26)</sup> Hayami argued that different responses to changes in economic conditions between the classes (defined by the size of landholding) led to inter-class mobility. Similar changes can happen in the long run in the Cambodian villages surveyed. That is, the above-mentioned differences between classes in land transfer practice and children's behavior imply that increase in migration opportunities can eventually reduce landholding inequality among households within a village by the following mechanism. Further fragmentation of smaller farms would be avoided as parents choose to give land only to a limited number of their children, made possible by the expansion of migration opportunities. In addition, because children who do not receive land tend to move out of the village, increase in landless households in the village would be contained.<sup>27)</sup> On the other hand, large-scale landholders will experience farm fragmentation as they continue to divide land among all their children, and the landholding of their offspring will get smaller and smaller.

The decrease in inequality does not necessarily imply improvement in livelihood for

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26) According to Hayami (1983), contrary to the stereotype of the Japanese family system, diverse patterns of land inheritance practice, including partible inheritance, existed in the Tokugawa era-village that he studied.

27) This prediction does not necessarily contradict with the existence of landless households in the surveyed villages. In fact, in accordance with this prediction, the proportion of landless households is lower for younger generations than for older generations (4.4 percent for households whose heads are in their twenties or thirties and 11.7 percent for households whose heads are in their forties, fifties, or sixties).



the lower economic stratum. As presented in Section VII, most of the children who did not receive land from their parents are in difficult economic conditions, as they do not receive other assets and their spouses are also less likely to receive land from their parents. This situation also implies positive assortative matching exists in marital partner selection in the villages surveyed, which may increase economic inequality among households.

Though increasing migration opportunities can have a large impact on land distribution or economic inequality among households in a village, as discussed above, whether, how, and to what extent that actually happens or will happen are beyond the scope of this paper and require future research. To tackle these questions, well-planned research with a long-term perspective is needed to collect detailed longitudinal data at the household as well as individual level in specific villages.

Another issue that this paper does not address is family conflict that may arise due to unequal division of land among children. With unequal division of land, children who receive neither land nor financial compensation from their parents may feel dissatisfied. Such dissatisfaction may cause a rift within the family, which can have a negative socio-economic impact on rural households and society. Our data is insufficient to examine this issue and further research is required.

Accepted: September 24, 2012

### Acknowledgment

This study was supported by KAKENHI [Grant-in-Aid for Young Scientists (B) (20780168)]. I am indebted to Mr. Dork Vuthy from the Royal University of Phnom Penh and the research assistants for preparing and conducting the field survey. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to people of the surveyed villages for cooperating with our survey.

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# The Establishment of the National Language in Twentieth-Century Cambodia: Debates on Orthography and Coinage

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This paper explores the process in which an ethnic Khmer language became the national one in Cambodia, through a discussion of activities and debates concerned with orthography and coinage of the modern vocabulary.

The committee for editing a Khmer dictionary established in 1915 consisted of both members who insisted on an etymological style of orthography and those who favored a phonemic style. A Buddhist monk Chuon Nath took the initiative from 1926 on and published the first Khmer-language dictionary in 1938. After the perfection of orthography based on an etymological style in the dictionary, the “Cultural Committee” began to create new vocabularies in 1947. Here again Chuon Nath assumed leadership with his best friend Huot Tat. The Cultural Committee rejected Sanskrit-originated words created in Siam and preferred the Pali language as elements of the modern vocabulary.

Keng Vannsak objected strongly to these activities and claimed that the Khmer language had to exclude as many Sanskrit/Pali-originated words as possible in order to expand primary education. In 1967 the National Assembly recognized Khmer as the teaching language in schools, and a new educational magazine *Khemarayeanakam* [Khmerization] was launched. In the process of editing this magazine, the followers of Keng Vannsak presented another way of coinage that they alleged was much easier, and advocated a new orthography. Even after the civil war, their new orthography continued to be used in education and media. In 2009, however, orthography recurred to the dictionary.

Through a study of the vicissitudes of language policies, we can understand the formation and development of Cambodian cultural nationalism. By the early 1960s, Buddhist monks were attempting to differentiate Cambodian modern vocabulary from Thai. Thereafter advocates of Khmerization, who no longer learned the Thai language, aimed at the “purification” and “simplification” of the Khmer language.

**Keywords:** national language, the Khmer language, orthography, coined words, loanwords, the Cultural Committee, Khmerization

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## Introduction

Article No. 2 of the first Cambodian Constitution promulgated by the Royal Government on May 6, 1947 provided that Cambodian was the official language (Jennar 1995, 37).<sup>1)</sup> The People's Republic of Kampuchea, which came into power after overthrowing the Pol Pot regime in 1979, amended the Constitution in order to abandon socialism in 1989 and stipulated that the official language and script was Khmer. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia in force, which was adopted on September 24, 1993 after the election supervised by UNTAC, prescribes Khmer as the official language and script (Huot Vutthy ca. 1998; Jennar 1995). Since ethnic Khmers allegedly make up about 90 percent of the Cambodian nationals,<sup>2)</sup> it seems natural that the Khmer language has been chosen as the official language and functions as the national one.

So political is the enactment of a national language, however, that many case studies have explored its significance for nation-building. For example, several languages in France regarded as “patois” or dialects have been oppressed since the French Revolution. Many books have also been published since the late 1990s addressing the relationship between the establishment of the national language and nationalism in modern Japan.<sup>3)</sup> In the same way, recent works on mainland Southeast Asia are searching for methods to combine sociolinguistic and nationalism studies.<sup>4)</sup>

Meanwhile, Cambodian studies have failed to amass knowledge on this issue. Scrutinizing magazines and newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s in her PhD dissertation and book, Penny Edwards (1999; 2007) refers to the first Khmer dictionary, mostly edited by a Buddhist monk named Chuon Nath (Edwards 2007, 249), and often mentions the establishment of the national language in colonial Cambodia. But the colonial period did not see the complete development of the national language, because the coinage of new

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1) Archives Nationales du Cambodge (hereafter ANC) DC 107 រដ្ឋធម្មនុញ្ញប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ca. 1947.

2) The national census of 2008 asked Cambodian residents about their mother tongues rather than their ethnicity, which was deemed too sensitive for some minority groups. Ninety six percent of the population declared that their native language was Khmer. The government and public media have appropriated this result to claim that a large portion of Cambodian nationals consists of ethnic Khmers (Schliesinger 2011, 183). This episode reveals that the perception of Cambodia as a multi-ethnic country is still weak. In the middle of the 1950s, ethnic minorities mostly living in the mountainous regions and Islamic Cham people were integrated into “we Khmer” and were called “Khmer *loe* (upper Khmer)” and “Khmer Islam” respectively, while Vietnamese and Chinese have been excluded as “outsiders” and “others” (Edwards 1996, 55; Mohamad Zain Bin Musa 2001, 2; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996, 19).

3) For instance, Kawamura (1994), Komori (2000), Koyasu (2003), Lee (1996), Mashiko (2003), Osa (1998), Sakai (1996), Shi (2005), and Yasuda (1997).

4) Imai (1997; 2001) and Iwatsuki (1995; 1999; 2005) on Vietnam; Driller (1991) and Tanaka (2003) on the Thai case; and Ivarsson (2008), Kikuchi (1997), and Yano (2008; 2013) on Laos, are examples.

vocabularies, which fill out a modern language, was carried out during the transition to and after the achievement of independence.

Khin Sok's works (1999a; 1999b) are one of the few studies on language policies in independent Cambodia. He mainly discusses Khmerization from the middle of the 1960s. His article (1999a) is noteworthy for its presentation of a memorandum written by a participant of the Khmerization movement. Although he refers to the activities of the Cultural Committee founded before the movement, he is not precise about the founding year of the Committee;<sup>5)</sup> nor does he fully analyze the Committee's coinage and its etymology.

While the papers concerned with socialist jargons after the Pol Pot regime can also be regarded as sociolinguistic studies on Cambodia (Mikami 1998; Picq 1984), coinage during the decisive period from the last years of colonization to the 1960s has to be revisited to elucidate the process by which an ethnic language became the Cambodian national one. In the first chapter, therefore, this paper traces the path to the publication of the first Khmer dictionary, which established an etymological style of orthography. Secondly, the membership and activities of the Cultural Committee are discussed to analyze coinage of modern vocabularies from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Finally, introducing some opinions on and objections to the orthography and coinage accomplished chiefly by the Buddhist monks, we try to shed light on the meandering road the Cambodian national language has followed to date.

## I Compilation of the Khmer Dictionary

Mainland Southeast Asian languages, of which scripts are derived from Indian civilization, have two options of orthography: etymological style spelling the silent letter(s) at the end of a word, and phonemic style, which tries to conform the spelling of a word as closely as possible to its pronunciation. While Thailand selected the former and Laos the latter, Book One of the Khmer dictionary brought out in 1938 settled the dispute from the early twentieth century as to which style Cambodia would choose. The preface of the fifth version of the dictionary by Chuon Nath (1967) and its review in the *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* by George Coédès (1938) introduce the debates and disagreement among the members of the committee for editing the dictionary. This section refers as well to the primary sources preserved at the National Archives of Cambodia, and

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5) Khin Sok (1999a, 298; 1999b, 40–41) quotes François Martini's article in which the founding year of the Committee is stated as 1946, but as described below, the Committee was actually established in 1945 for the first time and became active after its reestablishment in 1947.

surveys the process of concluding orthography.

Although the spelling of the Khmer letters in the nineteenth century tended toward etymological style to a certain extent, Sanskrit- and Pali-originated words did not always follow etymology, and those from old Khmer sometimes had a few kinds of spelling. For instance, the entry words in the *Khmer-French Dictionary* edited by Etienne Aymonier (1878) show that plural possibilities were not considered as cacography in many cases. Under these circumstances, the *arrêté* No. 72 of the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge (hereafter, RSC) on November 23, 1904 created a committee for revising the Khmer script that included among its members, the chief of the educational bureau, Sangharaja of the Mohanikay sect.<sup>6)</sup> On September 12, 1911 the RSC proclaimed another decree for establishing orthography and developing a Khmer-language typewriter,<sup>7)</sup> but these decrees did not seem to have had much success. It was not until 1915 that the argument over the orthographic issue came to the foreground.

Royal Ordinance No. 67, September 4, 1915 inaugurated the committee for editing a Khmer dictionary, whose members were the War and Education Minister Ponn, Prince Pheanuvong, Prince Sothearos, a famous poet Oknha Sottan Preichea Inn (transcribed as Ukñā Suttantaprijā Ind), etc.<sup>8)</sup> Royal Ordinance No. 88 on November 15, 1919 added new members, and Huot Tat, who had spearheaded the reform of the Mohanikay, the largest sect of Cambodian Buddhism, in collaboration with Chuon Nath, participated in the committee.<sup>9)</sup> This gave rise to discord over etymological or phonemic style.<sup>10)</sup> There are no documents detailing the stances of the committee members, but it is inferred that Buddhist monks who thought it important to learn the Pali language took sides with etymological style. On the other hand, advocates of the phonemic style favored a spelling closer to pronunciation, even if it meant creating a new vowel sign. With confrontation aggravating, the committee reached a deadlock. The members turned to experts of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) such as Louis Finot, but he only gave an equivocal reply that even the phonemic style could express the origins of the words derived from Sanskrit/Pali (Cœdès 1938, 317).

6) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 3(11), November 1904, p. 405.

7) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 10(9), September 1911, pp. 473–474.

8) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 14(9), September 1915, p. 482.

9) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 18(11), November 1919, p. 904.

10) Edwards (2007, 192) relates that the adoption of the Battambang and Siemreap dialects was one of the causes of the conflict. Cœdès (1938, 317–318), however, explains in his book review of the dictionary that it was the selection of the etymological or phonemic style that was problematic. Speaking of the dialects in the northwestern part of Cambodia, as Oknha Inn, who was born in Battambang, where the final consonant /r/ was articulated in those days, participated in the committee, he was able to indicate which words had the final consonant /r/ dropped in the pronunciation of the central plain dialects (*ibid.*, 316).

To break the impasse, Royal Ordinance No. 53 on July 19, 1926 founded a new committee to reexamine orthographic styles proposed by the former committee; Chuon Nath joined this new committee.<sup>11)</sup> The members of this new committee assembled twice on August 24 and September 8 of the same year, and finally determined to adopt the etymological style (*ibid.*, 319–320). Though the minutes of the Council of the Ministers’ assembly indicate that those who preferred the phonemic style did not consent to the decision,<sup>12)</sup> compilation of the dictionary was launched again under the leadership of Chuon Nath. He and Suzanne Karplès, in charge of the Conservatory of the Royal Library and secretary-general of the Buddhist Institute, became members of the committee for editing the dictionary, thanks to Royal Ordinance No. 78 on November 30, 1927.<sup>13)</sup> The Royal Library issued Book One of the Khmer dictionary in July 1938,<sup>14)</sup> and the Buddhist Institute, which merged with the Library on February 8, 1943,<sup>15)</sup> published Book Two by December of the same year<sup>16)</sup> and distributed it from the following month.<sup>17)</sup>

According to the preface to the fifth version, Chuon Nath describes how the spelling of the words handed down from old Khmer were based on the Angkorian inscriptions, and states that Sanskrit- and Pali-originated words should observe etymology and that a new vowel sign suggested by supporters of the phonemic style was rejected (Chuon 1967, kh). This dictionary served as a model of the Khmer alphabet until the Khmerization movement modified orthography, as mentioned below. On July 1, 1970, the head of state issued Edict No. 413, naming it the “dictionary of Samdach Chuon Nath.”<sup>18)</sup>

## II Loanwords between the Khmer and Thai Languages

It is well known that the Khmer and Thai languages have a long history of interaction; the old Khmer vocabulary in the Angkorian period was transmitted to Ayutthaya, and even today the Thai language employs many words borrowed from Khmer. The Khmer

11) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 25(7), July 1926, p. 889.

12) ANC RSC Box No. 2928 (File No. 25338), Extrait du procès-verbal de la 511ème séance plénière du Conseil des Ministres tenue le 28 Octobre 1926 sous la Présidence de Monsieur le Résident Supérieur BAUDOIN.

13) ANC RSC 2928(25338), Ordonnance Royale N° 78, November 30, 1927.

14) ANC RSC 2544(22324), Lettre N° 619 Br du Conservateur de la BR à RSC, July 25, 1938.

15) *Journal Officiel de l’Indochine Française*, 13, February 13, 1943, pp. 423–426.

16) ANC RSC 2552(22348), Activité de l’IB pendant le mois de Décembre 1943, Rapport à Monsieur le RSC (Cabinet), December 30, 1943 (N° 124lib).

17) *Bulletin Administratif du Cambodge*, 43(11), March 16, 1944, p. 512. In Cambodia today, this dictionary is bounded into one volume.

18) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 26(57), July 22, 1970, p. 3057.



language had a function lacking in the Thai language that allows nouns to be created by inserting infixes into verbs. It is without a doubt that Thai words such as /dǎən/ (to walk) and its noun form /damnǎən/ (royal visit) with an infix were derived from the Khmer words /daə/ (to walk) and /dǎmnaə/ (travel).

This flow was gradually reversed. The Khmer language began to borrow many Thai words, and even the Khmer syntax became influenced by Thai in the eighteenth century at the latest (Huffman 1973, 507; Jacob 1993, 42). There are interesting examples of Thai words derived from old Khmer being reimported by the Khmers. When an old Khmer word *trvāc* (to guard), which had been adopted as ตระวจ /truat/ in Thai, reverted to Khmer, it became spelled as ត្រួត /truot/, with the final consonant becoming “t” because “c” at the end of a word is read as /t/ in the Thai language. If this old Khmer word had been conveyed to modern Khmer directly, the spelling would have been ត្រួច /truoc/.<sup>19)</sup>

In addition, Khmer vocabularies representing modern concepts have come under Thai influence. The current letterhead of documents issued by the Royal Government carries these words “The Kingdom of Cambodia” ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា /prəəh riəciənaacak kampuciə/ in the first line, and “Nation, Religion, King” ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ /ciət sasnaa prəəh mǎhaa ksat/ in the second. Since the “Kingdom of Cambodia” was written as ក្រុងកម្ពុជាធិបតី /kroŋ kampuciəthipadəi/ in the colonial period,<sup>20)</sup> it is apparent that the word រាជាណាចក្រ belongs to the modern vocabulary.<sup>21)</sup> This word came from a Thai term ราชอาณาจักร /raatcha ‘aanaacak/ coined by the Siamese king Rama VI when he wanted an equivalent for the English word “kingdom” (Tomita 1997, 1270). From the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, members of the royal family and Buddhist monks in Cambodia were influenced by Siamese culture and its language. When translating modern concepts brought by the French, it is conceivable that they referred to the Thai modern vocabulary.

Nevertheless, whether Cambodian people recognize the Thai origin of such words depends on their education and knowledge of the Thai language. As described below, many modern Cambodian vocabularies are derived mostly from Pali as a result of the Cultural Committee’s activity. One needs to be well versed in these four languages to

19) Its noun form “*tamrvāc*” is also spelled as ต้ารวจ /tamrūt/ in Thai and ធ្ម្រួត /dǎmruot/ in modern Khmer. Michel Antelme (1996) analyzes this mutual influence in detail.

20) Because orthography had not been established yet, an alternative spelling កម្ពុជា was also used.

21) This word had been spelled as រាជណាចក្រ /riəcəə’ ‘aanaacak/, just like in Thai, but it was altered into រាជាណាចក្រ from the late 1960s. In Sanskrit and Pali, the compound of *rāja* and *āṇā* has to be spelled as *rājāṇā*, so someone proficient in these classical languages probably altered the Khmer spelling. This new spelling was reflected on the cover of Vol. 22, No. 76 of the Cambodian official gazette in the Khmer language, published on October 1, 1966, but the old spelling was still used in the main body of this issue.

grasp the similarity and mutual influence between Thai and Khmer. Here it is interesting to point out the resemblance in the interaction between the classical languages in mainland Southeast Asia and (classical) Chinese in East Asia—the latter also served as the source of modern jargons. In South Korea, a committee to purify the national language was established in June 1946 in order to exclude loanwords from Japanese. The committee prohibited many terms of apparently Japanese origin, for example, words that could not be written in Chinese characters or words written in Chinese characters but pronounced in the Japanese way (*kun yomi*). It was, however, difficult to detect metropolitan influence on many modern vocabularies created in Japan because they seemed “Chinese,” and most of them are still used in South Korea (Chung 2003, 237–250). In both East and Southeast Asia, nationalism often causes opinions about cultural influence from neighboring countries to be silenced. The origin of modern words based on classical languages are also often ambiguous, for the classical languages themselves, as well as other cultural elements such as religion, have often spilled over borders. Thus countries that may not have an amicable rapport with each other still find themselves using the same or similar modern terms.

Besides the modern word “kingdom,” King Rama VI also propagated the slogan “Nation, Religion, King” for the purpose of nation-building and state formation in Siam. As far as I know, it first appears in Cambodia in the preface to the Cultural Committee’s serial of word lists carried in the Khmer-language journal *Kambuja Suriya* in 1949. The preface was written by a famous novelist Nhok Thaem (1949, 243), who also published a book entitled *Nation, Religion, King* (1950) one year later. From 1918–30, when he had been ordained as a monk, Nhok Thaem had gone to Siam under the reign of King Rama VI to study. Nevertheless his works mention nothing about Siamese influence concerning this slogan. Owing to the Franco-Thai war in the early 1940s, the more explicitly Cambodian publishing media began to emphasize the differences between Cambodian and Thai cultures, and Siamese cultural influence was played down (Sasagawa 2006, 195–198). Nhok Thaem’s tacitness can be understood in this regard.

The names of the months on the Gregorian calendar too can be regarded as examples of the modern vocabulary. Some months in Khmer are the same as or similar to Thai while others are not. In colonial Cambodia, the Khmer alphabets had been used to write the names of months based on a direct translation from French (*janvier, février, mars*, etc.); the current appellation based on the signs of the zodiac was introduced in the late 1940s. The magazine *Kambuja Suriya* changed the terms on the cover from Vol. 19, No. 5 in May 1947, and the third serial of the word lists by the Cultural Committee proposed the new spellings in Vol. 21, No. 7, July 1949. Table 1 compares them with Thai and shows their etymology.

**Table 1** Comparison of the Names of Months in Thai and Khmer, and Their Etymology

	Thai	Khmer	Comparison	Etymology
January	makkaraa	mɛəʔkaʔraa	T=K	S=P
February	kumphaa	kompheəʔ	T=K	S=P
March	miinaa	miinaa	T=K	S=P
April	meesaa	meesaa	T=K	S=P
May	phruitsaphaa	ʔuʔsaʔphiə	T≠K	T<S, K<P
June	mithunaa	miʔthonaa	T=K	S=P
July	karakkadaa	kakkaʔdaa	T≠K	T<S, K<P
August	sihhaa	səihaa	T≠K	T<S, K<P
September	kanyaa	kaɲnaa	T≠K	T<S, K<P
October	tulaa	toʔlaa	T=K	S=P
November	phruitsacikaa	viccheʔkaa	T≠K	T<S, K<P
December	thanwaa	thnuu	T≈K	S=P

In this table, we should pay attention to differences rather than similarities. Half of the months (January, February, March, April, and October) have the same spelling, and the month December is alike in both languages. However, it is impossible to know whether they are based on Sanskrit or Pali, because these months have the same form in either. On the other hand, May, July, August, September, and November are different in Thai and Khmer; the former is derived from Sanskrit and the latter from Pali. Taking into account the above-mentioned months with the same or similar forms, the Thai names en masse are derived from Sanskrit and Khmer from Pali.

All in all the modern Khmer vocabulary was sometimes affected by Thai, but did not necessarily borrow the Thai equivalents. There are many Cambodian-made modern terms, created by the Cultural Committee.

### III Establishment of the Cultural Committee

Political autonomy stirs up longing for linguistic independence; the Cultural Committee was established to replace loanwords from French with modern Khmer terms. After the metropolis surrendered to the Nazis, French Indochina was subjected to the dual rule of the Vichy government and Japan during World War II. No sooner had the Japanese Army disarmed the French troops did the Kingdom of Kampuchea declare nominal independence on March 12, 1945. The Cultural Committee was created by Royal Ordinance (*Kram*) No. 13, March 24, 1945, with two sections in the committee to deal with national and foreign cultures. This ordinance decreed that Khmer be used as the teaching language from the following academic year, Khmer vocabulary for science and technology

be created, textbooks be edited and published, classics be chosen, foreign master pieces be translated, and foreign culture be diffused.<sup>22)</sup> Simultaneously the Royal Decree (*Kret*) No. 24 appointed members of the Committee (see Table 2). Chap Pin of the Buddhist Institute was named as secretary-general of the first section, dealing with national culture, and Kim Hak, chief of the propaganda bureau in the Ministry of National Education, was installed as chief of the second section for foreign culture.<sup>23)</sup>

Historical upheavals buffeted the Cultural Committee. The short-lived independence of the Kingdom of Kampuchea ended on December 14, 1945 with the defeat of the Japanese and the return of the French. As a result, Royal Ordinance No. 212, August 19, 1946 was issued, retracting the former Ordinance that founded the Cultural Committee, but not before making known to the public the remarkable accomplishments of the Committee.<sup>24)</sup> Although France recovered her dominance in Indochina, a Franco-Cambodian *modus vivendi* allowing for partial autonomy for Cambodia was signed in January 1946. There arose room for the Royal Government of Cambodia to draft language policies. This paved the way for Royal Ordinance No. 383, November 27, 1947 for the establishment of a Commission of National Education, with the Cultural Committee as its first section and the Educational Committee as its second.<sup>25)</sup>

Decree No. 3235 on December 16, 1947 issued by the National Education Minister nominated new Cultural Committee members, different from those in 1945 (Table 2).<sup>26)</sup> The position of president was filled by successive Ministers of National Education, and authority to manage the Committee was seemingly vested to the vice-president. Chuon Nath became vice-president and Huot Tat became a member. Through the 1950s and 1960s, even as other members came and went, the position of vice-president was almost invariably filled by either one of them, presumably because of their language competence.

When Chuon Nath passed away on September 25, 1969, Huot Tat published a memoir entitled *My Best Friend*, which provides detailed information about their experiences studying languages in their adolescence (Huot Tat ca. 1970, 2). From 1911 or so, both of them started to sojourn at Vat Unnalom, the head temple of the Mohanikay sect, and became acquainted with each other. While most Buddhist monks studied the Thai language and went to Siam to study Pali, Chuon Nath and Huot Tat felt it was necessary to study French, given that several decades had elapsed since the beginning of French

22) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 1(2), March 29, 1945, p. 40.

23) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 1(2), March 29, 1945, pp. 47–48.

24) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 2(32), August 15, 1946, p. 783.

25) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 3(42), November 27, 1947, pp. 1228–1229.

26) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 3(44), December 18, 1947, pp. 1292–1293.



Table 2 Members of the Cultural Committee (continued)

Name	Affiliations	1945 0324	1945 0827	1947 1216	1956 0105	1957 0202	1958 0102	1961 0308	1962 0103	1963 0930	1964 0225	1964 0640	1965 0907	1966 0312	1968 0831	1968 0314
		Kret 24	Kret 221	Prakas 3235	Prakas 3	Prakas 368	Prakas 24	Prakas 659	Prakas 28	Prakas 2925	Prakas 640	Prakas 2980	Prakas 1078	Prakas 2460	Prakas 554	Prakas 554
Pen So	school inspector			○												
Chum Tuot	Department of Tourism			○		○										
Svay So	member of the National Assembly			○												
Chau Sau	National Bank				○											
Meas Yuth	Jayavarman VII Museum				○											
Tan Kim Yuon [Huon]	Department of Water Supply and Forests					○										
Chau Seng	teachers college				○											
Pheng Kanthel	Department of hygiene				○											
Ho Tong Lip	School of agriculture					○										
Ouch Venn	not available						○									
Sam Thang	government official						○									
Meas Saem	ex-justice at the Supreme Court							○								
Mau Say	audit						○									
Keng Van Sak	teacher							○								
Khieu Komar	teacher															
Thao Kun	teacher															
Tep Yok	audit															
Eng Soth	president of a court															
Ros Ho	teacher															
Hell Samphar	Association of Khmer Writers															
Meas Chheng	Ministry of Information															
Sien Khandy	<i>Neak Cheanthiyom</i> newspaper															
Aum Leng Eang	teacher															
Khuon Chhieck	technocrat, food and agriculture															
Soeur Kean	president, national radio station															
Dy Rang	Ministry of Religions and school inspector															
Oeur Kim San	Royal University of Fine Arts															

Source: *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, various issues.

Note: A double circle ○: vice-president; single circle ○: members.

colonization. They secretly began to take lessons first from a Khmer teacher, then a French teacher (*ibid.*, 4). In order to understand not only Theravada but also Mahayana Buddhism, they decided to learn Sanskrit, and were taught by an Indian peanut peddler who had knowledge of the language and Devanagari letters and who had come to the temple by chance (*ibid.*, 5).

In 1922 the Pali school at Phnom Penh was reorganized as the Ecole Supérieure de Pali (hereafter, ESP), with the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient being involved in its operation.<sup>27)</sup> Louis Finot visited the capital and informed the authorities about a plan to enroll monks in the EFEO at Hanoi and entrust them with the instruction at the ESP. The National Archives of Cambodia possesses a letter from the RSC second bureau to the Minister of War and Education, requesting for the recommendation of two monks.<sup>28)</sup> According to Huot Tat's memoir, Finot asked the ESP director Thaong to select suitable monks, and the latter proposed Chuon Nath and Huot Tat (*ibid.*, 37–39). From 1922–23 they studied in Hanoi under the French Orientalists; beside Sanskrit and Pali, Victor Goloubew taught Indian Buddhist history, Leonard Arousseau gave lessons on Chinese history, and Finot tutored in old Khmer and the way of reading Angkorian inscriptions (*ibid.*, 47).

According to Chuon Nath and Huot Tat's biographies, in addition to Sanskrit, Pali, French, and old Khmer, they were also able to converse in the Thai and Lao languages.<sup>29)</sup> It is likely that they displayed their language proficiency to the hilt while performing their duties as vice-presidents of the Cultural Committee.

Nhok Thaem was also appointed as a member of the Committee in 1947. He was born on June 22, 1906 in the village of Svay Po in Sangkae district, Battambang province, which belonged then to Siamese territory. He stayed in Siam after his ordainment in 1918, taking and passing the state examinations of the Pali language a few times. After returning to Cambodia in 1930, he participated in the committee for editing the Cambodian version of *Tripitaka*. Eight years later, he renounced priesthood and became the chief editor of *Kambuja Suriya* magazine. His novel *The Rose of Pailin*, published in 1947 when he was secretary-general of the Buddhist Institute, was considered one of the finest works of Cambodian modern literature and was used as a textbook for secondary education from 1958 (Jacob 1996, 76–77; Khing 1993, 54–56). His language ability and literary talent earned him membership in the Cultural Committee.

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27) For the establishment and reorganization of these schools, see Sasagawa (2009, 10–11).

28) ANC RSC 2527 (22262), Lettre N° 10 du [RSC] 2ème Bureau, au Ministre de l'Instruction Publique, February 11, 1922.

29) Anonymous (1966a), Pon (1966), Trinh (1970), etc. are examples of Chuon Nath's biographies, and Anonymous (1966b) and Chea (1966) constitute Huot Tat's biographies.

Besides monks and staff of the Buddhist Institute, a few politicians were also installed as Committee members. Among them, the most renowned is Ieu Koeus, who was well known as president of the National Assembly and a “linguist” due to his book on the Khmer language. Just like Nhok Thaem, he was born in 1905 in a village in Sangkae, Battambang province, that was under Siamese control until 1907. He thus acquired an aptitude for Thai but studied at Lycée Sisowath in Phnom Penh and the commercial school in Hanoi. From 1940, when he was nominated to the colonial Chamber of Representatives of the People, Ieu Koeus began to engage in politics. He became Vice-Minister of Economics in 1945, when Cambodia achieved ostensible “independence” under Japanese military rule. The following year he joined the Democratic Party formed by Prince Sisowath Yuttevong and became its head after the prince’s sudden death on July 17, 1947. In the same year, Ieu Koeus published a book entitled *The Khmer Language*, discussed below. He became President of the National Assembly between 1948 and 1949. On January 14, 1950, he was assassinated by a hand grenade during the party’s convention (Corfield and Summers 2003, 168–169; Ieu 1947, kh–ch). Although he died young, while only in his mid-forties, his book is still in circulation in Cambodia today and he is seen as a “linguist” representative of the transitional period to independence.

By virtue of their careers and/or birthplaces, all the figures described in this section were proficient in the Thai language as well as Sanskrit, Pali, and French. While it was considered as a matter of course for Buddhist monks to learn Thai in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Battambang, which Siam possessed till 1907, afforded opportunities to become familiar with the language, even for the laity. When the Cultural Committee began its work, the influence of and differentiation from the Thai language would become a matter of grave concern for some members.

#### IV Coinage of the Cultural Committee

The *Kambuja Suriya* magazine ran the serials of word lists presented by the Cultural Committee twice: the first from April 1949–May 1951<sup>30)</sup> and the second from January 1961–April 1963. This section analyzes the etymology of these words<sup>31)</sup> and measures the ratio of loanwords from Sanskrit, Pali, Thai, French, and English, in order to discuss the extent to which modern Thai vocabulary influenced Khmer and whether the Com-

30) Vol. 22, No. 6, June 1951 carries an erratum.

31) The analysis of etymology is based on Sakamoto (2001) and Tomita (1997).



mittee itself tried to create modern terms. The first issue on April 1949 was devoted to a comparison between French and Khmer jargons in the constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia promulgated in 1947. Dates of the Committee's meetings to decide on modern Khmer words appeared from the next issue on. Thanks to this dating, it is certain that the word lists were not made by the first Committee established in 1945, but by the second one in 1947.

Tables 3 and 4 represent the etymology of the two serials, and abbreviations in the tables are as follows: K=T indicates that both the etymology and spelling of the Khmer terms adopted by the Committee are the same as their equivalent in Thai;  $K \approx T$  indicates that the spellings are similar to each other. Although these two languages are based on the etymological style of orthography, their spellings are sometimes a little different from the original in Sanskrit or Pali. In the subcategories, S represents Sanskrit, P represents Pali. S+P designates the compounds of these two languages (such as “kingdom” mentioned above).  $K > T > K$  indicates that Khmer reborrowed Thai words originated from old Khmer, and loanwords from Thai to Khmer are designated as  $T > K$ .<sup>32)</sup> When the Committee coined a word different from Thai, it is categorized as  $K \neq T$ , in which K indicates that an old Khmer word has been transmitted; K+S, P is a compound of Khmer and Sanskrit/Pali; F is derived from French; and E from English.

Along with the jargon found in the 1947 constitution, the early issues of the first serial presented vocabulary concerned with administration and law. Khmer modern terms in these domains had become necessary with the arrival of French colonization. Consequently, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the Thai language was a prerequisite among royal family members and Buddhist monks who aspired to be intellectuals, many modern words coined in Siam were borrowed and used. The Cultural Committee did not try to eliminate these Thai-made terms, and the ratio of commonality between the Thai and Khmer modern jargon is fairly high at the outset of the first serial.

From the fourth issue (August 1947), which was dedicated to military parlance, Khmer vocabulary diverged from the Thai equivalent. Just like the name of months in the solar calendar, the Committee preferred Pali to Sanskrit—the number of words derived from Pali in the category  $K \neq T$  are thrice as many as those derived from Sanskrit. While the compounds of Khmer and Sanskrit/Pali (K+S, P) make up the largest portion, Pali was usually chosen as non-Khmer elements of the compounds. These characteristics show a stark contrast to the category  $K = T$ , in which Sanskrit is utilized more frequently than Pali.

32) Though the verb ជួយ /cuoi/ (to help) derived from ជួយ /chùai/ is counted as  $T > K$ , its noun form ជំនួយ /comnuoi/ with an infix is considered to be an original word in Khmer and classified as  $K \neq T$ .

Table 3 Coinage of the Cultural Committee (1)

Vol. (No.)	Year/month	Pages	K=T				K≠T				K	K+S,P	S	P	S=P	T>K	K≠T	S	P	S=P	K≠T	S+P	F	E	Realms
			S	P	S=P	S+P	S	P	S=P	P															
21(4)	1949/04	244-254	4	3	5	2	1	2	3	9	0	0	6	2	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1947 constitution	
21(5)	1949/05	341-344	7	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	12	7	11	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	law, administration	
21(7)	1949/07	508-514	4	2	22	0	0	0	3	5	0	4	12	4	34	5	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	month names, administration	
21(8)	1949/08	582-588	6	2	4	0	1	4	2	1	0	0	16	24	7	13	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	military	
21(9)	1949/09	675-681	9	7	11	1	1	7	5	3	0	0	18	18	8	28	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	administration, industry	
21(10)	1949/10	735-744	4	6	4	3	0	4	4	5	0	0	24	48	8	24	6	10	8	0	0	0	0	education	
21(11)	1949/11	825-838	5	5	6	0	1	9	1	8	1	3	27	57	5	28	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	ethics, linguistics	
21(12)	1949/12	906-912	2	1	4	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	18	25	2	16	9	2	1	0	0	0	0	agriculture, commerce	
22(2)	1950/02	85-94	3	1	3	3	3	2	2	5	0	2	26	41	4	25	5	2	11	0	0	0	0	medical care, botany	
22(5)	1950/05	329-332	3	1	8	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	11	15	4	4	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	garments, literature, architecture	
22(6)	1950/06	412-416	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	18	31	1	13	2	1	5	0	0	0	0	politics, occupation	
22(7)	1950/07	493-499	2	3	8	2	4	2	7	5	1	0	20	37	8	25	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	weather, education	
22(8)	1950/08	581-584	2	4	1	0	1	5	1	3	0	0	15	21	3	6	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	education	
22(9)	1950/09	657-660	3	4	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	15	11	4	12	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	education	
22(10)	1950/10	731-735	4	3	0	0	1	2	2	6	0	0	28	13	2	12	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	education	
22(11)	1950/11	825-828	2	2	0	0	0	4	2	3	1	0	8	13	1	13	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	law, military	
22(12)	1950/12	901-904	2	2	3	1	0	2	7	4	2	0	7	17	6	7	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	language, culture	
23(1)	1951/01	10-13	0	1	1	1	0	6	1	1	0	0	9	19	6	14	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	politics, occupation	
23(2)	1951/02	91-94	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	9	14	2	5	3	0	2	0	0	0	administration	
23(3)	1951/03	193-197	2	1	2	3	1	6	1	0	1	0	10	15	6	17	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	mathematics, diplomacy, military	
23(5)	1951/05	368-372	3	0	8	3	0	4	0	3	0	0	15	6	2	14	6	8	8	0	0	0	0	domestic science, diplomacy	
Total			68	53	107	19	14	63	48	74	6	14	311	450	92	333	89	52	54	0	0	0	0	1,847	

Source: *Kambuja Suriya* 21(4), April 1949-22(6), June 1951

Table 4 Coinage of the Cultural Committee (2)

Vol. (No.)	Year/ month	Pages	K=T			K>T>K T>K			K≈T			K≠T			Realms						
			S	P	S=P	S	P	S=P	S	P	S=P	S	P	S=P							
33(1)	1961/01	57-58	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	14	3	4	5	8	3	0	weather, botany	
33(2)	1961/02	204	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	6	1	5	0	2	1	0	botany, commerce	
33(3)	1961/03	290	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	6	8	1	0	1	0	botany	
33(4)	1961/04	416	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	5	2	4	3	1	0	0	weather, medical care	
33(5)	1961/05	529	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	2	6	5	3	0	0	0	medical care, botany	
33(6)	1961/06	666	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	4	7	2	0	3	0	botany, petrology	
33(7)	1961/07	782	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	5	8	0	0	4	0	petrology	
33(8)	1961/08	897	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	3	4	3	0	2	0	commerce	
33(9)	1961/09	1019	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	5	2	1	2	0	arts, biology	
33(10)	1961/10	1124	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	3	1	5	1	0	3	biology, shipping	
33(11)	1961/11	1292	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	6	1	0	3	0	0	0	shipping, medical care	
34(1)	1962/01	47	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6	3	0	2	2	2	0	0	medical care, human relations	
34(2)	1962/02	203	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	5	0	5	0	0	2	0	medical care, gem	
34(3)	1962/03	314	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	law	
34(4)	1962/04	437	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	4	1	3	0	0	0	0	law	
34(5)	1962/05	566	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	2	0	1	0	0	law	
34(6)	1962/06	685	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	law	
34(7)	1962/07	791	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	law	
34(8)	1962/08	938	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	law	
34(9)	1962/09	1028-1029	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	17	1	2	0	0	0	0	law	
34(10)	1962/10	1143-1145	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	30	2	1	0	0	0	0	law	
34(11)	1962/11	1254-1257	0	1	3	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	7	34	2	4	0	2	0	0	law
34(12)	1962/12	1384-1387	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	24	2	13	2	3	0	0	0	law
35(1)	1963/01	55-58	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	7	35	4	4	0	2	0	0	0	law
35(2)	1963/02	185-188	1	3	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	8	40	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	law
35(3)	1963/03	284-285	1	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	12	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	law
35(4)	1963/04	397-398	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	law
Total			4	14	17	5	0	16	10	13	4	3	107	286	48	101	27	22	21	0	698

Source: *Kambuja Suriya* 33(1), January 1961-35(4), April 1963

This tendency continued in the second serial from January 1961. The proportion of terms same as or similar to Thai is much smaller than in the first serial, because the Committee proposed more original Khmer words, which were mostly derived from Pali, as can be seen in the first serial. Among the compounds of Khmer and Sanskrit/Pali, which again constitute the majority, esoteric Pali words are occasionally employed. This would later come under criticism by advocates of Khmerization.

Analyzing the first and second serials, we can conclude that the Cultural Committee tried to differentiate Khmer from Thai by making use of Pali rather than Sanskrit, which had been utilized in Siam, for the purpose of creating an original modern Cambodian vocabulary. The fact that the Committee's coinage propositions were accepted to a certain degree explains the existence of many Pali-derived words in contemporary Cambodia. This result can be attributed to the Buddhist monks and ex-monks who mastered Thai as well as the Indian classical languages and who played vital roles in the Committee.

## V Responses to the Dictionary, Orthography and Coinage

Compilation of the dictionary, the establishment of orthography and coinage of the modern vocabulary executed by Chuon Nath and his comrades provoked controversies and objections once in a while. Ieu Koeus' book *The Khmer Language* and Keng Vannsak's opinion, inter alia, are examined in this section.

As described above, because Ieu Koeus was born and raised in Battambang, which was Siamese territory in 1905, his mother tongue was the dialect of that region, and he was fluent in the Thai language. In the early twentieth century, that dialect had been characterized by the articulation of the final consonant /r/, and the fact that diphthongs ឃៀ /iə/ and ឃៀ /éə/ were distinct (Ieu 1947, 9–12). A famous literate Oknha Inn,<sup>33)</sup> who also came from Battambang, joined the committee for editing a Khmer dictionary in 1915. His knowledge proved useful when the committee had to deliberate on the existence of the final consonant /r/, which those from the central plain could not distinguish (Coedès 1938, 316). Ieu Koeus's work, therefore, reveals nothing about the final consonant /r/ and the distinction between /iə/ and /éə/ in Chuon Nath's dictionary. He does, however, point out several misspellings in the dictionary, without providing any concrete examples, and suggests different spellings from Chuon Nath's (Ieu 1947, 4). Nonetheless, he asserts that the dictionary sets the standard, and since a national language cannot be established

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33) His career and works are discussed in Hansen (2007, 35–44, 71–76) and Sasagawa (2006, 59–62).

unless a certain standard is observed (*ibid.*, 18), he exhorts compliance with the dictionary, even if it contains errors (*ibid.*, 19).

Ieu Koeus devotes many pages to the commonality between Thai and Khmer in *The Khmer Language*. According to him, the reasons why these two languages are similar to each other are threefold: Siam borrowed from the Khmer vocabulary in the first place, both languages contain many terms derived from Pali through a common belief in Buddhism, and finally the Siamese “returned the words” to the Khmers since the fall of the former capital Longvek to Siam in the late sixteenth century (*ibid.*, 25–26). Ieu Koeus presents examples of the loanwords from Thai (*ibid.*, 270) and reimportation of the old Khmer terms via Siam (*ibid.*, 275). In spite of the widespread trend of downplaying Siamese cultural influence in the Cambodian media from the early 1940s, when the Franco-Siamese war broke out, his academic and objective analyses are noteworthy in revealing the existence of diverse narratives in Cambodia.

Ieu Koeus goes into detail about loanwords derived from Sanskrit and Pali as well (*ibid.*, 230–240), and draws out lists comparing these languages with Khmer (*ibid.*, 240–254). But most words in these lists cannot be considered as modern vocabulary. There is also no mention of the influx of vocabulary from Siam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though he became a member of the Cultural Committee in 1947, we do not know his opinion on its activities because he was assassinated in 1950 and left no other work than *The Khmer Language*.

Keng Vannsak, who also took part in the Democratic Party just before independence, held quite a different opinion from Ieu Koeus. While most of the protagonists mentioned above were able to understand the Thai language, he belonged to a new generation of intellectuals educated only in French. After graduating from Lycée Sisowath in Phnom Penh, he went to Paris to study in August 1946 and taught Khmer at the SOAS in London University from 1948 to 1950. In 1952 he organized a circle to read Marxist literature at Paris, in which future Khmer Rouge cadres, such as Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Hou Youn, and Thiounn Mum, participated. Upon his return to Cambodia in the same year, his alma mater offered him a teaching position; he was also attracted by political activities in the Democratic Party. In 1955 he seized the leadership of the Party with other young members, but was temporarily detained for suspected assassination of Sam Sary and Sim Var. Soon after the Sangkum Reastr Niyum to support the Sihanouk regime was founded, he left the political arena. After he assumed professorship at the National Institute of Education in 1958 and the Royal University of Phnom Penh and Sihanoukraj Buddhist University in the following year, he was able to exert a strong influence in the fields of pedagogy and literary studies.

The establishment of the Lon Nol regime in 1970 brought Keng Vannsak back to

the political stage as director of the Khmer-Mon Institute,<sup>34)</sup> a think tank of the regime. On September 1971 he moved to Paris as a delegate to UNESCO and occupied the position of chargé d'affaires of the Khmer Republic in France from October 1974 to April 12, 1975. Five days into his term, the Republic was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge, and Keng Vannsak had no choice but to stay on in Paris, where he took a critical stance against Democratic Kampuchea and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (Corfield and Summers 2003, 197–198; Khing 1993, 71–72). When he passed away overseas in December 2008, Prime Minister Hun Sen offered his condolences in a speech (Anonymous 2008).

In the book *Principe de création des mots nouveaux* published in 1964, Keng Vannsak insists on a different method of coinage from the Cultural Committee. Pointing out the flaws in existing dictionaries and grammar books, he problematizes a reversion to the old Khmer language, an imitation of Sanskrit/Pali, and a risk of following India and “denationalizing” (Keng 1964, 1). For Keng Vannsak, the national language, or national culture in other words, had to be newly created. From such a standpoint, the main obstacle was not so much Thai influence as a resurgence of the Indian classical languages and old Khmer. To attain this new language, Keng Vannsak proposes a new coinage grounded on contemporary Khmer. Whereas Chuon Nath's name is not mentioned, it is obvious his preface is an attack on the prominent monk. On March 8, 1961 Keng Vannsak was nominated as a member of the Cultural Committee<sup>35)</sup> and was able to observe its method of coinage with his own eyes.

Keng Vannsak proposed a new method of coinage named “Khmerization” ខេមរនីយកម្ម /kheemaraniiyeakam/ that would supersede Sanskrit/Pali with contemporary Khmer (*ibid.*, 433 ff.), but he did not advocate the complete exclusion of these classical languages, as even the word “Khmerization” itself originates from Pali. Nor did he try to eliminate Thai influence on Khmer, probably because he belonged to a new generation in which mastery of the Thai language was no longer regarded as a precondition for intellectuals.

Both Ieu Koeus and Keng Vannsak were the leading figures of the Democratic Party and linguists who raised doubts about Chuon Nath's dictionary and/or the coinage of the Cultural Committee, but their influence on language policies varied. Although Ieu Koeus's book was reprinted in 1967 and is available in Cambodia even now, it was Keng Vannsak's opinions that impacted the followers who would propose the Khmerization of the language of instruction in schools and universities, a new way of coinage, and a reform of orthography.

34) As its name indicates, this institute revolved around the “Khmer-Mon identity,” as declared in the manifesto of the Socio-Republican Party drafted by Keng Vannsak (Corfield 1994, 160).

35) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 17(50), March 8, 1961, pp. 671–672; *Reach Kech*, 17(50), March 8, 1961, pp. 1760–1761.

With regards to reforms in the language of instruction, the teachers and inspectors who played an important role were mostly Keng Vannsak's friends and former students (Khin 1999a, 302–303). From around 1957, when secondary education taught in French was expanded to the rural area, they shared a sense of impending crisis that there were insufficient numbers of teachers proficient in French and that the language ability of students would decline (*ibid.*, 294–295). Khin Sok's article introduces these central figures, including the president of the Royal University of Fine Arts, Hang Thun Hak;<sup>36)</sup> inspector of Khmer language and literature, Loch Phlaeng; inspector of history education, Tran Ngia;<sup>37)</sup> and inspector of English instruction, Kong Orn (*ibid.*, 300). In 1966 they held private meetings to discuss the Khmerization of the teaching language, and the fruits of their discussion were submitted to the National Education Minister Vann Molyvann through the chief of the secondary education bureau Kaev Chaem. At the 23rd session of the National Assembly from July 10–13, 1967, the Khmerization bill was put on the agenda and approved (*ibid.*, 301). Decree No. 2294 of the National Education Minister on September 18 declared that elementary education be Khmerized from the academic year 1967, secondary education by 1973, and tertiary education by 1974.<sup>38)</sup>

## VI The Educational Magazine *Khmerization*

Owing to the change in the language of instruction from 1967, a new educational magazine *Khmerization* (កេមរាយណ៍កម្ម /Kheemarayāṅṅakam/) was launched. Cambodia had followed a bilinear education system since the mid-1920s: while public schools employed French as the teaching language, even at the elementary level, to cultivate a small elite, the “*écoles de pagoda rénovées*” or temple schools, which had been sanctioned as official pedagogic institutions, provided three-year instruction in Khmer to ordinary pupils living in rural areas. In 1925, two educational magazines—in French and in Khmer—were inaugurated and distributed to teachers (Sasagawa 2006, 113–134). The new magazine *Khmerization* unified them, and the first issue, published in September 1967, informs that the standing committee for Khmerization has been founded by decree of the National Education Minister, with Hang Thun Hak as its president.<sup>39)</sup>

36) Hang Thun Hak was one of the young members of the Democratic Party who seized its leadership with Keng Vannsak in 1954. Later he held the premiership of the Khmer Republic from October 17, 1972 to April 17, 1973 (Corfield and Summers 2003, 137–139).

37) Tran Ngia is famous for his two-volume work entitled ប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រខ្មែរ [A history of the Khmers], published in 1973.

38) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 23(3), January 11, 1967, pp. 3823–3824.

39) *Khemarayeaneakam*, 1(1), September 1967, p. 17.

The *Khmerization* magazine did not merely aim to change the teaching language, but also to modify the Khmer modern vocabulary. The National Archives of Cambodia and the National Library at Phnom Penh possess several issues of this magazine. Issues published in the first year carry the word lists proposed by those concerned with Khmerization. As well as the coinage of the Cultural Committee, Table 5 analyzes the etymology of the vocabulary listed in the magazine.

Although these lists were intended to replace Sanskrit/Pali and French with contemporary Khmer, many loanwords from French were retained in several realms. For instance, most of the jargon to do with weather in the “geography” section in Vol. 1, No. 1 is French.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the Cultural Committee, the standing committee for Khmerization considered it helpful for instruction to preserve French loanwords rather than use the Indian classical languages. While the Cultural Committee spelled the silent consonant(s) at the end of the French word in order to keep to the etymological style of orthography, the Khmerization movement tried a partial adoption of the phonemic style by deleting the silent final consonant(s) for example, *franc* ប្រុង /frɔŋ/ (Khin 1999a, 308). As Keng Vannsak noted, however, they did not eliminate all the words derived from Sanskrit and/or Pali, and their spellings are still based on the etymological style.

The other aim of the Khmerization movement was to revive the function of infixes to create nouns, which had been suspended in contemporary Khmer. For instance, the noun form អំណាច /ʔəmnaa/, which inserts an infix into the verb ឃើញ /ʔaa/ (to saw), was added to the list.<sup>41</sup> Most of the words newly created in this way were not widely diffused, but some of them, such as រូបិយវិទ្យា /səmnee/ (writing), composed of the shortened form រូបិយ /see/ of the verb រូបិយ /sɔɔsee/ (to write), became more or less popular.

The Khmerization movement did not attempt to exclude the modern vocabulary derived from Siam. For the advocates of this movement, these words had become rooted in contemporary Khmer. In addition, since they had been educated only in French, it is conceivable they had no intention of differentiating Khmer from Thai.

Their opinion about the coinage of the modern vocabulary was unquestionably opposed to that of the Cultural Committee, which repelled some of its members. Those who had created the modern terms by employing mainly Pali succeeded in urging the National Education Minister to proclaim Decree No. 2460 on August 31, 1966 to appoint new members<sup>42</sup> and modify the lineup on March 14, 1968,<sup>43</sup> but Chuon Nath and Huot

40) *Khemarayeaneakam*, 1(1), September 1967, pp. 38–39.

41) *Khemarayeaneakam*, 1(1), September 1967, p. 54.

42) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 22(68), September 3, 1966, pp. 3945–3946; *Reach Kech*, 22(68), September 3, 1966, pp. 5608–5610.

43) *Journal Officiel du Cambodge*, 24(22), March 20, 1968, p. 1125; *Reach Kech*, 24(22), March 20, 1968, p. 2067.





Tat came to terms with the Khmerization movement in the end (*ibid.*, 302–303). Each issue of the magazine declared that the vocabulary in the list had been approved by these famous Buddhist monks.

## VII A Reform of Orthography

Under the Lon Nol regime that began in 1970, the Khmerization movement extended its reform to orthography. At a meeting held on August 26, 1972, Loch Phlaeng proposed an orthographic reform to reduce the number of letters and boost the development of education (Khin 1999a, 305, note 48; Ly 2006, 47). In concrete terms, he advocated a revision of diphthongs (for example, តំលៃ for តៃលៃ /dɔmlai/, កំណើត for កំណើត /kɔmnəət/) (Ly 2006, 47–48) and an abolition of a few independent vowel signs (for example, អាច for ឲ្យ /ʔaoi/, អែណា for ណា /ʔae naa/) (Khin 1999a, 305, note 48). Because it is difficult to guess whether the newly proposed spelling កំណើត is pronounced /kɔmnəət/ or /kɔmnəət/, a half-way reduction of the letters would result in confusion. Besides, this reform did not alter the etymological style of orthography. This revised orthography was strongly opposed by novelist Vandy Kaonn, but the Lon Nol government accepted it for use in education and the media (Ly 2006, 48–49).

After the Pol Pot regime annulled public education and mass media, the People's Revolutionary Party, which came to power in 1979, faced the question of whether the orthography should be based on Chuon Nath's dictionary or the Khmerization movement. The Council of State discussed this issue on April 5, 1985 and selected the revised orthography of 1972. Once again Vandy Kaonn attacked the decision but in vain (*ibid.*, 49–56). According to Ly Sovir, who participated in this discussion, the Ministry of Education in the 1980s had no other choice but to follow the Khmerization movement's reforms due to limited human resources (*ibid.*, 60).

Since 1993, when Cambodia became a kingdom again, the 1972 orthography has been used in the spheres of education and media; yet the desire to resuscitate Chuon Nath's spellings persisted. In 2005, the Institute of National Language, set up on July 10, 1998 and integrated into the Royal Academy on December 27, 1999,<sup>44</sup>) published an orthographic dictionary based on Chuon Nath's spellings (Cambodia, Institute of National Language 2005). But these organizations have less influence on educational policies and media than one might imagine from their names.

44) Royal Academy of Cambodia, 2012, សង្ខេបន្តីតិ វ. ប. ស. ក. [Outline of the Royal Academy of Cambodia], <http://www.rac-academy.edu.kh/>, accessed August 12, 2013.

Finally, in March 2009, Chuon Nath's spelling was revived. At the National Institute of Education in Phnom Penh, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports called for a meeting to review pedagogic activities in the academic year 2008 and settle on a plan for 2009. In his closing address, Prime Minister Hen Sen declared that schools, newspapers, magazines, and official documents had to conform to Chuon Nath's dictionary.<sup>45)</sup> From the academic year 2009, textbooks of the Khmer language were revised, and independent vowel signs and the spellings of diphthongs reverted to the orthography before 1972, though no explanation for the modification was included in the textbooks. The actual situation in Cambodia is that most people consider it acceptable to write either ឿ or អោយ.

## Conclusion

From the latter half of the colonial period to the early 1960s, Buddhist monks and ex-monks were actively engaged in Cambodia's language policies. In trying to establish orthography, the two camps—etymological versus phonemic style—clashed and blocked the committee for editing a dictionary founded in 1915. The eminent monk Chuon Nath participated in the committee from the late 1920s, and Book One of *The Khmer Dictionary* was published under his direction in 1938.

Working closely with another prominent monk Huot Tat, Choun Nath exerted a great influence on the coinage of modern vocabulary as well. The Cultural Committee, which was set up during Japanese military rule in 1945 and reestablished in 1947, took on the task of substituting Khmer for French loanwords. Until the Committee was dissolved in the middle of the 1960s, the two monks almost invariably served as its vice-president. Nhok Thaem, who had also spent time studying in Siam, played a significant role too. The *Kambuja Suriya* magazine, issued by the Buddhist Institute at which he worked, ran serials of the word lists prepared by the Cultural Committee, and Nhok Thaem contributed the preface.

The Cultural Committee's main activity was the removal of modern Siamese vocabulary and a creation of original Khmer terms derived chiefly from Pali. As is often the case with Cambodian nationalistic discourse, however, both the legacy of loanwords from the Thai language and subsequent attempts to differentiate the Khmer language have seldom been mentioned in the media. In this regard, the situation in Cambodia is quite

45) Women Empowerment for Social Change Program, 2010, សម្តេចតេជោនាយករដ្ឋមន្ត្រីប្រកាសច្បាប់លាស់អក្ខរវិវឌ្ឍ-អក្សរសាស្ត្រជាតិ យកតាមវចនានុក្រម ជួន ណាត [The Prime Minister declared that orthography and national literature be based on Chuon Nath's dictionary], <http://women.open.org.kh/km/pm-declare-to-use-chounnath-dictionary-for-national-literature>, accessed August 12, 2013.

different from that in Laos, where ordinary words are also similar to their Thai equivalents because they belong to the same language family, but differentiation was actively debated (Yano 2008; 2013).

Ieu Koeus and Keng Vannsak presented counter-arguments vis-à-vis the orthography and coinage achieved by Chuon Nath and his comrades. Both of them took up politics as leaders of the Democratic Party, but their views were divergent. Though Ieu Koeus discussed the relationship between Khmer and Thai in detail, his viewpoint failed to become a dominant narrative on the Khmer language due to his premature death. On the other hand, Keng Vannsak, who belonged to the new generation educated in French, opposed esoteric, coined words originated from Sanskrit/Pali. He did not, however, dwell on the Thai influence and greatly influenced his friends and students.

Keng Vannsak's followers succeeded in changing the teaching language into Khmer from 1967. Next they embarked on the coinage of new words, which they announced in the educational magazine *Khmerization*. Although they tried in the process of coinage to abolish as many Sanskrit/Pali words as possible and to “purify” and “simplify” the Khmer language, they did not totally exclude these classical languages. Finally they achieved a revision of orthography in 1972, but their reform was far from thorough because they merely revised spellings of diphthongs and reduced independent vowel signs. As a result, most of the Pali words used in Cambodia today are based on the Cultural Committee's accomplishments; orthography based on Chuon Nath's dictionary was also officially revived in 2009.

The investigation of the way the Cambodian national language has evolved leads us to conclude that it has had a role to play in the formation of Cambodian national culture. It can be observed that since the Cambodian nation and culture are so heterogeneous, only a differentiation between “us” and “the other” could allow the existence and unity of “we Khmer (ខ្មែរ/ខ្មែរ /khmae yəəŋ/)” to be asserted. The subject of differentiation from the Vietnamese and the Chinese have often been discussed in Cambodian studies (Edwards 1996, 55; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996, 19), but in fact, the Thai have also been cast as “the others” since the early 1940s. In the tumult over the establishment of a Cambodian national language, those born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century expressed a sense of incongruity—explicitly, when it came to French and implicitly with Thai. The later generation, however, problematized the Indian classical languages and old Khmer, and Thailand became less a cultural than a physical menace, with the territorial dispute over the Preah Vihear monument marking the zenith of tensions in the late 1950s and early 1960s. For the French-educated intellectuals, a simplification of coinage and orthography were much more important than a distinction of Khmer from Thai and a reflection of old Khmer in the script.

As can be seen in Ieu Koeus and Keng Vannsak's works, narratives on the creation of the Cambodian national language present much diversity, but the dominant discourse on national culture has been the recurrent evocation of the "glorious past" of Angkor, when Sanskrit and old Khmer were inscribed on the stones of the monuments. Just like the process in which the court dance became regarded as a "tradition" handed down from the Angkorian era (Sasagawa 2005), the national language was also accomplished through the elimination and oblivion of Thai cultural influence. Partly because of the defective reform by the Khmerization movement, Chuon Nath's achievements are seen as the paragon of orthography and coinage till now.

Accepted: September 3, 2013

### Abbreviations

- ANC : Archives Nationales du Cambodge  
 BR : Bibliothèque Royale  
 DC : Documentations du Cambodge  
 EFEO: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient  
 ESP : Ecole Supérieure de Pali  
 IB : Institut Bouddhique  
 RSC : Résident Supérieur au Cambodge

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# The Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Suharto Indonesia

Kimura Ehito\*

What explains the failure of transitional justice and reconciliation measures in post-authoritarian Indonesia? One explanation is that domestic political elites have effectively stymied the efforts of civil society to implement global norms of transitional justice. However, as Indonesia has embraced a democratic and decentralized system of government, even the most corrupt and entrenched elites cannot merely veto or reject calls for justice. Instead, opponents have used a variety of strategies including legislative, religious, and cultural strategies to undermine justice initiatives. Examining the recent experiences in Indonesia, this paper shows the effects that a limited transition has had on the justice agenda.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, transitional justice, reconciliation, truth and reconciliation commission, human rights

## Introduction

Over a decade now since the fall of Suharto little to no justice has been served for the many and past human rights violations of the authoritarian New Order (Aspinall 2008; Frease 2003; ICTJ and Kontras 2011). The violations include: mass killings of communists and alleged communists in 1965–1966, political repression, military violence and torture against civilians, human rights violations in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua, and the repression of basic rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

What explains this failure in justice? A report by the International Center for Transitional Justice argues that progress has been blocked by “a deep, systemic unwillingness to uncover the truth surrounding serious human rights violations and hold those who are responsible accountable for their actions” (ICTJ and Kontras 2011). The implicit suggestion is that national and local political elites have effectively stymied the efforts of civil society to implement norms of justice and reconciliation that have been spreading globally now since the end of the Cold War.

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This perspective seems apt especially given the view that Indonesia's transition has achieved only limited or partial reform and characterized instead by entrenched elites or oligarchs (Robison and Hadiz 2004; Slater 2004). However, as Indonesia has embraced a democratic and decentralized system of government, even the most corrupt and entrenched elites cannot merely veto or reject calls for justice. Instead, opponents of the justice agenda have used a variety of tools to hamper justice and reconciliation measures. Put differently, the phenomenon of transitional justice is more than simply a transposing of a global norm onto a local site. In post-authoritarian polities, concepts such as justice and reconciliation are often re-defined and re-articulated at key moments in a politicized arena. Examining the recent experiences in Indonesia, this paper highlights the "how" of failure, the strategies by which justice and reconciliation in Indonesia have come to be stymied.

In so doing, this article examines several cases that highlight those strategies. The first, an institutional strategy, led to the process of cooptation. The attempt to build a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) emerged from activists and civil society organizations but came to be coopted into a law that would emphasize amnesty over accountability. At the same time, many groups, international and local alike, have turned to alternative forms of justice that employ traditional, cultural, and/or religious practices. While successful in some instances, forms of "traditional" and in particular, Islamic justice have also been used to avoid and even undermine forms of accountability. In the Tanjung Priok case, military officers responsible for the violence against Muslims in a Jakarta neighborhood proposed to settle matters through *islah*, an Islamic form of peace making. In Aceh, practices of *diyot* and *peusijek* have led to debates about whether to use alternative or traditional forms of reconciliation or national legal mechanisms to prosecute individuals. While proponents have argued that these cultural practices offer an alternative way to resolve conflicts, critics have derided the cooptation of Islamic and traditional principles for their own self-protection.

To be sure, this essay is not an exhaustive examination of all the reasons that the transitional justice agenda has failed in Indonesia. Those reasons are many and wide ranging including a weak judiciary, corruption, lack of political will, and the like. Instead, the article highlights some of the "softer" strategies elites have used to confound justice initiatives. It suggests that in post-authoritarian polities like Indonesia, a new politics is possible but faces constraints as old and new players adjust to the new rules of the game.

## The Rise of the Transitional Justice

Exact definitions of transitional justice vary, but it generally refers to the recognition for and the righting of past wrongs. The International Center for Transitional Justice defines the concept as measures to “redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses” (ICTJ n.d.). Teitel defines it more specifically as “a conception of justice associated with periods of political change, characterized by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes” (Teitel 2003, 69). Teitel emphasizes the legal aspects of transitional justice but as we shall see, it does not always fall into the confines of legalized justice. Transitional justice includes trials, reparations, truth commissions, and lustration but also apologies, rituals, and other symbolic acts. To varying degrees, all forms of transitional justice seek to offer some form of accountability, provide restitution for victims, and promote political, economic, and legal reform at the societal level.

The practice of modern day transitional justice can be traced back to World War I but it rose in international prominence after World War II and the ensuing Nuremberg Trials and Tokyo Tribunals (Teitel 2003). The Cold War, however, doused hopes of international consensus on the role of global institutions for post-conflict justice (Teitel 2002). While some countries did implement mechanisms for transitional justice in the 1970s and 1980s, the end of the Cold War led to a surge in the practice of justice and reconciliation measures globally (Kritz and Mandela 1995).

Alongside this reality, transitional justice has grown dramatically as a field of study in the past two decades. It encompasses a vast and interdisciplinary area that includes traditional academic disciplines such as political science, law, anthropology, and sociology (Bell 2009). Scholars have asked a variety of questions related to the phenomenon of transitional justice. Much of the work has explored the practical aspects of justice including institutional design, costs, and political implications of justice mechanisms (Vinjamuri and Sieff 1999). A related emphasis has consisted of debates in the field about the moral and political dilemmas and trade-offs of justice (Mani 2008; Posner and Vermeule 2004; Stensrud 2009; Van Zyl 1999). A third area explores the way in which justice mechanisms have spread as a global phenomenon (Ben-Josef Hirsch 2009; Fletcher *et al.* 2009; Kim 2008; Lutz and Sikkink 2000). While addressing the first two questions at the margins, the experiences of Indonesia help highlight and challenge some of the arguments made about the diffusion of international norms such as transitional justice.

Perhaps the most influential and well-known theories about the spread of transitional justice institutions have emerged from the constructivist school in international relations. Constructivists have argued that the interests of states and individuals should not be taken for granted but rather understood in the context of how they are formed or con-

structed (Adler 2002; Fearon and Wendt 2002; Wendt 1999). In this view, ideas play a key role in understanding state behavior, which stands in stark contrast to the realist and liberal schools of international relations theory.

Along these lines, a significant research agenda among constructivists has been to explore how ideas spread in international relations, including ideas such as the respect for human rights and prosecution of human rights violations. Finnemore and Skikink, for example, argued that norm entrepreneurs push for the implementation of ideas until they begin to “cascade” and then ultimately become “internalized” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1999). A second and related theory argues that transnational activist networks in particular spurred the diffusion of norms such as environment and human rights by offering broad new resources for actors (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

The idea of norms cascading transnationally has been applied to the growing global practice of transitional justice mechanisms. Scholars argue that norm entrepreneurs such as activists, NGOs, and other social groups learn from past experiences of transitional justice and diffuse them to other places. Sikkink describes this process as the rise of a “justice cascade” (Lutz and Sikkink 2001; Sikkink 2011). While this supply side theory of norm diffusion is able to recognize a growing trend in the acceptance of transitional justice, it pays less attention to the different ways in which states actually adopt and implement the practice at the domestic level (Cortell and Davis Jr. 2000).

To undertake this task requires examining the different ways in which norms are implemented and articulated against the internal machinations of a particular place and time (Acharya 2004). These include the national political institutions but also the sub-national and regional or local contexts as well. In another context, Leheny has explored the way in which the Japanese state adopted international norms against child pornography and new measures of counter-terrorism, both of which could only be understood in the context of Japan’s domestic political goals in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Leheny 2006). Subotic, looking specifically at transitional justice, argues that such institutions can be “hijacked” as in the Balkans precisely because domestic political actors have ulterior motives such as eliminating political opponents, receiving international aid, or gaining admission into international organizations (Subotic 2009).

In Indonesia too, domestic political actors have sought to subvert or coopt efforts to address past human rights abuses. They have used a variety of strategies in a variety of settings from “official” national institutional politics to local and cultural practices. The debate over the truth and reconciliation is one area where this can be seen and is where we now turn.

## The Rise and Fall of National Truth and Reconciliation

After the fall of Suharto, activists and victims organizations seized the moment and renewed their calls to revisit past violations of human rights during the New Order. Along with a variety of other proposed reform measures including new legislation, fact-finding missions, and human rights courts, NGOs and activists also supported the creation of a TRC during the *reformasi* period. The TRC provides a lens through which to examine the politics around transitional justice more generally, in the way that the commission became mired in the domestic political debate. Rather than simply being vetoed, the TRC was coopted and ultimately hijacked thereby leading to its failure.

In many ways the narrative of the efforts to create a TRC suggests, at least initially, the effects of a “justice cascade” theorized by scholars. International and Indonesian NGOs, some funded by western donors pushed hard for the creation of a TRC. They formed study groups, and invited renowned international scholars and practitioners of transitional justice including those who had been intimately involved with the South African TRC.<sup>1)</sup>

The experience of South Africa played a particularly important role in the development of the idea of an Indonesian TRC. Part of this has to do simply with issues of timing. The TRC in South Africa was established in 1995 and conducted the bulk of their work from 1995 to 1998. In Indonesia, the financial crisis struck in 1997, the *reformasi* movement took off in early 1998, and Suharto stepped down later that year. It was soon after that activists in Indonesia began to explore mechanisms to redress the past, drawing on experiences in other parts of the world including South Africa.

But the relationship was more than simply about timing. For example, Agung Puteri, a key promoter of the TRC and a staff member at ELSAM, the Institute of Policy Research and Advocacy, was also a fellow at the Transitional Justice Program at the University of Capetown in South Africa in 2002 along with several other Indonesians (Agung Putri 2003). In addition, several prominent individuals from South Africa and also from the International Center for Transitional Justice based in New York City also worked closely with ELSAM and others. For example, they co-hosted workshops, authored pamphlets and reports, and also funded the operations of many of the NGOs (Mashabane 2003).

Once the idea of a TRC came to be introduced, however, it articulated into the Indonesian national and local political sphere in particular ways. For example, debates erupted about terminology and the name of the institution. The military and police faction in the legislature objected to notions of “truth” or “*kebenaran*” citing the difficulty

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1) Interview with Zaini Abidin, ELSAM, Jakarta Indonesia, May 30, 2013.

of finding out the ultimate truth and the need to emphasize reconciliation over truth. In contrast, reform factions with the legislature favored terms such as “accountability” or “*pertanggung jawaban*” instead of “truth” (Sulistiyanto 2007, 89). In other words, the translation of the international terms and ideas bumped up against the power dynamics embedded in Indonesia’s legislature where the bill was argued.

Debates occurred also among the NGOs at the societal level. Some NGOs such as KontraS (The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence) argued that human rights courts and prosecutions should take priority over a TRC. KontraS and other organizations tended to take a harder line on these issues because they dealt with cases involving victims and victims’ families (*ibid.*). In contrast, other NGOs such as ELSAM expressed reservations about achieving justice through a dysfunctional legal system and argued that in any case, a TRC could complement courts and promote healing as victims could come forward with their stories.<sup>2)</sup>

Finally there were particular debates about the power of the TRC itself. How far back would its mandate extend? Muslim groups, for example were wary of reopening the wounds of 1965 which might have implicated many in anti-communist massacres that occurred during that time. Also, would it have the power to give amnesty? Clearly, the military and other potential perpetrators were deeply interested in this question. What would its relation be to other institutions such as the human rights courts that were also being established at the same? In these kinds of questions, the interests of NGOs and victims organizations were trumped by state institutions.

In 2000, the MPR called for the creation of a national TRC and in 2004, the legislature passed Law 27 which required the government to formally establish a TRC. The commission was empowered to receive complaints or statements from perpetrators, victims, or victims’ families who are the victim’s heirs, investigate and clarify gross violations of human rights; provide recommendations to the President concerning appeals for amnesty; provide recommendations to the President concerning the awarding of compensation and/or rehabilitation; and provide annual reports and final reports to the President.

At the same time, the law that finally emerged from the legislative process had also been altered significantly to the disappointment of NGOs and victim’s families. First, the TRC in the bill was empowered to recommend amnesties for perpetrators of serious crimes. Second, language in the legislation indicated that crimes overseen by the TRC could not be prosecuted in courts. Third, the legislation stipulated that victims could only receive compensation in exchange for their concurrence of amnesty (ICTJ and

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2) Interview with Ifdhal Kasim, Chairperson of KOMNAS-HAM, August 26, 2012.

Kontras 2011, 29–30). Taken together, activists supporting the idea of a TRC argued that the legislation had effectively become an institution that supported impunity rather than something genuinely seeking reconciliation.

Some might argue that the result of the legislative process is always that of compromise and so this result was simply the outcome of institutional politics. However, as Ifdahl Kasim noted, the NGOs and activists were not active participants in the debates around the legislation. They were consulted at the early stages and even then there were several aspects of the legislation that left many NGOs dissatisfied causing them to withdraw their initial support. With many members of the former regime participating in the debate including the since-dismantled military party, the legislation proceeded and became reshaped according to their own ends.<sup>3)</sup>

Discontent with the legislation, several NGOs brought a suit against key provisions of Law 27 to the Constitutional Court. The Court agreed that the provision stipulating the exchange of amnesty for reparations was in fundamental contradiction to rights enshrined in the Constitution and in the principles and practices of international law. However, instead of eliminating the particular provisions that were mentioned in the suit, the Court struck down the entire law, thereby annulling the entire basis of the TRC. For civil society organizations, this proved an enormous setback and an unexpected outcome to an otherwise legally sound strategy. In retrospect many might have preferred a flawed TRC to none at all but at the time activists brought the case to the Constitutional Court they did not see their options in those terms. In this sense, the resulting ruling produced the ironic result of a legal victory for proponents that forced them back to square one.

The failure of the TRC illustrates the way in which norms of diffusion come to be articulated and interpreted in vastly different kinds of ways depending on context. In one sense, we might argue that the TRC became hijacked once it entered the national policy making stage. While international and domestic NGOs promoted what they argued was a just and fair institution, it was re-shaped by the bureaucracy and the legislature to reflect the interests of actors including the military, many of the Muslim parties, and former regimist groups so as to emphasize amnesty and impunity above truth and reconciliation.

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3) Interview with Ifdhal Kasim, Chairperson of KOMNAS-HAM, August 26, 2012.



## Islamic Justice and the Case of Tanjung Priok

While the articulation between global and national forms of justice and reconciliation are critical, there is also increasing attention being paid to alternative forms of justice often drawing on local cultural, religious, or traditional practices (Shaw *et al.* 2010). Alternative forms of justice are defined here as those that employ traditional, cultural, and/or religious practices and institutions in order to resolve conflict and repair rifts in the society. They are increasingly seen as a critical response to the global or national mechanisms which are seen as formalistic and ultimately ineffective at dealing with issues related to reconciliation (Gready 2005).

The new emphasis on alternative forms of justice and reconciliation is important but needs to be treated cautiously. Practices in Indonesia have been “successful” in some instances but the way in which this is defined and the process by which alternative justice is carried out is just as important as the actual cultural practice itself. In the Tanjung Priok case, military officers responsible for the violence against Muslims in a Jakarta neighborhood proposed to settle matters through *islah* an Islamic form of peace-making. On the one hand, proponents have argued that these cultural practices offer an alternative way to resolve conflicts (Hamdi Muluk 2009). However, critics have argued that the military used these approaches for their own self-protection.

Tanjung Priok is a northern sub-district of Jakarta that includes the city’s main harbor. In 1984, tensions between the government and the Muslim communities were quite high, particularly in the context of a proposed law that would have required all organizations including religious ones to adopt the national *pancasila* ideology and declare their allegiance to it above all other ideologies. For conservative Muslims this was the latest in a series of moves that marginalized religious practices and beliefs in the country (Hefner 2000, 121).

In September, a security officer of the neighborhood military command went to a local mosque and ordered certain posters be removed from the mosque walls. Returning with several others the next day, the officer found that his orders had been ignored and with his men proceeded to forcibly remove the posters. One officer allegedly entered the mosque without removing his shoes and another used gutter water to scrub the walls. These represented desecrations of the mosque and led to protests and riots against the security officers (Burns 1989).

The police arrested several people whom they accused of disturbing the peace. However, a larger demonstration protesting both the arrests as well as the larger issue of the *pancasila* legislation was held on September 12. On that night a mass meeting being held transformed into a mass demonstration with several thousand demonstrators march-

ing down the main thoroughfares of the sub-district and the police and military opened fire on the protestors (Weatherbee 1985). At the time, most news of the incident was suppressed. The government detailed only that there was a violent incident in the area in which eight people had been killed. There continues to be uncertainty about the number of victims but estimates suggest the death toll was in the hundreds (Haryanto 2010).

Only after the fall of Suharto did the truth about the incident begin to emerge into the mainstream consciousness of the populace. Heavy pressure from NGOs and also Islamic organizations pushed Suharto's successor Habibie to re-open the case (Junge 2008, 11). As a result, the government opened several investigations into the events surrounding the Tanjung Priok incident (*ibid.*, 20). While some of the investigations provided credible evidence and recommended prosecuting key officers, little has come of these recommendations.

To be sure, the government did establish an ad hoc human rights court that began in September 2003 (Muningaar Sri Sawaswati 2003). This represented one of two ad hoc tribunals that tried officers involved in the incident for crimes against humanity. However, the trial itself came under heavy criticism for a number of reasons. First, only relatively low and mid-ranking officers were brought to trial. The people who would have been actual decision-makers in the incident including General Try Sutrisno were curiously left out of the indictment. Second, blatant intimidation occurred at the trial as members of the military in attendance threatened victims and others at the trial, and allegedly threatened some judges. Third, many of the defendants actually changed their testimony from the initial statements made before the trial to investigators and lawyers and despite this the court did nothing to deal with these obvious changes. Finally, of the 14 accused, initially 2 were acquitted and 12 were convicted in the court, but all convictions were overturned on appeal, resulting in zero convictions (Usman Hamid 2009).

The context of this failure is important. Two years before in March of 2001, General Try Sutrisno who was the commanding officer of the military regional command in Jakarta and generally considered one of the key figures responsible for the Tanjung Priok incident, invited victims and victims' families for a dialogue. Sutrisno called this meeting an *islah* or an Islamic form of peacemaking (*Jakarta Post*, September 22, 2001). *Islah* is derived from the Arabic word that means "to repair" or to "reform" and is practiced as an effort to achieve reconciliation between two people in a fight or dispute (Waterson 2009). In other words, Sutrisno was asking families to think about resolving the issue using a traditional cultural instrument rather than a modern institutional one.

The event began as a kind of open forum where participants, mostly on the military side, emphasized the importance of forgetting the past and building a "peaceful future"

(Fadjar Thufail 2011). Sutrisno and the other military members offered financial assistance to those who had been affected by the incident. The money was carefully referred to as *bantuan keuangan* or financial assistance rather than *kompensasi* or compensation. Fadjar Thufail notes that this included about \$200 of *tali kasih* or affection money to the families of each victim or political prisoner. The military also appears to have delivered motorcycles to those who might benefit from their use in business. However, these motorcycles never reached their intended recipient and were apparently sold off and the money was kept by the people entrusted to deliver them (*ibid.*).

The event concluded with the signing of an “*Islah* Charter” which was a document that cited verses from the Koran and called on the government to offer compensation and restitution to the victims (*Jakarta Post*, September 22, 2001). As Fadjar Thufail notes, it was in no way a legal document, but as family members and military officers signed the document it came to resemble a contract or official document. Sutrisno also infused the ceremony with legitimacy by inviting and involving Nurcholish Madjid, a prominent Islamic scholar to the event and having him oversee the event including the signing of the document (Fadjar Thufail 2011).

The *Islah* Charter did not forbid those who signed it from testifying in the ad hoc tribunal. In fact, many people who took the *tali kasih* from Sutrisno said explicitly at the time that they still wanted a proper investigation and justice pursued despite taking money. Nonetheless, the distribution of money to the victims created a major rift between the “pro-*islah*” faction and the “anti-*islah*” faction (Sri Suparyati 2004). This is what led to the inconsistencies at the ad hoc tribunal. Some victims and families who testified to investigators before the *islah* event withdrew or changed their testimony at the actual tribunal itself (Urip Hudiono 2003).

The Tanjung Priok incident and the events of the *islah* in particular provide a glimpse into the way traditional practices can undermine certain aspects of justice and reconciliation. To be sure there are benefits of a religious resolution to the conflict. A number of factors make the *islah* process palatable. First, it was done in a way that was sensitive to the cultural background of the victims. Notwithstanding the fact that the army during this time period was often perceived as being a more Catholic or Christian institution, the pursuit of a resolution that went outside the formal legal system and relied on traditional Islamic principles appealed to some victims’ families. Along those lines, the fact that some families rejected the financial assistance and refused to sign the charter indicates the lack of heavy coercion.

However, the army clearly succeeded in weakening the legal case against them. By dividing the victims’ groups into different camps, they prevented a potentially concerted effort of the victims to rally around the trial. Although ultimately, a trial did go forward,

it was weakened so fundamentally that none of the convictions could withstand the process of appeal. Furthermore, many participants noted afterward that there was little new information about the Tanjung Priok incident. The military members who attended offered no apology, no further explanation about the incident, and no more information about missing persons. It was also noted later that the military had dominated the floor and little time was given to the victims and families in the event.

In this sense, the main problem with the *islah* approach was not the use of the cultural practices to resolve a dispute and make efforts at reconciliation. If the charter and the payments had emerged after a process of consultation between the military and the victims and resulted in a final outcome after a number of different options were considered, the event might have had some degree of legitimacy. As it was, the military announced the meeting, initiated it, and came with their own agenda. Little room was left for voices of the victims themselves.

## **Justice and Reconciliation in Aceh**

Alternative forms of justice and reconciliation have also been prevalent in Aceh. After decades of separatist conflict and a devastating tsunami in 2004, international negotiators brokered a ceasefire between the Acehese rebels (GAM) and government forces in 2005 (Aspinall 2005). However, after the ceasefire, tensions still remained high as the region had to deal with a long legacy of trauma and violence. Casualties of the conflict are estimated about 15,000 dead and another 100,000 displaced. Furthermore, a Harvard Medical School survey estimates large percentages of people who had lived through combat experiences, fled from danger, had family members or friends killed, or experienced extortion and robbery (International Organization for Migration 2006). Social devastation was also high with high levels of poverty especially in rural areas and damage to major infrastructure such as schools, clinics, roads, and utilities.

The peace agreement established four mechanisms to implement peace between the two sides. First it called for an amnesty for the rebel fighters of GAM. Second, it outlined a timetable and benchmarks for demobilization, disarmament, and decommissioning of GAM and Indonesian forces. Third, it established a reintegration agenda for combatants, political prisoners, and civilians of the conflict. And finally, it recommended the establishment of a human rights court and a TRC for Aceh. The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), composed of international observers, was given the task of monitoring and supporting the peace process in Aceh (Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement 2005).

While the logistics of putting the plan in place proved difficult, many aspects were successfully implemented. However, the justice and reconciliation agenda proved to be an utter failure. The proposed human rights court for Aceh has still not been set up despite a law calling for its establishment. Furthermore, that law itself states that the court will only have the power to review human rights violations after 2006, meaning past violations will not be under the purview of the court. A TRC for Aceh was outlined in the Helsinki Peace Accords, but has not been officially established because it is supposed to operate under the framework of a national TRC which was ruled unconstitutional in 2006 (Aspinall 2008).<sup>4)</sup>

In this context, local traditional practices have also been employed as a way to address victims in the region. *Diyat* and *peusijuek* are two such examples. Both practices adhere to local traditional beliefs and practices. For example, *diyat* has roots in Islam while *peusijuek* seems to be an indigenous Acehnese practice. At the same time, both of these practices have also come under criticism for undermining aspects of justice and reconciliation.

*Diyat* is an Arabic term referring to payments made to the next of kin of those killed or disappeared in conflict. The term comes from Islamic jurisprudence and is practiced in many countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia where Islam is prominent (Warren and Press 2010, 27). In Pakistan for example, *diyat* was re-introduced as part of its national criminal code in 1990 and gives the victims of serious intentional battery and heirs of murder victims the opportunity to enforce punishment (*qisas*), negotiated settlement (*diyat*), or waive their rights to prosecute perpetrators altogether (Palo 2008). In the post-conflict situations of Darfur and Somalia, programs of transitional justice have also sought to integrate local traditional practices including *diyat* in “hybrid” justice mechanisms (Kritz and Wilson 2010–11; Zuin 2008).

In Aceh, *diyat* was not part of the criminal code, but payments to victims or heirs were initiated in the early 2000s by the governor at the time, Azwar Abubakar, in an effort to dampen the intensity of the conflict in the region. Local government officials believed that GAM’s recruitment was being driven by those who sought to avenge the death of a slain family member. *Diyat* was seen as a culturally sensitive and appropriate way to cushion to intensity of the conflict. It was also consistent with moves to allow the Aceh region the implement some forms of Islamic law that might also undermine support for the insurgency (Aspinall 2008, 25).

According to Islamic practice, a standard payment for *diyat* is 100 camels. The government decided to make payments of 50 million rupiah, revised upwards to 60 mil-

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4) There have been recent initiatives to establish a TRC in Aceh but the process has yet to be officially approved.

lion rupiah (about USD \$6500), roughly the equivalent of 10 buffaloes. However, citing insufficient funds, the government paid out three million rupiah and committed to monthly payments until the entire sum had been paid (*ibid.*). By June of 2007, the government had made some 20,000 *diyats* payments to victims' families averaging the equivalent of about \$200–\$300 per family (Clarke *et al.* 2008, 27). Payments were generally made to the next of kin based on village level data. Some received only the initial payment while others appear to have received more before the *diyats* program was ended along with other major reintegration programs in 2007.

Despite the extensiveness of the *diyats* program, a number of problems also surfaced. Critics argued that the choice of who received payments relied almost always on local government as well as the security sector including the military, the latter often having been complicit in the very crimes being addressed. Furthermore, these decisions tended to be subjective and based around who suffered harm during the prolonged conflict in Aceh (*ibid.*, 31). Some of the victims report that they were simply asked their bank account information and received deposits in their accounts with no information on why they were receiving the money. Stories also abound of corruption where portions of the *diyats* payment were taken by *keuciks*, *camats*, and others (United Nations Development Programme and Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional 2006, 37).

These issues point to an even larger problem, that payments for *diyats* were separated from any kind of process related to accountability. Under Islamic law, the family typically decides whether or not to accept *diyats*, or choose to have the perpetrator executed (an “eye for an eye”). But under the system in Aceh, payments were made independent of any knowledge about the perpetrator (Aspinall 2008, 25). No investigations were made and no information was recorded. In this context, it left many recipients deeply unsatisfied. As one female victim notes: “My child is dead as a consequence, then it is paid with 3 million rupiahs [approximately \$300] *diyats*. Is that justice? Not according to me, because my child's life has been tagged one life, 3 million rupiahs” (Clarke *et al.* 2008, 23).

The larger point here is that like in Tanjung Priok, Islamic tradition has been invoked in a way that selectively avoids notions of responsibility and accountability. *Diyats* was designed as a way to soften victim anger and prevent them from joining GAM. To be sure, it was an effective mechanism to do this and a situation in Aceh without *diyats* may very well have been a worse alternative. However, to the extent that the peace agreement promised notions of justice and accountability, the *diyats* program provided neither.

Another local ritual commonly practiced, especially after the conflict was called *peusijuek*.<sup>5)</sup> *Peusijuek* is a ritual performed to show that harmony and peace have been

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5) Avonius has written about this practice and the case described below draws primarily on her research (Avonius 2009).

restored to a community after a disruptive incident. Typically a conflict would be resolved through an apology and some compensation to a victim. The ritual itself involves pouring sacred water, yellow rice, or powder on the parties as a way to symbolize the reconciliation between disputants. *Peusijek* was performed in villages throughout Aceh when communities welcomed back former GAM combatants (Braithwaite 2010). It was also used to resolve small conflicts such as fights and brawls that occurred after the peace accords and as the peace accords were still being implemented.

Avonius recounts an incident in 2004 that occurred after the peace agreement in Aceh where violence erupted after the army beat a former GAM soldier who had been riding a motorcycle by the military post. Local residents argued that the military no longer had the right to detain people since Aceh was no longer a conflict zone. When AMM monitors and local police arrived at the military post, shooting broke out and one former rebel fighter was shot in the chest and several others were injured (Avonius 2009).

The military commander of the region suggested that the parties use alternative practices such as *peusijek* to resolve the tensions between the military and the local population. Members of the international AMM supported this idea and suggested that it be used in the aforementioned case. Subsequently, two high-ranking officers of the Indonesian military visited the home of the young man who was killed and offered financial assistance for the family, the traditional gesture among disputants between victims and perpetrators. They also presented a letter for the family to sign. The letter gave permission for the officers to remove the bullet from the victim's body, and it stated that the family would not lay any charges against the perpetrators. The parents of the victim allowed the officers to remove the bullet, but refused to sign the letter (*ibid.*).

Most local groups also rejected the idea of using traditional reconciliatory measures and *peusijek* for this particular case. One of the ex-combatants involved in the incident specifically stated that he did not want to reconcile with the military in this instance. "I do not want to have *peusijek* with the military. There is no need for a settlement, first they beat up someone and then they ask for peace" (*ibid.*, 126). He argued that Indonesians should follow the rule of law and his friend should have justice carried out according to the laws of the Indonesia. In many ways, this is a remarkable statement from an individual who had fought against Indonesia for so many years, precisely because the laws of Indonesia were seen as marginalizing the peoples of Aceh.

Others also opposed the use of *peusijek*. For example, several of the local NGOs including the local director of the Institute for Legal Aid (LBH) argued the case should be brought before a court of law. The director of the Aceh Judicial Monitoring Institute (AJMI) also opposed *peusijek* and criticized members of the AMM who were advocating

for *peusijek* saying that they should be simple monitors rather than dispensing advice on conflict resolution (Avonius 2009).

It should be noted that this case is not necessarily representative of attitudes towards *peusijek* more broadly. In fact, the ritual was practiced to the satisfaction of many throughout the region, and often included military officers as well (Clarke *et al.* 2008, 14). The point here is that in some cases, and in this case in particular, justice has to be understood in context. *Peusijek* came to be seen not as a communal way to reconcile, but as a way for perpetrators to escape accountability. As Avonius points out, ironically local actors rejected the alternative practices while outside actors including the AMM and the military pushed for them.

The cases above highlight the dilemma of alternative forms of justice. On the one hand, practices like *islah*, *diyot* and *peusijek* offer forms of justice outside of the official legal realm to resolve conflict and bring about reconciliation. In the first two examples, there is an emphasis on Islamic social ethics including explicit references to the Koran and related religious practices. In *peusijek*, the social ethics emerges from local indigenous practices that draw legitimacy from the involvement of community leaders and members. The cases then draw on plural forms of legitimacy and show how justice and reconciliation are being done differently.

On the other hand, these cases also identify the potential dangers in embracing these alternative approaches. While embedding transitional justice in local institutions and culture may give them more legitimacy, in these cases it also became an ideal strategy to avoid accountability and legal consequences for perpetrator groups while still offering a patina of legitimacy. In some instances, the embrace of the alternative approaches actively undermined contemporaneous legal proceedings. The *islah* process, for example, weakened the criminal prosecution in the ad hoc court and the *peusijek* case in Aceh was considered a substitute for legal prosecution. In this sense, while some have argued that official institutional approaches and “softer” approaches can be complementary, these examples also show the ways in which one the latter interferes with the former.

In part, much of the problem appears also to be the way in which the cultural or traditional approaches have been a largely one-sided affair with little discussion or consultation and almost clinically separated from notions of accountability. Thus, even judged on their own terms, these alternative approaches caused controversy and division and in some cases were actively opposed by victims and their organizations. For many, the approaches employed in these particular cases came to be viewed cynically as a way to co-opt a traditional practice and circumvent mechanisms of accountability.

These alternative institutions also raise questions about the role of the state and whether these approaches also absolve the state from responsibility in past violence. In



Indonesia's case, the state played a central role in much of the violence during Suharto's tenure in part because the military was at the core of the New Order state itself. But justice and reconciliation initiatives between say, army officers involved in the incident, and the victims are distinct from initiatives that recognize the Indonesian state itself as a perpetrator of the past violence. To be sure, the role and responsibility of the state is invoked implicitly each of these cases. In the *islah*, the document that emerges and is signed and is affixed with official looking seals and calls on the state to provide restitution. The practice of *diyāt* is Islamic in principle but is administered by provincial government of Aceh. The *peusijek* was encouraged by government and military officials. However, emphasizing the religious, cultural, and traditional approaches not only circumvents accountability of the actors but also of state accountability more generally even though the state ultimately wielded much of the responsibility for past abuses.

## Conclusion

The experience of transitional justice in Indonesia illustrates some of the larger and continued problems of governance in post-Suharto Indonesia where the rules of the game have changed, but many of the players remain the same. Many from the New Order era have little interest either in looking backward, or downward to the larger social forces at play.

This has been manifested in Indonesia's legislature which is increasingly dysfunctional and not able to pass very much meaningful reform legislation. While the early years after Suharto produced some significant gains in reforms including constitutional amendments, legislative hearings, and even some concessions on human rights courts, this has become much more difficult over the past six years or so when legislative politics has shifted from what Harold Crouch calls "crisis driven politics" to "politics as usual" (Crouch 2010).

The failure of transitional justice also reflects an incomplete reform of the military. While the military has stepped away from the official arena of politics, it still wields a great deal of autonomy because of its financial independence and its territorial structure. Their involvement in all of the cases of alternative or "traditional" justice reflects their continued ability to set the agenda and protect their own interests.

Finally, we see a weak judicial system where courts either overstep their own jurisdiction as appears to be the case of the Constitutional Court case on the TRC legislation, or a court that appears unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators as evidenced by the Tanjung Priok case. The weakness of the judiciary is perhaps a key reason why

so little justice has been seen in the post-Suharto era.

It is also worth noting that even at the societal level, the calls for justice have sometimes been uneven and even muted. While many NGOs and other social organizations have been involved in the push for transitional justice, there is also reluctance and antipathy among broad swaths of the population about past events that frustrates activists as well. For example, on the issue of the 1965 killings, many Indonesians still accept the official state version of events that the killing of hundreds of thousands of alleged communists was necessary to save the Indonesian state. The presidential election of 2014 also featured, former Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto who was directly involved in several of Indonesia's most prominent human rights abuses suggesting a penchant at least among some in the general population to overlook his past record. These factors too certainly influenced the trajectory of transitional justice in Indonesia.

However, this is not simply to suggest that old elites and opponents of the justice agenda can do as they please. In fact, there have been some significant changes to human rights institutions in Indonesia including new legislation, a more empowered human rights commission, and a more vibrant civil society. This has meant that the players have had to adjust their strategies as a way to protect their interests and positions in the new system. In the area of transitional justice, this has involved a variety of strategies both institutional and extra-institutional.

The example of the TRC shows the way in which legislation in the democratic process can be coopted in ways that run contrary to the original aims of activists and victims organizations. Similarly, religious and other cultural practices have also faced cooptation in some instances. Opponents to transitional justice are not standing idle as the institutional rules have changed. Instead they are using a wide variety of tools to counter the efforts to revisit the past. Not all these strategies are successful, but this essay has tried to highlight some of the processes that have frustrated reformers because of the nebulous way in which legitimate institutions are used to hinder a political agenda around transitional justice.

While this article does not mean to suggest that all prospects for addressing past violations of human rights in Indonesia are doomed, it points to the particular challenges of states that undergo limited or gradual processes of transition in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Said differently, elite continuity may emerge for a variety of factors, but one of them may be the nature of the transitional process itself. For example Posner and Vermeule highlight four kinds of transitions: foreign-led, opposition-led, elite-led, and bargain and argue that foreign-led transitions tend to lead to more complete transitional justice while the other types lead to more limited forms (Posner and Vermeule 2004). This is because international organizations, often the United Nations, take on the cost of

the justice initiative and offer cover for the groups who support it while able to convince or coerce resistant groups. On the other hand, opposition-led and elite-led transitions are in varying degrees, reluctant to carry out justice because they themselves may have little to gain.

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia and Timor Leste can be characterized as foreign-led transitions and these are the two states that have had some degree of justice and reconciliation mechanisms put in place. The Philippines is arguably opposition-led and Indonesia's transition can be characterized as elite-led and both of these countries have had much less success. In these latter cases, the elites had a direct or indirect role in the violations of the past and are reluctant to introduce initiatives that would implicate themselves or force them to be accountable for past deeds. By extension, the gradual transition currently underway in Myanmar is likely to be a difficult road for advocates of transitional justice initiatives to traverse.

Globally, Indonesia's experience may also be a cautionary tale for transitional justice at a time when it is being embraced in the Middle East and North Africa and other parts of the world. It suggests that attention to national and local political and institutional contexts are also critical. Justice measures are prone to cooptation or failure particularly in the presence of elite continuity and a weak civil society. In fact, the early experiences of Latin America in the 1980s may be regarded as somewhat more successful than Indonesia in part because of a clear break from the past and a revival of a popular left which was wiped out in the context of Indonesia.

The push for justice and reconciliation in post-authoritarian Indonesia thus also complicates our understanding of the way norms of transitional justice appear to be spreading around the globe. On the one hand, this is not a norm adopted and implemented in an unproblematic fashion. In Indonesia, the pressures for transitional justice have appeared both externally and internally but its implementation has largely been a failure. At the same time, transitional justice mechanisms have also filtered down to local level initiatives which use local cultural practices as a way to achieve notions of justice and reconciliation that differ significantly from international and national models. That said, there are still many instances both at the national and local level where these institutions have been coopted using new strategies for political survival and domination.

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# Preemptive Transitional Justice Policies in Aceh, Indonesia

Suh Jiwon\*

The peace agreement for Aceh included standard post-conflict measures, such as a human rights court and a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC). Why were they neglected? If they were going to be neglected, why did the negotiators initially agree on them instead of choosing amnesty or nothing? I argue that their nature as preemptive policies is key to understanding why they were introduced but not implemented. Preemptive transitional justice policies are adopted when reluctant policymakers attempt to trump “tougher” options with more acceptable alternatives, such as the following preemption in *reformasi* Indonesia: a domestic human rights court against an international tribunal, and reconciliation through amnesty against a domestic court. Preemptive policies are also mobilized to redirect pressure for other goals, such as a referendum for independence in *reformasi* Aceh. The process whereby preemptive policies were practically disabled in post-authoritarian Indonesia crucially influenced the non-implementation of transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict Aceh. Meanwhile, aid measures have been implemented since the *reformasi* period, originally as attempts of preemption against the demands of the local society, and later as a less costly alternative to justice and truth.

**Keywords:** Aceh, Indonesia, transitional justice, truth and reconciliation commission, human rights court, *reformasi*, Komnas-HAM, preemptive policies

In 2005, the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) signed a peace agreement that included a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) and a human rights court for Aceh. To date, neither institution has been established. Why was this requirement of the peace settlement neglected in Aceh? Furthermore, why did the negotiators of the 2005 Helsinki peace talks agree to these standard transitional justice measures instead of choosing a blanket amnesty or nothing at all? What is the relationship of this neglect to the general Indonesian situation, where existing legal clauses failed to deliver actual practices?

Another post-conflict measure in Aceh is economic compensation to civilian victims.

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The Aceh Integration Agency (BRA) distributed social and economic aid to civilian victims. This distribution bypassed the legal labyrinth of the national system that requires conviction of identifiable perpetrators in human rights tribunals before awarding compensation to victims of gross human rights violations.<sup>1)</sup> Until recently, there had been no comparable schemes for other groups of victims, except those who suffered from communal violence in Eastern Indonesia.<sup>2)</sup> How can we explain this divergence from the national pattern?

This paper examines the post-conflict justice measures in Aceh, emphasizing their characteristics as preemptive measures against different sources of pressure. The national laws for transitional justice mechanisms and, to a lesser extent, the clauses of the Helsinki agreement were primarily intended to frustrate stronger policies by replacing a possible international court with a domestic court and a domestic court with a TRC. If the goal of major legislation was to preempt introduction of less favorable mechanisms with “softer” alternatives, the origin of Aceh-specific measures is traceable to previous attempts to preempt post-authoritarian Aceh nationalism, especially the call for a referendum from the Acehnese society. These attempts could not prevent escalation of conflict at that time. However, after successful travels to areas of communal violence in Eastern Indonesia, they became a standard solution for Indonesian conflict victims in an era of faded hopes for the success of standard models.

A legalistic approach that focuses on whether a post-conflict or post-authoritarian society has introduced relevant legal clauses and whether the clauses are in accordance with international norms provides inadequate explanation as to why these clauses have failed to be implemented. Such an approach also fails to explain why ad-hoc measures such as economic aid to civilian victims in Aceh were implemented without strong legal grounds (i.e., separate legislation). The problem is not the lack of international human rights norms; many Indonesians made serious and partly successful efforts to adopt laws to address gross human rights abuses. International pressure for introducing standard models of transitional justice, such as a TRC and a special court for human rights abuses, is likely to result in mere introduction of these models by reluctant political leaders without implementation or utilization. To explain implementation of the models, we must carefully examine the source of the pressure and its nature. Specifically in Aceh, we

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1) The government regulation on compensation, restitution, and rehabilitation for the victims of gross human rights violations in 2002 (*peraturan pemerintah* No. 3/2002) is connected to the law on the human rights court (No. 26/2000).

2) Recently, the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) began to provide medical aid (“*rehabilitasi*”) to victims of gross human rights violations, including but not limited to the 1965 Communist purges (the “65”). See Tim ELSAM (2013).

must look back to the “post-DOM” period—the era of liberalization between Suharto’s fall and intensified military operations—as a background to the post-conflict situation.<sup>3)</sup>

The case of Aceh shows that post-conflict societies may have their own trajectories of transitional justice going back to the previous juncture—in this case, the post-authoritarian transition of 1998. The Helsinki peace process, which ended the conflict between the nationalist GAM and the Indonesian security forces in the westernmost Indonesian province of Aceh, occurred years after intense international pressure on the Indonesian government concerning the East Timor militia violence in 1999 and the post-DOM Acehnese demands for justice and independence. It helps us to see the legacies of the international and local pressure after momentum of transition is largely gone.

This paper begins with a discussion of the backgrounds of preemptive transitional justice policies. Two Indonesian mechanisms for transitional justice, the (ad-hoc) human rights court and the TRC, were introduced as preemption of measures that were less preferable to policymakers. After looking into the legislation on the national level, I will examine the chain of preemption that repeated in the Helsinki peace talks. Then, I will discuss the absence of prosecution and the official truth-seeking of abuses of the Aceh conflict in the wider context of post-Suharto transitional justice, where transitional justice policies were adopted but practically disabled after pressure weakened. Lastly, I trace the origins of compensation measures in post-conflict Aceh back to the *reformasi* period, when the call for independence was strongest and reluctant political elites, who were unwilling to implement transitional justice policies, were faced with vocal victims.

## Preemptive Transitional Justice Policies

Legal scholars such as Orentlicher (1991) argue that states have “the duty to prosecute human rights violations of a prior regime” under international law. In reality, state leaders rarely make such a move out of pure commitment to the rule of law. Transitional justice mechanisms are often adopted as preemptive policies by reluctant political elites who want to block unwanted international pressure to address human rights abuses. As Roht-Arriaza (2006, 8–9) explains, with increasing consensus that “some kind of transitional justice measures were needed . . . by and large . . . the no-action option was no longer either desirable or viable.” Blanket amnesty for state and non-state agents at all levels is not an acceptable option either because it signals an unwillingness to prosecute

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3) For clarification on the widely-used term DOM (Military Operations Zone), see Bambang and Kammen (2000).

and, in the worst case, paves the way for intervention from foreign and international courts.

Preemptive policies mean policies adopted by reluctant transitional leaders in the face of worse alternatives without the intention to fully implement the adopted policies. When leaders believe that the costs of external pressure, such as international courts or threats of aid cut, are higher than the cost of introducing transitional justice mechanisms, they are likely to adopt some mechanism, such as truth commissions, trials, or a combination of the two. In this way, material and symbolic pressure “has succeeded in framing the states’ choice as one of which model of justice to adopt, not whether any should be adopted at all” (Subotić 2009, 22). Thus, more states become “instrumental adopters” (Subotić 2009) of transitional justice mechanisms.

However, as Levitsky and Way (2010) argue with the origin of “competitive authoritarianism” in the post-Cold War era as a response to external democratizing influence, pressure from donors or Western powers is usually selective, superficial, and, in the case of transitional justice, ephemeral. The transitional period is not infinite, and donor pressure moves from one transitional policy to another after a certain period of time. Therefore, reluctant leaders have strong incentives to adopt formal mechanisms of transitional justice and then wait until the external pressure goes away. If the adoption of formal mechanisms can be characterized as preemption against international pressure, full implementation of the mechanisms is not expected.

Preemptive policies do not necessarily indicate that domestic constituencies are hostile to transitional justice.<sup>4)</sup> Nor do they always target external pressure. Preemptive policies may be employed to trump less palatable transitional justice options—in this case, the promise of full implementation will evaporate once the “stronger” demands are gone—or to placate domestic pressure for policies other than transitional justice. To persuade reluctant political elites to implement preemptive policies, however, local pressure must be able to transform itself into a credible and sustainable threat.<sup>5)</sup>

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4) Grodsky (2009) characterizes truth commissions in Serbia and Croatia as compromise policies devised to placate both international constituencies that demand compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and domestic constituencies that are against the ICTY. Not all preemptive policies involve such a contrast between international and domestic constituencies, however.

5) Simmons (2009, 78) discusses insincere ratification of human rights treaties that is “encouraged if governments are offered tangible benefits for ratification.” Preemptive policies as I introduce here differ from her “false positives” in that threats or possible costs, rather than benefits, are central in providing motives for introducing these policies. Moreover, preemptive policies do not involve miscalculation and poor information, as she assumes; I characterize reluctant governments as well-informed actors who are familiar with addressing their options against different sources of pressure.

The absence of a TRC and prosecution of past human rights abuses in post-conflict Aceh parallels a similar deficiency at the national level. The Indonesian TRC has never been formed after more than a decade of legislative process. Meanwhile, only three instances of human rights abuses—the East Timor militia violence in 1999, the Tanjung Priok shootings in 1984, and the violence in Abepura, Papua in 2001—reached the Indonesian human rights court. Commentators who attribute the failure of Indonesian transitional justice mechanisms to legal technicalities—such as the discrepancy between the Indonesian constitution and the law of the human rights court regarding retroactivity (Clarke 2008) or the incorrect adoption of international human rights instruments (Agung 2009)—overlook the nature of the mechanisms as preemptive policies, although legal technicalities provide good excuses for shelving inconvenient measures of justice and truth, as we will see with the Aceh TRC.

Alternatively, the failure of implementation may be because the responsible actors are different. In Indonesia, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his administration were not responsible for the major legislation regarding the human rights court (2000) and the TRC (2004). Nevertheless, the unwillingness to implement the predecessor's policies was not the only problem. The previous administrations were not enthusiastic to introduce and implement those policies either, as we will see. Moreover, the continuity of leadership was apparent in the Aceh peace process. The Helsinki agreement was a major achievement of President Yudhoyono, and the GAM has had a dominant presence in Aceh politics since then.

International Relations (IR) literature has extensively discussed the impact of international human rights norms and states' compliance with them (Hafner-Burton and Ron 2009). While the introduction of transitional justice is associated with the availability of international norms, it does not directly engage in the debates on the "compliance gap." Despite recent institutionalization, norms regarding transitional justice are closer to guidelines than codified treaties, which makes it tricky to discuss "enforcement" of international transitional justice norms.

What we can note from the literature instead is the critical quality of transitional democracies, when mobilization of human rights has a higher value than under stable regimes (Simmons 2009). The human rights legislation of Indonesian *reformasi*—the human rights law (1999), the human rights court law (2000), and the TRC law (2004)—were created under this mobilization, in addition to international pressure.

### Preemptive Legislation: 1999–2004

A brief human rights court provision first appeared in the draft of the human rights bill, which was passed before the East Timor referendum. The bill, prepared by the Ministry of Justice, was a component of a political reform package, together with new laws regulating elections and party politics (*Kompas*, April 12, 1999). The composition of the DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat; Indonesian parliament), elected under the New Order, was not beneficial to these ideas. Out of 499 members of the DPR, 75 were from the Armed Forces and 323 belonged to Golkar, the New Order's governing party.<sup>6)</sup> Hamid Awaludin, the future Minister of Justice in the Yudhoyono administration and the head of the Indonesian delegation team for the Helsinki peace talks, argued that the debate should be delayed until new members entered the DPR, because "old elements" might protect the interests of the New Order regime (*Kompas*, June 28, 1999). However, the government successfully sought support for this bill from all parliamentary factions except the Armed Forces, which consistently opposed the human rights court provision.

The crisis from the East Timor referendum hastened the legislation of the human rights court bill and strengthened its nature as a preemptive policy. The human rights court bill was one of the two-pronged strategies of the Indonesian government against international pressure for accountability. Another strategy was the inquiry team called KPP-HAM, which included members from the Indonesian human rights commission (Komnas-HAM) and NGOs. The formation of KPP-HAM was a response to the UN Commission on Human Rights special session, which issued a resolution demanding Indonesian accountability for human rights violations (KPP-HAM 2000, 13–14; Cohen *et al.* 2007, 12). The military did not obstruct KPP-HAM's activities out of concern that an international tribunal could intervene if the KPP-HAM's results failed to satisfy the international audience (Mizuno 2003, 136).

The lack of retroactivity in both Habibie's *perpu* (government regulation in lieu of law)<sup>7)</sup> and the subsequent draft of the human rights court bill indicates the unwillingness of the Indonesian government to actually establish a human rights court for the East Timor militia violence. The *perpu* could not be used as a legal basis for prosecution of the militia violence in East Timor, most of which occurred before October 8, 1999, the day President Habibie announced it. Although new Minister of Justice Yusril Ihza Mahendra replaced Habibie's *perpu* with a new draft law because of the absence of retroactivity, the

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6) PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; United Development Party) had 89 seats and PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia; Indonesian Democratic Party) had only 10 because of the election boycott by the Megawati faction, which built the PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle).

7) To remain effective, *perpu* must be approved by the parliament.

new draft, written in November 1999, also lacked a retroactivity clause. The new draft law stipulated that all past human rights abuses would be sent to a TRC. The retroactivity debate was revived only when Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozias van Aarsten raised the issue (*Kompas*, January 21, 2000), which shows that both the Habibie and Wahid administrations may have planned to keep the human rights court option only until the international attention went away.

The 2000 law, a measure to block an international tribunal for East Timor, was intensively discussed and unanimously passed after the killing of three UN humanitarian workers in Atambua, West Timor attracted international attention once again.<sup>8)</sup> The parliamentary debate ended without much disagreement. Most factions, especially TNI-Polri (the Armed Forces) and PDI-P, indicated their strong support for the TRC as an institution to address past human rights abuses in the future, which implied their reluctant approval of the ad-hoc human rights court provision for past abuses.<sup>9)</sup>

Just as the human rights law anticipated the human rights court, the formation of the TRC was mandated by the law of the human rights court. Habibie's *perpu* made the TRC a strong alternative to prosecution. The TRC drafting team worked closely with the parliamentary discussion regarding the human rights court law.<sup>10)</sup> After the enactment of the human rights court law in November 2000, the TRC bill was shelved at the State Secretariat and then entered the DPR in May 2003. At that time, threats of prosecution still existed. For example, a Komnas-HAM team was extensively researching human rights abuses of the Suharto era going back to the Communist purge from 1965–66.

Amnesty was the central feature of the 2004 TRC law. The function of the Indonesian TRC as an alternative to prosecution is highlighted by the fact that it was designed to address the same set of cases—genocide and crimes against humanity that had occurred before the enactment of the human rights court law—with ad-hoc human rights courts and nothing more. Not only did the Indonesian government welcome the idea of amnesty

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8) In a parliamentary session, the Minister of Justice and Human Rights expressed his concern regarding the Atambua, West Timor case, which might revive calls for an international tribunal for East Timor (Sekjen DPR-RI 2009, 897–903).

9) The composition of the DPR changed dramatically after the 1999 parliamentary election. Golkar (26% of the seats), PPP (12.6%), and TNI-Polri (7.6%) remained strong; however, PDI-P won 33.1% of the seats, forming the largest bloc in the DPR. New parties, such as Wahid's PKB (National Awakening Party) and Amien Rais's PAN (National Mandate Party), also won a sizeable number of seats (11% and 7.4%, respectively).

10) In May 2000, the team already had the fourth version of the draft law (*Kompas*, May 3, 2000). The TRC had been promoted by NGOs, Komnas-HAM, and figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid since the early *reformasi* period.

by importing South Africa's world-famous model,<sup>11)</sup> but it also added the condition that to become eligible for compensation, victims must forgive the perpetrators who reveal whatever truths, closing the possibility of an ad-hoc human rights court for the concerned case permanently.<sup>12)</sup> Though not a body for amnesia (*lembaga amnesia*) as Golkar proposed earlier (*Kompas*, March 14, 2000) or a reconciliation commission without "truths" as the military faction suggested (Sekjen DPR-RI n.d., 596), the central vision of the Indonesian TRC was "reconciliation through amnesty."

Opposition from organized victims and many NGOs notwithstanding,<sup>13)</sup> parliamentary special committee members approved the bill in September 2004 as one of the last bills approved by parliamentarians whose term was about to end. All major parliamentary factions supported the final bill (*ibid.*, 923–945). The TRC would not have received such widespread support, particularly from Golkar and TNI/Polri, without the amnesty provision. As one of her last tasks as outgoing president, President Megawati signed the bill the following month after her defeat by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The timing shows that neither parliamentarians nor the president was enthusiastic with the bill.

The three laws discussed here—the human rights law, the human rights court law, and the TRC law—were products of Indonesian *reformasi* and continuing international pressure. The Indonesian government had been familiar with international accusations of human rights violations and demands for accountability throughout the 1990s, starting with the Dili massacre in 1991. Furthermore, liberalization after Suharto's fall enabled Indonesian domestic forces to make similar and more detailed demands for accountability and truth-seeking against past human rights abuses under the New Order. In contrast to the hopes of the earlier *reformasi* period, however, preemptive transitional justice policies failed to bring the anticipated outcomes as credible threats disappeared.

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11) Among many similar institutions around the globe, the South African TRC is the only one with the power to grant amnesty to specific individuals (Wiebelhaus-Brahm 2010; Hayner 2011).

12) According to the law, amnesty is granted by the president upon recommendation from the TRC. The commissioners can make recommendations for amnesty even if victims do not accept an apology from the perpetrator(s). Amnesty is the precondition of compensation, though it does not automatically guarantee compensation.

13) Organized victims almost unanimously opposed the proposed TRC. In a public hearing of the parliament, representatives from the Trisakti shooting (1998), the Semanggi shootings (1998 and 1999), the May riots (1998), Talangsari (1989), and activist kidnappings (1997–98) made clear their support for prosecution and their opposition to the proposed TRC (Sekjen DPR-RI n.d., 1203–1261). Only the representative from one of the "65" groups indicated his conditional support and opposed only Article 27, which linked amnesty with compensation (*Berita KontraS* No. 05/IX-X/2004).

## The Helsinki Talks: “Reconciliation through Amnesty”

The 2005 Helsinki peace talks illustrate the ways the Indonesian government used different transitional justice options for the purpose of preemption. The Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 brought the Indonesian government and GAM to the negotiation table from January to July 2005.<sup>14</sup> Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari mediated the talks between the delegation of the Indonesian government, headed by Minister of Justice and Human Rights Hamid Awaludin, and GAM representatives, led by Malik Mahmud. Instead of independence or a referendum, GAM received a special provision permitting local political parties in the region, together with amnesty for political prisoners and reintegration funds.

The position of the Indonesian government delegation was firm. From the very beginning, it sought “reconciliation through amnesty” coupled with economic integration. Hamid Awaludin claimed that “the history of Indonesia is a history of amnesty from time past to the present” (Hamid 2009, 114). The Indonesian delegation opposed any idea of international participation and repeatedly emphasized that GAM also perpetrated human rights abuses, suggesting that an international court would be dangerous to the rebels as well. The usual chain of arguments appears clearly in Hamid’s memoirs. When the possibility of an international court was raised, he argued that Indonesia had a domestic human rights court (*ibid.*, 124). Later, it was advocated that human rights abuses must be settled through a TRC rather than a court (*ibid.*, 210). Then the basic principle that human rights is “a matter for the future and not a matter of the past” (*ibid.*, 229) was reiterated. Both the human rights court and the TRC were used to trump less palatable measures.

In the end, past human rights abuses were secondary. The GAM delegation raised the issue of a referendum in the first round of talks. After it became apparent, as expected, that the Indonesian government would never make such a concession, the issue of human rights abuses was addressed. Some GAM negotiators, such as the former political prisoner Nurdin Abdurrachman, argued that all offenders must be brought to an international court and an independent international organization should conduct an investigation (*ibid.*, 121). After the third round of talks, however, human rights disappeared from the agenda, and local political parties became the new agenda.

The provisions regarding human rights and justice were not contentious issues in

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14) Missbach (2012, 120–122) notes that, with President Yudhoyono’s inauguration, meetings and consultations occurred between GAM and the Indonesian government even before the tsunami. GAM was not in a position to continue armed struggle. Nevertheless, Missbach acknowledges that the tsunami facilitated the peace process.



the final rounds of negotiation (Aspinall 2008). Brief clauses regarding a human rights court (“a human rights court will be established for Aceh”) and a TRC (“a commission for truth and reconciliation will be established for Aceh by the Indonesian commission of truth and reconciliation with the task of formulating and determining reconciliation measures”) were included in the final version of the MoU.<sup>15</sup> Provisions for compensation and restitution were also included.

The Indonesian government learned from interacting with the international community that introducing human rights provisions on paper as preemptive measures would not harm their position. Similarly, Acehese campaigners learned that raising human rights issues would help draw international support and mobilize widespread discontent against repression.<sup>16</sup> The salience of the human rights issue in Aceh from 1998 to 2001 must have influenced GAM negotiators’ initial support for strong measures against past human rights abuses when civil society observers were watching. Nevertheless, human rights issues did not prevent GAM negotiators from moving to the next agenda item regarding power-sharing. At the same time, the final agreement still fully incorporated the language of human rights and post-conflict justice.

Post-Helsinki Aceh did not return to the violent past. Local power was transferred to the newly elected governor (elected in 2006 and 2012) and DPRA (Aceh Parliament) members (elected in 2009 and 2014) through elections arranged according to the Helsinki agreement. Still, the two major institutions for transitional justice, the Human Rights Court and the TRC for Aceh, have yet to be established.

### **Disabled Clauses: The Human Rights Court and the TRC**

International agencies played a limited, supporting role in post-conflict Aceh. They knew about the “allergic” response of the Indonesian government to their presence and made stability and peace, rather than human rights, their top priority (Barron and Burke 2008). This reprioritization does not mean that the impacts of international pressure and human rights norms were absent in post-conflict Aceh. The preemptive transitional justice policies of post-authoritarian Indonesia left profound legacies in Aceh. These policies

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15) The English translation is as in Hamid (2009, 314).

16) An anthropologist recalls her visit to the GAM commander-in-chief when she was introduced to victims of abuses by the Indonesian military. She was encouraged to listen to their stories and take their pictures (Drexler 2008, 24–25). Another researcher notes that Acehese frequently showed her pictures of maltreatment by Indonesian soldiers, though the sources of those pictures were unclear (Missbach 2012, 103).

formed a larger legal framework for post-conflict mechanisms and established the precedent of non-implementation of those clauses on paper.

### *Human Rights Court: An Abandoned Path*

Regarding the human rights court for Aceh, the 2006 Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) stipulated that it would not apply retroactively. Many in Aceh felt that the LoGA betrayed the MoU agreement because of this lack of retroactivity. Contrary to the initial understanding of some Acehnese groups such as the SIRA (Aceh Referendum Information Center) that “all those responsible for human rights violations in the past have been given immunity from prosecution” (Murizal 2010, 304), however, the LoGA did not neutralize the national law regarding the human rights court. As long as the 2000 law regarding the human rights court remains in effect, there has always been a mechanism to prosecute abuses in the national court. Therefore, criticisms against the human rights provisions in the LoGA—such as “the MoU’s provisions on human rights were virtually abandoned by the DPR” (Crouch 2010, 310)—are exaggerated. A local academic who drafted the human rights section in the DPRD’s (provincial council) version of the LoGA confirmed that changes in Jakarta were largely “matters of paraphrasing.”<sup>17</sup>

In principle, human rights abuses occurring after the enactment of the human rights court law can be prosecuted in the permanent court of human rights located in four cities throughout Indonesia, including Medan in neighboring North Sumatra. Prior to prosecution, a “pro-justicia” inquiry by Komnas-HAM must occur.<sup>18</sup> Similar abuses that took place before November 2000 can be sent to an ad-hoc human rights court established by the president upon recommendation from the parliament.

Why was the existing national human rights court system not used for Aceh? Certainly, the peace versus justice dilemma was considered. A leading Komnas-HAM commissioner admitted that the body did not conduct preliminary inquiry for Aceh because of this dilemma.<sup>19</sup> However, the dilemma does not fully explain the absence of prosecu-

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17) Author’s interview, November 16, 2010 (Banda Aceh). In accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedure under which the data collection activities of this research were regulated, I do not reveal identities of the interviewees. Unless otherwise indicated, Indonesian was used for the interviews, and I translated them. After the Helsinki talks, the DPRD—later called DPRA to put an emphasis on its special status—formed a special committee to produce a local draft of the autonomy bill (Rusdiono and Mujiyanto 2009, 305–306; Crouch 2010, 307–308; Drexler 2008, 258–259). The draft was sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs in Jakarta, and then to the parliament by the president with revisions by the ministry.

18) Both KPP-HAM and the pro-justicia inquiry refer to preliminary investigation by Komnas-HAM according to the human rights court law.

19) Author’s interview, January 7, 2011 (Jakarta).

tion in post-conflict Aceh. If peace talks had been conducted in the early *reformasi* period or in late 2002 when Komnas-HAM commissioners just began their new term, abandoning prosecution altogether would have been much more controversial. To understand the notable absence of prosecutions, we must consider the trajectories of Indonesian transitional justice since *reformasi*, which influenced post-conflict justice in Aceh in crucial ways.

To explain the absence of a preliminary inquiry as in the 2000 law, we must first consider the weaknesses of the national human rights court system, the timing of the transition to peace, and the (un-)development of the prosecutorial approach at the national level. This special court, which incorporated international norms into a national law by duplicating the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to preempt an international court,<sup>20</sup> ceased working after international pressure was gone.

By late 2005, the failure of the human rights court was apparent. Only two ad-hoc human rights courts—one for referendum violence in East Timor (1999) and another for the Tanjung Priok shooting of Muslim protesters (1984)—were formed. The permanent human rights court was used only once for a case in Abepura, Papua. The records of all these courts disappointed supporters of the new court system. Indictments were very weak, almost guaranteeing acquittals despite some judges' attempts to convict (Cohen 2003; Cammack 2010). Only two individuals were prosecuted in the Abepura case, and both were acquitted in September 2005. The ad-hoc courts made several convictions only to be overturned on appeal. In 2006, the year the LoGA was passed, the only conviction that had not yet been reversed was that of East Timorese militia leader Eurico Guterres, who was released in March 2008.

Therefore, when Aceh finally achieved negotiated peace, Komnas-HAM commissioners were not prepared to lose face again by producing another report doomed to fail. New pro-justicia reports by the Komnas-HAM were ignored by the Prosecutor General's Office and neglected by the parliament and the president when their recommendations were necessary.<sup>21</sup> This indifference embarrassed the Komnas-HAM and its commis-

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20) As far as I know, the Indonesian human rights court had no contemporary parallels. A great majority of transitional trials against human rights abuses use the existing criminal laws rather than special laws incorporating international human rights norms into domestic legal systems. Since 2009, Bangladesh, Uganda, and Kenya established or attempted to establish a special domestic court for international crimes, under the threat of ICC prosecution in the case of Uganda and Kenya.

21) The report on the May 1998 riots was submitted in September 2003 and another followed in September 2004 regarding a recent case in Papua ("Wasior/Wamena"), which does not require recommendations by the parliament and the president. The 2009 DPR recommendation of an ad-hoc human rights court for 1997–98 activist kidnappings was an exceptional move.

sioners. The commissioners, who were “extremely cautious in pro-justicia inquiries”<sup>22)</sup> from the beginning, hesitated to produce more pro-justicia reports, fearing the credibility of the institution would be lost if prosecutors refused to take up the cases.

Komnas-HAM, the gatekeeper for the human rights court system, has not played a major role in inquiries into human rights abuses in Aceh for the past two decades. The commission was established in 1993, several years after the peak of the counter-insurgency campaign in Aceh. Except for a surprise visit to Lhokseumawe to inspect a detention center (Jones 1994, 128–129), there is no sign that the institution paid any attention to Aceh before *reformasi*. In its annual reports from 1994 to 1997, Aceh does not look different from other provinces in Indonesia. No special section was devoted to Aceh, unlike East Timor (NCHRI 1995; Komnas-HAM 1995; 1996; INCHR 1997).

During *reformasi*, Komnas-HAM responded to the human rights advocacy regarding Aceh by making a three-day trip to witness the excavation of mass graves in August 1998 (INCHR 1998); however, the commission failed to take significant initiatives. The Komnas-HAM sent two commissioners to the independent investigation team formed in the aftermath of the Bantaqiah killings in 1999, but did not lead the team.<sup>23)</sup> The situation did not change substantially even after the 2000 law on the human rights court gave a crucial mandate of pro-justicia inquiry to the institution. A pro-justicia team for Aceh was never established, except one for the Bumi Flora killings in August 2001.<sup>24)</sup> Between 2002 and 2007, the Komnas-HAM plenary session (*paripurna*) refused all proposals to put ongoing and past abuses in Aceh on the human rights court track.<sup>25)</sup>

22) Author’s email correspondence with a former Komnas-HAM commissioner, September 8, 2010. The 2002–07 Komnas-HAM was very careful with forming pro-justicia teams. It usually required at least one or two non-pro-justicia teams, variously called study teams or monitoring teams, to conduct research before commissioners formed preliminary inquiry teams according to the human rights court law.

23) The killing of Teungku Bantaqiah and more than 50 of his pupils on July 23, 1999 in West Aceh is also called “Beutong Ateuh.” Bantaqiah was one of the few independent Islamic scholars in Aceh who was set free upon Habibie’s amnesty. Aspinall (2009a, 99) notes that “soldiers, who apparently believed the stories of Bantaqiah’s invulnerability, used high-powered weapons and explosives to kill him.” KontraS revealed the killings in a press conference in Jakarta, opening the way for an independent commission.

24) See HRW (2002) and Komnas-HAM (2003, 124–129) for the Komnas-HAM response to the Bumi Flora massacre. In August 2001, 31 people were shot by an unidentified group of armed men on a plantation of Bumi Flora, East Aceh. Komnas-HAM commissioners began inquiries upon the request from its regional office but postponed the decision to create a pro-justicia team several times, particularly after an official letter from the Aceh governor asking to stop inquiries. In April 2002, they finally formed the team, which stopped activities without progress when the commissioners’ term expired. For more on Komnas-HAM teams for Aceh, see Amnesty International (2013, 35–37).

25) The plenary session of the Komnas-HAM did not approve the recommendation for pro-justicia

In 2008, new commissioners formed a team for DOM Aceh (Tim Pengkajian Kekerasan di Aceh), together with teams on “Petrus” and the 1965 communist purges.<sup>26)</sup> The commission also widened its scope to the pre-DOM era (from 1976) and the later post-DOM era (from 1998 to 2003). Unlike the “Petrus” and 65 teams, which produced pro-justicia reports in July 2012, the Aceh team stopped its activities before the pro-justicia stage. Instead, the Aceh team merely suggested “the third way,” allegedly a combination of the human rights court and the TRC, but practically abandonment of the human rights court track (Asiah *et al.* 2010, 21–23).<sup>27)</sup>

Five years later, Otto Syamsuddin Ishak, an Acehnese sociologist and researcher at Jakarta NGO Imparsial who actively wrote about human rights abuses in Aceh, became the head of Komnas-HAM. Finally, Aceh got its own KPP-HAM, just like East Timor. Although the legal status of the two teams is similar, in practice, the 2013 pro-justicia team for Aceh is very different from the KPP-HAM for East Timor in 1999. Except for the team’s five priority cases that occurred between 1998 and 2004 (*Kompas*, November 21, 2013),<sup>28)</sup> few details about the team are known to the public.<sup>29)</sup> It is an exclusively Komnas-HAM team, which includes no single member from outside the institution (KontraS 2014). Even if the team produces recommendation for a human rights court based on evidence of gross human rights violations, the possibility that such a court will actually materialize is very low, which leads us back to the larger problem: the failure of the preemptive human rights court.

Meanwhile, the human rights court in the LoGA was not established either. No one has a stake in a court for the post-Helsinki era only. Instead, the institution expected to

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↘ inquiry from the Ad-hoc Team for Aceh, which monitored ongoing violence and compiled 70 cases of abuses. Instead, the commission decided to make four new teams regarding different categories of abuses—which is synonymous with disapproval of a pro-justicia inquiry team (plenary session decisions, March 31, 2004, in Komnas-HAM 2004). The Suharto team (Tim Pengkajian Pelanggaran HAM Soeharto Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia) and the disappearance team (Tim Pengkajian Penghilangan Orang Secara Paksa 2004) also made frustrated recommendations to conduct further inquiries on Aceh.

26) Komnas-HAM formed these two teams after reviewing the “Suharto team” case file from 2003. “Petrus” refers to extrajudicial killings of alleged criminals in the eighties.

27) In 2012, the 65 team made similar “third way” suggestions, though they were recommendations from a pro-justicia team, if it matters at all.

28) The five cases are Rumah Geudong, Simpang KKA, Bumi Flora, Jambo Kepoh, and Bener Meriah. The 1999 Independent Commission already covered Rumah (Rumoh) Geudong and Simpang KKA, while Komnas-HAM made some inquiries into Bumi Flora.

29) As of July 2014, the team finished inquiries into just one case, Simpang KKA, out of the prioritized five. Komnas-HAM Commissioner Roichatul Aswidah’s comment, July 3, 2014, at a public forum hosted by Imparsial in Jakarta.

assume a major role in settling past accounts in Aceh was the second half of the “third way”—the TRC.

*Truth and Reconciliation Commission: The Permanent Alternative*

For more than a decade since the *reformasi*, the TRC has been a permanent alternative to or a preemptive policy against prosecution. The TRC law existed for two years from 2004 to 2006, until the Constitutional Court repealed the law. For the rest of the period, the TRC as an alternative has survived in written drafts in various stages. After the 2006 decision, the TRC bill was never revived, complicating the fate of the Aceh TRC. Truth-seeking, reconciliation, and amnesty through a TRC were frustrated after threats of international and domestic prosecution disappeared.

While the government opposed prosecution in a human rights tribunal in Helsinki, an explicit amnesty for crimes perpetrated during the conflict was not given. The absence of an amnesty clause for state agents can be explained in two ways. First, the Indonesian government knew well the international law claims against impunity and did not want to include such a controversial provision in the MoU.<sup>30)</sup> Second, if an Aceh TRC were established by the 2004 national TRC law, amnesty would have been granted to perpetrators and the human rights court would be accordingly closed, at least for crimes before November 2000. An amnesty provision would have been redundant.

The TRC was a reality to come in the near future from the perspective of participants in the Helsinki talks and the legislation of LoGA. The activities of the TRC commissioner selection committee coincided with the Helsinki peace process. The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights was responsible for both the Helsinki talks and completion of the candidate list. According to the 2004 TRC law, commissioners were supposed to take their oaths in April 2005, but the committee for commissioner selection was formed on March 28, 2005 between the second and third round of the Helsinki talks. Then, in August 2005—the month the MoU was signed—the list of 42 candidates was sent to the president, who had to select 21 from the list. Did this preliminary list come out because of the Helsinki talks? For the next 16 months until the Constitutional Court repealed the TRC law, President Yudhoyono never proceeded to the next phase of commissioner selection.<sup>31)</sup>

NGOs and victim representatives filed for judicial review of specific provisions of

30) Amnesty for GAM and Acehnese political prisoners cannot be interpreted as amnesty for crimes against humanity. See Jeffery (2012) for amnesty in post-conflict Aceh.

31) Selection of 21 commissioners by the president was not the final stage. The list was then to be sent to the parliament where candidates could be rejected and replaced with additional candidates from the original list.

the TRC law—those linking compensation and amnesty and closing the possibility of ad-hoc human rights tribunals. They were patient observers in the beginning. In March 2006—after 18 months from the enactment of the law—they went to the Constitutional Court. In December 2006, the court repealed the entire law rather than specific clauses. It was four months after the LoGA was enacted that the Constitutional Court annulled the TRC law.

The legal-technical question that arose from the Constitutional Court decision has been difficult for Aceh. In Aceh, there have been generally two positions regarding the future of the Aceh TRC in the face of the Constitutional Court decision. Some believed that the Aceh TRC must be formed under a properly established national TRC, because the LoGA stipulates that the Aceh TRC is an inseparable part of the national TRC. Others supported an independent Aceh TRC as soon as possible. Unlike the Helsinki MoU, which stipulated that the Aceh TRC should be formed by the national TRC, Article 229 (1) of the LoGA—“to seek the truth and reconciliation, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission shall be established in Aceh by virtue of this Law”—already established the Aceh TRC. Thus, according to this position, Aceh needs only the working procedures of the TRC by provincial regulation (*qanun*), not another legal umbrella at the national level.

The slow but positive progress in Jakarta strengthened the national-TRC-first position. The Directorate-General of Human Rights, an office under the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, formed a drafting team in 2007, which produced an “academic draft” of the new TRC bill early in 2008 (*VHR News*, February 4, 2008). Throughout 2009 and 2010, public hearings for the new bill were held several times in Jakarta and Banda Aceh, to which representatives of the Aceh government were invited (Aspinall and Fajran 2014, 103). Then the bill was submitted to the president in July 2010 and entered the 2011 National Legislation Program (*prolegnas*).

The momentum of transition had long gone in Jakarta. In a survey of nine individual parliamentarians from all major factions that comprised the 2009–14 DPR, seven respondents—except those from Golkar and Hanura—indicated their support for the TRC (*Asasi*, March–April 2011). However, nominal support from legislators may in fact conceal complex layers of political positions, or no position. A representative from the ruling Democratic Party compared the court and TRC strategies and supported the TRC: “I think it is not necessary to bring them [cases of past human rights abuses] to court. . . . [Because] our court system is bad and corrupt . . . therefore, the TRC is more likely to guarantee processes that are fairer, and outputs are more likely to fulfill the sense of justice, *close to fair justice*.”<sup>32)</sup> Later, when asked regarding the willingness of the govern-

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32) Author’s interview, January 4, 2011 (Jakarta). Italics originally in English.

ment to establish the new TRC, his answer was rather different:

The problem is, *what is the relevance, what is the significance* . . . also, it seems like the bill does not get support from society [*masyarakat*], and society is not concerned with it any more . . . there must be a process of public pressure towards the government, the parliament, and the president to accelerate discussion of this bill. I believe this bill lost its legitimacy. . . . If you talk about [transitional justice], it is not solely to be seen through the TRC law. For me, the TRC law is, please go ahead [*silahkan saja*], [but] not necessary, no.<sup>33)</sup>

For him, there would be no point of proceeding with the TRC bill without public pressure. Meanwhile, TRC supporters were already disappointed to see the proposal of a truth commission being used as a tool for preemption and foot-dragging. Instead of a TRC, one of the human rights workers who previously led the TRC campaign supported a “fast-track” alternative:

About the TRC bill, I personally feel now it is not so necessary to submit the bill. Why? Because it is like giving . . . an alibi to the state for not handling past violations in a prompt manner, because they can say this bill is now being discussed. The bill is still in the process of discussion, so wait for the bill to be finished. Because of that, they are able to do nothing during the period the law is being made. Therefore, we are giving time for the government or the state to avoid responsibility, to get away from responsibility—this is a sort of alibi. However, making this law will take a long time. . . . I believe, politically, it is not so urgent to discuss this bill now. What is more urgent is that the current government finds a pragmatic policy to resolve past cases, so that Indonesian society is not burdened with the history of the past cases. Therefore, there must be a political exit for the past, and it is not necessary to form a truth commission by making a law—it is enough if the president can issue a government regulation or a presidential decree, establish a commission, and this commission is assigned to clarify what happened in the past, and the government gives apologies and also rehabilitation and compensation to victims. Case closed, so that one does not keep being brought to the past. . . . Without something like this, I believe Indonesia will just spin around [*saya kira Indonesia ini berputar-putar*].<sup>34)</sup>

The idea of a TRC had officially existed since the early *reformasi* period—as a draft law, a law, an academic draft law, etc. Although the TRC was never formed in practice, the alternative was always conveniently used as an “alibi” for government inaction, or a preemptive alternative against prosecution. As one human rights activist states: “[when they demanded prosecution] the Prosecutor General’s Office and the DPR said several times, ‘Wait for the TRC to come’ (*Nanti tunggu KKR*).”<sup>35)</sup>

Currently, the slow and protracted legislative process has halted once again as

33) Author’s interview, January 4, 2011 (Jakarta). Italics originally in English.

34) Author’s interview, January 7, 2011 (Jakarta).

35) Author’s interview, December 20, 2010 (Jakarta).



President Yudhoyono withdrew the bill from the DPR and sent it back to the Coordinating Ministry for Legal, Political and Security Affairs (Wahyuningroem 2013, 128). It is unlikely that the bill will be revived after so many years of indifference. Neither would a “fast-track” alternative—an administrative measure that supposedly will offer reparations and an official apology from President Yudhoyono to victims of past human rights abuses—materialize without threats or vigorous pressure.<sup>36)</sup>

Those who believed early on that waiting for the national TRC was not very promising supported a stand-alone Aceh TRC. In December 2008, Aceh NGOs and victim associations submitted a TRC bill to the DPRD and the Aceh provincial government. The Aceh parliament put this bill into the local legislative program in February 2011.<sup>37)</sup> The bill remained dormant for two years before the TRC suddenly became a hot issue in the middle of the conflict between Jakarta and Banda Aceh over Aceh’s decision to adopt the GAM banner as its official flag (ICG 2013). The Aceh parliament invited local and national human rights activists for a public hearing on the local TRC bill. After declaring that the bill for a stand-alone Aceh TRC should be passed, Aceh representatives travelled to Jakarta to consult with the central government, where they were told once again to wait for the national TRC (*KBR68H*, April 19, 2013; April 25, 2013).

Against Jakarta’s will, Aceh passed the TRC qanun at the end of the year. The qanun challenges the way truth and reconciliation has been treated in Indonesia as a preemption against prosecution. The body of the qanun is largely based on the 2008 draft from Aceh NGOs and victim groups; however, the amnesty provision of the 2008 draft is nowhere to be found.<sup>38)</sup> Truth-seeking and reconciliation are reserved for human rights violations of the non-gross varieties—social, economic, and cultural rights first, and then civil and political rights.<sup>39)</sup> Moreover, the TRC qanun explicitly denies that reconciliation forecloses the possibility of prosecution.<sup>40)</sup> The Aceh TRC will adjust itself accordingly once the national TRC is formed;<sup>41)</sup> until then, the new idea of “TRC-for-non-gross-violations” will be a guiding principle for Aceh.

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36) See Wahyuningroem (2013, 128–129) for dialogues for “fast-track” alternatives between the human rights community and the Yudhoyono administration since 2010, which started out as a discussion of follow-up measures of the 2009 parliamentary recommendations on the forced disappearance of activists (1997–98).

37) The outgoing provincial councilors put it in the 2009 legislation program, but it was missing in the 2010 program of newly elected members.

38) Another major difference is the period for truth-seeking. While the 2008 draft proposed to cover the period between 1989 and 2005, the new qanun covers the period going back to 1976 and before. My gratitude goes to Chairul Fahmi, who kindly forwarded the new qanun to me.

39) See Article 19 on revealing truth (*pengungkapan kebenaran*) of the 2013 qanun.

40) See Article 31(4) of qanun Aceh.

41) See Article 48(4) of qanun Aceh.

Is the qanun another bargaining chip of the Aceh government to mobilize against Jakarta? Or, have Aceh politicians begun to feel that some local reconciliation initiatives are necessary? If Aceh politicians wanted to avoid responsibilities or risks that would disrupt the mutually beneficial relationship with political elites in Jakarta, with whom they make allies for presidential and national parliamentary elections, it is difficult to see how and why this preference for avoidance has changed. Furthermore, newly excavated pieces of truth or even a compilation of widely known facts will bring embarrassment to individuals and groups involved in grave events of the past, including former GAM cadres who dominate Aceh politics today. Clearly, Jakarta is not happy with the new TRC qanun. Minister of Home Affairs argued that Aceh should have waited until the national legislation would materialize (*BBC Indonesia*, December 27, 2013). The Ministry also sent a letter of clarification to Aceh governor, indicating that all clauses on truth-seeking, reparations, reconciliation, and data management—i.e. virtually all substances of the qanun—must be eliminated from the qanun (Menteri Dalam Negeri 2014). Whether the TRC qanun would be implemented despite these barriers is yet to be seen.

In sum, the national TRC was a preemptive policy against the court mechanism, and it complicated truth-seeking in post-conflict Aceh too. While many observers emphasize the constitutional court decision that repealed the law, it should also be noted that the progress with setting up the commission and making a new law has been extremely protracted. Faced with procrastination at the national level, political elites in Aceh withheld the Aceh-only TRC proposal from civil society for five years before the Aceh parliament approved the TRC qanun in December 2013.

The absence of two major institutions of transitional justice, trials and truth commissions, however, does not mean utter indifference to conflict victims in post-Helsinki Aceh. Without narratives, conflict victims entered the administrative system as numbers.

### **Strong Sense of Justice and Aid for Civilian Victims in Aceh**

Compared to the absence of the human rights court and the TRC, the implementation of aid for civilian victims in post-Helsinki Aceh is impressive. These measures were stipulated in the Helsinki MoU, but there are other MoU clauses such as the TRC that were never implemented. The reparation measures in the LoGA are compensation, restitution, and rehabilitation for victims of human rights violations whose status shall be granted by the nonexistent human rights court. Thus, the implementation of economic and social aid for tens of thousands of civilian victims must be explained by something other than the presence of legal clauses. Aceh nationalism in the *reformasi* period is the

indispensable background to the origins of these measures.

The fall of Suharto in May 1998 changed the political atmosphere of Aceh in a very short time. Student activism grew, and local human rights groups were soon formed. Local and national politicians jumped on the human rights bandwagon too, strongly denouncing military abuses in Aceh.<sup>42)</sup> General Wiranto, then Minister of Defense and commander-in-chief of the Indonesian military, apologized to the people of Aceh and announced withdrawal of non-territorial troops on August 8. The national parliament and Komnas-HAM sent fact-finding teams in July and August. By September 1998, proposals from those teams included nearly every element of standard transitional justice measures and more: to put decision-makers and perpetrators of abuses on trial and investigate abuses thoroughly, to provide aid or compensation to victims and their families, to grant amnesty to political prisoners, and to adjust allocation of revenues from natural resources between national and provincial governments.<sup>43)</sup>

The inquiry teams of the parliament and the Komnas-HAM were similar to a beginning of official inquiries into DOM violence rather than a conclusion, which the teams themselves acknowledged. However, further breakthrough measures did not come. Only the killing of Bantaqiah and his pupils in July 1999 made President Habibie establish the Independent Commission for the Investigation of Violence in Aceh (Komisi Independen Pengusutan Tindak Kekerasan di Aceh, hereafter the Independent Commission),<sup>44)</sup> which was late in timing.

If human rights and military abuses were the defining issues of the early *reformasi* period in Aceh, after President Habibie announced a referendum for East Timor in January 1999, the Acehnese civil society promoted a similar referendum for Aceh. On November 8, hundreds of thousands of people marched on the streets of Banda Aceh for the largest protest Aceh had ever seen. The Independent Commission findings were released the very next day, far ahead of schedule.<sup>45)</sup> President Abdurrahman Wahid met

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42) For example, H. Muchtar Aziz, a PPP parliamentarian from Aceh, mocked the government: "Imagine that around 3,000 soldiers are deployed to confront 27 rebels. That is excess" (*Harian Pelita*, August 10, 1998).

43) Two lists of recommendations that came out in September (DPR-RI 1998; INCHR 1998, 74–76) are very similar. Both recommend trials for human rights abuses, although only the Komnas-HAM recommendation makes it explicit that the hierarchy of decision-makers must be brought to court. Komnas-HAM uses the English term compensation, while the DPR team uses the term *santunan* (aid/assistance). Only the DPR list mentions the problem of political prisoners.

44) See note 23 for the Bantaqiah killings. The five cases that the Independent Commission strategically focused on covered different types of abuses that occurred in different districts (Pidie, North Aceh, East Aceh, and West Aceh) throughout the DOM period and thereafter, though collection of evidence was largely limited to four years from 1996 to 1999.

45) It meant that the team announced findings and recommendations within less than three months, in the middle of its first six-month term.

Independent Commission members on November 10, where he encouraged them to keep up investigation into recent abuses and passed on their findings directly to the new Prosecutor-General Marzuki Darusman. With political support from the president, prosecution proceeded in a relatively prompt manner. The trials for the Bantaqiah killings began on April 19, 2000 in Banda Aceh, with 1,000 soldiers on guard. Twenty-five defendants, 24 soldiers and one civilian, were charged with premeditated murder.<sup>46)</sup> On May 17, 2000, all of them were convicted of the secondary charge of individually and collectively committing murder (Drexler 2008, 148). They received sentences from 8.5 to 10 years in jail.

In terms of public support, the trial was a total failure. The “*koneksitas*” (civil-military) court was a result of compromises among multiple goals and models. As civilian prosecutors and judges participated in the processes, the major disadvantages of the military court, such as exclusive dominance by the military hierarchy and the lack of openness, could be avoided.<sup>47)</sup> If the goal of an anticipated human rights court on East Timor was to satisfy the international audience with trials matching international standards within a reasonable time, the goal of Aceh trials was to satisfy the Acehnese “sense of justice” as soon as possible to assuage the demand for a referendum. Thus, waiting for a new human rights court law to be passed was not a very strategic option for the government. There is no reason to believe that the whole process was a conspiracy to cover the truth or to prevent human rights abuses in Aceh from being sent to a human rights court. Similarly, there is no guarantee that a KPP-HAM and human rights court would have produced better outcomes.

Nevertheless, as long as the possibility of human rights tribunals for Aceh existed, the Independent Commission and the *koneksitas* trial were regarded as inferior measures to the human rights court for East Timor and, thus, discrimination against Aceh. International and national human rights NGOs were not satisfied either. Human Rights Watch (November 24, 1999) argued that “if accountability is to have any meaning, the Indonesian government will have to conduct a comprehensive investigation going back to 1989, and going all the way up the military chain of command . . . this crisis is not going to be defused unless there is a sense in Aceh that justice has been done, and not just for a handful of cases.” On the day the trial opened, Munir from the Jakarta NGO KontraS commented that “the trial is only to show that there is already a trial, while it ignores substantive

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46) Two commanding officers of the operation were not indicted, however, to say nothing of their superiors.

47) The ground for the *koneksitas* court was that the Bantaqiah killing was a joint civil-military operation, involving a civilian informant. Since *reformasi*, a similar court opened only for two cases: the Bantaqiah killings and the July 27, 1996 affair.

demands of Aceh's people who want justice, not just a court" (*Kompas*, April 20, 2000). Between NGOs with the maximalist position and conservative cliques of the military, President Wahid and his reformist administration failed to address human rights abuses in Aceh successfully. Follow-up measures to the Independent Commission findings ended with the Bantaqiah trial.<sup>48)</sup> After two years since the end of DOM, settling human rights abuses disappeared from the agenda of Indonesian government policies on Aceh.

As an observer noted, "though human rights groups rarely admit this, there have been some positive changes" (Barter 2004, 83), and the background to these "positive changes" was strong pressure and anger against the Indonesian government from the Acehnese society. Challenging the GAM rebels militarily was one thing; placating the vocal and disgruntled voters was another. Disgruntled voters were a particularly serious problem to local politicians, who were being marginalized as irrelevant collaborators as conflict escalated (McGibbon 2006). Some initiatives from the provincial government overlapped with those of the central government, such as a local fact-finding team into the Bantaqiah killings.<sup>49)</sup> Other initiatives were novel, such as aid projects to conflict victims from new resources of the special autonomy funds. A large portion of the post-Helsinki aid schemes originated in post-DOM local politics, where disbursement of compensation was used to placate discontent among the electorate.

The *diyut* and the housing projects, which took up more than half of the BRA funds between 2005 and 2009 (Avonius 2011), began as initiatives of the provincial government in the post-DOM period. In 1998, the provincial government of Aceh announced programs of scholarships and medical assistance for DOM victims (Amnesty International 2013), which continued to be provided by the BRA. In addition, between 1998 and 2000, hundreds of DOM victims were given houses worth 15 million rupiah (*Serambi Indonesia*, June 6, 2000).

When a peace negotiation team led by then Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Jusuf Kalla arrived in Malino, Central Sulawesi, to settle the violence in Poso, they had the housing program in Aceh in mind. Immediately after the Malino Declaration on December 20, 2001, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti said that "the method of rehabilitation for Poso will be more or less the same with the one we used in Aceh" (*Kompas*, December 22, 2001). The rehabilitation measures

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48) Except for a military tribunal for the rape case in Medan, there were no trials for three other priority cases of the Independent Commission, despite Marzuki's earlier announcement that the Rumoh Geudong trial was being prepared along with the Bantaqiah trial (*Kompas*, January 4, 2000).

49) After two months of inquiry, the local team announced its finding that Bantaqiah and his pupils had not resisted to the one-sided military attack, a few days before the Independent Commission's findings came out (*Kompas*, October 31, 1999).

included, among others, housing aid of five million rupiah for each family and two million rupiah for those who lost family members (*Kompas*, December 27, 2001). Later, in February 2002, the Jusuf Kalla team led another peace accord for communal violence in Maluku and implemented similar rehabilitation packages for victims of conflict. In Aceh, further housing schemes were introduced, e.g., the 2003 plan to rebuild 6,000 houses for refugees with funds from both central and provincial government budgets (*Kompas*, September 5, 2003). The BRA housing program for conflict victims is a continuation of these earlier schemes, which preceded the Tsunami rehabilitation programs of 2005.

The origin of *diyāt* in Aceh goes back to 2002, when Vice-Governor Azwar Abubakar launched the program with the new special autonomy budget (UNDP and Bappenas 2006, 38). It is not clear whether Azwar Abubakar was aware of similar programs in Poso and Maluku. However, the aids in eastern Indonesia preceded the introduction of *diyāt* in Aceh, though it was not called *diyāt* in regions of Christian-Muslim conflict. The *diyāt* program was allegedly rooted in Islamic tradition. The punishment for murder according to *qisas* (*qishash*) is the death penalty, but victims' families and the perpetrator may reach a settlement through an alternative process in which the families forgive the perpetrator and accept compensation amounting to 100 camels (Azhari and M. Jafar 2003, 5–13). According to this interpretation, *diyāt* involves acknowledgment of responsibility from the perpetrator. Whether the *diyāt* program means acknowledgment of state responsibility in civilian deaths was, however, far from clear in practice. Although *ulama* in Aceh may have interpreted *diyāt* in this way, Jakarta was silent regarding the point.

Moreover, if we take the interpretation seriously, receiving *diyāt* is equivalent to a promise that victims will not bring the case to court—a promise reminding us of the annulled TRC law. Again, this meaning of *diyāt* does not seem to have been widely shared among victims in Aceh. Victims' communities in Aceh did not experience serious internal disputes with *diyāt*.<sup>50)</sup> The recipients tended to dismiss the idea of alternative Islamic conflict resolution through *diyāt* (Clarke *et al.* 2008, 23). Then, for conflict victims in Aceh, there would be no contradiction between receiving *diyāt* and demanding justice for perpetrators. For the state and the victims alike, the *diyāt* program was just another ad-hoc aid scheme.

Since 2005, the Department of Social Affairs in Jakarta had taken up the *diyāt* pro-

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50) Avonius (2012, 230) argues that civil society activists and family members of victims turned down *diyāt*, criticizing its goal of maintaining impunity. It is true that NGOs and victim groups have criticized *diyāt*, arguing that real reparations based on international human rights principles will come only after the TRC, because *diyāt* does not involve acknowledgment of wrongdoings. It seems they did not discourage victims from receiving *diyāt*, however. If they had actively tried to discourage victims from receiving the money, it would certainly have split victims' groups.

gram and channeled the budget through its local office, and then BRA, until the funds ran out at the end of 2009. The BRA estimates civilian deaths during the conflict to be 30,128, and 29,292 family members have received various amounts of *diyāt*. An even larger portion of reintegration funds for civilian victims was dedicated to the housing project. The amount of aid per house increased from 35 million rupiah to 40 million rupiah, and the target of the housing aid became 29,378 units (Ketua BRA 2010, 7). In addition, the BRA distributed 10 million rupiah for victims of disabilities (*korban cacat*). Considering that political prisoners and anti-independence militias also received 10 million rupiah from reintegration funds, the amount of compensation for civilian victims is not small.<sup>51)</sup>

Aid schemes for civilian victims in post-Helsinki Aceh belong to enduring legacies from post-DOM politics, when the central and provincial political elites attempted to fulfill the Acehnese sense of justice with all possible measures except for a referendum for independence. Why do they endure when the target of preemption, i.e., the threat of independence, is largely gone, unlike trials and truth-seeking measures? Stand-alone compensation in general is less costly than trials or TCs. As long as compensation is disbursed by the state rather than private parties, it involves little cost on the side of the outgoing regime or perpetrators. The ambiguous meaning of *diyāt* and other schemes makes it even more convenient to continue the compensation schemes, which were implemented without acknowledgment of any wrongdoing. Strong demands from victims in the face of strong resistance from status-quo forces may result in stand-alone compensation. This compensation has the advantage of prompt implementation without having to wait for the implementation of a truth commission or criminal trials.

The continuity of these schemes in post-Helsinki Aceh despite their origin as preemptive policies can be traced back to the activism of the vibrant civil society in post-authoritarian Aceh. These compromise, not necessarily corrupt, policies do not give us a clue on the backgrounds of the suffering, nor the narratives of the victims—not even an accurate description of aggregated number of damages.<sup>52)</sup> For now, however, these numbers are all that post-Helsinki Aceh added to what we officially knew about the decades-long conflict.

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51) Three thousand ex-combatants of GAM were to receive 25 million rupiah each, but some individuals received less than that, due to under-reporting of the number of combatants.

52) Compensation without truth-seeking does not necessarily involve corruption, but BRA officials confess they have difficulties with the verification process and, as a consequence, the number of new houses being built far exceeds actual damages from the conflict. Personal communication with BRA officials, November 29, 2010 (Sabang). The 30,000 target of *diyāt* was also much—from 150% to 375%—higher than the then-existing estimates of the conflict death tolls. Author's interview with a local human rights worker, November 26, 2010 (Banda Aceh).

## Conclusion

When President Megawati visited Banda Aceh in 2002, she said “all law violations, including abductions and murders, must be tackled”; her Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, agreed, saying “all major violations of human rights in the past would be brought to court” (*Jakarta Post*, December 19, 2002). Since then, no major human rights violations of Aceh’s past have been brought to court; nor were official truth-seeking commissions launched. Post-conflict Aceh is fully equipped with transitional justice measures, but only on paper. Years after President Yudhoyono’s successful peace process with Aceh, the situation there was described as “non-truth and reconciliation” (Braithwaite *et al.* 2010).

Preemptive transitional justice policies appear when reluctant policymakers attempt to trump “tougher” options with more acceptable alternatives. An implication is that familiarity with international norms and models does not guarantee implementation of transitional justice policies. Post-conflict Aceh did not lack exposure to international actors and norms. Domestic actors—political elites and human rights groups in Jakarta and Banda Aceh—have been well aware of international norms on human rights and transitional justice. They accordingly introduced proper models, which were to be abandoned when the target of preemption disappears. Thus, to explain transitional justice fully, one should not stop at the point of adoption because the presence of legal clauses does not always lead to implementation.

Will delayed justice come to Aceh? Post-conflict transition in Aceh was an Indonesian transition, and transitional justice in post-Helsinki Aceh was conditioned by the rise and fall of two preemptive policies on the national level—the human rights court and the TRC. If what hampers prosecution is only the fear of potential spoilers as the commonly discussed dilemma between peace and justice posits, we can expect that the possibility of prosecution will increase as time passes. An increase in prosecutions is not likely to be the case in Aceh, as the absence of prosecution there is closely related to the dismal performance of the national human rights court system, which was originally designed to preempt an international court. Similarly, the recent adoption of the Aceh TRC qanun makes us wonder whether it will be implemented, unlike previous laws that stipulate a TRC. Threats of court do not exist, and the central government makes a clear opposition to the Aceh-only TRC. Local elites, in particular those who do not want to face uncomfortable truths, will not act to implement the qanun under these circumstances.

The vibrant civil society in post-DOM Aceh contributed to the origin and development of aid schemes for conflict victims. Stand-alone compensation, an anomaly when first implemented in Aceh, became the standard solution for victims of communal vio-



lence throughout Indonesia. They are less costly than trials or a TRC because its ambiguous meaning incurs little cost to perpetrators of violence and their supporters. These are the only measures available for conflict victims in the current state of transitional justice in post-conflict Aceh, which reflects the situation of transitional justice of post-authoritarian Indonesia. The schemes also show that where commitment to rule of law is weak, as in many transitional societies, organizing and maintaining political pressure is as important as proper introduction of human rights norms.

Accepted: September 9, 2014

### Acknowledgments

Field trips for this research were supported by POSCO TJ Park Foundation and the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-362-2008-1-B00018). The author thanks Fery Kusuma, Sabela, Asiah Uzia, Yati Indrayani, Dody Sanjaya, Rini, and anonymous interviewees for their help and assistance, and Hyung-Jun Kim, anonymous reviewers, and participants of the Comparative Politics Research Workshop at the Ohio State University for their comments.

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# The Anti-Communist Third World: Carlos Romulo and the Other Bandung

Lisandro E. Claudio\*

This article revisits the Bandung Conference and Third Worldism through an intellectual history of the Filipino diplomat and intellectual Carlos P. Romulo. By examining Romulo's work during, before, and after Bandung, it argues that Third Worldism must be understood in its original sense—as a negation not only of Western imperialism but also of Soviet Communism. In examining the anti-Communist undercurrent of Bandung, the article hopes to recover a vision of the Third World that opposed various forms of totalitarianism. Although anti-Communism is usually associated with the fascism of McCarthyism, I contend that Romulo's liberal, Asianist anti-Communism forms a normative vision for a more equitable world order.

**Keywords:** anti-Communism, Bandung, Third World, Carlos P. Romulo, Cold War, Philippines, diplomacy

For many, Third Worldism was simply an opposition to Western colonialism, which is hardly surprising. Most of the countries that gathered at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, were former colonies of the West; and many of the leading lights of that event, from Indonesia's Sukarno to Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser, were prominent critics of Western colonialism and neocolonialism.<sup>1)</sup> However, it is inadequate to focus only on the anti-Western rhetoric of Third Worldism, for the concept involved the charting of a road independent of two systems: Western imperialism and Soviet Communism. Despite this, contemporary historiography largely ignores Third Worldism's challenge to the Communist "Second World"—a tendency pronounced in both general twentieth-century histories and contemporary revaluations of Bandung. "The Bandung philosophy," writes the conservative twentieth-century historian Paul Johnson (2000, 489–490), "was for the new nations to create their own industrial bases as fast as possible, making

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1) For a general history of Bandung, see Mackie (2005). For a book that examines individuals who have been under-researched in Bandung, see McDougall and Finnane (2010).

themselves independent of “imperialism,”” which, for Johnson, is a negation of the West. The progressive historian of Marxism David Priestland (2009, 374) acknowledges that the Bandung participants saw themselves as independent of the Western First World and the Communist Second World, but ultimately concludes that “The conference agreed on the need to escape economic dependence on the First World. . . .”

In a volume examining the legacies of Bandung, Christopher J. Lee (2010, 10) writes that the Bandung participants based their solidarity on a “shared history of Western aggression.” In a chapter from the same volume, Michael Adas (2010) views Bandung’s Afro-Asia solidarity as an “assault” on the West’s civilizing mission. Elsewhere, Lee (2009, 82) notes, “The historical importance of Bandung is that it points to the interconnected world created by western imperialism and anti-colonial resistance. . . .” In these studies, the Second World, if mentioned at all, is a mere afterthought. It is thus unsurprising for Roland Burke (2006, 949) to observe that in Bandung historiography, “few studies devote much attention to those aspects of the conference outside the categories of colonialism, the politics of Afro-Asian solidarity, and the evolution of non-aligned movement [*sic*].”

While anti-Western interpretations of Bandung are not entirely incorrect, they are also incomplete, revealing how contemporary postcolonial theory may create a tunnel vision that places Third Worldism in a binary relationship with Western colonialism.<sup>2)</sup> In contrast to these one-sided studies, Pang Yang Huei (2009, 83) posits a “fractured” approach to the history of Bandung, emphasizing that the success of the conference lay in preventing both the United States and Russia “from creating monolithic blocs.” From this perspective, the conference curbed the power of both systems by creating independent geopolitical solidarities. The political threads competing in Bandung were multifaceted; thus, the conference cannot be reduced to singular narratives, such as its being an assault on the West.

Certainly the critique of Western imperialism was more refined in Bandung as this had been—and still is—the primary locus of postcolonial nationalism. However, I hope to show that anti-Communism, the “other Bandung,” was an incipient and radical discourse that cannot be ignored, especially if one wants to capture the textured Third Worldism that began to emerge in Bandung. Third Worldism’s twin negation of the First

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2) The “postcolonial” reading of Bandung (common among American scholars), with its attendant focus on racial distinctions and the cultural matrices that inform these, can be traced to the beginning of Bandung historiography. The African American novelist Richard A. Wright’s 1956 first-person account *The Color Curtain* is, indeed, fodder for trendy, yet empirically barren, courses on race and postcolonial studies (largely en vogue in American academia). For an analysis and critique of Wright, see M’Baye (2009).

World and the Second World was not mere rhetoric. The Third World was in many ways the first of the many “third ways” of the twentieth century, much like the resurgent European Social Democracy of the immediate postwar period, which was both anti-fascist and anti-Soviet. There is, as such, a need to grapple with a hitherto unacknowledged ideological current that informed the rhetoric of the Third World: anti-Communism (which I define, narrowly, as opposition to Leninist Bolshevism).<sup>3)</sup> Given the McCarthyite brush that has tainted criticisms of Communism, it is difficult to confront the latent and, at times, explicit anti-Communism of the Bandung Conference and Third Worldism. To excavate the anti-Communist genealogy of Third Worldism, however, does not necessarily entail playing fire with reactionary politics. On the contrary, beyond providing a fuller historical account, this allows progressive scholars to examine the antitotalitarian potentialities embedded in Third Worldism.

A more holistic understanding of Third Worldism requires an unpacking of its anti-Communist underside. To this extent, I examine the writings of the Filipino diplomat and public intellectual Carlos P. Romulo, a leading figure in the Bandung Conference and vocal exponent of Third Worldism. While the fulcrum of my analysis is Bandung, I also attend to the ideas that radiated into global intellectual debates in its wake. Romulo, both before and after Bandung, wrote eloquently against Western colonialism and Soviet Communism, and for this he was duly acknowledged as a leading voice of the Third World. I contend that Romulo should be understood as an Asian equivalent of European pre-McCarthyite critics of Communism, locating him within a global intellectual history of liberal anti-Communism. I posit what may seem like an oxymoron for contemporary readers: that Romulo represented a progressive anti-Communism, which, while condemning Leninist strategy and ideology, did not reject certain principles of socialism such as economic planning. More important, this anti-Communism spurned the witch hunts and repressive policies of McCarthyism, criticizing the latter for merely replicating the terror tactics of Communists.

Concomitantly, I contend that Romulo’s anti-Communism forms part of an Asianist worldview. It was an approach to postcolonial politics that saw in Asian solidarity a means to transcend the aggressive international posturing of international Communism and the

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3) Anti-Communism, as such, refers to opposition to a specific political model that emerged in the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution that split world socialism into the Social Democrats of the Second International and the Communists of Lenin’s Comintern (Third International). Anti-Communism here should not be taken as a critique of philosophical “communism” or abstract Marxist theory, but of the historical Leninist Communism, premised on the creation of vanguard parties composed of professional revolutionaries—a model implemented on vast swathes of the earth until the collapse of the USSR. (It has become common, in studies of Communism, to refer to “Big C” Communism.)



more established Western imperialism. For Romulo, Asianism was a mutable project, able to absorb foreign principles such as liberalism while remaining grounded on the concerns of largely postcolonial societies.

Beyond documenting a forgotten intellectual history, I seek to examine Romulo's thoughts as constitutive of a normative vision for the Third World. This vision remains important today despite the collapse of the Cold War's tripartite division of the world. Many states of the contemporary Global South remain caught between reactionary imperial formations from above (the IMF, the WTO, etc.) and repressive revolutionary movements from below. Romulo's own country, the Philippines, is threatened by both neo-liberal policy (see Bello *et al.* 2006) and a Maoist Communist movement that has not only refused to repudiate Stalinism (see Liwanag 1992)<sup>4)</sup> but has also committed atrocious acts of violence against its own members and other leftists (see Abinales 2008; Garcia 2001).<sup>5)</sup>

In many respects, this article advances and complements the work of Augusto Espiritu (2006, 177), who has previously argued that "Romulo's ostensibly nationalist, anticolonial, and antiracist views, and his simultaneous hostility to communism and enthusiasm for the free market—which has proved more enduring than socialist visions of the Third World—need to be seriously reread and reexamined, both for their pitfalls as well as for the critical perspectives they raise." Despite his sympathy for Romulo, however, Espiritu dismisses the diplomat's anti-Communism as part of a "transcript that American empire" had "written for him" (*ibid.*, 179). In what follows, I hope to show that Romulo's anti-Communism was more than an imperial script. I propose to interpret it instead as an integral element of a coherent, liberal worldview that opposed various forms of domination. Rather than simply being a form of Americanism, Romulo's anti-Communism reflected a deeply rooted Asianist perspective, critical of foreign intervention in Asian affairs.

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4) This article presents Stalin as genuine leader of the proletariat. It is part of a larger work called "Stand for Socialism against Modern Revisionism," which Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Chairman Armando Liwanag (nom de guerre of CPP founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison) published during the "great rectification campaign" that purged the Party of all those who deviated from the Party's original doctrines.

5) Naturally, scholars and activists in the Philippines have placed more emphasis on the power of international forces, as these are, indeed, more powerful than a fledgling Communist movement. However, the Communist Party itself reproduces this binary by claiming to be the vanguard against imperialism. In Romulo's writings on anti-Communism, it is clear that criticizing the problem must come in tandem with criticizing so-called solutions. I have presented this dual rejection of Communism and elitism in the Philippines in a previous work (Claudio 2013a).

## Liberal Anti-Communism

A progressive anti-Communism was invigorated amid increasing evidence of atrocities committed by the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, Red China. This thinking emanated from Western—mostly European—intellectuals beginning in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but it radiated outward and shaped mid-twentieth century global debates.<sup>6)</sup> Romulo articulated an antitotalitarian opposition to Communism that mirrored these debates. A brief intellectual history of postwar liberal anti-Communism during and after Bandung, thus, helps set his opposition to Communism in context.

Non-fascist opposition to Communism arose almost directly after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.<sup>7)</sup> Unlike the McCarthyism of the United States in the 1950s, this opposition began with leftists. As early as 1920, for example, Leon Blum, chair of the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO, or French Section of the Workers' International), opposed participation in Lenin's Communist International. Blum argued that Bolshevism was the "first time in the history of socialism" when "terrorism is not merely a final recourse, not an extreme measure of public safety to be imposed on bourgeois resistance, not as a vital necessity for the revolution, but as a means of government" (quoted in Judt 1998, 67). For Blum, it was the Communists' "emphasis on dictatorial terror" that distinguished them from socialists (*ibid.*).

The common defense of Communism—the one most constantly forwarded by Trotskyites—is premised on the claim that Stalin betrayed the noble vision of Lenin.<sup>8)</sup> However, Blum's argument reveals that the violence of the USSR can be traced to its foundation. Prisons for political prisoners arrested by an unaccountable secret police (Lenin's Cheka, which would eventually become the NKVD) were the brainchild of Lenin. Under Lenin, the Cheka would administer the various gulags that would become emblematic of the USSR's systematic terror. In the early 1920s, socialists in the USSR relaunched a prison aid organization called the Political Red Cross. Prior to 1917, the organization had publicized and lobbied against the imprisonment of socialists under the Czar. With Lenin's regime imprisoning the same socialists under similar conditions, the organization

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6) The history of European anti-Communism here is far from exhaustive. It does not, for example, include the diverse history of anarchist anti-Communism, which would include leaders such as Emma Goldman. These forms of anti-Communism do not resonate as clearly with Romulo's work. What I have done, instead, is to summarize the history of European anti-Communism based on a pantheon of anti-Communist thinkers discussed by contemporary anti-Communist historians such as Tony Judt (1998; 2011) and François Furet (1999).

7) By non-fascist anti-Communism, I simply refer to the anti-Communism outside the ambit of Hitler and Mussolini.

8) A typical example of this is Ernst Mandel's (1995) biography of Trotsky.

was resurrected and became integral in publicizing the crimes of the Leninist regime (Applebaum 2003, 14). Thus, the socialists sidelined by Lenin may be considered progenitors of non-fascist anti-Communism.

Lenin designed the totalitarian system of governance that Communist Parties the world over would inherit, and much of liberal anti-Communism has been a reaction to the all-encompassing dogma of the Leninist vanguard party—a party that seeks to be the vehicle of History and ultimate representative of the proletariat. The critiques of systems such as Lenin’s would eventually fall under the blanket term “antitotalitarian thought.” The characteristic of totalitarianism, as the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski (2008, 762) notes, can be found in “such formulas as Lenin’s: people may be executed for views that may ‘objectively serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.’” Under this system, there is neither law nor a set criminal code, only what the Party deems objectively errant at a given moment. The Leninist Party’s ability to determine counterrevolutionary guilt, based on the whims of its central authority, was the basis of the arbitrary justice system that informed the show trials of Stalin. Noting this inherent violence of Leninism and its inextricable connection to Stalinism, George Orwell (2002, 111) remarked in 1939:

It is probably a good thing for Lenin’s reputation that he died so early. . . . The essential act is the rejection of democracy—that is, of the underlying values of democracy; once you have decided upon that Stalin—or something *like* [emphasis in original] Stalin—is already on the way.

Despite objections from leftists such as Blum and Orwell, the Bolshevik revolution would, until the 1940s, be treated as a victory not only of the Communists but of the majority of leftists from various tendencies. After 1917, Eric Hobsbawm (1996, 74) explains, “Bolshevism absorbed all other social-revolutionary traditions, or pushed them to the margins of radical movements.” The rise of fascism in Europe, moreover, created an enemy that allowed different leftists to unite either as Communists or as fellow travelers. During the Spanish Civil War and World War II, Communism became intimately associated with the anti-fascist cause, thus allowing Communists and fellow travelers to dismiss anti-Communists as fascists.<sup>9)</sup>

By the late 1930s, however, evidence of the show trials and purges, in which high-ranking opponents of Stalin were publicly forced to confess to bogus crimes against the revolution, had already leaked into the Western European press. In 1937, for instance, pro-Soviet French intellectuals were already on the defensive, arguing for the necessity of the “Inquisition” that was occurring in the USSR (Judt 2011, 102). A turning point for

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9) For an analysis of how Communism’s association with the anti-fascists blunted critiques of the Soviet Union and its allies, see Furet (1999).

anti-Communism occurred in 1940, when the Hungarian ex-Communist journalist Arthur Koestler published the novel *Darkness at Noon*, dramatizing the imprisonment, torture, confession, and execution of Bolshevik leaders through its main character, Comrade Rubashov—an amalgam of revolution-era Bolshevik leaders purged by Stalin.<sup>10</sup> Together with Orwell, Koestler would become one of the leading anti-Communist voices on the British Left (Koestler settled in the United Kingdom after World War II).

The thread uniting intellectuals such as Koestler and Orwell (along with other prominent liberal and socialist anti-Communists of the time such as Ignazio Silone, Raymond Aron, and Albert Camus) was their condemnation of the authoritarianism of both the far Left and the far Right. This was a distinctly postwar perspective, produced by these intellectuals' engagement with two extremes that defined the century's first decades. Koestler and Orwell, for instance, were as committed to resisting Generalissimo Franco's fascism as Stalin's Communism (Koestler served jail time in Spain, while Orwell fought with antifascist Trotskyites).

Anti-Communists such as Orwell and Koestler expanded their critiques of totalitarianism to denounce the repressiveness of all forms of imperialism. As Christopher Hitchens (2003, 27) notes, Orwell's journalism from Paris immediately after the war, which criticized Charles de Gaulle's extension of Vichy-era colonial policies in Indochina, stressed "what might be termed the 'Third World' dimension of the struggle against fascism." At roughly the same time, Koestler, according to biographer Michael Scammell (2009, chap. 22, sec. 5, para. 7), was writing political essays, consistently examining "the way the Soviet system had evolved from a radical experiment in socialist revolution into a classic case of reactionary imperialism." The categorization of the Soviet Union as imperialist would become a crucial debate in Bandung.

Despite the onset of the Cold War and the concomitant mainstreaming of McCarthyite anti-Communism, many intellectuals held the torch for liberal anti-Communism in Europe. The philosopher Bertrand Russell, who many times expressed sympathy for socialism and Marxism, nonetheless grew critical of Communism's illiberalism as the Cold War deepened, bringing him closer to the likes of Koestler and Orwell in the immediate postwar years.<sup>11</sup> In France, Albert Camus's isolation from mainstream French intellectual life (which ultimately led to a break with his good friend Jean-Paul Sartre)

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10) Rubashov's "manner of thinking," notes Koestler (2005, 479), "was modeled on Nikolai Bukharin," and "his personality and physical appearance a synthesis of Leon Trotsky and Karl Radek." For Koestler's own comparison of the fictional account of *Darkness at Noon* with the firsthand account of former head of Soviet intelligence General Walter Krivitsky, see the second volume of Koestler's memoir, *The Invisible Writing* (2005, 483–488), first published in 1954.

11) See chapter 24 of Scammell's 2009 biography of Koestler.

was occasioned by his growing disillusionment with Communist revolutionary rhetoric. From 1945 until the late 1950s, he published philosophical essays condemning rhetoric that justified revolutionary violence in favor of a political Utopia (Judt 1998, 94–95). Viewed from the perspective of European Cold War-era intellectuals, therefore, anti-Communism takes on a new intellectual depth beyond simply the witch hunts in the United States.

The globalization of an initially European liberal anti-Communism occurred through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), established in 1950 as a cultural front to resist Soviet propaganda. Older European intellectuals such as England's Bertrand Russell and Italy's Benedetto Croce gave the organization its gravitas, but its intellectual direction came primarily from young anti-Communists such as Koestler, Aron, Sidney Hook, and Silone (Judt 2005, chap. 7, sec. 4, para. 21). The CCF formally operated in 35 countries and sponsored cultural publications established to rally intellectuals, mostly on the Left, against Communism (*ibid.*, chap. 7, sec. 4, para. 22).<sup>12)</sup> The CCF's Office for Asian Affairs was run out of New Delhi, with Bombay newspaper editor Prabhakar Padhye serving as its Secretary (Office for Asian Affairs, Congress for Cultural Freedom 1955, 2). As Secretary, Padhye marketed and distributed CCF publications such as Stephen Spender's literary and political review *Encounter* (*ibid.*, 56) and set up regional conferences (*ibid.*, 3). One such conference was held in Rangoon in 1955, with over 35 participants from various countries in South, Southeast, and East Asia (*ibid.*, 3).<sup>13)</sup>

In the Philippines, Padhye recruited the journalist and fictionist F. Sionil Jose, who in June 1960 attended the CCF's 10th anniversary in Berlin along with Raul Manglapus (Jose 2013)—a diplomat who had accompanied Romulo to Bandung five years earlier.<sup>14)</sup> Like the European anti-Communists of the CCF, Jose is an intellectual who has remained sympathetic to socialism and class politics while condemning the practices of Communist Parties.

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12) The CCF, as it is now widely known, was funded by the CIA, though its members did not know of this when they joined the congress. According to Judt (2005, chap. 7, sec. 4, para. 6), this fact is not as serious in retrospect, because writers such as Koestler, Aron, and Silone “did not need official American encouragement to take a hard line against Communism, and there is no evidence that their own critical views about the US itself were ever toned down or censored to suit the paymasters in Washington.” The same can be said of Filipino CCF member F. Sionil Jose, who is routinely accused in the Philippines of being a former CIA agent.

13) The proceedings for the conference do not state whether there were participants from the Philippines. This was, however, unlikely, because, as I show below, the first interaction of the CCF with Filipino intellectuals was in 1960.

14) Manglapus is a minor, but important, character in our story. He wrote the final communiqué's section on cultural relations and was a close associate of Carlos P. Romulo. See Thompson (1956, 226–227).

With money from the CCF, Jose established the literary and political quarterly *Solidarity*, for which Romulo contributed articles. With the same money, he also set up the publishing house Solidaridad. The first book issued by the new publishing house was Romulo's *Identity and Change: Towards a National Definition* in 1965.<sup>15</sup> In 1970, Solidaridad published Romulo's *The Asian Mystique: A Clarification of Asia's New Image*. (These books, as I discuss below, are key texts in which Romulo discusses his nuanced approach to Communism.)<sup>16</sup> At around the same time, in 1964, the entrepreneurial Jose also opened Solidaridad Bookstore in the Ermita district of Manila. Romulo was the guest of honor at the bookstore's opening (*ibid.*).

There is no evidence that Romulo, like Jose and his subordinate Manglapus, ever became a member of the CCF. However, the closeness of Romulo to these figures and to endeavors financed by the CCF reveals that Romulo occupied an intellectual space similar to that of the Congress.

### **Romulo, the UN, and the Third Force**

Carlos Peña Romulo is the most prominent diplomat in Philippine history. At the height of his political career, his aplomb was greater than that of some of the presidents he served. As noted by Gregorio Brillantes (2005, 94–95), a doyen of Philippine journalism and literature, Romulo did “more to enhance the country's image abroad than any other Filipino in his time.”

Born in 1899 and educated at the University of the Philippines and Columbia University, he began his career as a journalist and publisher. During World War II, he served in the US Army as General Douglas MacArthur's press officer, delivering lectures in the United States about the Pacific War. Under MacArthur, Romulo rose to the rank of colonel in 1942 and brigadier general in 1944 (University of the Philippines–Reserve Officers' Training Corps n.d.).<sup>17</sup> It was, however, after the war, as the Philippine chief

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15) Interview with F. Sionil Jose, Manila, March 1, 2013.

16) Naturally, because formal relations between Filipino intellectuals and the CCF began after Bandung, one cannot argue that the CCF directly influenced the anti-Communism of Filipinos in the conference. Nonetheless, the latter association of these intellectuals with the CCF points to the resonance between their thinking and that of liberal anti-Communists in Europe. People such as Manglapus and Jose would not have been recruited by the CCF had they been ideological opponents of the Congress. Moreover, as noted earlier, my concern here is not just Bandung itself but the anti-Communist Third World that Romulo articulated before and after it.

17) Numerous sources and interviews state that Romulo, until his death, insisted on being addressed as “general.”

diplomat to the United Nations, that Romulo became a prominent figure in global politics. From 1949 to 1950 he was president of the United Nations General Assembly, and he would remain a fixture in the United Nations until his retirement in 1984 (Espiritu 2005, 10). With the exception of a brief stint as president of the University of the Philippines from 1962 to 1968, Romulo devoted his postwar professional life to the foreign service, serving as Secretary of Foreign Affairs for Presidents Elipidio Quirino (1950–52), Diosdado Macapagal (1963–64), and Ferdinand Marcos (1968–84).<sup>18)</sup>

Viewed from the perspective of the unrelentingly nationalist Philippine Left,<sup>19)</sup> Romulo is an inconsequential figure, a pro-American glitch in the broader narrative of the Philippine nation. Very few left-wing intellectuals, especially those from the University of the Philippines—then, as now, a hotbed of anti-American nationalism—recall Romulo as a prominent Third Worldist. Commenting on his tenure as UP president, Jose Maria Sison, the founding chairman of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines, and his wife, Juliet de Lima, dismiss Romulo as a “chief agent of cultural agencies of the US government” (Sison and de Lima 2008, 54). Francisco Nemenzo (2013, interview with author), a prominent Marxist professor during Romulo’s term as university president (who would himself become UP president in the 1990s), claims that campus nationalists were barely cognizant of Romulo’s role in Bandung and ignored his claims of being an anticolonial intellectual. Nemenzo adds that progressives at the university viewed Romulo as a subpar intellectual who was more adept at sweet-talking the intelligentsia than producing relevant scholarly work. Reinforcing Romulo’s reputation as a pseudo-intellectual was the widespread belief that most of his writings had been penned by ghostwriters, whose egos the diplomat stroked as enticement to work for him.<sup>20)</sup> The Romulo that emerges is at best a dilettante opportunist, and at worst an embodiment of reaction.<sup>21)</sup>

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18) See Espiritu (2005, 9–45) for an overview of Romulo’s career and intellectual history. For an account of Romulo’s retirement, see Brillantes’s (2005) intimate and eloquent portrait of an old, sickly Romulo, disgraced after his association with Marcos (89–98, “Delights and Difficulties of a Diplomat”).

19) See Claudio (2013b) for an analysis of the Philippine Left’s contradiction-laden relationship with nationalism.

20) Four anonymous sources who knew Romulo confirm that much of the diplomat’s writings in the mid-1960s was penned by the Marxist intellectual Petronilo Bn. Daroy—a close friend of Jose Maria Sison’s. Other ghostwriters mentioned by my sources include the nationalist historian Renato Constantino, Romulo’s protégé Salvador P. Lopez (who allegedly wrote Romulo’s Pulitzer-Prize winning book), and the historian Cesar Majul. Despite this, one source close to Daroy notes that Romulo’s ghostwriters wrote some of the material but many times also took dictation directly from Romulo. Moreover, the same source emphasizes, Romulo, a former journalist and literature instructor, edited all the works himself. Romulo’s books can thus be seen as reflecting his own views.

21) As Resil Mojares (2006), through his intellectual history of the nineteenth-century Hispanophile and pseudo-intellectual Pedro Paterno shows, serious intellectual histories of dilettante nationalists are revelatory of broad intellectual patterns.

Perhaps the outright dismissal of Romulo stems from the evolving and contradiction-ridden nature of his politics. Filipino leftists ignore Romulo not only because of his anti-Communism, but also because he was never as categorical about his geopolitical positions as the more prominent nationalists of the left-wing canon. The Maoist Communist Party and other leftists influenced by it, Patricio Abinales (2001, 193–228) notes, derived their categorical anti-Americanism from the nationalist and anti-American senator Claro M. Recto—Romulo’s political *bête noire*. As a result, the Philippine Left remembers Romulo as an opportunist and American lapdog, ignoring the various nuances in his positions that made him indeterminable and difficult to place within neat binaries such as anti-American/anti-Filipino, nationalist/American lapdog, or revolutionary/reactionary.

In what follows, I hope to show that it is precisely the evolving nature of Romulo’s thought that makes him crucial to an understanding of a concept such as the Third World, which is in itself a nuanced, contradiction-ridden, and evolving category. Romulo may not have been the most prominent delegate at Bandung based on historical accounts; other leaders such as Sukarno are certainly more prominent figures in global history. Nonetheless, Romulo represents a crucial strand in the plural narratives present at the conference. To reiterate Pang’s point, Bandung is best understood as containing a plurality of postcolonial positions, contradicting, intersecting, and mutually reinforcing.

A revisiting of Romulo’s legacy requires a different vista, a perspective broader than that of the domestic politics of postwar Philippines. In doing this, I neither seek to exonerate Romulo for his various dalliances with reaction nor do I aim to reconstruct him as a hero. Many times, he was, indeed, hopelessly pro-American, as when he allowed research that would benefit the US Army in Vietnam to be conducted at the UP (Nemenzo, interview with author, 2013).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Romulo’s lifelong commitment to liberalism was severely compromised when he became a loyal minister of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Nonetheless, Romulo was a genuine voice of the Third World and one of the most articulate exponents of the concept.

That the Filipino diplomat was a close US ally is a given. But in his UN career he made efforts to continually signal his affinity for former colonies. In votes where the main protagonists were the United States and Russia, Romulo naturally sided with the Americans. However, in votes that pitted “small nations” (a term Romulo used for the

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22) Nemenzo was part of an independent review panel (the Committee to Review External Programs) on Romulo’s projects with US agencies and discovered that the University of the Philippines’ Institute of Hygiene had a US Navy-funded project studying mosquitoes that caused inflammation of the male genitals. This breed of mosquitoes could distinguish between Asians and Caucasians and infected only the latter. Nemenzo’s expose came after the coalition Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN) revealed that research on napalm had been conducted at the UP’s Los Baños campus.



pre-Bandung Third World) against powerful ones, Romulo took the side of the former. In discussions about the wording of the UN Charter, for instance, the Big Powers wanted the Charter to state that non-self-governing nations should aspire only toward self-governance. Romulo led the delegates who wanted to insert the word “independence.” Big powers such as England, France, and Russia opposed Romulo and his allies, while the United States abstained from the vote. The Philippine proposal eventually won (Romulo 1986, 38–44).

In the case of the partition of Palestine to create the state of Israel, Romulo opposed the proposal, claiming that it was “repugnant to the valid nationalist aspirations of the people of Palestine” (*ibid.*, 67). This was obviously a position contrary to the United States’. Manila, having been threatened with a withdrawal of aid, eventually ordered Romulo to support the formation of Israel. Romulo saw the actions of the United States as arm twisting, and until his death he maintained his views concerning the dangers of partition (*ibid.*).

Finally, Romulo contradicted the United States on the issue of veto power in the UN. According to Romulo, the leitmotif of his 38 years in the UN was the struggle to revise the UN Charter and to limit the veto power of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. For his entire UN career, he was at loggerheads with the United States on the issue of the veto (*ibid.*, 53). Even during his time as Marcos’s foreign minister, Romulo argued for a review of the charter to prevent the abuse of the veto. All these proposals were shot down by the United States (Romulo 1982, 6).

Crucially, even the United States did not view Romulo as its lapdog. A declassified CIA document from 1949 notes that “Although the Philippines generally supports US policy in the UN, there has been some deviation largely owing to Romulo’s championship of dependent peoples of Asia, for whom he has become a leading spokesperson” (Central Intelligence Agency 1949, 13). It was Romulo who began to craft an explicitly anticolonial foreign policy for the Philippines. Before Romulo, the document adds, “Philippine policy toward colonial peoples has [*sic*] been limited to expressions of sympathy for national aspirations. . . .” With Romulo at the helm of foreign policy, however, the Philippine delegation to the New Delhi conference on Indonesia in January 1949 played a leading role in pushing the UN to support Indonesian independence (*ibid.*).

Robert Trumbull (1949, E5), who served for more than three decades as a *New York Times* international political commentator, observed that the New Delhi conference—the first time Asian countries “had come together on a matter of common concern”—was a landmark moment that sent a message concerning Asia’s desire to “play a stronger role in international affairs.” This manifested in a call for a permanent pan-Asian organization—a Romulo proposal, which drew massive applause from the audience (*The*

*Washington Post* 1949a, 1). Jawaharlal Nehru and Romulo, for Trumbull (1949, E5), were “two of the strongest figures” in the conference. A few days after the end of the proceedings, the two leaders delivered interviews that were “in contrast to the deliberately moderate tone of the conference itself.” Summarizing their statements, Trumbull noted that Nehru and Romulo “warned the West” that Asia’s peoples had “definite objectives” and were “determined to obtain these by concerted effort if necessary” (*ibid.*). One objective was economic independence: for Asian countries to cease being mere suppliers of raw materials to Western countries.

New Delhi foreshadowed Bandung. Even before he was elected president of the UN General Assembly, Romulo was already a prominent pan-Asianist who styled himself as a representative of formerly colonized peoples. In this regard, he was capable of criticizing his erstwhile superpower ally. In May 1949, for instance, Romulo and Chinese UN delegate Dr. Lee Wei-kuo condemned the United States for halting the delivery of Japanese reparations to wartime opponents (the United States was seeking to prioritize Japan’s economic recovery) (*The Washington Post* 1949b, 4). Romulo declared that he was “flabbergasted” by the decision and blamed the United States for paving the way for Japanese revanchism—the primary victim of which would be Asia (*The New York Times* 1949a, 2).

Romulo’s anti-Communist credentials allowed him to criticize US foreign policy without fear of being branded a Communist sympathizer. On March 2, 1950, for example, he sent a personal and confidential letter to US Secretary of State Dean Acheson condemning the United States’ decision to recognize Emperor Bao Dai’s government in Vietnam; he viewed Bao Dai as a puppet of French colonialism. In supporting Bao Dai simply because he was an anti-Communist, Romulo (1950, 2) wrote, the United States “may have unwittingly espoused even the demonstrated iniquity of colonial imperialism.” The decision, moreover, gave Communists “the enormous advantage of plausible and logical insistence on anti-Communism being pro-imperialism,” reinforcing the notion that only Communists were anti-imperialists (*ibid.*, 3–4). Consistent with his self-aggrandizing style, Romulo, who viewed himself as a mediator between Asians and the West, declared that US policy in Vietnam would lead to “the virtual isolation of American policy from the sentiment of Asian countries” (*ibid.*, 4). Most surprisingly, Romulo explained that Ho Chi Minh was a potentially independent Communist who “could make all sorts of trouble for Stalin” (*ibid.*, 5). In the meeting with Acheson that followed, Romulo told the Secretary that Ho Chi Minh was a patriot who would refuse to simply become a tool of Mao or Stalin (Acheson 1950, 1). He advised Acheson to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh and suggested that France and the United States assure the Communist leader that Vietnam would gain independence (*ibid.*, 2).

Romulo believed he spoke from a position of authority, because he claimed to know Ho Chi Minh personally. In a likely fabricated account, the diplomat said he met Ho Chi Minh in 1948 after a UN meeting in Paris (various accounts, however, state the Vietnamese revolutionary was in Vietnam in 1948, having last been in Paris in September 1946). Hearing that Ho Chi Minh was in the city, Romulo claims, he sought out the Vietnamese leader. They met in a “small bistro in a by-way in Paris” (Romulo 1986, 114) and spoke about Philippine history, with Ho Chi Minh discoursing fondly about General Emilio Aguinaldo’s struggle against Spanish and American colonizers. Romulo considered the Vietnamese leader to be a “true patriot” who was forced to seek assistance from the USSR only because the United States refused to support his anticolonial cause (*ibid.*, 124).<sup>23</sup> This story may be apocryphal, or Romulo (or his wife, Beth Day, who posthumously edited the book) may have confused the date. Nonetheless, Romulo’s praise for Ho Chi Minh reveals his sympathy for national liberation movements, despite their affiliation with Communism.

Romulo’s letter and subsequent meeting with Acheson revealed his prescience. He knew that Vietnam would not support a puppet regime. Moreover, the engagement with Acheson exhibited Romulo’s nuanced anti-Communism. For Romulo, anti-Communism was not to be viewed as an automatic endorsement of imperialism. To resist Communism, one had to acknowledge its appeal to anticolonial nationalism—a perspective Romulo gained through his advocacy for Asian independence. This perspective was not inconsistent with what Romulo had already said in public. The previous year, he had explained his vision for an anti-imperialist *and* anti-Communist Asia.

The person credited with coining the term “Third World” in its contemporary geopolitical sense is the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, who in 1952 compared former colonies to the “third estate” (the people) of the French Revolution (*The Economist* 2010). In a 1949 speech at the University of Chicago, however, Romulo had already used the term “third force” to describe Asia—“the most dynamic region in the world,” which was “interposed between the two great powers” (*The New York Times* 1949b, 16). A little over a week before he was elected president of the General Assembly, Romulo (1949, 13) had published a version of this Chicago speech in *The New York Times*. As in his conversation with Acheson, Romulo conceded that Communism appealed to colonized peoples, particularly in Indochina, where “the Communist party was identified with the nationalist struggle, first against the Japanese and later against the French.” For Romulo, “the methods and principles of communism have an appeal” for peoples who, by virtue

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23) Ho Chi Minh’s attraction to Communism was obviously more complex than this. It is, however, true that he did not start out as an enemy of the United States and that he was a nationalist before a Communist. For an introduction to Ho Chi Minh’s thinking, see Bello (2007).

of their colonial history, “may be led to believe that they have nothing to lose from aligning themselves with communism, which generously promises plenty for all and loudly professes its irreconcilable antagonism to the colonial system” (*ibid.*, 68). It was in this context that Romulo would put forward liberalism and human rights as an alternative to the Communist system.

A few years before the conference, Romulo had already outlined the Asianist version of anti-Communism that he would take to Bandung. Speaking at Johns Hopkins University in 1952, Romulo (1953, 249) declared that the threat of Communism was more pronounced in Southeast Asia, because the region was in “a position of vital strategic importance to the whole free world.” Citing Lenin, who believed that “the road to Europe lies through Peiping and Calcutta,” Romulo argued that “Southeast Asia is the last remaining roadblock to Soviet hegemony in the whole of Asia” (*ibid.*). Foreshadowing the anti-imperial language of Bandung, he added, “The struggle against Communism and Soviet imperialism may well be won or lost in Southeast Asia” (*ibid.*, 250). Romulo’s comments may sound exaggerated today, but it is important to recall that he made them in the context of the Korean War—a war he believed evidenced Soviet-Chinese aggression.

Romulo was right about his assessment of the Korean conflict. The most recent scholarship based on recently opened Soviet archives proves that Stalin, with Mao’s support, encouraged Kim Il-Sung’s invasion of South Korea in a reckless attempt to drag the United States into a protracted Asian conflict (Pantsov and Levine 2012, 383). Romulo was thus justified in going to Bandung with deep suspicions about the Chinese delegation. Indeed, Communism could threaten the stability of Asia, and Romulo would make this point eloquently during the conference.

### **The Anti-Communist Bandung**

That the Philippines participated in the Bandung Conference is a function of Romulo’s view that the event would transcend the narrow anti-Western perspective that many had already associated with it even before its commencement. Indeed, even within the Philippines, President Ramon Magsaysay—a staunch US ally—was initially hesitant to send a delegation. It was, however, Romulo who convinced the pro-American president that the Philippines had a place in the conference (Molina 1961, 408).

In his oft-cited book *The Meaning of Bandung*, Romulo (1956) sets out to correct the popular perception that Bandung was simply a challenge to Western power. He begins by decrying how the US press prejudged the conference, noting the popular belief shortly before its commencement that it would degenerate “into an anti-Western politi-

cal demonstration” (*ibid.*, 5). In response to the misinterpretations of the Western press, Romulo’s goal was to outline Bandung’s “unpublicized nuances” in order that “its historical import and flavor may be better appreciated” (*ibid.*, 6). He emphasized that the countries in the conference were not homogeneously anti-Western, and that they reflected “different shades of political persuasion” (*ibid.*). Early on, Romulo was critical of the simple East vs. West binary that subtended interpretations of Bandung. Very few contemporary historians have listened to him.

The tendency to homogenize the Bandung narrative as anti-Western was not only the myopia of the pre-conference Western press. This narrow-minded interpretation is replicated in current Bandung historiography. For example, according to Burke (2006, 949–950), the focus on the anti-Western aspects of the conference has led scholars to ignore Bandung’s contribution to human rights discourse. He contends that studies easily assume that the anticolonial ethos of the conference translated into a critical attitude toward “Western” human rights. Burke demonstrates, however, that human rights discourse was essential to the vocabulary of Bandung, and that the latter’s debates mirrored those in the United Nations over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (*ibid.*, 950–957). Of more importance for this article, Burke posits that criticism of the Soviet and Chinese governments, forwarded by conference delegates such as Romulo and Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sir John Kotelawala, “raised arguments with important consequences for human rights and democracy” (*ibid.*, 958). Simply stated, anti-Communism and human rights were intimately linked in the minds of some “Third World” strategists as early as 1949. In this regard, the Asia-Afro debates concerning Communist imperialism and totalitarianism foreshadowed intellectual shifts in Europe. As Tony Judt (2005, chap. 18, sec. 1) notes in the case of Western Europe, human rights discourse did not enter mainstream international discourse until the late 1980s, amid the discrediting of Communist totalitarianism.

In the conference, the anti-Communism of many of the delegates was immediately palpable. Initially, Chinese delegate Zhou Enlai forfeited his right to deliver an opening speech. “But as the addresses proceeded, and when some countries went out of their way to express their attitude to Communism,” recalls Kotelawala (1956, 181) in his memoirs, “Chou En-lai rose and said that he reserved his right to deliver an address of his own.” C.P. Fitzgerald (1955, 113), an Australian historian watching the proceedings, noticed a conciliatory Zhou, who claimed he was not in Bandung to promote Communist ideology. For Fitzgerald, Zhou’s speech represented a “marked change of attitude, if not policy” on the part of the Chinese premier. Kotelawala (1956, 181), on the other hand, claimed that Zhou’s comments were “satisfactory,” “but what was more satisfactory” was that Zhou “should have been forced to make them.” Zhou was placed on the defen-

sive because of the pervasive anti-Communist sentiment at Bandung—a sentiment immediately perceptible to the Philippine press, though neglected in accounts from neutralist countries such as India.<sup>24</sup> The leading weekly news magazine *Philippines Free Press* (1955, 69) began its report on the first two days of the conference as follows:

Outright anti-communist speeches were delivered at the opening of the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung, Indonesia, by Iraq's Foreign Minister Fadhil Jamali, Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammed Ali, the Philippines' Carlos Romulo, and Thailand's Foreign Minister Prince Wan Waithayakon. It was clear from the speeches the conference would not develop into a communist propaganda vehicle. For example, Ambassador Romulo, while criticizing Western colonialism past and present, warned that communist imperialism is today a great danger to the new nations in Asia and Africa.

The report added that Zhou was “surprisingly mild in his speech Tuesday” (*ibid.*).

The *Free Press* (*ibid.*) also declared that Romulo found the conference “more than reassuring,” because many countries shared the sentiments of the Philippines against “communist domination.” It added that Zhou, surprised by the turn of events, was “forced to sit back and listen to unsparing attacks against communism” (*ibid.*). It is in this context of hostility to Communism that we should situate Romulo's (1956, 11) famous quip that Zhou “had taken a leaf from Dale Carnegie's tome on *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.”

The opening speeches, however, would not be the last time Bandung delegates attacked Communism. In September 1955, writing for the local Philippine press, Romulo (1955, 34) recalled that one of the most dramatic parts of the conference was the “fight over communism and colonialism.” Serious debate went into the definition of colonialism to be placed in Bandung's final communiqué. The communiqué is a pathbreaking document, which, beyond articulating the “Bandung spirit” of Asia-Afro solidarity, also allowed for a radical redefinition of colonialism. It condemned “colonialism in all its manifestations” and affirmed that “alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of human rights . . .” (Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference, Section D, Article 1). In his newspaper account (a clearer and more detailed account of the colonialism debate than *The Spirit of Bandung*), Romulo reported how the conference arrived at this definition.

The debate began when Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhamad Fadhil Jamali “opened up the heavy artillery against Soviet imperialism” (Romulo 1955, 34). However, “Powerful forces” (Zhou and the neutralist Nehru)<sup>25</sup> wanted to block any reinterpretation of colo-

24) See, for example, Appadorai (1955), which makes no mention of Zhou's reaction to anti-Communist speeches.

25) Romulo singles out these two in *The Meaning of Bandung*. See Romulo (1956, 10).

nialism. For them, there was “only one form of colonialism—Western,” and “Nothing else counted” (*ibid.*). The Philippine delegation and a majority of the conference’s participants supported Jamali. Romulo narrates:

We took the position that the conference must condemn all colonialism, both overt and potential. *We were opposed to every form of domination, subjugation, or the exploitation of peoples* [emphasis mine]. Everyone present knew we referred to communism.

Powerful support came from Ceylon’s Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, who with the caliber of a world leader could set aside restricted regional loyalties for a greater cause. Turkey’s Deputy Prime Minister Fatin Rustu Zorlu also was a real fighter for democracy and so we were able to show the conference—meaning representatives of half of mankind—that we spoke for the security and interests of all. And all finally rallied to stand with us—condemning not only Western colonialism but colonialism “in its various forms.” (*ibid.*)

Perhaps no statement better encapsulates Romulo’s vision for a Third World that served as a dual negation of both the First and Second Worlds. It is a vision that, like those of the European anti-Communists discussed earlier, condemned all forms of domination and totalitarianism. Naturally, Romulo was delighted that his views received much support in the conference, particularly from Kotelawala, who until then was a known neutralist like Nehru (*ibid.*). In his speech, the prime minister asked the delegates to consider the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe (Kotelawala 1956, 187). “Are not these colonies as much as any of the colonial territories of Africa or Asia?” he asked. If the conference was united against colonialism, he added, “should it not be our duty to declare our opposition to Soviet colonialism as much as to Western imperialism?” (*ibid.*, 188).<sup>26)</sup> Kotelawala thus affirmed Asia and Africa’s solidarity with the occupied peoples of countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>27)</sup> Hearing Kotelawala’s remarks, Nehru and Zhou took umbrage,<sup>28)</sup> and the two issued a statement extolling the values of neutralism (Romulo 1956, 31). Nehru followed this up with a speech, which Romulo immediately refuted (*ibid.*, 33).

Romulo’s response to Nehru is one of the most eloquent speeches of his career. First, he pointed out that the expansionist nature of global Communism was “not a charge made by non-Communist countries” but “the explicit declaration of international com-

26) The latest account of the crushing of Eastern Europe is Anne Applebaum’s (2012) magisterial *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1945–1956*.

27) The comparison is prescient, especially since, like Third World countries, the states of Eastern Europe would also launch resistance movements against a foreign occupier. It is thus apt to trace continuities between the struggles of Asian anticolonialists in Bandung and those of Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa. The latter too were “postcolonial” leaders.

28) There was a brief confrontation between Nehru and Kotelawala after the latter’s speech. Despite this, Kotelawala says he and Nehru remained “best friends” (Kotelawala 1956, 187).

munism” (*ibid.*, 188). Moreover, he noted that Communist Parties did not respect elections and merely used these for propaganda purposes (*ibid.*, 82). And, echoing Blum’s comments on Leninist terror from 1919 (see above), he explained that Communism’s “schism with socialism is based upon the fact that Communists see violence as the sole means of achieving social reform” (*ibid.*).<sup>29</sup> He then reminded the audience of the 1950 Chinese attack on South Korea, which was condemned by 50 countries at the UN (*ibid.*, 83). Quoting statements from Chinese officials about the need to encourage and organize armed rebellions in other Asian countries, he argued that China had violated the non-aggression principles of the UN (*ibid.*, 84–88). Peaceful coexistence with China, he believed, was impossible. In concluding the speech, he declared, “What we fear now is the new empire of communism on which we know the sun never rises. May your country India, Sir, never be caught by the encircling gloom” (*ibid.*). Once again, Romulo was prescient. Exactly five years after Bandung, after China had seized Indian border territory, Nehru called China’s methods “coercive” and labeled the Communists in India “a destructive opposition factor” (Nehru, interview with Frasser 1960).

Writing 30 years after Bandung in his memoirs—long after he and Nehru had become good friends—Romulo (1986, 139) recalled the debate in Bandung:

I warned Nehru in my debate with him that there would be an aggression against India from the North. He didn’t believe me. He said that I was wrong. That the Chinese were not aggressors and that we should speak of peace, brotherhood, neighborliness, and not make any statement about aggression. Yet, within four years, China attacked India’s borders.

Several years after that when I was invited to New Delhi by Nehru for a lecture series and I went to call on him, he was already ailing. As I entered his bedroom he said:

“General Romulo, how right you were at Bandung! And how wrong was I.”

Despite their eventual rapprochement, however, Romulo and Nehru in Bandung represented two differing perspectives on the ossifying Cold War. For much of the 1930s and 1940s, the Indian leader was an ardent student of Marxism. Even when he became critical of official Communism in the 1950s, when he criticized the religious dogmatism of Soviet leaders, he was never an outright anti-Communist and continued to admire certain aspects of Soviet socialism such as public education and health care (Martyshin 1989, 131–133). Like Romulo, however, Nehru held a position that was at the crossroads

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29) The similarity here with Blum is crucial. Romulo did not condemn socialism as a whole and was cognizant of the broader history of socialism, whereby the issue of using terror as a political strategy became a crucial delineating line between the socialists of the Second International and the Communists of the Third.



of multiple ideologies, reflecting a syncretic and flexible political worldview. For Orest Martyshin (*ibid.*, 121), the three pillars of Nehru's worldview were Western liberalism, ideas of national liberation, and Marxism. With the exception of Nehru's more sympathetic approach to Marxism, therefore, Romulo and Nehru already had much common ground, even when they were each other's interlocutors.

### The Afterglow of Bandung

Upon returning from Bandung, Romulo (1955, 35) wrote of anti-Communism as a source of solidarity among many Afro-Asian nations. Summarizing the sentiments of the anti-Communists in the conference, he said:

We are anti-communist because we know communism endangers our liberties. That our position happens to be that of the United States or of most countries of the West, is only because the ideals of freedom as enshrined in the Magna Carta of England, the Declaration of Independence of the United States, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man by France, are universal.

Once again, Romulo posited the intimate relationship between human rights discourse, anticolonialism, and anti-Communism. In his mind, this was not a Western position but an Asianist one.

In the wake of the Bandung Conference, Romulo continued to articulate his views on the intimate connection between anti-Communism, anticolonialism, and human rights. And the CCF-funded Solidaridad Publishing House continued to make these writings available to a wide audience. Romulo's dedication to human rights, anti-Communism, and anti-imperialism stemmed from a liberal commitment to freedom. He was a quintessential mid-century liberal, who, because of his liberalism, condemned colonialism. Ironically, this liberalism was cultivated through a life immersed in the West. Romulo's anticolonialism and love for Western liberalism, however, are not contradictory. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012, 141) notes, the critical/discursive weapons of the colonized—liberalism and Marxism—were embedded in the very cultures of the imperial powers. Colonialism brought with it the seeds of its own demise.

It was in this regard that Romulo was both an advocate of Western liberal principles and an antagonist of Western colonialism. In *Identity and Change*, Romulo (1965, 69) explains:

Colonialism was a contradiction of moral principles in politics; in terms of the 20th century, colonialism was some kind of saurian moment remnant of the [*sic*] political evolution—a monster that failed to develop with other sub-species of the Western liberal tradition.

If Romulo loved the West, it was not only because he trusted Western democratic governments but also because he believed in the ideals that emanated from the West's political history. These ideals, however, are not exclusive to any country, and Romulo could thus view his liberalism as an integral facet of his Asian identity.

In *The Asian Mystique*, Romulo (1970, 11) says that democracy, which he construed in its liberal sense, is not “a national property.” It is a concept that can “yield to the necessities of a particular social context” and can therefore be truly Asian. “Asians,” he explained, “deplore the readiness of America to claim as pro-American any of their leaders who affirm the democratic way of life.” Any Asian duplication of “Western life,” as such, would inevitably “be a forgery.” In the CCF-funded *Solidarity*, he notes that, like Jose Rizal and other Filipino nationalists of the nineteenth century, Filipinos need to be “cognizant of our social, political, and economic situation but without any timidity to study, confront, analyze and integrate into national intelligence the best values and aspects of other civilizations” (Romulo 1967, 36).

Romulo saw the future of Asian politics as open-ended, flexible, and provisional. Democracy would allow Asians to build their own unique political systems, which was not the case with Communism. In contrast, “totalitarian communism does not accept any deviation” and its adherents must be “in complete conformity with the official doctrine” (Romulo 1970, 10). Indeed, *pace* the earlier reference to Kolakowski, Communism establishes objective class enemies who are lesser beings according to its tenets.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as the case of Eastern Europe proves, Communist governance is inflexible, hence the crushing of the 1968 Prague Spring. Unlike the strictures of Communism, Romulo (*ibid.*) argues, the “liberal imagination” is premised on “the principles of tolerance of differences.”

For Romulo, then, it was no surprise that many former colonies at Bandung would be anti-Communist. After all, who better to understand the trappings of a new form of colonialism than those previously colonized? Romulo (1965, 78) believed “It is foolish to think that, after fighting the Dutch, the British, the French colonial regimes, Asians will now accept willingly Communist totalitarianism.” Anti-Communism in Asia, then, was not so much pro-Western apologia but a properly Asianist and postcolonial position. It is not—contrary to Espiritu's claim—an imperial script aped by US allies such as Romulo.

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30) This would explain, for instance, why the latest research on Red Army terror reveals that in 1920 alone, Lenin's forces executed 50,000 White soldiers and their allies (see Scammell 2013, 12). To belong to the “wrong class,” of course, was life-threatening during the period of Mao's red guards. The latest biography of Mao, which is the first to examine Soviet sources on the Great Helmsman, establishes that he rose to power within the Comintern as a firm supporter of Stalinism (see Pantsov and Levine 2012).

The dovetailing of anti-Communism with pan-Asianism is not without precedent. As Pankaj Mishra (2012, 246) notes, Japanese intellectuals in the 1930s often saw the Soviet Union and the United States as “Western” threats to China. This critique of Communism—part of the rhetorical arsenal of Chinese and Indian nationalists as well as pan-Islamists—was part of a broader pan-Asian polemic against Western modernity (*ibid.*, 254). Romulo, a secularist,<sup>31)</sup> did not appropriate many of the spiritual underpinnings of this position (the first chapter of *The Meaning of Bandung* is titled “The Spiritual Offensive,” but it barely talks about religion or spirituality). Moreover, though a great admirer of Gandhi as a peaceful anticolonialist, Romulo was not disposed to extolling the values of spirituality over liberalism.<sup>32)</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that his vision of the Third World as a dual negation of Western colonialism and Soviet Communism has clear Asianist antecedents.

Since the twin bases of Romulo’s anti-Communism were liberalism and Asianism, it is unsurprising that he had a strong aversion to anti-Communism’s illiberal, American offshoot: McCarthyism. Like colonialism, McCarthyism betrayed the liberal principles Romulo held dear. For McCarthyites, he observed, “everything progressive, because it proposed change, was tagged as Communist subversion” (Romulo 1965, 83). Romulo worried that applied to international relations, McCarthyism would become a tool for neocolonialism. Speaking once more as an anticolonial Asianist, Romulo explained, “The communist danger became an excuse for intervention; the politics of fear became the politics of the West.” He added that McCarthyites did not understand Asian nationalism. Under the spell of this false philosophy, the West “failed to be discriminating,” and what they did not understand “tended to be propagandized as Communistic . . .” (*ibid.*, 76).

Even later in his life, Romulo would brag about recognizing McCarthyism as a misguided, temporary fad (Romulo 1986, 141–142). Reflecting on his career in the United Nations, he recalls his admiration for UN Secretary General Trygve Lie, who was attacked by the Russians for allegedly being a US lapdog and by McCarthy for allegedly being a Soviet lapdog (*ibid.*, 58). “Apparently the American public never appreciated the irony of an international servant who was simultaneously being vilified by Russia and the shameless Senator McCarthy,” he quipped (*ibid.*, 59). Like the Third World, Lie was caught between First World America and Second World Russia. And like imperialists, Senator Joseph McCarthy did not understand the nuances of provisional alliances that emerged in international affairs.

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31) One of his top priorities when he became president of the UP was to promote secularism on campus (Epistola 1985, 395).

32) See Romulo (1964), which is a compilation of his 1964 Maulana Azad lectures in New Delhi. Interestingly, it was his interlocutor at Bandung, Nehru, who invited Romulo to deliver these lectures.

Romulo's liberal opposition to McCarthyism was strengthened by his international work, and he brought this attitude back to the Philippines. When Romulo assumed the presidency of the UP, one of his first acts was to take a strong stand against on-campus McCarthyism, seeking to end the witch hunts against student activists that had occurred during his predecessor's term (Epistola 1985, 395). True to his human-rights liberalism, Romulo opposed all forms of extremism, oppression, and control of free speech.

Romulo's refusal to crack down on student radicalism surprised many. The university's Board of Regents had nominated him to serve as president believing that he would combat campus activism and Communism (*ibid.*, 394). And yet, even Nemenzo—a staunch critic of Romulo—cannot recall a single crackdown on student radicals. Benjamin Muego (interview with author, 2013), Chair of the UP Student Council in the academic year 1984–85, likewise recalls a very permissive president. Muego, who was a champion debater like Romulo in his youth, developed a close fraternal relationship with the university president—a relationship that did not sour even when Muego became involved in radical politics.

In 1966, Muego became a charter member of Senator Lorenzo Tañada's Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism—a broad nationalist coalition that included Sison and his fellow Communist militants (Muego himself was not a member of the Communist Party). And in July 1967, Muego, along with Sison, De Lima, and 13 others went to Communist China upon the invitation of the All China Youth Federation. As a member of MAN (an organization critical of Romulo) and a close ally of Sison's Kabataang Makabayan, Muego became a prominent student activist. Despite this, he remained close to Romulo. Muego finds this striking in retrospect:

Given his [Romulo's] background (if indeed he was an agent of US imperialism) and given the degree of supervision he had over us, he could have very easily said, "I want you to ease up, because it's hurting my fundraising in the US." He didn't. And he knew what we were doing; the papers would carry our pictures with slogans, and burning effigies and flags.

Whenever Muego saw Romulo, the diplomat would simply give him a "fatherly slap on the back" and joke "make sure you're behaving, okay?" And that was the end of it. In retrospect, Muego is surprised at how much anti-Americanism Romulo tolerated on campus given the amount of fund-raising he was doing in the United States.

Romulo, adept at the art of persuasion, did not need to repress. Muego, like Nemenzo, claims Romulo "co-opted" many progressive intellectuals—most of whom, he confirms, became ghostwriters for the university president. Unlike Nemenzo, however, Muego ascribes this co-optation to more than opportunism. He claims that intellectuals were attracted to Romulo's genuine liberal humanism and his vision of creating a national

university.<sup>33)</sup> For example, he explains that Romulo's main speechwriter, Petronilo Bn. Daroy, who eventually became a close ally of Sison and the Communist Party, was "enamored" with Romulo because both men were true liberals. Similarly, Muego claims that nationalist intellectuals such as the historian and public intellectual Cesar Majul wrote speeches for Romulo not simply for career advancement, but because they saw in the president someone who valued intellectual work.

Although the influence of liberalism in the Philippines is not the topic of this article, it is important to note how liberalism, through its permissiveness, paved the way for the emergence of radical politics. One can hardly imagine, for instance, the blossoming of the radical nationalism that would inform the anti-Marcos movement without reference to the University of the Philippines. And had liberals such as Romulo and his protégé Salvador P. Lopez not led this university, nationalist dissent on campus would likely have been repressed. Romulo may have betrayed his liberal principles when he worked for Ferdinand Marcos, but Marcos's downfall—one triggered by the work of nationalist militants—was already prefigured by the intellectual climate he helped nourish.<sup>34)</sup> Even Romulo's morally bankrupt decision to support Marcos, however, must be understood in the broader context of his commitments as an internationalist and Asianist.

### **Building the Third World through a Dictator**

The tragedy of Romulo's career lay in his struggle to operationalize his vision for the Third World while the divisions of the Cold War intensified. As the tensions between the United States and the USSR deepened, it became more difficult to maintain a third way; states had to choose. On the part of the United States, its position of "preserving freedom" in postwar global politics metamorphosed into a paranoid policy of anti-Communist containment, which led it to support violent right-wing regimes such as the apartheid regime in South Africa, the Pinochet regime in Chile (at the expense of the democratically elected Allende), and Diem in Vietnam. Conversely, the Soviet strategy of financing national liberation movements (even as it crushed nationalist dissent in places

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33) It was under Romulo's term, for instance, that the UP established its Department of Filipino. During his term, Romulo also attempted to raise funds that would allow more local intellectuals to go to the United States for further education. Romulo's intellectual contributions as university president cannot be tackled at length in this paper, but it is important to note that the "American Boy" in the country's national university was able to distance himself from this caricature.

34) For an analysis of the connections between nationalist liberalism and the radical politics of the 1970s, see Abinales (2001), particularly the chapter "Filipino Marxism and the 'National Question.'"

such as Poland and Hungary) led many to champion the Communist cause. Fidel Castro's Cuba, for instance, which initially attempted to curry favor from both the United States and the Soviet Union, quickly became a beneficiary of Khrushchev's largesse and thus the Soviet Union's ally—a replication of a decision made earlier by Ho Chi Minh's Vietnamese revolution.

Even Nehru's, Sukarno's, Josip Broz Tito's, and Kwame Nkrumah's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1961 in the afterglow of Bandung, could not stay neutral for long. The movement fractured over the position of Castro's Cuba to support the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was for this reason that Romulo, although sympathetic to Nehru and Sukarno, was always critical of the NAM (Romulo 1982, 28).

How did Romulo navigate the increasing divisions of the Cold War? As a bureaucrat, he could only do so much. Within the divisions of the Cold War, the Marcos regime in the Philippines quickly became one of the United States' most prominent client regimes (see Bello *et al.* 1977; Bonner 1987) and a bedrock for containment in Southeast Asia. As someone who tied his fortunes to those of the state, Romulo had to operationalize his ideas under the ambit of a US-backed dictator. The endeavor was ultimately quixotic.

When asked why he thought Romulo supported Marcos even after the declaration of martial law in 1972, Muego speculated it was because Romulo refused to leave the public limelight. Phrased differently, Romulo did not want to end his career as a diplomat. Speaking to the journalist Brillantes (2005, 95) in 1984, a dying Romulo explained that he was primarily nonpartisan. "My main preoccupation," he said, "has been foreign relations and not domestic partisan politics. It is with that overriding concern that I have served all the Presidents, from President Quezon to President Marcos."<sup>35</sup> This does not exonerate Romulo. As a member of Marcos's cabinet, he would have been aware of the widespread repression during the dictatorship, especially after the declaration of martial law in 1972. He surely would have known of the persecution of student activists at the university he once led. It is, thus, unsurprising that Romulo's break with his former protégé and successor as UP President, Lopez, was a result of the former's collaboration with the dictator. In 1980 Lopez called Romulo's life a "tragedy," claiming that Marcos's chief diplomat had turned his back on the principles he stood for, namely, "human rights," "democracy," and "press freedom" (Espiritu 2005, 41).

Despite the inadequacy of his defense of simply being a bureaucrat, Romulo's statements nonetheless provide us with a glimpse into his thinking. His priority, above all, was the formation of the Third World. From the beginning of his diplomatic career,

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35) It was his main preoccupation, but he was not completely detached from partisan politics. He attempted to become the presidential nominee of the Liberal Party in the early 1950s.

Romulo sought to construct a foreign policy grounded on the concerns of Asia and other decolonizing states. He took offense whenever someone cast doubt on his credentials as an Asianist. His famous debate with Nehru in Bandung, for example, was triggered when Nehru questioned the credibility of Asian leaders supporting the US-backed Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO, founded in Manila in 1954). According to Romulo (1986, 139), Nehru's comments "got me," which led to his extended rebuttal of the Indian leader. Romulo's reputation as "America's boy" was obviously a sensitive spot for him. And in his career after Bandung, he would attempt to distance himself from this image. More important, after Bandung he would continue his career as an advocate of the Third World. A post in the Marcos government allowed for this.

In the second of his two posthumously published memoirs, he recalled that Marcos was a "receptive and able ally" in his goal of forwarding an independent Philippine foreign policy. "We agreed that it was time for our former colony to distance itself from the towering shadow of its old patron, the United States" (Romulo 1988, 137). In the 1970s, the Philippines opened diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union, "independent of the US position" (*ibid.*). Romulo, in fact, claimed that Richard Nixon credited him with the idea of opening diplomatic relations between China and the United States in 1972 (Romulo 1986, 155).<sup>36</sup> Though at no point did he retract his criticisms of Communism, Romulo began to espouse a more pragmatic approach to relations with Communist countries.

The shift to a more independent foreign policy reflected Romulo's changing views in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, he no longer believed that Asian nations could be divided between a non-aligned bloc and those, like the Philippines, that supported the United States. In a speech following the conferment of an honorary degree from the University of the East, an unusually humble Romulo (1969, 51) reflected on the changes in Philippine foreign policy since Bandung:

In recalling the events of the 1950's, especially with reference to Bandung, I consider it one of the little ironies of our time—and I did not foresee it then when I clashed with Jawaharlal Nehru in the Bandung Conference—that the positions of India and the Philippines would somewhat change, one moving slightly to the other's position. But this would be a story of the 1960's after India was to suffer, as she did, the trauma of military aggression by Communist China, and the Philippines was to begin to realize the full implications of her one-sided policy.

He concluded that both India and the Philippines would likely "move nearer to each other, and to the rest of Asia, moving in the same direction" (*ibid.*).

What did Romulo's shift in orientation mean in terms of concrete policy? Beyond

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36) The claim is difficult to verify. I cannot find evidence of Nixon either affirming or negating it.

opening ties with new states, it meant turning the United Nations into a venue for Asian and Third World solidarity. During a trip to India in 1969, Romulo drew attention to India and the Philippines' joint support of policy recommendations from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (*The Indian Express* 1969). At the time, UNCTAD was led by Raul Prebisch, one of the left-wing pioneers of dependency theory in economics, which called for the economic independence of peripheral countries in a world economic system.<sup>37</sup> In India, Romulo rehearsed the ideas of left-wing Third Worldists, echoing UNCTAD's critique of unfair tariff policies that protected First World markets from Third World goods (*ibid.*). He also congratulated the Indian government for nationalizing its banks in a bid for economic self-sufficiency (*The Hindustan Times* 1969).

Moreover, as Marcos's foreign minister, Romulo participated in the formation of the ASEAN, which he viewed as "an Asian Third World grouping" (Romulo 1988, 153). One of ASEAN's primary goals was ensuring "freedom from interference in the internal affairs of the countries of the area by outside Powers" (Romulo 1972, 9). Of course, ASEAN then was spearheaded by brutal domestic dictators such as Marcos and Suharto. But for Romulo, ASEAN was a concretization of his Asianist worldview. As a diplomat wedded to the nation-state, he saw developing world solidarity through the narrow lens of state-to-state relations. His notion of protecting states from external threats allowed him to justify dictatorial threats from within. Ironically, it was Romulo's dedication to Third Worldism that made him a servant to a US-backed dictatorship. Close to his death, he wrote a final justification for his support of Marcos: "If only he would be judged by his conduct of foreign relations, Marcos would go down in history as an excellent leader of the Filipino people" (1988, 153). It was almost a plea for forgiveness.

Romulo eventually resigned from the Marcos administration in 1983. The assassination that year of oppositionist Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino triggered a political and economic crisis—one that would lead to the dictator's ouster. The crisis gave Romulo an excuse to leave. After his final appearance at the UN in 1983, an ailing Romulo said he was "heartsick." Speaking from a hospital bed in the United States, the 85-year-old admitted defeat: "For the first time in 37 years, I appeared before the United Nations with my head bowed in shame. . . . It was hard for me to explain. . . . I have done my best building up Philippine prestige abroad. That prestige has been destroyed" (quoted in Brillantes 2005, 89).

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37) For a discussion of dependency theory, the Third World, and the legacy of Prebisch's UNCTAD, see Bello (2006, 32–58) and Connell (2007, 139–164).



## Conclusion

The broad, democratic Left shies away from anti-Communism by virtue of the position's intimate association with reaction. Anti-anti-Communism—the equation of all criticisms of Leninism with fascism<sup>38)</sup>—has prevented a progressive reinterpretation of the phenomenon, thus allowing the terms of the discourse to be dictated by the modern-day heirs of McCarthy on the Right. Indeed, anti-Communism has a dark history, particularly in Southeast Asia.<sup>39)</sup> But, as with most ideological constellations, anti-Communism does not come in one strain. As I outlined earlier, opposition to Leninism began on the Left. A committed socialist like Blum, for instance, believed Bolsheviks had betrayed their socialist cause.

Romulo was not a man of the Left. Nonetheless, his views mirrored those of liberal and socialist anti-Communists—views that the statesman articulated in the language of Asian solidarity. That he was an anti-Communist is not as scandalous as a contemporary progressive might assume. Removed from the paranoia and propaganda of the Cold War, elements of Romulo's anti-Communism would not be controversial in the context of the contemporary democratic Left. In the Philippines, for instance, progressive scholars publishing in progressive journals have replicated his criticisms of Communism's inflexibility and its disdain for democratic structures such as free elections.<sup>40)</sup>

Romulo's oeuvre, however, goes beyond merely proving that anti-Communism could transcend its fascist associations. In this article, I hope to have shown that liberal anti-Communism was essential to the birth of Third Worldism and the solidarities it produced. It is, thus, his unique synthesis of liberal antitotalitarianism and Asianism that makes Romulo an important figure in global intellectual history. That Romulo betrayed his ideals when he became a servant of the Marcos dictatorship does not negate the relevance of his ideas. His views constitute an alternative, if provisional, Asian modernity—one that undermines totalitarianism in all its forms.

**Accepted: May 1, 2014**

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38) According to Francois Furet (1999, 209–265), the ability of Communists to pass off their critics as fascists, or abetting fascism, was the legacy of Stalin's united front policy during World War II. Communist propaganda, especially under the supervision of Willi Munzenberg (Communism's Goebbels and one of the first mentors of future anti-Communist Arthur Koestler), turned the followers of Stalin into the ultimate symbols of anti-fascist resistance. Under this rubric, it became easy for Munzenberg to dismiss the Soviet Union's critics as abettors of German and Italian fascism.

39) The 1965 mass murder of members of the Communist Party of Indonesia is the most egregious example. See Kammen and McGregor (2012) for the latest scholarship.

40) See, for example, Quimpo (2005) and Putzel (1996).

## Acknowledgments

My thanks to Patricio Abinales, Caroline Hau, and Kate McGregor for commenting on this article and for their continued mentorship. I also acknowledge the feedback of my anonymous reviewers. All errors, naturally, are my own.

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# Playing along the Perak River: Readings of an Eighteenth-Century Malay State

Husni Abu Bakar\*

This essay questions the construction of cartographic, historical, and literary artifacts underlying the cognitive foundations of an eighteenth-century Southeast Asian state on the Malay Peninsula—Perak—by exploring alternative modes of reading. Through a narratological and historiographical exploration of nonconventional textual elements in *Misa Melayu*—a Malay text that contains accounts of Perak’s statecraft—and several other primary and secondary sources, I seek new, alternative, more playful, and enlightening ways of navigating and thinking about a Malay(sian) geopolitical entity beyond prescribed Cartesian maps and boundaries.

**Keywords:** Malay, Malaysian, narratology, cartography, hermeneutics, historiography

## Perak: An Introduction

Among an old bundle of notes<sup>1)</sup> compiled by the British officer W. E. Maxwell<sup>2)</sup> on the royal families of Perak, Barbara Andaya—an Australian historian researching on the eighteenth-century Malay state of Perak—discovered a Malay map dated 1876. She included this map in the introductory pages of her doctoral dissertation, later published as a book titled *Perak: The Abode of Grace* (1979). If one were to categorize this work, it

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- 1) MS 46943, “Notes on Genealogies of Rajas and Chiefs of Perak,” compiled by W. E. Maxwell, Royal Asiatic Society, London.
- 2) “Born 1946: Son of Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, (one time Recorder and Judge in the Straits Settlements). Served in Malaya from 1869 to 1895, latterly as British Resident, Selangor (1889), Colonial Secretary, 1890. Founder of Maxwell’s Hill, Taiping (1876) when Assistant Resident Larut. Keen supporter and contributor to the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (over 30 articles or notes). Vice President of the Society in 1894–95. Died at sea, while Governor of the Gold Coast, West Africa, December, 1897. Father of Sir George Maxwell, later Chief Secretary F.M.S.” Short biography of Maxwell from R. O. Winstedt and R. J. Wilkinson, *A History of Perak* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1974).

would not be inaccurate to call it a history of Perak. To be more specific, it is a history of the Malay state of Perak in the eighteenth century. If one were to read about the state at present, it would usually be described in terms of its primary resource—tin, the mineral that mythically gave the state its name (*perak* in Malay means “silver,” referring to the color of the alluvial tin deposits abundant in the state) and its constantly changing political situation following the victory of the opposition coalition in March 2008 and the subsequent takeover by the ruling government of Malaysia.

A precursor of Andaya’s work in Perak history is R. O. Winstedt and R. J. Wilkinson’s *A History of Perak* (1974), which includes three articles by Maxwell: two on historical manuscripts and one on “Shamanism in Perak.” Central to both histories—Andaya’s and the Europeans’—is the presence of trade, as events with regard to Perak history are explained in terms of the concentration and movement of capital, complex networks of kinship and power, and multifaceted relations between factions competing for control of Perak’s resources. These factions included the British, the Dutch, the Achinese, the Bugis, the Perak Malays, and the Siamese. The centrality of the presence of trade in histories is indicative of a modern understanding of the English word “history” as being laden with dates, timelines, important agents—usually those in power—and the overarching presence of trade as the main catalyst of events. Something Niall Ferguson systematically points out in *The Ascent of Money* (2008), that “financial history is the essential back story behind all history,” is iterated by Winstedt and Wilkinson in the introduction of their book: “. . . at the back of all Perak history has been trade” (1974, 1). The sections on Perak in national histories have, unsurprisingly, followed this tradition, and as a result Perak is popularly known in Malaysian history for two events: the signing of the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, which allowed the British to act as royal advisers to the Malay sultans, effectively starting the British Malaya period of Malaysian history; and the murder of J. W. W. Birch, a British resident, by Seputum, a slave of the royal chief Dato Maharajalela.

With the prominence of trade and printed sources in historiography, it is easy to overlook the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural nuances in the paradigm that underlie native historical source materials, such as the 1876 Malay map and *Misa Melayu*, the eighteenth-century Malay text about the sultanate of Perak in that century. I contend that the historical approach to these source materials must be balanced with complementary and supplementary information, as well as other modes of comprehension gained from alternative readings that illuminate aspects beyond historical considerations.

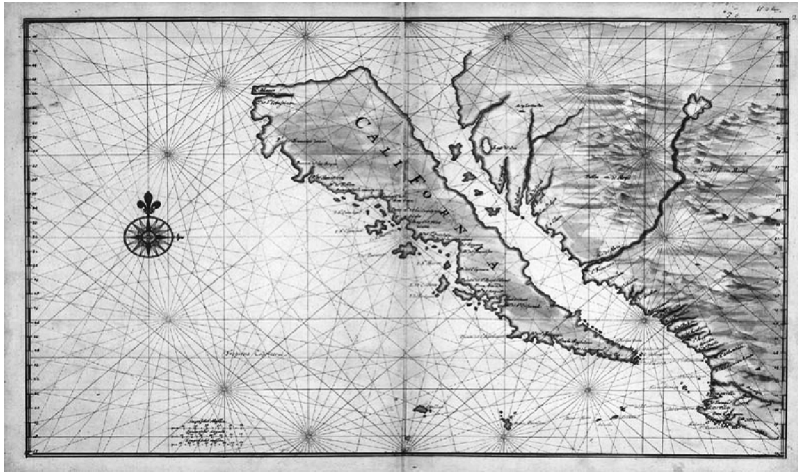


Fig. 1 A 1639 map of California as an island, apparently influenced by a quote from *Las sergas de Esplandian* (1510) by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, in Jacobs (2009)

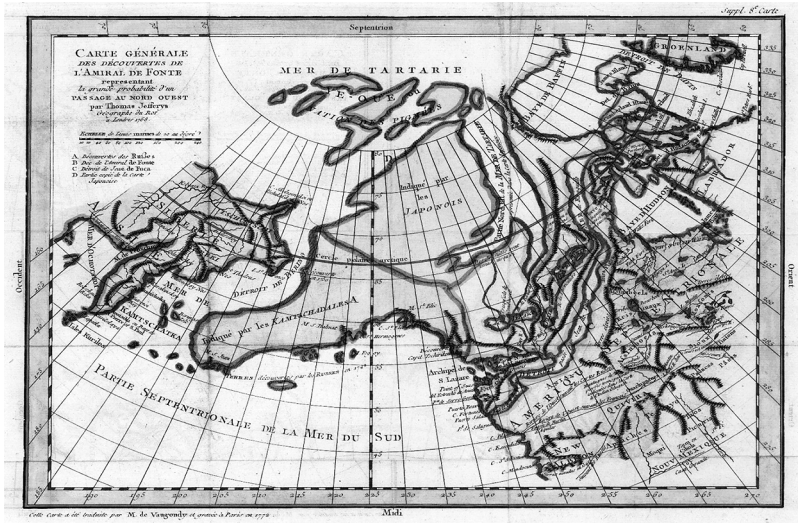
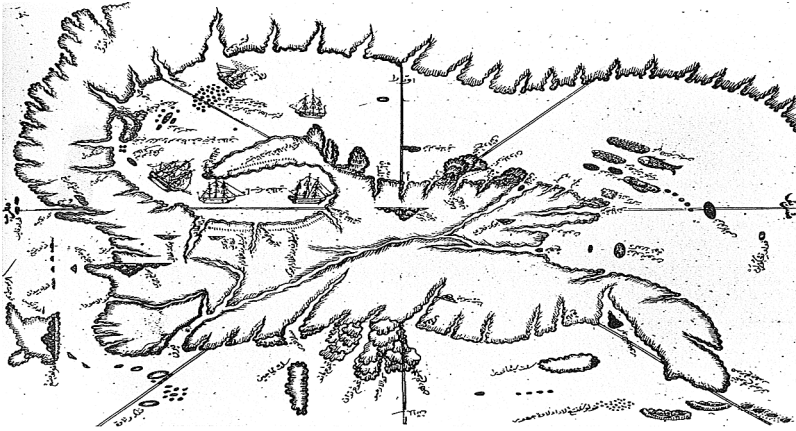


Fig. 2 A 1762 update of an English map by Didier Robert de Vaugondy, cited by Jacobs (2009) as “a prime example of wishful mapping.” Taken from *Strange Maps* blog: <http://bigthink.com/strange-maps> (accessed on November 30, 2013)

## Unframing Cartographic, Historical, and Literary Myths of/on the Peninsula

*Strange Maps*, an anthology of rare maps, compiles and discusses nonconventional cartographic curiosities, including maps with nonexistent waterways or water bodies such





**Fig. 3** An early eighteenth-century Malay map of the Malay Peninsula with the mysterious Perak–Kelantan transpeninsular channel. Despite its geographical inaccuracies, the map served its purpose by showing the most convenient trade route for ships going to and from Pattani (Phillimore 1956).

as an eighteenth-century map showing the mythical Northwest Passage<sup>3</sup>—a fictional aquatic route from the Gulf of California to the St. Lawrence River near Quebec—and a 1639 map depicting California as an island (Jacobs 2009). The map in Fig. 3 shows a similar mixture of fact and myth: both the Perak and Kelantan Rivers (whose estuaries are located in the southwest and northeast of the peninsula respectively) geographically exist as separate rivers instead of the single continuous flow represented as a canal running through the Malay Peninsula. Beyond our appreciation for these aspects of an old cartographic document, there is a story about the production of the map, about the representation of a currently nonexistent waterway, and the most interesting one of how we, as (post)modern map readers should read these imaginative depictions. The transpeninsular channel appears in 46 other European maps predating the one discovered by R. H. Phillimore (1956), and part of it actually represents a *penarikan*,<sup>4</sup> a semi-aquatic route for sea vessels through which ships have to be dragged (Wheatley 1996). The directions of the bowsprits seem to indicate that the ships have just passed through the transpeninsular channel on their way to Pattani, a renowned regional and international trade center in the eighteenth century.

In ancient maps of the Malay Peninsula, there is no one fixed name for any location; the names change and keep getting revised from one map to another, as do the repre-

3) <http://bigthink.com/ideas/548-wishful-mapping-a-half-baked-alaska-and-the-passage-that-wasnt-there?page=all> (accessed on November 30, 2013)

4) A derivation of the Malay word *tarik*, meaning “to pull” or “to drag,” *penarikan* may be translated as “drag-way” or “portage.”

sentations of the Southeast Asian<sup>5)</sup> landmass as a sub-unit of the larger continent of Asia. Lineages of Portuguese, Greek, Arab, Turkish, and Chinese cartographers who wished to map the world mostly worked on maps that were drawn by sailing explorers, or privateers, who explored uncharted waters and documented them using their own craft. Through comparing, copying, and charting various cartographic representations of the water and land bodies, the mapmakers came up with very diverse ideas on how to represent the world and its constituents. The first person to map a space/place would most commonly be the authoritative voice in deciding how a continent or a sea would look on a map, gaining a certain kind of primacy over the people who came after and subtly subjugating the latter under an old, overarching spell of cartographic canonicity. Such is the effect of Ptolemy on the mapping of the Malay Peninsula, which went through several revisions of cartographic representation—from *Aurea Chersonese* (the Golden Chersonese), *Malacca* with its various spellings (*Malacha*, *Malacca*, *Mallacqua*, *Malaca*), *Alta India*, *Malaya*—each of them distinctly different yet indirectly reflecting those that came before. A question that could be asked here is, What made the cartographer decide not to merely reproduce older names and come up with new ones? Why, or how exactly, did Southeast Asia and its contents change on these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century maps? The answer lies partially in the predominant cosmological understanding that the cartographers had, and probably also in the developments that pushed exploration and cartography as ways of documenting parts of nature into a cyclical stage of constant revisions, parallel with the ebbs and flows of linguistic change that inevitably pass with time. More pressing questions about these maps are: What were the bases of the changes in place names? What are the factors that underlie a cartographer's inclination to rename a place/space and/or represent it in a different way from the way it has been represented before?

The Ptolemaic Southeast Asian mainland is retained as well, though it is dwarfed by the false peninsular subcontinent. Martellus places various Southeast Asian islands known from Marco Polo and other travelers in relation to the bogus peninsula rather than true Ptolemaic Malaya. He also inscribes the new subcontinent with Polian comments about the Malay Peninsula, reinforcing the original *error*. The Martellus map (or its unknown prototype) thus gave birth to an error that would have a profound impact on the mapping of Southeast Asia, as well as on the mapping of America, for the next half century. (Suarez 1999, 94)

Cartographic errors, at least in the case of the maps mentioned above (if not the entire corpus of pre-modern Southeast Asian maps), can be attributed to their conformity

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5) As a geopolitical unit and term of reference, "Southeast Asia" did not exist until the mid-twentieth century.

to the three basic attributes of modern geographical and geometrical cartography, “scale, projection and symbolization,” where “each element is a source of distortion” (Monmonier 1996, 5). Mostly the errors are results of the fictive imaginaire of the cartographers transferred onto a form that requires metrical correctness, based on the modern functions of the map—to delineate landscape and land space, for purposes of determining one’s *loci* in the universe’s infinite *topoi*. Indeed, reason-based fact-making did not come to the surface in maps including the Malay Peninsula until the late eighteenth century via Dutch and English maps. Against these maps, a map such as the 1489 Martellus map of the “dragon-tail” peninsula, which causes uncertainty regarding the land space it represents—between Latin America and Southeast Asia (which includes the Malay Peninsula)—would seem incongruent. Complications arise in the onomastogenesis of the place and space names that populate the maps, as well as the directionality of the peninsula, which begs for new and more flexible hermeneutics in cartography.

William Richardson (2003) rejects the popular assumption that the peninsula actually represents Latin America, particularly around Tierra del Fuego and the Strait of Magellan, due to the fallibility of the toponymic claims and coordinate-based feature analysis on the “dragon-tail” peninsula, citing the suggestion as “not substantiated.” Thomas Suarez (1999) likened the peninsula to a phantom, dubbing it “fake” due to its non-corroboration to the Ptolemaic “truthful” map of Southeast Asia. Present standards of cartography would make any serious consideration of the errors on the Martellus map irrelevant and unimportant, as it is not a geometric map. Similar to these is a 1639 map showing California as an island, which apparently internalized a derivational error from an oft-referenced and rarely seen fictional text,<sup>6</sup> positing a strait between California and mainland North America. Educated, yet conjectural, error analyses on these maps could be sidestepped by taking into account the meta-fact that the errors are errors only because they do not corroborate the spectral factuality of the geographies of Ptolemy and Mercator. Being temporally flanked by these two main progenitors of classical cartography, Martellus’s map is one of many that are full of false, hyperbolized errors that provide grounds for fascinating origin myths for place names and land shapes in a present-day map.

As map readers living in the twenty-first century, we would find it convenient to dismiss all cartographic errors as just that—mere errors—and relegate the maps that

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6) “One of the most famous misconceptions in cartographic history is of California as an island. The origin of this error is *Las sergas de Esplandian*, a romantic novel written in 1510 by Garcilaso de Montalvo in which he states that ‘on the right hand of the Indies there is an island called California very close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise; and it is peopled by black women, without any man among them, for they live in the manner of the Amazons’” (Jacobs 2009, 7).



feature a captain, who is also the cartographer (instead of a sultan)—Captain Thomas Forrest, a Renaissance seaman—whose name is written in clear font on the map itself.

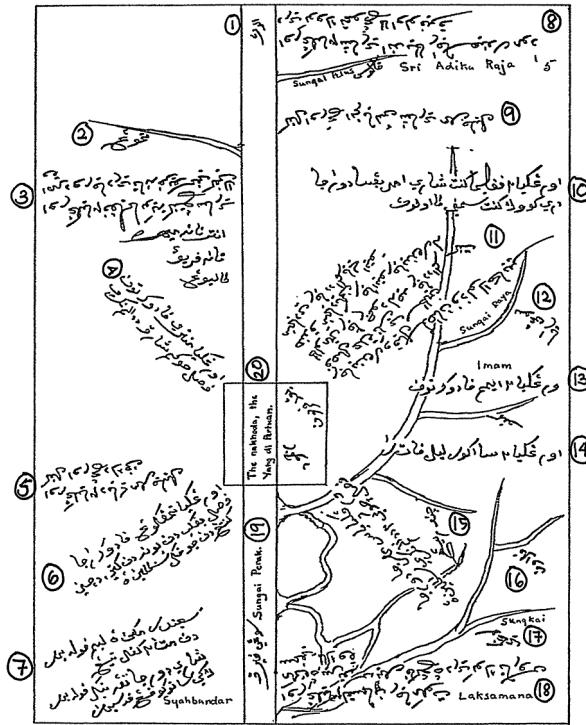
Essentially, both the 1876 Malay map and the 1792 European map represent the Malay state of Perak circa late 1700s to late 1800s, with underlying narratives of how the geopolitical entity was conceptualized from two paradigms—a European one that has become so familiar and a Malay one that is still underdescribed. The former, prepared with measurement tools, is a product of print technology, is mainly land-based, and is generally more scientific compared to the latter, which was made through estimation, drawn with pen and ink, and focused on the flowing Perak River and its dendrites. In one of his short stories—*On Exactitude in Science*, fashioned poignantly as a quote from a seventeenth-century text—Jorge Luis Borges (1999) captures and almost ridicules the Enlightenment-based empiricism that is in constant search of the ultimate be-all-end-all way of representing reality and nature by telling readers the story of a fictional map that is the actual size of the empire itself.<sup>7)</sup> The map in the story serves as a supposed ideal for cartographers, yet it is impossible to produce, reminding us that there are always shortcomings in a geographical/scientific/cartographic map despite the impression of accuracy it gives. The exertion of divine control and rule over the entirety of its territory by the empire that Borges refers to is summarized in the map. To answer the fundamental questions of Malay statecraft in the eighteenth century—“What is Perak?” and “How is the state produced in print?”—the two maps of Perak offer radically different explanations based on the paradigms governing their constructions.

### Partial Transliteration and Translation of the 1876 Malay Map

For the most part, the Jawi script toponymic labels and royal names are translated based on definitions given in R. O. Winstedt’s *An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary* (1963):

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7) “. . . In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Piteousness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography. Suarez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658.”



3. A MALAY MAP OF PERAK, 1876

Fig. 5 A Malay map of Perak, 1876, from W.E. Maxwell’s notes, MS 46943, Royal Asiatic Society, London, as published in *Perak: The Abode of Grace: A Study of an Eighteenth Century Malay State* by Barbara Andaya (1979). Some words—names of places and court nobles—on the map have been transliterated by Andaya. Arabic numerals in circles are my annotations used as a guide in the transliteration and translation of the Jawi text to Romanized Malay to English.

1. *Ulunya*: upper waters (of a river), up-country, the interior of a country
2. *Temong* (“Temong”)
3. (Upside down) *Orangkaya2 Panglima Bukit Gantang Seri Amar Dewaraja dari tanah Grik sampai ke paya laut.*  
Noble Chief of Bukit Gantang from the land of Grik to the sea swamp.  
*Antara tanah <...> tanah Periuk Keling*  
Between the land of <...> the land of Periuk Keling
4. *Orangkaya menteri paduka tuan pasal hukum syarak didalam negeri*  
Noble Minister of His Royal Highness regarding the syariah law in the state
5. *Orangkaya2 <...> Maharajalela kapal orang d.k.p.t(n?)*  
Nobleman <...> Maharajalela ship people
6. *Orangkaya Temenggung paduka raja pasal <...> dan bunuh dan <...>*

- Noble <...> Admiral of His Royal Highness regarding killings and <...>
7. *Syahbandar* <...> *lima puluh bahara dan mata2 kapal* <...> *Seri Dewaraja tiga puluh bahara*  
Harbormaster <...> 50 *bahara*<sup>8)</sup> and ship spies <...> *Seri Dewaraja 30 satu kupang pada sebahara*  
one kupang for each bahara
  8. *Orangkaya2 Seri Andika Raja Syahbandar Muda dari Kuala Temong ke Ulu Perak. Sungai Alas*  
Noble Seri Andika Raja Junior Harbormaster from Kuala Temong to Ulu Perak. Alas River  
(in Roman alphabets “Sri Adika Raja,” “Sungai Alas,” “5”)
  9. *Kapal Orang Enam Belas Seri Maharajalela*  
Ship of the 16 nobles of Seri Maharajalela
  10. *Orangkaya2 Panglima Kinta Seri Amar Bangsa Dewaraja dari Kuala Kinta sampai keulunya*  
Noble Chief of Kinta Seri Amar Bangsa Dewaraja from the estuary of Kinta to its source (*ulu*: upriver)
  11. *Raja bendahara wakil sultan* <...> *pasal adat negeri sekalian. Kalau mati raja* <...> *raja di dalam hendak menjadikan raja itu raja bendaharalah menjadi raja didalam balai itu. Kinta.*  
Royal Harbormaster representative of the sultan <...> regarding the traditions of the state. If the king dies <...> in the process of making that king, the Royal Harbormaster should be the king inside the hall. Kinta.
  12. *Sungai Raya* (“Sungai Raya”)  
Raya River
  13. *Orangkaya2 Imam Paduka Tuan.* (“Imam”). *Kampar.*  
Nobleman Imam Paduka Tuan. *Kampar.*
  14. *Orangkaya2* <...>
  15. *Orangkaya* <...> *Maharaja Dewaraja pasal cukai2 didalam negeri sekalian. Chenderiang*  
Nobleman <...> Maharaja Dewaraja regarding tax inside the entire state. Chenderiang
  16. *Palawan* (“Palawan”)
  17. *Sungkai* (“Sungkai”)

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8) A Malay word that has spun out of currency, referring to a measure of weight (3 *pikul* or 400 pounds)

18. *Orangkaya2 Laksamana Raja Mahkota <...> seratus bahara <...> dari kuala terus sampai ke laut.* (“Laksamana”)<sup>9</sup>  
Noble Admiral Raja Mahkota <...> 100 *bahara* <...> from the estuary to the sea.
19. *Sungai Perak* (“Sungai Perak”)  
Perak River
20. *Nakhoda; Yang DiPertuan*  
Captain; His Royal Highness

In Fig. 5 the Perak River is depicted prominently with two arrow-straight lines in its center, flanked on both sides by meandrous tributaries flowing from various points. Accordingly, the Jawi text labels are diverse in their orthographical (or cartographical) alignment—upside down, diagonal, upright—and they are written in such a manner that there is no upright position to read the map. The main river itself is identified with the *nakhoda* “captain” and *Yang diPertuan*, “the one who is made Lord” or “His Royal Highness,” as also shown by the Romanized transliteration of the Jawi labels—a title assigned to Sultan Iskandar Dzulkarnain of Perak (r. 1752–65). The sultan is the chief character in *Misa Melayu*, an eighteenth-century Malay text containing accounts of the Perak royalty and their relations with Dutch Batavia. Similar to the river, the tributaries on the left and right are labeled not only with names of places but titles and names of Perak nobles, with brief descriptions of their legal and administrative roles in the state with regard to taxation, tradition, and criminal law. The top of the river is labeled *uhunya*, a Malay term that can refer to several things: “the upper waters (of a river)” or “upriver,” “up-country,” or “the interior of a country” and also “the head of.”

It is not surprising that readers will find this map a little strange due to its lack of border lines, legends, metrical scale, and compass—the usual furnishings of a contemporary geographical map. In *Misa Melayu*, the Malay word *peta* (map)<sup>10</sup> does not occur in its base form but as a passive verb, twice: once to describe the beautiful imagery of one of the nobles (*Orangkaya Temenggung*) conjured up in one’s thoughts, and the other time to describe the making of a blueprint of a ship. It is evident that the 1876 map was not necessarily a navigational tool among the Malays of Perak in the eighteenth century as much as it was a projection of human imagination, on paper, of the riverine state.

9) The *Laksamana* and *Orang Kaya-kaya Shahbandar Paduka Indra* are considered “the keys of the country,” as described in *Misa Melayu*.

10) *Peta*: map, plan; *p. angina*: weather chart; *p. timbul*: topographical plan (of clay); *petakan*: to draw or sketch; *dipetakan dalam angan-a*: imaged in one’s thoughts (of a loved face); *perpetaan*: In., topography



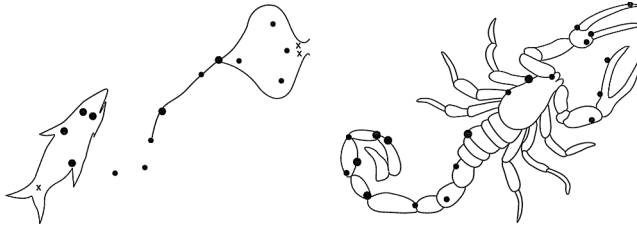
As part of the set of written documents about the history of the statecraft of Perak in the eighteenth century, the 1876 map is an invaluable piece of text. It tells another story of how the state could have been imagined in the past—through the flow of the Perak River and its tributaries combined with the titles of the court royals. Reading this map alongside *Misa Melayu*, a text that “celebrates not only the present but the *tanda* (signs) of that present—a new city, a fort, a mosque,”<sup>11</sup> one might be reminded of the fact that the map itself could be considered a sign of the present or of modernity, and that it is as obscure as the text. It could be the case that this map, just like *Misa Melayu*, was produced at the request of a modernized sultan who wanted the state to be represented in a manner understandable to Europeans and other foreign elites or merchants that were dealing with the state government at that time. It would not be difficult to imagine the map being in the possession of the Perak elites, or the sultan specifically as part of his regalia, as suggested by old paintings of European kings and queens (and sometimes estate owners) with a globe or a map in the background. And much like other maps from the 1800s and earlier, the 1876 map would have been a piece of knowledge that was secret, sacred, and available to only a privileged few—the royal elites and British officers.

The word “map” could be a misleading translation or label for the 1876 text, just like the word “epic” is an inadequate translation for the Malay *hikayat*, a genre label under which *Misa Melayu* is subsumed. Although the surface forms of these two textual documents show features they share with other maps and epics, the underlying intentions and paradigms behind their production are overshadowed by the connotations of those labels.

On the first few pages of Andaya’s 1979 monograph is a comparison of cartography (also epistemology) in the form of one map of Perak drawn by a European scholar and

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11) “One contender for consideration might well be an obscure eighteenth-century text originating from the Malay state of Perak. Known as the *Misa Melayu*, it was written by Raja Chulan, a respected poet, at the behest of his cousin Sultan Iskandar, who desired a *hikayat* (story) that would celebrate ‘zaman kita’, our time. Unlike many Malay works, the *Misa Melayu* accords little space to past myth and royal genealogies. Instead, it celebrates not only the present but the *tanda* (signs) of that present: a new city, a fort, a mosque. Through their very newness these *tanda* both anticipate the future and ensure that the ruler will be remembered ‘in the days to come’. In its depiction of the ruler as initiator and innovator, whether it is as a mosque builder or sea traveler, the text is infused with the sense of transformation that Berman sees as intrinsic to the experience of modernity. What is overwhelmingly absent here is Berman’s correlate of modernity, a sense of rupture with the past that invites a challenge to tradition. The evocation of ‘our time’ does not mean a denigration of what has gone before, for the past has set the standards by which the present can be measured. Sultan Iskandar’s achievements emulate former times and simultaneously surpass them. In looking backward to the past and forward to the future, he is, in Malay terms, a modern man” (Andaya 1997, 405).



**Fig. 6** Different paradigmatic interpretations of the same constellation: Scorpio is seen by Bugis seafarers as a shark and a stingray rather than a scorpion.

another by a Malay. The first one is Cartesian: it has boundaries and space contained within them, with various places labeled. On the Malay map there is a river with branches that are labeled with the places the sailing Sultan Iskandar visited, as depicted in the *syair* part of *Misa Melayu*. Although Andaya does not discuss much about the *syair* in her thorough historical narrative, she does call for a reexamination of the emphasis on land that has, for a long time, been the mainstay in Southeast Asian studies. On this precolonial Malay map of the state of Perak, there are accompanying notes that say, “. . . the raja is the captain and that the duties of ministers mirror those of crew members” (Andaya 2006). The river, which is just a rupturing line in the land-based European map of Perak, is the essence of the Malay one. Going by the metaphor presented with the map, the raja as captain and ministers as crew members, it may be inferred that the state of Perak itself, in precolonial Malay epistemology (or at least cartography, which is a misnomer), was imagined with the river as its quintessential core, rather than land space.

Water bodies in Southeast Asia, previously viewed through European lenses as just uninteresting interstices between pieces of land on which property could be built and profit gained, is currently being reexamined as a key aspect of life in Southeast Asia. Water was the conduit through which Muslim merchants’ ships and European galleons came in contact with various areas in Southeast Asia. In the final line of the sixth stanza in the *syair* in *Misa Melayu*, it is said that the sultan goes on a journey at sea (the word used here is *bermain*, which also means “play” and “go places”) in a state of “perfect faith” or *semburna iman*, which could very well be an expression based on Muslim travelers who brought with them the word and the notion of *iman*. Andaya (*ibid.*) also mentions the arrival of a Dutch “stranger-king” on the shores of Sulawesi, whom local tribes turned to for help with settling disputes. In the seas of Southeast Asia European order did not get established in its full form, although there were attempts that resulted in Bugis seafarers being considered pirates because they did not heed European law (Rubin

1974, 31).<sup>12)</sup> The most famous Malay character in Europe is Sandokan, the “Tiger of Malaya,” a fictional pirate character created by Emilio Salgari in the novel *The Tigers of Mompracem* and featuring in cartoons as well as films. There are still communities of seafarers called Orang Laut, or “sea people” (Chou 1994; Ammarell 1999), who are well versed in aquatic navigation and who consider the infinite sea their home.

How do we reconcile the maritime discoveries above with myopic European histories of Southeast Asia, which for the most part were preoccupied with land and order instead of water and fluidity? How do the nautical relate to the Malay noetic at present and in the past? These questions can be the motivation for Southeast Asianists to contest—but not necessarily do away with—European historicist views to give some “space” (and “time”) to another way of viewing Southeast Asia. After all, it is part land and part water (mostly water), which should hint at the prospect of a harmonious coexistence between Euro-leaning (land-based) approaches and approaches that challenge them (maritime), like the waves lapping the shores of the many beaches in the region, altering the region’s landscape constantly and persistently (Maier 2003).

Perhaps Sandokan, as a fictional character, could lead us to understand the disparity between land and sea, and its implication on the establishment of order during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when British influence was spreading across the archipelagoes of Southeast Asia. As a rebel pirate, he is the nucleus of the main counterforce leading local natives against British colonization in Borneo, under the rule of White Rajah James Brooke. His demeanor is gentle and reserved, reminiscent of a Malay *pendekar*, warrior-like and fearless.

In Salgari’s novel cycle the spirit of the tiger is immortalized through the epithetic and zoomorphic character of Sandokan, who is dubbed the Tiger of Malay(sia), fierce and relentless in his stance against the forces of colonization led by James Brooke. In one of the historically detailed film versions, he slays a tiger with a *keris* in the style of a true *pendekar* to save his love interest, Marianna, after she falls off her steed. Prior to that, another tiger is killed by a mysterious dark-skinned youth to save the nearby *kampung* from its terror.

Mompracem, in the films and novels, could be viewed as a microcosm of the entire colonized Malay world, or as one of the prime examples of how natives were more resis-

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12) Hugo Grotius formulated a justification based on concepts of honor and vengeance for any aggressive act by European merchant ships against local seafarers that were considered as obstacles or “pirates” on their trade routes. *Mare liberum*, established by the sixteenth-century Dutch scholar, was considered the natural law that extended across the globe, with the Europeans themselves as the self-proclaimed police enforcing it while ensuring the law worked to their advantage of possessing land, spice ports, and, ironically, waters in Southeast Asia.



Fig. 7 Langeren's 1623 world map that shows the transpeninsular channel on the Malay Peninsula. Also shown is the Bornean island of Mompracem, the home of the fictional character Sandokan, Tiger of Malaya (Wheatley 1955).

tant to the Queen's army on an island. For Salgari and many of his readers, who were likely mostly Europeans during the time when the novels were first published, Sandokan is possibly the only Malay hero created by a European in fiction, and thus he cannot help but reflect the traditional mold of a romantic hero. The only strange thing about him is that despite being respected and upheld as a leader by the locals, he does not really fit in their community and cannot be categorized as Malay. Yet, through his demeanor he performs as a Malay, in fact a Malay hero, to, for, and against the Europeans, who were probably charmed by the exotic, exoticized stories of traveling authors and their traveling heroes.

The tiger is a recurrent theme throughout Malaysian literature, political history, and pop culture. For instance, on the national emblem there are two Malaysian tigers flanking the insignia; the national football team is called Harimau Malaya (*harimau*: tiger); P. Ramlee, Malaysia's top silver-screen legend—as well as author, actor, director, script-writer—writes in *Sitora Harimau Jadian* about a horrifying man-tiger terrorizing a *kampung*. Long before its fame in modern works, the tiger as a metaphorical symbol appeared in *Misa Melayu* as a fierce, grandiose allusion reserved for the sultan:

Telah turun kenaikan Sultan, Sikap seperti **harimau** jantan, Terlalu indah rupa perbuatan, Dikarangkan syair ikat-ikatan.

[The sultan descended from his vessel, in a manner similar to a handsome tiger, gallant in form and demeanor, for him this *syair* is composed.]

Oral-based Malay texts such as *hikayats* and *jatakas* have been read, interpreted, and analyzed through examining the plots, characters, and motifs of the tales, along with Hindu epics as well as Persian and Arabic tales. For example, A.L. Becker analyzed *Aridharma* according to its “frames,” which are defined by “who is saying what to whom, about what, and in what language” (Becker 2000, 140). Through this analysis, a common story is identified between the Javanese tale of *Aridharma* and other texts such as the Malay *Hikayat Syah Mardan* (also known as *Hikayat Indrajaya*), the Thai *Lin Ton*, the Buddhist *Kharaputta-jataka*, and the *Arabian Nights*’ “The Ox, the Ass and the Farmer.” Farish Noor (2006) in his analysis of *Hikayat Inderajaya* identifies scenes and leitmotifs from the tale as being similar to those in the Burmese-Thai renditions of *Vessantara-jataka* and *Jataka Wetsandon*, particularly the exile of the main character into the forest as a form of purgatory in both tales. Aside from that, he relates the existence and interaction of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist elements in *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Hikayat Inderajaya* to the historical context of the coming of Islam as a gradual process, replacing Hinduism and Buddhism as the main religion in the region.

Becker’s notion of “framing a tale” is helpful as an alternative way of analyzing ancient oral-based tales, beyond the language of strata and layers. Rather than being level upon level of influences based on temporal linearity, cycles of framing are posited as structural elements in which these stories are presented, which affect their mediation and perception and therefore also appreciation, or lack thereof, as historical or literary data. The justified emphasis on language allows analysts, like readers of the stories who I imagine to be fortunately unfamiliar with the systematic categorization of religious influences in literary studies, to read tales such as *Aridharma* as a Javanese story rather than a Hindu one that is glossed and coated with Javanese elements.

Readers (and listeners) of the *hikayats* with elements from Hindu epics—*Hikayat Seri Rama* or *Hikayat Pendawa Lima* or *Hikayat Indraputra*—must be acquainted with the characters from the Hindu epics and learn the differences and distinctions between them and, for example, the Islamic elements in the stories, before they can categorize them in different boxes. This is very unlikely in pre-modern times, as these boxes were constructed at a later point in history, used and prescribed by proponents of a European-based tradition of religious knowledge governed by Christian soteriology and emphasis on scriptural writing rather than oral-based tradition, and are usually consciously learned.

In the case of *Misa Melayu*, the boundaries of the text encapsulate a Malay narrative space that is populated by Malay, Tamil, Chinese, and European characters from the state of Perak in the eighteenth century, including the author. Commissioned by Sultan Muzaffar Syah III and begun during his reign, the *hikayat* frames important court events, palace traditions and customs, trade engagements between Dutch and Perak royals, as

well as the establishment of edicts related to trade at the time. A significant part of the text is devoted to the sultan's voyage along the river.

In the first frame there is the author presenting the genealogy of Perak rulers and their kin, in parables and episodes about traditional ceremonies, elephant hunting and fishing trips, funerals, trade dealings with the Dutch, celebrations, and events leading up to the sultan's journey to sea. The royal characters speak in a high register of classical court Malay. Physically, the events in this frame take place within the court setting and multiple destinations—mini frames in themselves—across the entire state of Perak.

In the second frame, the author speaks to the reader in a humble narrative, poetic voice, by using the traditional first person pronoun *patik* reserved for an audience with the sultan, due to the fact that the text was commissioned by Sultan Muzaffar Syah. A lengthy *syair* charts the sultan's journey, interspersed with poetic descriptions of royal figures, events, vessels—ships, boats, schooners, prows—that escorted the sultan on his trip. In the third frame, more contemporary voices such as the earliest readers and translators of the *hikayat*, Richard Winstedt and the publisher of the Pustaka Antara 1962 version, explain the text through summaries—one in English<sup>13)</sup> and the other in Malay—delineating the information from the text, charting the discursive paths through which the text might be further appreciated by the present-day reader. Arching beyond the other two frames, it is through the discursive, disciplinary frame that the *hikayat* is ultimately made to be understood as a historico-literary material to a larger public.

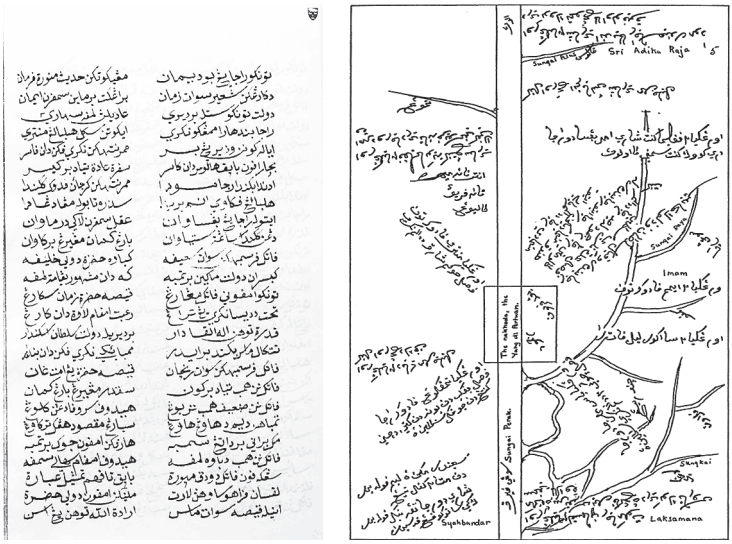
All Southeast Asian pre-modern and early modern texts, in whatever form they come in—maps, be they indigenous, political, water-based, or geo-based; and oral-based texts—are readable only with postmodern views that cannot disregard the frames that bring them to the surface, as inherent, albeit recognizable, parts of our reconstruction, reimagining, and fictionalizing of cosmographies of the past. Deliberate, conscious transgressions of these frames prevent oversimplifying, sweeping labels that often taint readers' views from seeing specificities and diversities of the literary, spiritual elements in the texts, making way for novel narrative hermeneutics in reading a state's past.

### Playing with Strange Texts: *Misa Melayu* as Literary Artifact

... ada yang **bermain membaca** hikayat Jawa dan syair ikat-ikatan berbagai-bagai ragam bunyinya riuh-rendah siang dan malam.

[... there were ones “play-reading” a Javanese *hikayat* and *syair* arrangements with various modes of sounds in a hullabaloo, day and night.]

13) This summary was perhaps written and included earlier in the 1919 version.



**Figs. 8 and 9** A page from the manuscript of *Misa Melayu* (Maxwell 25, p. 77) showing the *syair* (left) and the 1876 map. The straight line depicting the river acts as an orthographic divider, similar to the blank space in the center of the manuscript page. On the map, as on the page, the central space is flanked by bits of narrative about Perak royalty and nobles and their activities at locations along the river.

The Malay word *bermain* is used multiple times in *Misa Melayu*<sup>14)</sup> to signify “playing” and “traveling” or “sailing.”<sup>15)</sup> In the quote above it is combined with the word *membaca*, which means “to read, or rather to read out loud,” as that would be the time in which a *hikayat* such as *Misa Melayu* was experienced in the eighteenth-century Malay world. The written *hikayat* is sometimes compared (or contrasted) with Islamic texts because of its being written in Jawi, a written form of Malay that is “chirographically controlled” (Sweeney 1987, 54) and therefore has the same values as the scriptural medium of Islam—Arabic—and the orthographical medium of many Sufi tales—Farsi. Jawi stands taller than the unwritten, yet spoken, Malay, and its Islamic prestige is upheld as a “lan-

14) There are 43 appearances in the text, searched on the Malay Concordance Project Web site.  
 15) “The Malay phrase for such an expedition is *pergi bermain-main* ‘to go and enjoy oneself’ and this is echoed in the Dutch word *speeltochtje* ‘pleasure trip’. But their purpose was not just amusement, for while the ruler was engaged in pastimes like elephant hunting or tuba fishing [a method of catching whitewater fish by using *tuba*, a liquid poison made from the root of *Derris elliptica*], he was also carrying out a personal inspection of the area. In a sense he was showing the flag and it was during such trips that the reality of the ruler was made splendidly manifest to people in remote districts who might otherwise have been only dimly aware of his existence. One of the themes of the *Misa Melayu* is the interaction between Sultan Iskandar and his people, during those royal progresses through the country, he moved among his subjects, personally dispensing justice, receiving tribute and accepting declarations of loyalty” (Andaya 1975).

guage of the book.” The word “Jawi,” from Persian *Djawij*, signifies “something that is placed,” “a placed language,” and also the adjectival form of “Jawa” used by Arabs for Java and Sumatra (*ibid.*, 56). Moreover, in the *kromo* (royal) register of Javanese, “Jawi” shares the referent “Javanese,” conjuring up the lofty and esteemed prestige of the script as well as the high status of the court as the Javanese literary center, far from the realm of the wandering *fakir* or *dagang* “traveling mendicant” who exchanges stories in the oral/aural realm. In a letter to a Dutch officer, Raja Ali Haji, a Bugis poet,<sup>16)</sup> gestured to a semantic component of the *syair* that could only be accentuated by its orality. From a splendidly musical, rhythmic existence on the oral-aural domain, its richly textured and varied rhyme patterns (Teeuw 1966, 431–432)<sup>17)</sup> are relegated to being mere letters on a page, forcing the reader to comprehend it in its silence.

*Syahdan jika sahabat hendak bermain-main satu waktu, coba panggil seorang orang Melayu yang pandai bersyair, suruh baca dengan lagunya yaitu seperti nyanyi, maka lebih terang lagi maknanya.* (Putten and Al-Azhar 2007)

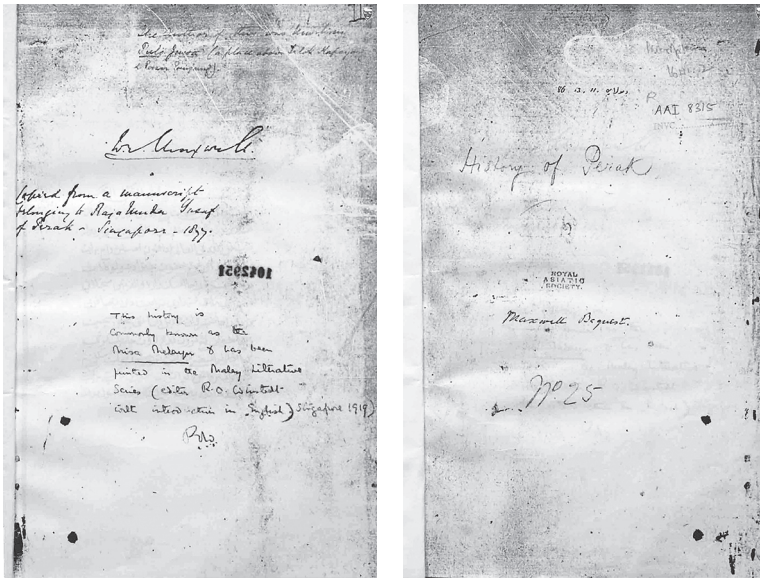
[Hence, if you want to have fun sometime, try to summon a Malay person who knows how to (recite a) *syair*, tell him to recite it melodically, like singing, so that the meaning becomes clearer.]

Underneath this colophon is what seems to be Winstedt’s signature (R.O.W.?). *Misa Melayu*, as shown in the notes above, is framed as a “history of Perak,” a sultanate on the Malay Peninsula, and has been printed as in a piece of literature edited by Winstedt, evoking a “historical epic” mode of reading, legitimizing its use by historians to formulate a narrative based on “factual” information from the text and attributing it to Perak and its semantic extent, including the present-day space of the state, its people, and especially the Perak Sultanate. The episteme of history is what is evoked in the action of labeling the text as such, an action that, to a certain extent, influences subsequent readings and analyses of the text, which has now been homogenized and standardized—Maxwell 25 is the standard version transliterated into Roman alphabets. It was initially authoritatively described as a literary and historical text. Surely this is not a problem if there is a level field of comparison between *Misa Melayu* and the historical and literary works that

16) He was also a nobleman, a writer, and a scholar from Riau. Among his famous works are *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (The Precious Gift) and *Bustanul Katibin* (Garden of the Poets). He may be considered a *dalang* (reciter/purveyor of soothing tales) or a *penglipurlara* (master storyteller).

17) Some of the patterns found in *Misa Melayu* are aaaa, aabb, and abab. A thorough, albeit outmoded, definition of the poetic form is as follows: “The *syair* is a less popular and less well-known form of Malay poetry than the *pantun* in that each stanza, though also made up of four lines, is part of an entire poem and is naturally linked to the stanza before and to that which follows. The rhyme scheme is a-a-a-a. In a *pantun* the symbolism and allusion of the first two lines make clear the meaning of the second couplet. There is almost no scholarly research which has been done on the *syair* form” (Teeuw 1966, 431–432).





**Figs. 10 and 11** The first two pages of the Maxwell 25 version of *Misa Melayu*, which display what could be identified as Maxwell's signature and some remarks as recorded in Ricklefs and Voorhoeve's *Catalogue of Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain*, display some telltale signs of the surfacing of the episteme "*Misa Melayu*." A history of Perak down to c. A.D. 1770, containing particulars on relations between Perak and Batavia, etc. Inside the cover a note by W. E. Maxwell: 'copied from a manuscript belonging to Raja Muda Yusuf of Perak-Singapore\_1877'. 121pp. Italian paper: Benedetto Gentili Vittorio', 31.5×21.5 cm. 25 lines. Maxwell bequest, 1898."

On the front page of the manuscript, in large cursive writing, is written "History of Perak." There is a smaller stamp saying "Royal Asiatic Society," under which is written "Maxwell Bequest." On the same page as the colophon there is a note, possibly written by Winstedt: "This history is commonly known as *Misa Melayu* & has been printed in the Malay Literature Series (editor R. O. Winstedt—with introduction in English) Singapore 1919."

scholars such as Winstedt and Maxwell upheld in their minds, works that became a yardstick against which *Misa Melayu* was measured. And naturally, works that correspond the closest to European ideals in history and literature, which are usually Homeric and come from the Greek and Latin conventions (as the word "epic" without fail suggests), are held in the highest regard.

The epistemes operating in this instance, which could be characterized as the "literary" and the "historical,"<sup>18)</sup> have far-reaching consequences in Malay historiography and the readings of Malay histories. For example, Andaya's (1979) thorough narrative on the history of eighteenth-century Perak as a Malay state comparatively and meticulously

18) According to Michel Foucault (1972), epistemes are not mutually exclusive and may overlap each other.

analyzes *Misa Melayu* with Malay and Dutch historical sources.

The historian's intellectual journey, starting with the text, then going out into the realm of context, asking circumstantial questions and finally coming back to the text to address any issues during the time the text was produced, is not too different from a literary theorist's/narratologist's. Of importance here are questions that deal with the second stage in the analytical reading above, concerning the paradigm of knowledge the text was produced in and how it compares to other contemporaneous sources, in other words, the occurrence of writing itself and how the structure of a narrative influences what kind of information is included and what kind is excluded in a text. A map, in this particular sense, is no different from a narrative because of the limitations imposed by the "need for selection":

The need for selection means that every story contains, and is surrounded by, blank spaces, some more significant than others. When we create a fictional world, our decisions include geography, or setting, but also where and when a narrative begins and ends, who it involves and who it doesn't, which actions and conversations are worthy of inclusion and which aren't. (Turchi 2004, 42)

However, it is important to note here that a heightened awareness of "silences" in a text (especially one written in a language that is either temporally or spatially foreign) and a narratological mode of reading do not promise, in my view, a superior or a better reading. Rather, it is about exploring uncharted territories of over- and under-interpretations of that text based on epistemes that are related to it. After all, both the narratological and strictly historical modes of reading are inevitably problematic ways of reading old texts because they are strategic, teleological steps taken as a pathway to a goal and developed in the twentieth century.

O. W. Wolters (1999) practices a different type of textual analysis that does not require going out of the text, as most of the texts he discusses are authorless:

... the literatures of earlier Southeast Asia are a promising field for experimentation. Most literary materials are anonymous, so that one does not need to be distracted by questions about a writer's situation or personal intentions. One does not immediately have to look outside the texts to account for what is inside. Instead, one has to learn to read groups of texts in the same culture and genre to discern the presence of a local social collectivity which is expressing itself through language usage. Textual studies can also highlight something which tends to be given short shrift in accounts of earlier Southeast Asia: elements of "strangeness" in the various cultures when compared with each other and with cultures in other parts of the world. Literary texts are bound to be "strange" because they depend on figurative language. Various forms of literary strangeness are part of the "ranges of experience" which need to be opened up to allow satisfactory general accounts of earlier Southeast Asia to be written. (*ibid.*, 72)

Note both the generic, deductive framework used by Wolters and the “strangeness” with which he regards literary texts from another culture. It would be redundant to echo criticisms and shortcomings of Wolters’s research in terms of specificity and scope of the terms “culture,” “literature,” and “language usage.” Instead, I would like to point out the way in which he decentralizes authorial intention and deliberately brings attention to the strangeness of earlier Southeast Asian texts, which would include *hikayats*. I read this “strangeness,” which has not been given much emphasis before, as also being the “silences” that have not been much explored by modern historical readings of the *hikayats*, such as the readings of *Misa Melayu* by contemporary scholars such as Andaya (1979) and Arba’iyah Mohd Noor (2006). It could also be mentioned here that this “strangeness” can be posited not only due to the literariness of the texts but due to a perpetuation of standards of normalcy based on the established notions of “literature” and “figurative language.” Regarding this weak relation between strangeness and figurative language posited, this question comes to mind: What if in a particular language (culture language), say eighteenth-century Malay, what is now perceived as figurative language is the normative way of expressing oneself, something that is strange only through the constricted lens of present English literary standards?

Wolters’s focus on the literary aspects of old texts—although he still evaluates “literariness” from a Western standpoint—is crucial in providing a balance to the constant subjection of these texts to historicism, which sheds light only on certain parts of the texts (the “factual”) and relegates other parts to the realm of historical nonsense. Wolters ignores the episteme of the historical to focus on the literary. Wolters’s reading of *Misa Melayu*, much like Andaya’s, Winstedt’s, and mine, consists of “response statements” that are products of institutional academic training, conditioned by disciplinary traditions such as history and literature, that train the reader to look for, pay more attention to, and write more about certain parts or tropes in a text. A reader’s response usually contains a specific kind of information (that answers questions about a text asked in a particular discipline) without acknowledging its theoretical-methodological background, which is often taken for granted and to be less important than the information itself. Modern histories and scholarly narratives about Perak, as response statements to literary artifacts, inevitably contain information about the scholarly approaches of readers, which is unfortunately not given as much lip service as data concerning the geography and economy of the state.

A response statement aims to record the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, and peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations. While other forms of mentation may be considered “natural and spontaneous,” they would not be so in this context. Recording a response requires the relaxation

of cultivated analytical habits, especially the habit of automatic objectification of the work of literature. . . . Normally, the act of objectification inhibits awareness of response. (Bleich 1975)

With this in mind, I analyze fragments from past readings and readers of *Misa Melayu*—Andaya, Wilkinson, Winstedt, and Maxwell—without unnecessarily historicizing every part of *Misa Melayu*, by switching back and forth between the two epistemes the “historical” and the “literary” to discover how the text became the subject of epistemological labeling and categorization.

I choose to read *Misa Melayu* as a discursive microcosm in which some Malay notions can be examined in their contextual uses so as to inform us more about the connections between those notions and the world in the spatial and temporal context in which *Misa Melayu* was written. This approach is similar to Michelle Rosaldo’s (1980) research on Ilongot notions of self and social life, in which she consciously veered away from treating language as merely “an ordinary vehicle of reference, logic and cognition” and instead examined the occurrences of “knowledge” and “passion” linguistically by navigating through nuances and metaphorical meanings beyond the simple gloss of a word. By doing this, I hope to get away from rigid analyses based on abstract concepts that are assumed to be universal (such as “border” and “trade”) and step closer to the “rough grounds” of the circumstances back then, specifically Malay language use in the eighteenth century. Basically, instead of scanning the text for information or certain facts that would supposedly tell us about the historical past like an ethnographer or a historian, I read the text as a reader who tries to be sensitive to “what language tends to pass over in silence.”

Unfortunately, this approach is still unpopular in mainstream scholarship on Southeast Asia, specifically Malay studies. Most popular histories of Southeast Asia cite trade and commerce as being major factors in the changes that occurred in the region, without explaining what the circumstances on the ground were, especially on the production, consumption, and circulation of texts (including maps) and how they traveled through time and space to become influential in present cognitive conceptions of Perak in the past.

These are all features that are not graspable if the complexities of the notion of “reading”<sup>19)</sup> are not examined in the oral/aural literary community. In *Misa Melayu*, for example, the *syair* (Malay poetic form), which is presented together with the prose part of the text, has been largely ignored by scholars—namely Winstedt and Andaya—who both consider the text to be a “history of Perak” as scribbled by Maxwell, the British scholar who initially obtained and owned the Jawi manuscript that was transliterated and printed in codex form.

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19) (*Mem*)*bac*a in Malay means both “to read” and “to recite,” similar to the Arabic polysemous *qira’at/igra’*.

## *Misa Melayu* and the Quandary of Translation

The exact meaning of the first word in the text's title *Misa Melayu* remains unknown to this day, and it is only appropriate that we begin any discussion of this text with an uncertainty that matches this lexical enigma. Maxwell, a British scholar of the Malay language who was probably stumped by this unfamiliar word, first speculated that it was a corrupted form of the Arabic loanword *missal*, which means "example." For some time this became the meaning of the word for scholars of the Malay language. However, Maxwell later realized that his guess was wrong when he saw a Javanese text with the same word in the title,<sup>20</sup> thus ruling out the possibility of its being misspelled. He then thought that the word was used in the title because of the text's similarity in content to the Javanese text. His colleague Winstedt, bewildered by the guess, later pointed out that the word meant "water buffalo" in Javanese and was sometimes used as a nickname for a person. Winstedt expressed his doubts about this claim due to the fact that animal-based nicknames were not common among Malays. As ludicrous as they seem, these two guesses are all the present-day reader has if she or he is interested in figuring out the absolute meaning of the first half of the text's title.

*Melayu*, translated into English as "Malay," is a term that has been subject to increasing attention, contest, and deliberation by scholars—from historians to sociologists—in debates concerning a unifying ethos of groups of people spread throughout maritime and mainland Southeast Asia, mainly on the island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (Matheson 1979). A vague *ethnie* construed based on language, culinary practices, way of life, and other artifacts of tradition, it is established on prescribed principles founded during colonial times and still relevant, especially politically, in Malaysia today—*bahasa* (language), *raja* (king), and *agama* (religion) (Shamsul A.B. 2004). For linguists, it is a category referring to a spectrum of Austronesian languages that are not always mutually intelligible, spoken in present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Philippines, southern Burma, southern Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka, Easter Islands, and Madagascar. As a language, it has official status in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei, although it is important to note that different variants are spoken in different regions.<sup>21</sup> For sociologists, anthropologists, and historians, Malay identity might be considered a social system of ethics and beliefs, documented in printed literature and practiced in everyday life by agents/subjects through spoken languages, mannerisms, customs, traditions, and rituals. Its origin remains buried and elusive, and as a categor-

20) *Misa Perbu Jaya* or *Misa Jawa* in the introduction of Raja Chulan (1919, 4).

21) Concise ethnolinguistic information on different Malay variants is available on [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com).

ical definition for an infinitely diverse group of people, it offers no scholarly escape from critically thinking about the diversity that exists within the group.

The academic field most concerned with terms such as “Malay” and more recently “Malayness” is Malay studies, in which classical Malay texts, mostly from the sixteenth up to the nineteenth century, have been the main foci as “native” sources. What I find most challenging is providing a balanced analysis of the geopolitical entity that transcends the formation of the nation-state of Malaysia, as Perak existed in texts and in Malay literature, before Malaysia was even formed by the union of the former British colonies on the Malay Peninsula and Northern Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak). Understandings of *Melayu*, Malay, and Malayness as identity and language have infinite variants based on whose definition it is: a Perak Malay might have a different understanding of Malay(ness) from a Kedah Malay or a Bugis or Mandailing, yet in many scholarly works there is the tendency to collapse it into one racial, linguistic, and cultural identity, ignoring the diversity within the category. To include every definition since the inception of the word/concept would be an insurmountable task, and what is provided in this essay is but a tiny piece of a giant puzzle, or perhaps a giant cultural chess game.

From a cornucopia of texts varying in content and form, those known as *hikayats*<sup>22)</sup>—*Misa Melayu* can be considered one—have been studied as important historical source materials because many of them contain genealogical and “panegyric” stories of the origins of Malay sultanates (Braginsky 1993, 58). The *hikayats* are considered to contain valuable information on Malay history, and the contents of these stories are classified as “mythical,” “historical,” or otherwise,<sup>23)</sup> evaluated and scrutinized for “facts” that corroborate information from other sources—the bulk of Malay and European (mainly British and Dutch) writings about the region. It is a network of complex processes, involving many translations and cross-referencing, centered around the “historical method” as its guiding principle.

The popular *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, for example, has been branded a “historico-heroic epic”; it discusses the Melaka and Johor Sultanates and their relations with Jambi in Sumatra in the context of historical events, such as the Johor-Jambi war in 1666 (Braginsky 2004). Stemming from philology, such literary treatments of *hikayats* are often based on

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22) *Hikayats* were stories told by folk storytellers called *penglipurlara* in the old Malay-speaking world, which stretched from Sumatra to what is now southern Philippines. As oral-based tales, they are amorphous to the current ebb and flow of the literary context in which they are presented and have influences from other literatures and traditions that preceded them. The Malay-Arabic word *hikayat* can be translated as “story” or “narrative” and first made its appearance in literary texts in Malay languages with the ascent of Islam in Southeast Asia.

23) Terms such as “historicity,” “historiographic,” and “historiosophic” are also used in assessing *hikayats*.

European genres such as the epic, and elements such as the hero and the interaction between the epic and history. A similar approach is used in Andaya's (1979) thorough narrative on the history of eighteenth-century Perak as a Malay state, in which *Misa Melayu* is comparatively analyzed with Malay and Dutch sources. Although "the temptation to force the material into tidy patterns has been resisted," the *hikayat* is considered by the historian as "a product of Malay historical method." There are two key issues here: first, the "Malay historical method" is subject to our understanding of the phrase, inevitably affected by all the connotations and footnotes that come with the English word "historical" such as dates, timelines, important agents—usually those in power—and the overarching presence of trade as the main catalyst of events; and second, the assumption that the text was produced with history in the mind of the author. In this essay, I wish to sidestep European-based historical and literary values that have been tagged on the *hikayat* and offer the perspective of simply a reader of the story who turns a critical eye on the problems of translation—of words and notions—in its analysis.

To read *Misa Melayu* is to imagine royal court life in eighteenth-century Perak, a Malay state often dubbed the successor of the traditions of the Malaccan<sup>24)</sup> and Johor Sultanates. The "talented"<sup>25)</sup> author Raja Chulan,<sup>26)</sup> who was an aristocrat, wrote himself into the text. This gives an insider's perspective on the lives of the Perak elite (*orang besar*<sup>27)</sup>): their feuds, marriages, and dealings with the Dutch (*Holanda*) involving tin and *rial Holanda*, or Dutch banknotes. A significant portion of the text is a poetic tribute to the sultan's voyage down the Perak River, while the other parts are intimate and elaborate accounts of festivities and processions. In Winstedt's words:

Recording the names of contemporary Perak chiefs, and incidents in the relations of Perak with the Dutch and with Selangor and Kedah, and throwing unconsciously a deal of light on the life of a Malay State in the XVIIIth century, the *Misa Melayu* is one of the more valuable of Malay historical works; and it is surprising that it has not been printed before. The *shaer* or long poetical recital of Marhum Kahar's trip down the Perak river and round the coast to Matang has literary as well as historical value. The prose portion of the book, though not equal in style to that Malay masterpiece the *Sejarah Melayu*, is not lacking in merit. (Raja Chulan 1919)

Other than *Misa Melayu*, there are several titles associated with the text, such as

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24) Until now, the Malacca Sultanate is considered in many histories of Malaysia to be the seat of Malay civilization on the Malay Peninsula.

25) *Pengarang yang ulong* (Raja Chulan 1919, back cover).

26) "raja, Sk. 1. (1) king, queen, (2) any prince or princess . . . a prince with a title conferred by a ruler." In this case, the title was inherited from his father, Raja Hamid, who was the prince of Sultan Mansur Shah. Raja Chulan's full name was Raja Chulan Ibni Raja Hamid Ibni Yang Dipertuan Muda Sultan Mansur Shah.

27) A literal translation would be "big person/people."

*Hikayat/Ikatan Raja ka-Laut* (The Story of the King Going to the Sea), *Sultan Iskandar Bermain-main ka-Laut* (Sultan Iskandar Journeys to the Sea), *Hikayat Misa Melayu* (The Story of *Misa Melayu*), and *Hikayat Salasilah Negeri Perak* (The Descent/Genealogy of the Perak State). The first two refer to the exquisite *syair*,<sup>28)</sup> a Malay poetic arrangement that intertwines meaning and form in ways that make them almost impossible to be incorporated into history.

The version of *Misa Melayu* used as the primary text for this research is the 1968 reprint of a 1962 edition based on Winstedt's transliteration of the Jawi text from three manuscripts,<sup>29)</sup> of which the main one used is dated 1836. It includes Winstedt's introduction and outline of the content in English from the first edition, as well as their Malay translations and some commentaries by Pustaka Antara, a publishing house in Kuala Lumpur. In all of the auxiliary materials accompanying the text, the historical value of the text is highlighted. Perhaps, ironically, that was the reason why the text had not been given much attention, as it was compared to *Sejarah Melayu*, a much-quoted seventeenth-century Malay text originally titled *Sulalat as-Salatin* (The Descent of Rulers) and considered to be, as the translated title *The Malay Annals* suggests, a canonical source on the history of the Malays. This comparison makes it unsurprising that Winstedt finds it necessary to point out the "merit" of *Misa Melayu*, as it is being measured against a text that has been elevated to a position of authority over other "historical" classical Malay texts. And from his evaluation of the former, we can see that he still favors *Sejarah Melayu* by calling it a "Malay masterpiece." On this matter, the questions I ask are similar to the ones Jacques Derrida (1992) asks about Franz Kafka's *Before the Law*: What decides that *Misa Melayu* belongs to what we think we can understand in the name of "literature" and "history?" And who decides? Who judges?

On one level at least, apparently one answer to the questions above is Winstedt, as his "writings more than anybody else's set the standard in Malayistics from 1915 onwards" (Maier 1988, 30) and, based on the same criteria that constitute British historical sources, imply that every *hikayat* deemed historical should be "read against the background of the *Sejarah Melayu*, and ever since the primacy of the Malay Annals has never been subverted." Scholarship in Malay studies, until today, continues to accept

28) Contemporary spelling of *shaer*.

29) As stated on the Australian National University's Malay Concordance Web site, [http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/Misa\\_bib.html](http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/Misa_bib.html) (accessed on November 30, 2013): "Editorial notes: The Winstedt text is based on the manuscript in the possession of the Sultan of Perak ('Naskhah A'), but is not a diplomatic edition. Winstedt also drew on two other incomplete manuscripts. Winstedt's edition was republished in full by Pustaka Antara in 1962, and its text was republished (in modern spelling) in 1991 by Pustaka Antara. The editors have normalised the text to some degree. In 1992 a further edition was published by Ahmad Fauzi Mohd. Basri and provided with a new introduction."



and to be (mis)guided by such a unilateral imposition of British empiricism on indigenous Malay texts. In this framework, *Misa Melayu* would undoubtedly be seen as a lesser historical text, just as Perak is generally considered an offshoot state of the Malacca Sultanate rather than having a unique history of its own.

Winstedt's 11-page English outline—of over 200 pages of poetry and prose, in classical Malay—informs us about which kinds of information were important for him (Raja Chulan 1919). And it is not too difficult to imagine that Raja Chulan could not possibly have had Winstedt's standards of a "Malay historical text" in mind when he was writing *Misa Melayu*. I am curious as to what lies beyond Winstedt's (and many historians') chronological and linear notion of history in the text and how to get to it in a methodologically sound manner. One way is by reading what has been de-emphasized by historically inclined scholars, or thrown in the background, as is the case for the parts of *Misa Melayu* that did not make it into Winstedt's outline. Another way is by simply asking, What would be the intended purpose of *Misa Melayu*? Perhaps it was to be read by (or to) Sultan Mudzafar Shah, who commissioned Raja Chulan to write it, and maybe some members of the royal family? What would be the reading context of *Misa Melayu*, and is there an opportunity to peer out of this context, through the text? It is, again, a problem in translation that shrouds this text, as every reading of *Misa Melayu* would be influenced by our language of history. To overcome the perilous compulsion of a historical reading, a question that I use as a directive would be what is unsaid when *Misa Melayu* is translated into, or related to, historical discourse:

The stupendous reality that is language cannot be understood unless we begin by observing that speech consists above all in silences. A being who could not renounce saying many things would be incapable of speaking. And each language represents a different equation between manifestations and silences. Each people leaves some things unsaid *in order* to be able to say others. Because *everything* would be unsayable. Hence, the immense difficulty of translation: translation is a matter of saying in a language precisely what that language tends to pass over in silence. (Ortega y Gasset 1963, 246)

The quote above might well be a parable of the colonial encounter in the Malay world, where multiple attempts at translation occur after instances of language contact. On the pages of the 1968 *Misa Melayu*, this contact is exemplified by Winstedt's supplementary text side by side with Raja Chulan's narrative, one discourse saying what is silent in the other and vice versa. Underlying this discrepancy is a difference in language and, more important, discursive methods by which concepts such as history, literature, and law are constructed and reinforced. Obviously, these are colossal notions that could be considered systems or frameworks of knowledge, each containing their own interconnecting vast networks of ideas.

This phenomenon would explain the language (and the existence) of treaties, such as the 1874 Pangkor Treaty, a colonial document signed between British administrators and Perak royals—one of many that initiated the British advisorial system in Malaya—that was an exclusive agreement between the two parties, in complete disregard of the consequences of the onset of British imperialism in Malaya. Treaties like these are mainly framed in legalese decided by the British, transferred through the process of translation into Malay, and demand agreement from the Malay royals, rather than vice versa. In a language firmly rooted in the conventions of European nation-states, the Malay voice would be incongruent, saying the unsayable in that language. Although the sovereignty of Malay polities is asserted in some *hikayats*, including *Sulalat as-Salatin* and *Misa Melayu*, it lies buried in the silence of the treaty, undermined by a voice more authoritative, if only for the reason that it decides so itself.

In *Misa Melayu*, as well as many other *hikayats* that have been labeled as state histories, *negeri* is the most ubiquitous self-referential word representing a polity. Parts of it correspond to the European “state,” such as the existence of taxation laws and state revenue. However, its geography consists of humans—rulers and subjects (the latter mostly silent and kept out of the texts)—who were constantly traveling. In a sense, *negeri* was not bound exclusively to one area of land; instead, it was a mobile political unit comprising the palatial institution and its subjects. This performative aspect of *negeri* was obscured in the 1874 treaty by oversimplification and ignoring any signs of the existence of a complex and abstract political system that was as elusive as the nation or state. Instead of imposing land-borders marking a geopolitical region, within the literary space of the *syair*, the sultan is said to be “making a state” on the islands in the Perak River:

Zaman Sultan Raja Iskandar	The epoch of Sultan Raja Iskandar
Membuat negeri di-Pulau Chempaka;	<i>Making a state</i> on Chempaka Island;
Eloknya pekan dengan Bandar,	A fine town with a city center,
Tempat dagang datang berniaga	Where the merchants come to trade
Membuat negeri di-Pulau Chempaka,	Making a state on Chempaka Island,
Di-gelar Pulau Indera Sakti;	Named Indera Sakti Island;
Dagang senter datang berniaga,	[Where] Wandering merchants come to trade,
Ka-bawah duli berbuat bakti.	Devoted under the protection of the royal highness.
TuanKu Raja Sultan Iskandar,	TuanKu Raja Sultan Iskandar,
Takhta di-Pulau Indera Sakti;	Bethroned on Pulau Indera Sakti;
Indahnya lagi jangan di-sedar,	Its beauty not to be compared,

Kota pun sudah bagai di-hati, Takhta di-Pulau Indera Sakti, Di-sembah tentera sa-isi negeri,	Its fort immortalized in the heart. Bethroned on Indera Sakti island, To whom the entire state's army gives obeisance,
Kota pun sudah bagai di-hati, Bertambah kebesaran sa-hari-hari.	Its fort immortalized in the heart, Adding to its magnificence day after day.

Notions of *negeri* the way it is presently understood would be incongruent with the way the word is used in the *syair*: the latter presents *negeri* as a pleasurable, progressive act rather than something that is constative, or already built. Such is the problematic of translating the past into present terms; the mismatch in semantic relations offers us no way of remembering the reality of the state's past other than looking through the narrow constrictive lens of the present, which does not allow us to escape into the realm of the state's glorious narrative past, beyond the grids of archetypal symbols—flags, political institutions, geometric maps—that we are more used to in the present. It is anachronistic and misleading, therefore, to understand the word and the concept *negeri* through present-day sense.

One of the reasons to dive into the margins of a canonized discursive space of Malaysian and/or Perak (a Malay state in the eighteenth century) history and historiography is to take a possible look at the other “data” consigned to the margins by the upholding of linearity, and linearization in the histories of nation-states in Southeast Asia (Yong Mun Cheong 2003, 95). Southeast Asian history can be problematized further by the application of novel literary theories that give rise to a whole new set of questions. For example, in attempts to translate *Hikayat Hang Tuah* from Malay to English, what tense should be used (Errington 1975)? Seemingly simplistic, this question hinges on the deeper issue of the spectral hegemony of linear time deployed by the episteme “history” in the study of old Malay texts. Much like space, time is assumed to exist in any consciousness as unidirectional and linear by many historians via timeline-based narratives of the past regardless of the absence of any symptomatic signs of its consideration as such. Malay does not have any tense, and specificity in time is often marked by lexical temporal markers; thus, a translation of a Malay text into English automatically imposes the tense system of the latter onto the former, overshadowing any concept of time (or the absence thereof) in the former.

In a similar way that it cultivates inquiry of the upheld notions of historical, literary, social, cognitive, and physical space, Southeast Asian studies' disciplinary plasticity allows the incursion of a healthy form of skepticism, stemming from literary theory, of the way time was considered in old Malay texts. Narratology, the study of narratives and

its structural makeup—essentially a form of close reading—can be an instrument to challenge the assumptions of the “historical” and also therefore the labeling of a text as historical (instead of literary, religious, or otherwise). This form of textual analysis is used by Anthony Milner (2002) in studying the “silences” in the Malay nationalist Ibrahim Yaacob’s record of his speeches, *Surveying the Homeland* (1941), delving into what he did not say as well as what he did.

To a certain extent, the many analyses and interpretations of the state, as presented by histories written by authors who have read *Misa Melayu*, have tried to compose a finite picture of Perak. The focal point of this essay, instead of doing the same thing that historians have done, is to critically analyze the features of the historical discourse that forms the narrative. In other words, what is presented in the essay is the information in the outskirts or in and around the edges of history and literature of a Malay state.

Regarding the question of ideology, *Misa Melayu* predates any institutionally prescribed political understanding as it is understood now, and this is the very reason why I choose to dive into the discursive margins of the text. It is true that the writing of the text has been commissioned by the sultan to the author Raja Chulan, a member of the royal family himself. Thus, the fact that the *hikayat* was written as an internal response to an authoritative voice cannot be ignored, yet beyond politics the text offers an avenue to understand Malay literary aesthetics, something that is subtle and vague and cannot be totally captured by a historical eye that constantly searches for data, which I find more important to focus on. Another important point to be mentioned here is that *Misa Melayu* is a combination of many texts and within it many stories, rather than one, and this factors into the reception of *Misa Melayu* as a historical source, as is the case with the other textual artifacts presented in the essay. All of them are influenced in their production and reception by underlying epistemes, be it “history” and/or “literature” for the texts, or “cartography” and “geography” for the maps. For this reason they should be appreciated critically and not taken at face value.

*Misa Melayu* may be read as a key text in understanding textualized oral narratives—*hikayat* and *syair*—beyond the constraints of the time and space of its contents. To do the text justice is to read it in multiple modes, venturing around it, unlocking doors and opening windows of matrices in/of Perak’s past, present, and future, leading us to understand in an interdisciplinary, performative way how the state was constructed by the powers that be, by way of textual and cartographic maps. By bringing texts, events, and characters around the “cartographic,” “historical,” and/or “literary” text that has been overshadowed by constative reading practices, seemingly set in stone for centuries, we can only gain more by unraveling new paths that map networks of meaning that were previously untrodden. Parallel to serious, excavative, archeological means of reading,

we might find other ways of deciphering bits and pieces of sacred knowledge buried in the soothing orality of its language—now silenced by textual modes of knowledge production—by playfully wandering in and around the text, harvesting from our consciousness jigsaw pieces of reimaginings of senses from which a geo-, hydro-, cosmo-cognitive space has been understood, construed, and cyclically produced and revised. Ultimately, of course, in reading the *hikayat*, the choice lies in the reader's hands, whether to be bound by the narrow confines of normalized, academicized reading methods or to play freely, sensibly with game pieces from within or without the text, creating novel and deeper comprehensions from the uncharted territories of the reading imagination.

Accepted: September 9, 2014

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*Exploration and Irony in Studies of Siam over Forty Years*

BENEDICT R. O'G. ANDERSON

Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2014, 166p.

**Professor Crocodile Who Blocks the Canal**

Helpfully compiled and arranged both chronologically and thematically in one volume, the various essays, articles, and reviews that make up this book reflect the wonderful skepticism, relentless questioning, daring iconoclasm, contrarian perspective, critical intelligence, penetrating insight, mordant humor, wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge of the country, its people and beyond, and above all, the tender and deeply-felt love and care which Professor Ben Anderson, the world-renowned doyen of nationalism and Southeast Asian Studies at Cornell University, has consistently brought to the study of Siam/Thailand over the past 40 years. Like “*Jorakhe khwang khlong*” or a crocodile who blocks the canal (and thereby obstructing the smooth flow of the canal traffic) in a traditional Thai saying, this body of his work was indeed widely recognized as a paradigmatic watershed in Thai studies that has altered and shifted the hitherto dominant, conservative, elitist, state-centric, royal-nationalist mainstream to an inundation of revisionist counter-streams and sub-streams since the 1990s.

I first encountered *Khruu Ben's* (or Teacher Ben as he likes to be called) path-breaking, seminal literature review essay “Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies” (first published in 1978, Chapter 1 of this volume) shortly after I left the communist-led *maquis* in north-eastern Thailand in the early 1980s when I was asked to translate it into Thai by the editor of *Pajarayasan* Magazine, an independent intellectual periodical under the patronage of Sulak Sivaraksa, a well-known conservative Buddhist intellectual who happened to be one of the two commentators of this essay when it was first publicly presented. Still fresh from the jungle and blinkered by the rigid Maoist ideological frame of reference, I could hardly fathom the ground-shaking impact of its message, which attempted to overhaul in toto the axiomatic foundations of Thai studies as practiced up till then by both Western scholars and their Thai official nationalist counterparts. Argued defiantly, systematically, solidly, and meticulously, the review essay contains



Ben's central revisionist vision of modern Thai history that has proven to be most thought-provoking, stood the test of time, and rendered it an indispensable item in any serious reading list on modern Thai politics in the past four decades. This central vision was subsequently expanded upon and developed further in other writings of his also included in this volume. Let me lay it out point-by-point here as briefly and succinctly as I can for the readers' benefit.

1. In order to properly understand the essence and trajectory of modern Thai history, it is imperative to conceptually separate the Thai nation from its monarchy. Not only are the two non-identical and not only do they have different interests, but in many cases their interests also clash (p. 21).
  
2. The state built by the Jakri dynasty during the reigns of King Rama V to VII (A.D. 1868–1935) was by no means a modern nation-state but an absolutist dynastic auto-colonial one that carried out modernization in some aspects to a certain degree but delayed and/or obstructed it in others, particularly those that were related to the vested interest and position of the monarchy itself. Hence, the rise of the Siamese absolutist state did not amount to the successful building of a modern nation-state. On the contrary, it hindered the latter alongside the coming of Siamese nationhood (pp. 28, 34).
  
3. In contrast with erstwhile European absolutist states, the Siamese one was too short-lived (lasting about 40 years from 1892–1932), and the reach and effects of its power were too shallow. Since it had not transformed Thai society and economy widely and profoundly enough, the political reaction that finally came about in the form of a constitutionalist putsch, staged by the self-styled People's Party of junior military officers and government officials, was merely "*the partial, mystified revolt . . . of absolutism's own engine, the functionalized bureaucracy*" (p. 39), with very limited dynamic for revolutionary change. It fell far short of a real popular revolution, with only superficial and intermittent mass mobilization and participation, wholly inadequate for a radical overhaul of the Thai state and society (pp. 39–40).
  
4. The various well-known symptoms of political and administrative malaise of the Thai bureaucratic polity (à la the late Fred W. Riggs in his *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*, 1966), namely chronic political instability, inefficiency, lack of coordination, corruption, favoritism, factionalism, formalism, unresponsiveness to extra-bureaucratic/popular demands, etc., resulted from the protracted, laggard, and incomplete transition from the not completely extinct absolutist state to the oft-aborted, stillborn popular nation-state (p. 40).
  
5. The Thai bureaucratic polity was similar to the old absolutist state in the sense that, devoid

of popular representation and political accountability, it also tended to be a *moi*-state i.e. serving the interests of the state and its bureaucratic rulers themselves. And yet, with the supposedly divine absolute monarchs irreversibly replaced by usually profane commoner military strongmen-cum-bureaucrats, the bureaucratic polity fatally lacked the traditional supernatural/sacred legitimacy of the *ancien regime*. Unable to avail themselves of the legal-rational legitimacy of a modern elective democracy “*which corresponds to the facts of effective control*” (to quote Riggs) either, the military-bureaucratic elite had no choice but to seek a symbiotic *modus vivendi* with the surviving monarchy in which the latter served as the national palladium that lent royal-nationalist legitimacy to the former in exchange for armed protection of its security, untouchable status, ideological hegemony, and material interests (pp. 67–69).

6. Hence a frequent and facile lapse of the Thai bureaucratic polity into military absolutist dictatorship such as the one under Field Marshal Sarit-Thanom-Prapart from 1958 to 1973 which was duly blessed by the royal palladium. And with the plentiful military and economic aid, support and investment of the U.S. and its anti-communist allies, plus the technocrat-planned and directed market-led socio-economic development, the said military absolutist dictatorship had indeed achieved what the Jakri absolute monarchy of yore failed to do i.e. a rapid, extensive, and profound wholesale transformation of the Thai economy and society in less than two decades. Most significantly were the continuing migration of millions upon millions of poor and landless peasants into Bangkok and other regional urban centers in search of work, further education, and a better life together with the rise and/or huge expansion of various bourgeois strata in the city and countryside. When it finally emerged in October 1973, the political reaction to the stagnant, corrupt, unchanging, and intransigent military regime took the form of an unprecedented, largely spontaneous, mass uprising of half a million student-led demonstrators in downtown Bangkok, which Ben memorably called “*Siam’s 1789*” (p. 107). It opened the way to the rise of Thailand’s first popular nationalist movement (pp. 47–76).

7. If one looks at it through the optic of the political rise of the Thai bourgeoisie, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the gradual and cumulative consolidation of bourgeois political power through an elective parliament amidst the decline and final collapse of the radical popular movement led by the communist armed rural insurgency on the one hand, and the terminal decay of bureaucratic polity along with the eventual retreat back to the barracks of the military on the other. Ironically, no matter how corrupt and murderous it was, the progress of bourgeois parliamentary regime became an inevitable trend that at long last was turning the page to a new chapter of Thai political history, or so it seemed especially after another successful popular uprising against military dictatorship in May 1992 (pp. 101–127).

It is the above-synopsized central vision of Ben as contained in this book that has inspired, framed, and deeply influenced various subsequent landmarks in Thai studies in the past four decades, ranging from Dr. Seksan Prasertkul's Marxist-revisionist works on the economic dependency of the Siamese absolutist dynastic state and the anti-Western stance of the local immigrant Chinese entrepreneurs, and the current crisis of the Thai nation-state under economic globalization, Professor Thongchai Winichakul's pioneering works on the mapping of Siam and the rise and development of royal-nationalism, to Professor Nidhi Aeusrivongse's works on the Siamese absolutist state and the Thai official imagined community, for instance.

And yet, as the publication dates of his writings in this book indicate, there was a long hiatus of 18 years (from 1993 to 2011) during which Ben, having retired from active teaching at Cornell with no new Thai students under his supervision and engaged in other projects on post-Suharto Indonesia, global anarchism, nationalisms in the East, etc., had not published any serious work that focuses on Thai politics and history per se. Besides, it was a period in which tremendous, far-reaching changes had happened to the country, namely, the apogee and decline of royal hegemony and the network monarchy, the so-called *Tomyamkung* East Asian economic crisis of 1997, the emergence of the middle-income peasant, national majority electorate and local political society in the countryside, the rise and fall of the multi-billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra's elected capitalist authoritarian regime from 2001 to 2006, the resumption of ferocious Muslim secessionist insurgency in the deep South since 2004, the military coup of 2006, and a series of alternate violent mass mobilizations and revolts against the existing governments—the so-called “*color wars*” between the anti-Thaksin royalist Yellow Shirts and the pro-Thaksin democratic Red Shirts—that has oftentimes rendered the country almost ungovernable, cost over a hundred deaths and thousands of injuries so far, and remained intractable if dormant till the present. These new developments, somewhat beyond the scope of Ben's central vision, have been effectively and illuminatingly dealt with by such recent important works as Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker's *Thaksin* (2004), Andrew Walker's *Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy* (2012), People Information Center's *Truth for Justice: The April-May 2010 Crackdown* (in Thai, 2012), and Apichat Satitniramai *et al.*'s, *Re-examining the Political Landscape of Thailand* (in Thai, 2013).

Ben's intellectual return to Thailand (Chapters 6–9 of the book) focuses instead on the contemporary cultural and artistic scene, providing subtle and sensitive, learned and comparative, incisive and eye-opening critical analyses not only of the wonderful works of such world-renowned Thai film directors as Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Anocha Suwichakornpong, but more importantly of the current cultural political mentality of the dominant largely Sino-Thai urban bourgeoisie, who, being culturally and ethnically removed and isolated from both their rural fellow countrymen and the Western intelligentsia, are blindly following and aping the withered octo-and-nonagenarian non-majoritarian royal-nationalist military-bureaucratic elite. It is only with these insights into the consciousness of this class that one can begin to understand the latest, 13th military coup of the

country earlier this year and what future may lie ahead for retrojected Thainess and Thailand.

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## *Sounding Out Heritage: Cultural Politics and the Social Practice of Quan Họ Folk Song in Northern Vietnam*

LAUREN MEEKER

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013, 192p.

*Sounding Out Heritage* is an exceptionally appealing and well-designed book, from its colorful cover to its smoothly presented theoretical arguments and its detailed ethnography of the “modernity” of traditional Vietnamese folk songs. *Quan họ* folk songs come from the Bắc Ninh province of northern Vietnam, and—as the author documents in great detail—they have already been the focus of intense efforts to conserve them, record them, verify their authenticity, and in 2009 to inscribe them as elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. But Meeker is the first non-Vietnamese author to take this “soundscape” seriously and to ask how this once remote village-based style of singing has become an important part of modern Vietnamese cultural politics.

Her argument also addresses issues of how cultural heritage is related to material exchange, how it is realized and modified by different forms of performance, and what sentiments it may evoke in its singers and their audience. The new “cultural market” which has emerged in Post-renovation Vietnam has brought reclusive older women singers out onto the public stage, and it has revalorized an intimate form of singing as a “living treasure,” linking the present market economy to a long history of musical connections between the village and the court.

In twenty-first century Hanoi, the nostalgic and romanticized countryside has been repre-

sented as the seat of cultural authenticity. Following the August Revolution of 1945, rural folk songs began to emerge as a tradition that had escaped the contaminations of colonial oppression and could be both heart-warming and progressive. Musical nationalism developed both as a way of ritualizing optimism (“the sound of singing drowns out the sounds of the bombs”) and as an affirmation of what was most distinct about the Vietnamese as a people. Correcting some songs to make their lyrics more “patriotic” brought them into line with socialist goals, and emphasized sustaining the social collectivity more than individualized sentiments of love or loss.

*Quan họ* is an embodied practice, with its own etiquette, forms of address, and ritual protocol. The songs were sung at temple festivals to worship local deities, so they were part of the “world of superstition” condemned by nationalist campaigners in the 1950s, but since 1965 they have resurfaced as part of the “indigenous foundations” of the nation, inscribed with communal ideals and moral values. A “mythology of interruption” asserted that this practice had vanished, and while villagers may have remembered things a bit differently, the idea that *quan họ* had to be “restored” allowed for a new, officially sanctioned, and nationally recognized form to appear (pp. 71–72). In this nuanced way, Meeker shows that she can “read against the grain” of some of the accounts written by Hanoi academics, and she uses the local knowledge gained from elderly female singers to complicate the “*quan họ* movement” ideology.

She also documents the fact that many Bắc Ninh singers feel uncomfortable about the way control over the representation and narration of these songs has been whisked away to Hanoi once *quan họ* was recognized as a “national heritage” in 1990. An alternative origin story, told by an older woman, presents the oldest songs as having been inscribed on a strip of yellow silk that was “taken away by the center.” Certain stories, like this one, have become inaudible in the face of a national heritage movement that authorizes some local voices and silences others.

*Quan họ* is performed by pairs of men and women who address each other as equals (*em*) in a village context, and they exchange tender sentiments. In staged and televised performances, in contrast, male and female singers use the hierarchical terms *anh* (for the man) and *em* (for the woman), introducing an age and gender hierarchy seen as appropriate for romantic love, and especially the intense yearnings for an unattainable beloved. Disembedded from the social relations of local life, the “modern” formats of stage shows and competitions cannot reproduce the intimacy, egalitarianism, and sense of shared creation of earlier *quan họ* performances.

At UNESCO-sponsored *quan họ* clubs in ancient temples, new electronic microphones are used to amplify the singing out to a wider audience, just as urban Vietnamese can come to visit village festivals to “hear” their traditions. Instead of being sung in dark and crowded temples, many of these “modern” songs are now performed with microphones on dragon-shaped boats, floating in a picturesque pond that evokes the timeless and organic natural world. Although none of this new staging is actually “traditional,” it often “feels more natural” to spectators, who have their own notions of authenticity. Participants learn to tune in to the ways in which their practice

of a particular local form is part of a larger, diverse national culture.

The larger theoretical issues that Meeker's study addresses concern the ways a local practice can be defined and re-framed as cultural heritage, and what the consequences of this "heritagisation" (to borrow a term from Endres [2011]) might be. Specifically, she argues that songs are seen as representing sentiments (*tình cảm*), but there are differing conceptions of how sentiment is embodied and enacted. Revolutionary ideologists after 1945 wanted to root this musical practice in an essential Vietnamese character, which was both communal and egalitarian. Village *quan họ* singers, on the other hand, lived their singing as rooted in the body and in social interaction. The emotions evoked by the songs should be expressed in actions which are morally, socially, and politically appropriate. Negotiations about how to do so (and who gets to make those decisions) are traced out in each of her chapters.

When local culture becomes a UNESCO certified Intangible Cultural Heritage it needs to be mapped in relation to an identifiable standard. Meeker argues that the "culturalist discourse" of the heritage paradigm can become as totalizing and influential as earlier Marxist evolutionary models that saw temple singing as "primitive superstition." Older women officially designated as "masters of folklore" (*nghệ nhân*) can qualify for state support if they were trained before 1945. But this enshrining of 1945 as an official "sign or brand of Vietnamese cultural authenticity" (p. 148) feels arbitrary to village singers, even though they are also very concerned about losing elements of their culture and protecting what they see as "authentic." Although anthropologists have critiqued the idea of the authentic as an essentialization of what is in fact a cultural construction, it is a concept that remains meaningful for *quan họ* singers, as well as for academic folklorists and for government heritage policy.

It is unfortunate that Meeker's monograph, which deals so extensively with the impact of hearing *quan họ* songs, does not come with any recordings of actual performances. (In contrast, Barley Norton's somewhat similar 2009 study of *chầu văn* songs, *Songs for the Spirits: Music and Mediumship in Modern Vietnam* came with a DVD showing both village and commercialized performances.) But Lauren Meeker has also worked on several films, and it is strange that the book does not ever refer to these films or provide information about their distributors. In my opinion her book should be taught in combination with the viewing of these films. She worked with Jaysinhji Jhala to make *Drums on the Red River* in 2007 (in collaboration with the Vietnamese Institute for Culture and Art Studies), and has reflected on this collaborative process in a very interesting co-authored article (Meeker and Jhala 2013). The film documents a festival in northern Vietnam where *quan họ* songs are performed, and it is presented in a "conversational style" in which participants narrate their own experiences to the camera.

Lauren Meeker has recently finished another documentary titled *Singing Sentiment* (2014). It provides a detailed portrait of the practice of *quan họ* singing as perceived by one older woman, Bà Vân, her daughters, and various other figures in the community. It provides a more personal

perspective on the arguments presented in the book *Sounding Out Heritage*. And of course it allows us to actually see and hear the songs as they are performed in the home, at the temple, and in the context of village festivals. The ceremony that closes the film, full of dark robed ladies, and disciplined ritualism, provided me with the most vivid glimpse of a northern Vietnamese festival that I have seen. The mixture of “gaiety and gravitas” as the effigy of the village god is brought to make a formal visit to the deity, is rendered through details of costume, protocol, and propriety.

Meeker has integrated visual and written forms of presentation quite skillfully, so that the two complement each other but do not overlap. *Sounding Out Heritage* contrasts the social practice of singing these songs in an everyday village setting with their display as a form of “folk culture” and national heritage. By showing how cultural heritage is negotiated and constituted from the center, it provides us with a deeper understanding of the differences between these standardized performances (full of colorful costumes and mimed gestures) and the intimate, everyday life of the songs as embedded within social relations. Both the book and the films show a remarkable mastery of Vietnamese sources and the finer points of Vietnamese etiquette, as well as a compassionate perspective on a rapidly changing society. Using the book and one of the films together would work very well for undergraduate courses in Asian studies, ethnomusicology, gender studies, and anthropology. The two would also work well in graduate courses dealing with these topics, as well as ethnographic methods, “shared anthropology,” and the contested field of visual anthropology.

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*Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*

MANDY SADAN

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 470p.

Over the past 15 years, Mandy Sadan has single-handedly launched new historical scholarship on the Kachin people. The Kachin, a group of highlanders who mostly reside in the northern region of Myanmar, had long been widely known among academics, thanks to Edmund Leach's 1954 classic *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. The lack of access to Myanmar, however, has meant that until very recently scholarly discussions were often more about Leach and his theory than about the Kachin people themselves. Sadan, an English historian, has introduced an entirely new set of historical studies from a resolutely empirical perspective. The much-anticipated monograph, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*, brings together the fruits of her scholarship, including a surprisingly large amount of findings that have not been published before. This publication is certainly a cause for celebration, especially because it is rare that such a thick monograph exclusively focused on one ethnic minority group is published at all nowadays.<sup>1)</sup> With this monograph, Sadan has again raised the standard of Kachin scholarship to a new level. Students of Kachin studies will be indebted to this book for decades to come.

*Being and Becoming Kachin* is not an accessible book, however. Sadan herself admits in her Introduction that "the primary concern of this book is to explore the historical, ongoing, lived complexities" (p. 20) and as such her determination to do justice to the "complexities" of the subject has made the book exceptionally long.<sup>2)</sup> She uses the word "complex" often—too often, in my opinion—to characterize the subject matter in order to justify the length of this 512-page tome. It is not available as an e-book, and the price of this book is unforgiving. As a result, it is unlikely to be widely available, especially in Southeast Asia. Aware of these concerns, Sadan has created a very impressive accompanying website ([www.mandysadan.weebly.com](http://www.mandysadan.weebly.com)), which presents not only chapter-by-chapter summaries but also extremely rare archival materials in digital formats. The website is a truly commendable effort, which should inspire many other scholars.

In this review, I will not perform the conventional task of offering chapter-by-chapter summaries, mainly because we can easily find excellent summaries on the Internet.<sup>3)</sup> Rather, I will

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- 1) An obvious exception is Anthony Walker's immense study, *Merit and Millennium*, a 900-page study of the Lahu in Thailand and China.
  - 2) In a post-publication forum in *Sojourn*, Sadan has stressed again that *Being and Becoming Kachin* is "ultimately attempting to achieve . . . a recognition of the depth and complexity of the [Kachin] history" (Farrelly *et al.* 2014, 479).
  - 3) Magnus Fiskesjö (2014) has also written an excellent summary for each chapter in his engaging review, which is available online. Sadan herself offers a summary on the accompanying website: [www.mandysadan.weebly.com/book-summary.html](http://www.mandysadan.weebly.com/book-summary.html), accessed January 15, 2015.



treat this monumental book as the culmination of Sadan's distinguished scholarship and raise a few broad questions about her method. I will therefore refer not only to *Being and Becoming Kachin* but also to some of Sadan's earlier studies. I will first highlight what I consider to be the book's most original and promising contributions, and then move on to address methodological and historiographical issues. Calling into question her strong faith in secular historiography and textual positivism, I will argue that the historical narratives that are produced and consumed among the Kachin people themselves deserve more scholar attention. My contention is that the Kachin self-representations, which are replete with Christian evangelical rhetoric today, are a worthy object of sustained inquiry.

One of the most important contributions of *Being and Becoming Kachin* is the spatial scope with which Sadan reframes the geography of "Kachin." Her study broadens the geographical scope of "Kachin" by consistently including the adjacent areas of Jinghpaw-speaking communities: "Singpho" area of northeast India and the "Jingpo" area of southwest China.<sup>4</sup> Refusing to treat the Kachin space as a periphery of a nation-state, she treats this region as one integral area. This geographical perspective was always latent in her scholarship, but in this book it is explicitly articulated and substantiated throughout the book. While ethnicity was the primary focus in her previous studies, she emphasizes this geographical framing in this monograph. Although I am not convinced that the terminology of "borderworld" serves her purpose well, it is a refreshing approach, which distinguishes *Being and Becoming Kachin* from almost all other studies that bear the word "Kachin," including Sadan's earlier work.<sup>5</sup>

*Being and Becoming Kachin* particularly shines where it uncovers little-known historical events in northeast India, starting from the encounter between the Singpho and the British East India Company in 1824. Sadan skillfully relates these events to the greater "Kachin" geography. On the China side too, she identifies a number of relevant events in Yunnan (and beyond) and brings to light historical linkages across the border. One such event is the so-called Panthay Rebellion, whose impacts on the Myanmar side have hardly been explored before (pp. 143–146).<sup>6</sup>

While Sadan explores both the Indian and Chinese sides, the strength of the book is the former. Her meticulous reading of British archival documents is unparalleled and breathtaking. As Fiskesjö (2014) has pointed out in his review, however, the voluminous Chinese-language sources are not covered as comprehensively. It would be unfair, however, to expect Sadan to cover the Chinese-language literature on top of everything else she has already unearthed and presented. It suffices

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4) The Jinghpaw (Jingpho) language is the lingua franca among the Kachin people. Jinghpaw is spelled in various ways—"Singpho" in India and usually "Jingpo" in China.

5) The only exception I am aware of is the work by Nicholas Farrelly, whose unpublished 2010 dissertation examines the "Kachin" in the three countries. Farrelly has written a review of *Being and Becoming Kachin* (Farrelly et al. 2014).

6) A rare exception here is the work by Andrew Forbes. See Forbes (1986; 1988). It should be mentioned that the Panthay Rebellion is usually called the Du Wenxiu Rebellion in China.

to say that thanks to her pioneering work, we are now able to identify more clearly than ever the gaps to be filled by other scholars.<sup>7)</sup> *Being and Becoming Kachin* brings to light a vast amount of archival sources in more than 1,500 footnotes. (It is hoped that the book will be eventually made available on a searchable, digital format.)<sup>8)</sup>

In Sadan's view, upland Southeast Asia has been poorly served by academics, who fail to back up their arguments with verifiable empirical references. She names in particular three studies: *Political Systems of Highland Burma* by Edmund Leach, *System, Structure, and Contradiction* by Jonathan Friedman, and *The Art of Not Being Governed* by James C. Scott, arguing that these works, although thought-provoking, are not sufficiently grounded in historical evidence. In the section titled "Kachin history and the problem of anthropology," Sadan argues that for these scholars "the concern was to develop totaling, ahistorical . . . interpretations" (p. 15).<sup>9)</sup> She demands that a scholar provide the reader with references so that the study can "be tested and critiqued properly" (Sadan in Farrelly *et al.* 2014, 479).

Modern academic scholarship is, in George Stocking's words, "not search but re-search."<sup>10)</sup> *Being and Becoming Kachin* exemplifies this "re-search" principle of modern academic scholarship. Sadan's insistence on this "re-search" principle, however, raises certain methodological and historiographical questions. To put it simply, is this an adequate mode of inquiry if we want to understand how the Kachin themselves view their history? How should we seek to understand and engage with the historical accounts produced and consumed by the Kachin people themselves, which do not follow the academic conventions? How should we analyze their religious and mythical narratives, which do not adhere to the standard scholarly practice? In fact, Sadan does not address these questions herself. She has been dismissive towards the historical narratives that circulate among the Kachin themselves.

Sadan has repeatedly expressed dismay that Kachin self-representations are dominated by Christian evangelism and that they are reductive, essentializing, and dogmatic as a result. In her 2007 paper, "Constructing and Contesting the Category 'Kachin' in the Colonial and Post-colonial Burmese State," she wrote: "it has been very hard to challenge, refute, renegotiate or decolonize the constructions of traditional Kachin morality and society that are perpetuated by the Kachin institutional churches," calling for a secular history of Kachin resistance against Christianity (2007,

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7) There have been excellent studies on Jinghpo and Zaiwa in Yunnan, most notably by Wang Zhusheng (1997) and Ho Tsui-Ping (1997), but to date no-one has conducted a substantive historical and ethnographic research on the cross-border dynamics.

8) Sadan herself seems to defend the paper format when she says that the "materiality of the book is significant" (Sadan in Farrelly *et al.* 2014, 477). But by "materiality" she actually means the *length* of the book.

9) Sadan has reiterated this point in the post-publication forum by saying that her book was "definitely a reaction to this kind of Kachin imaginary"—the kind of imaginary entertained by scholars like Leach and Scott (Sadan in Farrelly *et al.* 2014, 479).

10) Quoted in Appadurai (2000, 11).

52–53). In *Being and Becoming Kachin* too, she observes that the influential Christian evangelism has made “the secular appraisal of the Kachin past . . . difficult” (p. 403). From her point of view, the problem is that “the Kachin people lack an adequately researched secular history” (2007, 65–66), and that “Kachin elites . . . lack the secular academic training in historical and anthropological disciplines that would enable them to translate . . . into more globally understood conventions” (2010, 147). Her insistent demand reminds me of the observation made by Webb Keane in his paper “Secularism as a Moral Narrative of Modernity”: “secularity often presents in compulsory terms, even as an ethical demand” (Keane 2013, 159). It appears that Sadan is disturbed by the “morally and politically troubling anachronisms, premoderns or anti-moderns” of the Kachin (*ibid.*, 162).<sup>11</sup> I wish Sadan had reflected more on her own reactions and spared more thoughts as to why secular historiography has to be so privileged.

In *Being and Becoming Kachin*, Sadan engages with the issue of Kachin Christianity at length for the first time, devoting a whole chapter titled “Virtue” to it. The primary concern of this chapter is to dismantle the popular teleological narrative enjoyed by Kachin Christians. According to this narrative, the Kachin embraced Christianity during the colonial era and the religious conversion unavoidably led to a war against the oppressive state. Sadan analyzes archival data to show that the Kachin conversion actually took place not before but during the insurgency. This is certainly an important and necessary corrective. Sadan’s refutation of the evangelical account, however, leaves what seems to me a larger question untouched: why does the evangelical narrative appeal so strongly to the Kachin, despite the factual inaccuracies that could be pointed out rather easily? Is it conceivable that the evangelical narrative spreads *because* it is able to gloss historical facts as a simple, reductionist, essentializing story? Sadan herself admits that “Christianity is a useful resource for unifying discourses of historical experience among a diverse set of communities,” but this particular kind of discursive resourcefulness needs to be analyzed more specifically (p. 463).

In pursuing these questions about a variety of narratives, I find it helpful to consult *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* by Liisa Malkki.<sup>12</sup> When Malkki arrived at a refugee camp in Tanzania, she found that the refugees were constantly telling historical stories among themselves: “Unexpectedly, [the camp] turned out to be a site that was enabling and nurturing an elaborate and self-conscious historicity among its refugee inhabitants” (Malkki 1995, 52–53). She found out that the historical narratives told by the refugees “went beyond merely recording events. It represented not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamental moral terms. In this sense, it cannot be accurately described as either

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11) For a penetrating analysis of this moral disturbance, see Talal Asad’s essay on the British reaction to the Rushdie Affair (Asad 1990).

12) Another useful study here is Susan Harding’s study of the rhetoric of Christian conversion. See Harding (1987; 2000).

history or myth. It was what can be called a *mythico-history*.” Malkki’s insights remind us that people everywhere create quasi-historical narratives but that they are typically mythical and religious. These mythical narratives need to be taken seriously because they often reveal how a community shares situated knowledge and moral visions. Following Malkki, it is worth asking what kind of mythico-histories are being created by the Kachin. I realize that the questions I am raising here are more anthropological than historical. But studying a people like the Kachin makes us understand that the two are inseparably intertwined.<sup>13</sup> A methodological implication of this inseparability between history and anthropology is that ethnographic evidence might come to play a central role in writing a Kachin history and investigating the Kachin historiography.

It should be noted that Sadan too presents ethnographic descriptions and relies on unrecorded conversations in *Being and Becoming Kachin*. In the chapter on Christianity, for example, she assesses the impacts of the missionaries on the Kachin view of history and offers the following in a footnote: “These comments are based on extended conversations . . . in a variety of settings, especially during the period 1996–9” (p. 365). These “extended conversations” surely fail to meet the “re-search” principle, as they are impossible to trace and verify. This is obviously a common issue for those of us who try to learn from speaking with ordinary people during long fieldwork. Studying a people like the Kachin thus challenges our own conventions.

In *Being and Becoming Kachin*, Sadan convincingly repudiates the erroneous view (espoused by scholars like Robert Taylor) that the upland peoples like Kachin were “essentially deluded supporters of [the British] oppressive order” and “politically unsophisticated” (p. 260). When it comes to the Kachin’s religious behavior, however, she appears to uphold a similarly unfounded view, implying that the Kachin are ultimately deluded supporters of an oppressive order and that they are not sufficiently sophisticated to “decolonize” themselves. For all the groundbreaking work Sadan has done, she appears to too hastily dismiss the Kachin subjectivity when it comes to their encounter with Christianity. To suggest, even implicitly, that “the Kachin have been misled by colonial officials and foreign missions” (2007, 53) and that they remain unaware of this deceit today is quite antithetical to her scholarship, which has been skillfully uncovering the Kachin-centric perspectives.

Perhaps it is worth recalling that these questions of subjectivity have been raised among historians of Southeast Asia too. Many years ago, David Wyatt urged us to think about “what was happening inside people’s heads” (Wyatt 1997, 689). Commenting on Victor Lieberman’s “externalist approach,” Wyatt wrote that it is “necessary and useful,” but he also suggested that historians also investigate “internal” change—how people’s views and perspectives changed over time.”

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13) As James Scott has noted: “no historian ought to be allowed to walk out the door in the morning without being strapped to an anthropologist who can recover the rich texture of human action and understanding” (2013, 341). For a set of insights into the relationship between history and anthropology, see Tagliocozzo and Willford (2009).

Such a goal would require us to engage with the historical accounts that are appreciated by the studied people themselves. We would like to know better how the Kachin people talk about their history among themselves as they endeavor to make sense of their present predicament and to envision their collective future. In order for us to write a Kachin history, it seems necessary that we seek to understand the “method” of the Kachin historical narratives, however erroneous they are from the empirical positivist perspective.

Rather than framing Christianity with the binary of domination and resistance, it might be more useful to investigate the Christianization as a historical and ongoing process with many unexpected twists and turns. Such an approach would make us more cautious towards the view that Christianization is a one-way street of colonial domination. In her studies of South Africa, Jean Comaroff has stressed how “Christianity was inseparable from the whole logic of the way colonialism had been made *and was then being unmade*” (quoted in D. K. Kim 2010, italics added). An example of this unmaking can be found in the formation of the African National Congress in South Africa; the founders came out of the African Independent Churches, “whose leader had taken the Bible—which had entered the community as a colonizing, civilizing text—and read another message out of it.” For our purpose here, it is worth recalling that the founders of the Kachin Independence Army were Baptists. Comaroff also urges us to observe how Christianity itself changes as it travels, asking: “Is Africa becoming Christianized or was Christianity becoming Africanized?” (*ibid.*). A similar question can be raised for the Kachin context: while the Kachin are Christianized, isn’t Christianity also Kachin-ized at the same time?

If we take the Christianization as a historical process in which the evangelical rhetoric has been slowly yet steadily adopted and modified among the Kachin, then many new historical questions emerge. What aspects of the evangelical rhetoric did the Kachin first come to adopt? Has the evangelical rhetoric been uniformly shared among various ethno-linguistic groups and across various denominations within the “Kachin?” How do the non-Christian Kachin in China and India view the ethno-nationalist narrative? How does the Kachin military use the evangelical ethno-nationalist narratives without alienating its non-Christian members? How do Kachin evangelical Christians solve contradictory narratives?

I have taken this opportunity to write much more than a conventional book review and raise a number of questions here, because Kachin studies is entering a new phase, thanks to Sadan’s path-breaking work. Asking these questions was unthinkable 15 years ago. For those of us who follow the paths she has opened up, it is necessary to engage even more deeply than ever with methodological questions. It is Sadan herself who identifies method as “the greatest problem” in *Being and Becoming Kachin* (p. 26).

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### ***Dreaming of Money in Ho Chi Minh City***

ALLISON J. TRUITT

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013, xii + 193p.

The scholarly study of banknotes (notaphily) is not a new phenomenon. But it did not take systematic modern form until the 1920s. (Ironically, it emerged under the Weimar Republic just as Germany was entering a three-year period of hyperinflation.) Since then, the number of numismatic associations has grown considerably, as have specialized publications. *Banknote News* is one relevant example. *Banknote News* issues breaking stories about international paper and polymer money. Collectors are the primary audience, and the website contains hundreds of links to vendors for people who wish to purchase the bank notes they covet. One of the links directs collectors to the 2014 edition of *The Banknote Book*. It includes 205 stand-alone chapters, each of which can be purchased separately as a country-specific catalog. (The Vietnam chapter provides detailed information on notes the State Bank of Vietnam issued, but only from 1964 to present, color copies of them, as well as their current market valuations.) The four-volume set currently runs 2,554 pages and details more than 21,000 types and varieties of currency, some dating back centuries.

The global community of currency collectors and the desires that shape their relationships to different forms of money provides a useful entry point into Allison Truitt's fascinating book, *Dreaming of Money in Ho Chi Minh City*. Truitt is similarly interested in state-issued currencies, especially with regard to how people conceptualize the interplay of their material and symbolic properties. But her interests do not end there. The ethnographic focus of the book is instead upon interpersonal relations, as mediated by different currencies (primarily coins, paper, and gold), which she dubs "monetary pluralism" (pp. 149–150).

The author's attention to interpersonal relations enables her to raise new questions about the cultural politics of identity in Vietnam's economic capital, Ho Chi Minh City, which she rightfully acknowledges is not always representative of the country as a whole. Nevertheless, the central questions around which the book is organized are not specific to it. The questions are applicable everywhere, and I reproduce them here for this reason. First, she asks, "Can people exert control over state-sponsored infrastructures such as territorial currencies?" Second, "How do we come to have faith in the currency we handle?" Third, "How do people personalize money so that it becomes a vehicle for expressing qualities other than exchange value?" And, finally, "What hap-

pens when those efforts fail?” (pp. 3–4).

The author describes how ordinary people—butchers, unlicensed money changers, small shop owners, street traders, lottery ticket purchasers, and so on—responded to the above questions over the course of six chapters. The first chapter provides a historical account of the “problem” competing currencies (Indochinese piasters, revolutionary-era financial notes, U.S. dollars, gold bars, and demonetized national currency) posed for people living in the south during the twentieth century. Chapter two features the rise of consumer culture, a process that began during the mid-1990s when a series of reforms known as “Renovation” (*Doi moi*) accelerated the shift from a centralized command-and-control economy to a decentralized market-based one. Truitt’s insights into what this process looked like at the household-level lays the foundation for chapter three. It features the methods prosperous households used to hide their growing wealth and to maintain its value in the face of mounting inflation, a consequence of the country’s gradual reintegration into global financial markets. Chapter four reorients the reader’s attention to the role “fictive” currencies, such as “spirit” money (*tien ma*), play in Vietnamese ritual life. Particular emphasis is placed upon how “subjective” debts rather than “contractual” debts are (re-)produced through social interactions, and the complicated ways they link people over time and across territorial spaces. Chapter five, though very brief, presents an intriguing discussion of how Vietnamese assess the quality of cash with regard to its physical “appearance, feel, even its denomination” (p. 107). These assessments shape everyday interactions with others due to the prevalence of counterfeit notes, the frequency with which people reject bills that are either too worn or too large to make change, as well as the challenges banks face in terms of enrolling customers in what is still a predominantly cash-and-carry society. The final chapter features the strategies people employ to transform little money into big money through a range of illicit activities, most commonly by: participating in underground lotteries, speculating on land-use certificates (buying and selling land is still illegal), and investing in over-the-counter markets rather than the stock exchange to avoid state controls created to limit price fluctuations.

The resurgence of interest in the anthropology of money began several years ago. This book, with its insightful discussion of money and the role it plays in shaping new subjectivities, is a welcome contribution to this literature. According to one of the leading figures in this field, Bill Maurer, scholarship on this topic typically falls into one of three broad categories: the large-scale transformations of economic systems; the relationship between quantification and commensuration; and the materiality and fictions of finance (2006). Truitt’s book intersects with all three subfields, and it demonstrates what can be gained by working across their boundaries in addition to within them. For example, she challenges simple, linear assumptions about the ascendancy of neoliberalism in Vietnam following decades of state socialism. Her findings instead show that the “transition” from one economic regime to another has not replaced prior relationships to money and value, some of which date back to the colonial period. Instead, these relationships continue to



coexist—in ways that are harmonious at some moments and contradictory at others. Similarly, her field data demonstrates that the “gift economy” still flourishes despite the increasing commodification of everyday life. It does so, she elaborates, precisely because the perpetuation of “subjective” debts (*on*), i.e. social and moral obligations, is always asymmetrical and thus incommensurate in nature, which paradoxically strengthens rather than weakens social ties. Finally, she explains why speculative economies are not limited to the financial sector, but crucially shape the accumulation of religious merit, especially among women, as well.

The book contains many more insights into economic beliefs, values, and practices among Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City. The author does not always adequately explain their broader significance, however. For instance, there is little discussion of the theoretical literature on the anthropology of money, including ethnographic studies conducted in post-communist Europe and post-socialist Asia, many of them at the same time as her field research (see, e.g.: Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Ngai 2003; Ledeneva 2008; Rofel 2012). Admittedly, the book is written for the educated readers, not simply specialists. Nevertheless, these studies also examine how culturally inflected understandings of “national integrity, political authority, and membership in a globalizing world” (p. 3), to borrow her phrasing, are reflected in and shaped by the ways people talk about and use money. Some discussion of this literature, to highlight where patterns converge and where they do not, would open up greater space for comparative work, which is very much needed in this subfield.

The sheer number of ethnographic vignettes in each chapter is not always an asset either. The stories are rich in detail, and the author is able to convey what they mean, often in a highly nuanced manner, to the reader. But the chapters are thematically organized, not analytically driven. Consequently, the chapters can come across as a loosely linked series of “snapshots” into people’s lives, which obscure in the process the book’s theoretical contributions to debates in the literature.

The author conducted the bulk of the field research during 2001–02, supplementing it with a second trip in 2007. Based on this reviewer’s experience, the author’s analysis remains accurate. But the length of time that has passed raises an important question, which the brief epilogue does not sufficiently address. What changes have occurred since then? Attitudes about official corruption have undergone a noticeable shift, for example. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of people who purchase health and accident insurance as a hedge against the unknown rather than accepting such events as “fate.” And, the numbers of Vietnamese who participate in leisure activities, such as tourism at home and abroad, have exploded along with the rise in household incomes. All of these trends affect how people in Ho Chi Minh City think, feel, and use money today and, in turn, how they interact with one another on an everyday basis. Such trends are noteworthy, and they deserve further study.

Despite these modest shortcomings, Truitt’s book has laid a strong foundation for future

research in this area. Scholars will find the book to be a valuable resource, as well as an excellent text for undergraduate courses. So, too, will general readers, particularly those interested in the complex lives of money in other cultural contexts.

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## *In Search of Middle Indonesia: Middle Classes in Provincial Towns*

GERRY VAN KLINKEN and WARD BERENSCHOT, eds.

Leiden: KITLV Press; Boston: Brill, 2014, xvi+242p.

In 2012, the Indonesian *Daily Kompas* conducted a survey aiming to calculate the actual number and define the characteristics of what it called “the middle class cohort” of the country’s population. Involving 2,550 people above 17 years of age who lived in the cities of Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Makassar, and Medan, the survey employed the World Bank criteria of education level, occupation, and purchasing power parity (PPP) to determine the class categories of the respondents. The survey result shows that 1% of the respondents belonged to the upper class, 3.6% to upper middle class, 50.2% to middle class, 39.6% to lower middle class, and 5.6% to the lower class. In the World Bank criteria this means that the surveyed cohort groups, successively, earned and lived on more than US\$20 per day, between US\$10 and 20, between US\$4 and 10, between US\$2 and 4, and less than US\$2. This result echoes the World Bank’s own survey earlier that year as quoted by the *Daily Kompas*, in which 56.5% of the entire Indonesian population of 237 million in 2012—thus forming an actual number of 134 million people—is seen as belonging to the middle class category. *Kompas* and the World Bank surveys represent analyses of the socio-economic diversification of the Indonesian population over the past five years, which generally depicted a growing middle class. Whereas the criteria used for the grouping of the surveyed respondents perform an established standard of income and expenditure method typical of economists, they do

not satisfy other scholars who work on the social, anthropological, and political aspects of demographic population. This edited volume, *In Search of Middle Indonesia*, is an attempt to break these established criteria and definition of “middle class” and to offer an alternative to studying this paradigmatic term and phenomenon.

*In Search of Middle Indonesia* explores the expanding middle class in Indonesia not by measuring people’s consumption but by raising “more relational, political questions” (p.2). Its basic premise is that “class is not essentially a question of income or expenditure categories; it is a political concept, intended to explain why differences remain between the behavior of rich and poor people over matters of common goods” (p.2). The authors in this book agree on the statement that “the possession of consumer durables says nothing about new political commitments” and that “simply reducing the income threshold to the poverty limit and calling everyone above that ‘middle class’ begs many analytical questions about political action” (p.3). While it does not abandon the income and expenditure methodology, this book employs an ethnological approach to find answers to its prime question “Why is Middle Indonesia so influential, locally and in Indonesia as a whole, though it is neither particularly rich nor particularly central in geographic terms?” (p.8). This book thus examines “middle class” in terms of agencies and their characteristics of behaviors and seeks to clarify the motives that prompt such behaviors by exploring ethnological rather than statistic data.

*In Search of Middle Indonesia* is organized around three theoretical concepts, namely class, the State, and everyday culture, each of which consists of three individual studies. Three of the chapters concerning Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara emphasize previous studies some of the authors have done on this provincial town (see authors’ biographies pp. vii–ix). Other studies focus on what the authors consider “middle towns,” mostly provincial capitals. It has to be noted that the selection of the geographical locality of these studies reflects the authors’ shared consciousness of two points: the importance of a non-Java centric approach and the centrality of non-metropolitan urban lives in the making of Indonesia’s middle class.

In the first part of the book, about class, Ben White overviews the concept of Middle Indonesia based on Clifford Geertz’s “intermediate town” (1963) and Robert and Helen Lynd’s “Middle-town” (1929; 1937). For this he presents a reflection on the theoretical implications that these concepts bring about in any understanding of the changes of the Indonesian people, society, and State today. Next, Nicolaas Warouw examines class relations among manufacturer workers in the towns of Cilegon and Pekalongan while suggesting the re-positioning of “citizens back in the ‘social contract’ with the state” (p.67). Jan Newberry examines the structure of mobility in a kampong located in a suburb of Yogyakarta in order to understand “the middle class from below” (p.71).

The second part of the book, on the State, presents Sylvia Tidey’s observation on the social segmentation and competition for resources in the town of Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. Tidey argues that in today’s Kupang, ethnicity is a major factor that explains why social segmentation

and competition for resources have increased and how they are constructed in daily life. Wenty Marina Minza, also in the second part, discusses the work aspirations of youth in the town of Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Like Tidey, Minza points out the important role ethnicity plays, in her case, in the youth's orientation for jobs. She elaborates the fact that non-ethnic Chinese youth in Pontianak mostly desire the status of government employee (Pegawai Negeri Sipil, PNS). Meanwhile, Amalinda Savirani evaluates the post-Soeharto economic reforms and their impact on the "way the construction sector operates" in the town of Pekalongan in the north coast of Central Java. Savirani shows how strong ties between local politicians and contractors had not disappeared in post-Soeharto Pekalongan although the latter had lost considerable power over the system of contract distribution (p. 134).

Part three begins with Cornelis Lay's autobiographic reflection on his hometown now and then, Kupang. Lay witnesses the changes that have taken place in Kupang as he grew up and feels he has become "part of the complex yet paradoxically simple matrix of events taking place in that space" (p. 169). Then, there is Noorhaidi Hasan who discusses the changing role of Islam in the Central Java's Kebumen and South Kalimantan's Martapura. Hasan puts forward the thesis that the rise of the global resurgence concerning Islam that has followed the 9/11 events in the US has stimulated the growing consciousness of Islamic religious identity, social status, and life style among the Indonesian middle class in the two towns. The last chapter of this volume is Joseph Errington's analysis of linguistic dynamics, again, in Kupang that he claims to have reflected "the broader process of geo-social integration and class formation in Indonesia at large" (p. 219).

Generally speaking, this book attempts to offer an alternative to the commonly accepted concept of "middle class" on three points. Firstly, even with income and expenditure criteria, the number of the middle class in Indonesia today has multiplied so drastically that it exceeds any existing assumption scholars have traditionally argued. The common assumption is that the Indonesian middle class has fallen to a relatively small number and comprises a very tiny elite percentage of the population. For example, in his seminal work *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (1960, republished 1984), Robert van Niel says that in 1900, out of a population of 27 million inhabitants in Java and Madura, 2% comprised the middle class. This then went up to about 7% of an Indonesian population of 60 million people in 1942 (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, although "scholars and politicians alike routinely said the middle class made up around 10% of the population," in 1985 economic historian Howard Dick, as cited in the book being reviewed here, claims a middle class figure of 16.6% out of the total Indonesian population (p. 3). All these claims are however, being refuted. As this book argues, in Indonesia today "many more people than [previously assumed] have become consumers" and "recognizably [their] political behavior has changed." Although this book does not provide numbers of its own as to suggest what it presumes to be the new estimated figure of the Indonesian middle class today, the results of both the *Kompas* and the World Bank surveys cited earlier do confirm the premise of an expanding Indonesian middle class that this

book attempts to examine.

Secondly, unlike many other studies, which traditionally identify the middle-class phenomenon of metropolitan cities, this book deliberately selects Indonesian provincial towns as geographical localities in which the middle class question is paradigmatically situated. The logic underlining the selection is both political and theoretical. The authors of this book believe that after 1998 “the strong push for decentralization amidst the democratization that followed did not come from the national elite, but from a much broader provincial classes” (p. 2). There emerged a push for spatial dimension in politics. One of the sources for this push was “not the globalized metropolis, but the provincial towns—a place that foreign researchers rarely visit” (p. 6). In the context of provincial towns, the self-employed medium scale entrepreneurs, the private and public sector clerks, the teachers and the youths, although sharing global consumerist aspirations, were only “partly assimilated with the national bourgeoisie” (p. 6), and had a less secure income than their metropolis counterparts. Yet, this intermediary group holds control over their towns that becomes a power blow to the grip of the national politics given the local autonomy and decentralization.

Thirdly, the book offers a “non-quantitative” definition of the taken-for-granted concept of “middle class” and a way of studying it. The authors of this book understand provincial towns as an intermediary between the highly dynamic, global looking urban life and the relatively quiet life in rural localities. Although the physical space studied in this book covers geographical spaces of provincial towns, Middle Indonesia is referred to more as a paradigm than as an operational framework. “The middle class” of the Middle Indonesia cohort is thus meant as an imaginary locality which, while bridging the political and economic gaps between metropolis and periphery, drives the course of power relationships between the two. This theoretical framework constitutes one of the fresh, or refreshing insights that the book offers to understand Indonesia’s present day middle class.

Although the Introduction of this book conveys a theoretical framework that binds tightly the chapters as an entirety, the three themes that it attempts to use in the organization, i.e. class, the State, and everyday culture, seem to be loosely presented. Readers might wonder how the ethnographic details of the individual chapters are related to each other to frame the paradigmatic inter-relation of the class, the State, and the everyday culture upon which they are categorized. For the latter to be present, it seems that the book requires a concluding chapter, which is absent. This being said, given its title *“In Search” of Middle Indonesia*, this book is missing, to a large extent, the historical perspective that might be useful for situating the ethnographic data either in its entirety or in the individual chapters.

Last but not least, reading this book in the context of the post-parliamentary and presidential election of 2014, it is worth noting one more point. The local government election bill recently passed by the Indonesian Parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) has cancelled the popular direct vote system of the election of local governments (governors, mayors, and regents) that has

been effective since 1999 and brings it back to the representative vote system by Local Parliaments (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD) like in the New Order. Whether the re-centralized, albeit local, election system will influence the dynamics and political commitment of the middle class in provincial towns is yet to be seen. It is not the task of this book to answer this. Yet, by emphasizing the role of politics in the construction of the middle class in provincial towns, this book sounds to me a bit too optimistic about the future of decentralization and democracy in Indonesia. It is very likely that the new bill, unless it is revoked before the local election rounds starting in 2015, will soon lead to a return of oligarchy in which elite-dominated political parties will put to an end the dynamic and energetic courses of life the middle class has lived in provincial towns over the past 10 years.

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## *Rethinking Chineseness: Translational Sinophone Identities in the Nanyang Literary World*

E. K. TAN

Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2013, xii+260p.

In Southeast Asian studies, a gap often exists between social science and humanities scholarship. This divide has arisen due to differing research methodologies, methods, approaches, materials, issues, and perspectives. In this sense, E. K. Tan's *Rethinking Chineseness: Translational Sinophone Identities in the Nanyang Literary World* deftly bridges the divide as it copes with an issue, Chineseness, which is a common interest of scholars in both spheres. The underlying critical concept of "Sinophone" has widened the research horizons of literature and Chinese studies, and also been increasingly accepted in fields like comparative literary studies, Southeast Asian studies, cultural studies, diaspora studies, anthropology, and sociology. By focusing on two writers from

Malaysia and one from Singapore (all who write in different languages), the text juxtaposes influential theories of Chineseness with Sinophone theories to persuasively negotiate the current value of Chineseness as an identification marker of Sinophone communities. Using both the Sinophone and Anglophone literary works and associated cultural practices of these three writers as evidence, *Rethinking Chineseness* uncovers a Sinophone identity that is always transitional and open for (re) construction.

Sinophone studies place key focus on identities of Chinese-descent communities across the world and related representations of everyday local life experiences. While existing works in the field do respond to such crucial issues to a certain extent, *Rethinking Chineseness* is comparably outstanding for its substantial combing and correlation of interdisciplinary theories, such as those of Ien Ang, Rey Chow, Allen Chun, Shih Shu-mei, Tu Wei-ming, Wang Gungwu, Wang Ling-chi, Chow Kai-Wing, Tan Chee-Beng, Jing Tsu, Stuart Hall, Aihwa Ong, Donald M. Nonini, Chen Kuan-hsing, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. This meticulous study potently justifies its research rationale and repeatedly enhances the conversing space of the studied topic with insights from other fields. Indeed, *Rethinking Chineseness* astutely weaves a thought-provoking dialogue with the above-mentioned scholars into literary textual and historical contextual analysis to deploy convincing argumentation throughout the book.

To Tan, who is basically a literary scholar, literary imaginaries are products of social realities and manifestations of Sinophone community dialogues with nation-state narratives. In this view, Sinophone subjects frequently mobilize imaginaries to navigate certain demarcating discourses like the universal hegemony of Chinese culture and Chineseness; these imaginaries hence move beyond nationality and ethnicity to differentiate what is Chinese and what is not in the historical and social-political milieu of the Sinophone community. In other words, the writing and deployment of imaginaries is a conscious practice in the cultural politics of identification. It provides a way for Sinophone subjects and communities to express agency and escape from imposed forms of identification. This dynamic legitimizes the investigation into the Sinophone subjects' perception of desires and memories as "Chinese" or local through analyzing and evaluating their literary imaginaries. With this basic foundation, *Rethinking Chineseness* extensively examines expressive works like novels, war narratives, and plays to find out how Sinophone subjects and the following generation of these sojourners reconstruct and articulate their memories, desires, dreams, hopes, and longings when they reinvent their ethnic culture in different stages of migration (p. 38).

In chapter 1, "Filling in the Blanks: War and the Inscription of a Sinophone Malayan Identity," Tan scrutinizes Malaysian-born writer Vyvyane Loh's English-language novel, *Breaking the Tongue* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), a coming-of-age story of an anglicized Peranakan boy, Claude Lim, whose life in British Malaya is disrupted by the Japanese occupation during World War II. Tan analyzes how the protagonist searches and reconstructs his local identity through personal and collective memories after spiritually struggling due to war trauma, restricted acquaintance with

cultural heritage and identity uncertainties—i.e. the “blanks” suggested in the chapter title—as well as the experience of tongue mutilation, a symbolic detachment and break from the familiarity that is meaning-corrupted and repressive to the formation of an autonomous self. Tan employs this novel to suggest that nothing can impede the negotiation of a Sinophone subjectivity within the local circumstance (p. 43).

By exploring Malaysian writer Chang Kuei-hsing’s Sinophone novel *Elephant Herd* (Qun xiang, Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban, 1998) in chapter 2, “Prosthesizing an Origin: Metanarratives and the Making of Sinophone Malaysian Myths,” Tan explicates how the protagonist, whose ethnic longing and local identity are obscured by his limited knowledge of China and immigrant history, reconstructs his identity by transforming Borneo into a realistic space of cultural and national identification (p. 162). Tan emphasizes that the artificial myths fabricated in such a fiction reflect the narrative strategies of Chang’s Sinophone writing as minor literature. Chang frequently engages metanarratives (metahistory and metafiction) and ultimately alters the structural representation of the genre by using the Sinophone Malaysian experience and the poetic language of the Chinese tradition to delineate a unique literary form of local content and aesthetics. Such a language of inventiveness suggests that Chineseness as a designator of Chinese identity has evolved into a floating signifier. Indeed, Tan contends that Sinophone writing is far more than a mere documentation of homelessness and exile, as Sinophone Malaysian writers’ creolized environment and distinct historical experience enable them to convert the geographical homeland into a linguistic sign. To them, the choice of Sinophone writing is intended to create linguistic fluidity for constructing a sense of belonging (p. 164).

In chapter 3, “Transcending Multiracialism: Open Culture and the Making of a Sinophone Singaporean Identity,” Tan features Singaporean playwright Kuo Pao Kun’s notion of open culture. By examining two multilingual plays of Kuo, Tan expounds on Sinophone attempts to promote a common cultural identity that celebrates the intermingling of past and present as well as the local and global in an effort to transcend the cultural, linguistic, and racial compartmentalization formed by Singapore’s bilingual policy. Tan details the quest of a common culture embracing diversity, difference, and openness through discussion of *Mama Looking for Her Cat* (1998) and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1995). Utilizing examples like Zheng He’s journey and a carnivalesque market scene, Tan proposes that the open culture allows culturally orphaned Singaporeans to re-root and re-route their cultural parentage by actively mingling their lived experience, history, and memory. Such an invention of culture and identification exposes Singaporeans to a new option for a localized cultural heritage of their own (p. 210).

By demonstrating different dimensions of cultural translation, the introductory chapter and the three long core chapters collectively elucidate how the experience and mentality of Chinese emigrants and their descendants transition from a hope to “return,” to a desire for a sense of belonging, to an eventual ability to creatively articulate difference and connection. This progression



is usually represented in discourse as “overseas Chinese,” “Chinese diaspora,” and “Sinophone,” respectively. Tan thus cogently argues that Sinophone identities are translational, i.e. both relational and translatable, as they are formed by the coexistence of national, regional, ethnic, and local identities (p. 18). Sinophone communities, Tan underscores, assume and integrate traits from other cultures to build and rebuild their distinguishing Sinophone characteristics and thus recreate their ancestral culture (p. 41). Although resonant with previous concepts like Aihwa Ong’s “flexible identities” and Tan Chee Beng’s claim that there is no global Chinese identity, Tan goes further by critically rethinking the instrumentality of Chineseness as an effective theoretical category, especially in terms of its availability in the local context. He hence alters Chineseness to a linguistic symbol that continuously produces new meaning. In contrast to the theory of the diaspora first defined in the context of the Jewish community that focuses mainly on the notion of “returning to the original homeland,” *Rethinking Chineseness* reveals the mental experience of “not returning to the imaginary homeland” of diaspora Chinese.

The book is significantly contributive in its scrupulous theoretical mapping of Sinophone genealogy and its detailed close-readings of the selected literary texts and practices. It skillfully investigates three writers of different generations and backgrounds, a cross-boundaries research perspective that uses impressive conceptualization and sufficient contextualization to essentially strike at the core of Sinophone notions and concerns. Although its approach is primarily rooted in literature and cultural studies, it is definitely worth reading for anyone interested in Southeast Asian studies, area studies, or Chinese studies.

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### ***The Ruling Elite of Singapore: Networks of Power and Influence***

MICHAEL D. BARR

London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014, 200p.

Michael Barr’s research on the recent political history of Singapore has not generally been well-received by Singaporean academics, to say the least. This is not surprising: Barr roundly dispatches meritocracy and multiculturalism, two basic building blocks of the Singaporean psyche, and finds instead elitism and Chinese dominance, which he traces to the work of one man, former long-serving prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. Independent-minded Singaporean scholars tend to avoid attributing all things on the tiny island to one individual and to find nuances in their study of post-colonial Singapore (Hong 2002).

In his latest book, Barr sets out to map the networks of power in Singapore from the 1960s

to the present. In his idea of networks, political leaders are less actors unto themselves, whose personal ambition and command of power may change the course of history, than hirelings of Lee who fulfilled his vision for piloting the city-state's course. The networks of elitism and Chinese dominance produce a stable authoritarianism. In this sense, the book expands on Barr's first book (2000) on Lee's psychological make-up and the second (co-authored, 2008) on the making of Singapore as Lee envisaged. In the beginning of *The Ruling Elite of Singapore*, Barr cites from Lee's memorable speech in 1966 that Singapore's survival depended on 150 people (p. 1).

The book is mainly descriptive. The first two chapters introduce the approach and argument before substantive discussions are made in the next three chapters. In Chapter 3, Barr charts the creation of an English-educated elite from the 1950s to the 1970s by a select group of People's Action Party (PAP) leaders, among whom Lee was only the first among equals. While rival groups were crushed or co-opted in the process, Chapter 4 highlights a turning point in the 1980s when Lee attained sole power and could dictate the type of ruling elite to be recruited. Chapter 5 lays out the key aspects of Lee's policy: the increasing emphasis on Chinese elites and elite schools, with adverse consequences for social mobility, and on male military scholarship-holders. The classic product of this process was Lee's son, current prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, also a "retired" brigadier-general and the "uber Singaporean" (p. 91).

The last three chapters of the book are generally weaker and less interesting. Chapter 6 discusses the impact of the 2011 elections on the elites: a few lost their titles but this was hardly the "bloodbath" that Barr suggested (p. 103). The last chapter predicts that even without the elder Lee, Lee Hsien Loong's position is likely to be secure in the near future. At least Chapter 7 in between is useful in pointing out some of the failings of elite rule in Singapore and the need for a transparent government.

The weaknesses of the book are apparent. As Barr himself admits, it is difficult for scholars to penetrate the walls of secrecy that enclose Singapore's elite makers and gatekeepers (such as the work of the little-known Directorship and Consultancy Appointments Council). Barr relies mainly on official speeches and statements and on interviews with people who were part of the system. The sample of interviews, many of which are understandably anonymous, is small; what they say is important, but probably more in unraveling the claustrophobic worlds of Singaporean elites (and critics) than in depicting networks of power.

Aside from a tendency to exaggerate (e.g. Goh Chok Tong's "quasi-coup" against Lee Kuan Yew in the 1990s, p. 59), Barr deserves much credit for his sustained research into closed-off areas of Singapore history, where archival sources are limited and interviews are inflected by the experience of living under an authoritarian regime. There are important questions that Barr could have addressed in his book. For example, were all the selected elites content to play their role as handmaidens of Lee's Singapore? Goh's efforts to assert his independence, though trivial in comparison with political fractures in democratic and post-authoritarian countries, and the occasional

conversion of a former senior civil servant to an opposition party candidate suggest that elite formation was a more fraught and unpredictable process than Barr indicated.

The book also does not explore the policy and social ramifications of the elitism. Did the recruitment of an ethnic Chinese, military-type leader affect government policy since the 1980s? In his second book, Barr examined elitism and Chinese ethnocentrism as played out in Singapore's educational system, but there is very little discussion of their impact on government policy and their social effects in *The Ruling Elite of Singapore*. The book feels incomplete; one hopes that Barr would provide some answers in his subsequent research.

In focusing on elitism, Barr has tackled an important and difficult subject. As he rightly notes, it is disturbing that the population has generally internalized the elitist ethos alongside their acceptance of meritocracy and multiculturalism: Singaporeans desire to succeed as part of the elite as long as it is based on endeavor and merit, no matter one's ethnic background. However, while elitism may be dominant, it is not hegemonic. There is substantial work on the social history of Singapore that suggests that people have ways of mediating, reinterpreting, or critiquing official policy beneath the outward appearance of acquiescence (Loh 2013; Yeoh 2003; Kong and Yeoh 2003). This is possibly a way to write a more comprehensive history of elitism in Singapore that departs from Lee Kuan Yew without rejecting his considerable role.

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***Business Practices in Southeast Asia: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Theravada Buddhist Countries***

SCOTT A. HIPsher

London: Routledge, 2010, 207p.

***Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society***

JULIANE SCHOBER

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011, 248p.

An image come to mind when talking about Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia: devout monks who dwell in the remote wilderness or forest dwellings and care no more about the secular world. *Business Practices in Southeast Asia* by Scott A. Hipsher and *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar* by Juliane Schober succeed in re-examining something we think we know about the Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia (i.e., Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand), and providing readers with a better understanding of the four countries in which Theravada Buddhism has significant economic and political power.

*Business Practices in Southeast Asia* explores the cultural features that are influenced by Theravada Buddhism in entrepreneurial behavior and business practice in these four countries. This book has 12 chapters. Chapters 1–2 overview Theravada Buddhists and the impact of Theravada Buddhism in the four countries. In Hipsher's words, Theravada Buddhism does "bind the nations together in a way that makes this a distinctly recognizable region" (Hipsher, p. 16). Chapters 3–6 successively examine the extent to which companies in the four countries are influenced by Theravada Buddhism. Chapters 7–10 explore features of companies in Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia, such as business strategies, tactical management, marketing, finance, labor relations, and so on. In the final two chapters, Hipsher stresses the interconnections that exist between secular politics and Theravada Buddhism, and then predicts future trends. In the words of Hipsher, companies in the four countries of Theravada Buddhism will "continue to be influenced by Theravada Buddhist values," while "increasingly use globally available technology" (Hipsher, p. 179).

The most significant contribution of this book is that it reveals five distinctive features in the Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhist societies: (1) they are hierarchical, but paternalistic; (2) flexible; (3) possess a low level of control; (4) practice moderation and pragmatism (taking the middle path); and (5) focus on the individual (Hipsher, p. 30).

In the view of Hipsher, in contrast with impersonal strategic management in the West (e.g., human resource management and labor relations), many companies in the Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia are family owned; in other words, "there is no separation between

ownership and management” (Hipsher, p. 48). Hipsher concludes that these local companies are more personalized, relationship-oriented, and less bureaucratic, in contrast with those in the West. However, with non-core operational business practices (e.g., accounting, billing, and shipping), there is a higher level of convergence with international practices.

Theravada Buddhists believe that souls transmigrate and *kamma* gained in precious lives determines the social order in the present. Therefore, Theravada Buddhists generally accept the legitimacy of rulers and employers, because they assumed the individuals “earned a significant amount of *kamma* in previous lives” (Hipsher, p. 151). So it’s not surprising that companies in these societies are characterized by patron-client relations and values that follow a “middle path.”

Patron-client relations are common throughout Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia. Within these relations, employees believing in *kamma* “readily accept differences in power and wealth” (Hipsher, p. 125). At the same time, the patron (employer) does provide “both tangible and intangible benefits to one’s clients in order to retain their respect and loyalty” (Hipsher, p. 120), such as preferring personal relations in hiring and training employees.

According to the “middle path” value of Theravada Buddhism, “success is important but does not necessarily mean unlimited growth and expansion” (Hipsher, p. 77). In daily practice, the “middle path” means “to be serious in one’s work and studies, but not too serious, and to ensure one also enjoys one’s life” (Hipsher, p. 27). Following this value, most Buddhist employees prioritize low-stress workplace, rather than pursuing material possessions.

Alongside Hipsher’s thought-provoking book, *Modern Buddhist Conjectures in Myanmar* by Juliane Schober focuses on the “conjectures” between Theravada Buddhism and secular politics in Myanmar from pre-colonial seventeenth to early twenty-first century. An attached chronology and exhaustive notes improve the readability of this book to some degree.

*Modern Buddhist Conjectures in Myanmar* has eight chapters. The first two chapters contextualize the conjectures between Buddhism and different realms in the pre-colonial (including the three Anglo-Burmese Wars) and colonial eras, while highlighting the construction of Buddhist rationalism as an essential push factor that relied on and used Buddhism moral and political leverage to challenge the government.

Based on personal fieldwork in Myanmar since 1980, Schober’s core argument is to question the Weberian narrative of “otherworldly” Buddhism (Schober, p. 10). In her opinion, “Buddhist public acts performed by monks and laity in Buddhist societies are simultaneously—and necessarily—political and religious” (Schober, p. 20). In addition, Schober discovers a lesser-known fact: the Sangha has not been uniform for a long time. Due to the decline of Buddhist education and different attitudes toward politics, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Sangha experienced fragmentation, leading to many factions developing different attitudes toward the politicization of religion. It’s not surprising that some Buddhist factions were employed by modern domestic movements to “resist the power of the state” (Schober, p. 14), while other Buddhists

factions provided the State Law and Order Restoration Council (1988–97) with legitimacy through religious means. In the early twentieth century, the Young Men’s Buddhist Association was initially supported by the colonial government. This is obviously contrary to the Weberian description of Buddhism as otherworldly.

Chapter 3 contextualizes the colonial reaction toward Buddhism. In the case of Buddhist education, colonial education itself hastened the decline of Buddhist education, which no longer retained its “privileged status it commanded prior to the British presence” (Schober, p. 13). Though successive governments allowed monasteries to offer basic education, coverage was limited in rural areas.

Chapters 4–5 highlight how since the early 1900s, some lay Buddhist associations tried to change traditional Buddhist practices and develop Buddhist nationalism, specifically elite lay organizations such as the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) that advocated “civil Buddhism under colonial domination” (Schober, p. 72).

In the pro-colonial era, successive governments (e.g., U Nu Government in the years 1948 to 1962, Ne Win Government in the years 1962 to 1988, the State Law and Order Restoration Council [1988–97], and the State Peace and Development Council [1997–2010]) tried to control the monastic community (particularly the Buddhist Sangha), its doctrines, and its social influence. For example, they championed Buddhist nationalism to consolidate their legitimacy in ruling Myanmar. As a result of this, many young monks were mobilized, but many members of the Sangha remained silent.

In Chapters 6–7, Schober analyzes the political realities to show how “the legitimation political authority remains entrenched in the political divisions” (Schober, p. 117). In the case of the “Saffron Revolution” of 2007, the struggles between the Sangha and the military regime revealed conflicting visions of moral authority held by the monks. Many participated in the government’s “administrative structures in a perfunctory way” (Schober, p. 108). At the same time, some “provided logistical support for widespread anti-government mobilization, relayed information through an internal monastic network, and even stepped up to administer some judicial and civil infrastructure” (Schober, p. 107).

Chapter 8 concludes by predicting the direction of future conjunctures between the Sangha and secular politics. As Schober concludes, partnership between the Sangha and the state might maintain an “overwhelming social and political synergies,” while “their mutual contestations certainly harbor the potential for divisive conflicts” (Schober, p. 145).

Both *Business Practices in Southeast Asia* and *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar* provide valuable insights into the changes that Theravada Buddhism has wrought on both local politics and economy. Both books recognize that at present, several issues will remain unresolved. For instance, Schober believes that Buddhism has become “a really accessible source of power for supporters of the state as well as for those who contest, implicitly or overtly, the authority of the security of the secular state” (Schober, pp. 141–142). In the opinion of Hipsher, due to business

practices, outsiders in family-owned companies have limited opportunities for advancement, which often results in leaving their employers and seeking out better opportunities.

There is a common omission in the two books. Both show little concern about Buddhists' involvement in violence. In Hipsher's book, Buddhists' involvement in violence deviates from their beliefs in *kamma* and "middle way" values. In Schober's book, Buddhists' involvement in violence should be regarded as another expression of monastic resistance to the state. At present, Buddhist extremism is thriving in Myanmar, which is engaging in violence against Muslims. Radical Buddhist monks have been accused of spreading hate speech and fueling sectarian violence as was evident when the country was ravaged by anti-Muslim violence in 2012 and 2013, violence that left more than 200 people dead and tens of thousands homeless, mostly Muslims (Radio Free Asia 2014). In March 2014, Buddhist mobs even attacked international aid agencies over perceived pro-Rohingya bias, triggering a mass humanitarian withdrawal from Rakhine State (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2014). If the authors would consider Buddhists' involvement in violence, their arguments and predictions on the future trend will be more inclusive.

Rich in insights and elegant in presentation, both books are well documented and thoroughly researched. They represent a welcome and original contribution to the study of Theravada Buddhism, and offer new directions for future research. They are to be highly recommended to researchers, students, and practitioners alike who seek to gain both stimulating theoretical and more practical insights into Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia.

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## *To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century*

ANTHONY REID

Singapore: NUS Press, 2011, 348p.

*To Nation by Revolution* is a collection of articles written by Anthony Reid, who has been praised not only for his seminal book *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, but also for important works on diverse themes that have been critical in the formation of Indonesia. At first glance, the book

looks quite disoriented: the 12 chapters were written over a quite long time span, and the topics of the chapters appear to be rather fragmented. However, reading through the entire book, readers find that these seemingly fragmented chapters are interconnected through the mediating role of the “Revolution” and sociopolitical transformations linked to it.

Reid sees the Indonesian Revolution as more analogous to the French Revolution than to the Russian Revolution and in this book the term is used to represent a kind of political phenomenon. However, the Revolution is not confined to the “Revolusi,” Indonesian struggle (1945–49) for independence against the Dutch. As Reid himself states, this book is rather about the “manner in which Indonesia entered the modern community of nation-states, through political revolution” (p. viii). In light of this perspective, the Revolution here does not merely denote political changes, but also connotes sociocultural transformations Indonesians have experienced for a longer period of time beyond the 1940s.

The themes of the chapters testify to the wide thematic scope of the Revolution, and of the changes resulting in and from the Revolution. The majority of the chapters analyze topics directly or indirectly related to the Revolusi (1945–49) and adjacent time period. Yet some chapters deal with themes, temporally or thematically far away from the Revolusi. The most interesting cases are chapter 2 (“The Late Death of Slavery”), chapter 3 (“From Betel to Tobacco”), and chapter 12 (“Chinese and the State”). These issues appear to have nothing to do with other chapters on political changes in Indonesia in the mid-twentieth century. They are, however, not unrelated to others in that they explore transformations that led to a break with past tradition in Indonesian society. Subsequently, these paved the way for the “Revolution” and the emergence of a nation-state, baptized with a new zeitgeist such as modern knowledge and new political system. Yet, the Revolusi in the 1940s did not come without any preliminary symptoms: “revolutionary” social transformations in the colonial period such as the abolition of slavery and the replacement of betel by tobacco were among those factors that contributed to the political revolution in the mid-twentieth century.

In this regard, I think that chapter 5 (“*Merdeka*: The Indonesian Key to Freedom”) is pivotal in linking the two seemingly unrelated phenomena—sociocultural transformations (chapters 2 and 3) and political changes—analyzed in other chapters. *Merdeka*, originating from Sanskrit *maharddika* (eminent, wise, illustrious), came to legally mean non-slave status in Malay, and, with the introduction of the Western political concept, it came to take on the meaning of “freedom” and functioned as a key political term in anticolonial movements (pp. 107, 116). In the context of the Revolusi, *Merdeka* signified the ultimate freedom: independence (p. 120). Thus, considering the etymological history of the term *Merdeka*, research on the Indonesian Revolution should also pay attention to diverse social reforms (such as land reforms and labor movements) against the backdrop of political upheaval. The inclusion of chapter 9 (“Gestapu”) can be understood in this light: to Reid, the coup in October 1965 and the subsequent birth of an authoritarian state was not just



a tragic political event: by eliminating social aspects of Merdeka and making it completely a political independence, the New Order brought about the decline or demise of the Revolution that Indonesians (and probably Reid) have envisioned.

Another interesting point is the time span of the publication dates of the chapters: almost 40 years. The oldest one (chapter 9) was published in 1968, while the most recent one (chapter 11 “Why not Federalism”) came out in 2007. This temporal gap between chapters may raise skepticism on the coherence of the entire book. At the same time, however, it is one of the merits this kind of compilation can produce: reading this book provides an opportunity to trace the diversity and changes over many years in Reid’s scholarly interests in contemporary Indonesia. These factors make the publication of this collection of diverse articles more plausible. As the author points out, each chapter exhibits his perspectives and scholarly debates in the period when they were written, so it is understandable that he deliberately meant to leave the articles as unmodified as possible. This is particularly positive in that the book provides other scholars of modern Indonesia with room for (re)interpretation of what has been written by one of the most prominent trailblazers in the field.

However, this book also contains weaknesses, some of which ironically come from the above-mentioned merits. First, primarily because of his intention to keep the articles as unchanged as possible, there is inevitable redundancy in some parts of the book. For example, while chapter 7 (“The Japanese Impact”) investigates the Japanese Occupation period (1942–45) in detail, parts of chapters 1 and 8 also cover the period. A slight streamlining of some chapters might have made the book more compact and cohesive. The most regrettable point is that the book does not include a newly-written introduction. To some extent, chapter 1 (“Indonesia: Revolution without Socialism”) plays its part as an introductory chapter. However, it would have been much better if it had included Reid’s own reflection (if not evaluation) of his research and perspectives on Indonesian society over the past four decades. I agree that the publication of this book is justifiable in that it would benefit Indonesianists by bringing together the scattered writings of the author (p. viii). However, I believe that a new (introductory) chapter reflecting his current interpretation of the (concept and scope of) Revolution would have given more scholarly legitimacy for the publication of this book.

Despite these minor weaknesses, *To Nation by Revolution* is still a good read, filled with useful information and (still) provocative insights. By welding a social history point of view in analyzing political issues and events, this book (and each chapter) problematizes the definition and significance of the Revolution. By doing so, it provides diverse angles to look at Indonesian society in the twentieth century.

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*Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*

ANDREW MERTHA

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014, 192p.

Andrew Mertha's book, *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*, not only provides historical insight into the bureaucratic structure of China's aid to its client state, i.e. Democratic Kampuchea (DK) between 1975 and 1979, but also explicates the causal effect of the fragmented Chinese and DK bureaucratic institutions, the variation of which determines the degree of China's ability to assert influence over DK. The main contribution of this book rests on two major breakthroughs. First, Mertha's access to a variety of high-quality archival sources in Cambodia, combined with extensive interviews with former Chinese and Khmer Rouge officials and cadres, illuminates new details on this important subject. Second, his method of structured, focused comparison is rigorous and cutting-edge social science; he meticulously constructs descriptive accounts of and systematically traces the variation of bureaucratic-institutional fragmentation/integrity and its corresponding difference in the outcomes (i.e. China's ability to influence DK). He does through three empirical cases, namely military aid, economic aid, and trade in chapters 4–6.

This book answers the following question: why was a powerful China unable to influence its far weaker and ostensibly dependent and client state Cambodia? Grounded in Graham Allison's "bureaucratic politics" level of analysis of foreign policy decision-making, Mertha focuses on inter-ministerial competition and bureaucratic-institutional infighting and fragmentation in China and DK as the main units of analysis (chapters 2–3). The central argument in this book is that the varied degree of fragmentation of bureaucratic institutions in China and DK as they interacted with each other at the implementation stage of China's aid policy explains the corresponding degree of China's ability to exert influence over DK during the period 1975–79 (p. 9). Before delving into the structured, focused comparison of the three empirical case studies, Mertha asserts that both regimes in Beijing and Phnom Penh share at least three common attributes, namely the Leninist single-party state, significant rural development, and power in the standing committee of the Party. However, he makes the case that the degree of institutional integrity varies significantly because of differences in the ways in which individual bureaucrats navigated the two institutional environments in China and DK. As Mertha summed up, "both countries suffered from subversions of the formal institutional structure, whether fragmented, as in China, or fluid as in DK" (pp. 11–12). Thus, to Mertha, the fragmentation of bureaucratic institutions in both countries is the most important explanatory variable of China's ability to influence the DK during this period. In the three empirical cases (chapters 4–6), the main causal inference from the three case studies can be summarized in the table below:

**Table 1** Institutional Strength and Influence

	China's Institutional Integrity	DK's Institutional Integrity	China's Influence over DK
Kraing Leav Airport (military)	Strong	Strong and Assertive	Limited
Kampong Som Petroleum Refinery (economic)	Fragmented	Weak/not a Viable Partner	Limited
DK Foreign Trade Development	Strong	Fragmented but still a Viable Partner	Significant

In the case of Kraing Leav military airport, China's influence was severely limited by a political and military stalemate as the then-DK Defense Minister Son Sen, with strong backing of Pol Pot, was able to push back China's assertion of its influence by dictating its preference for the location and the content of the agreement (pp. 87–89). Although the Chinese Military Attaché at the Chinese Embassy was under a “clear command-and-control” authority structure of the Chinese military (p. 91), it was “unable to influence DK in the implementation of China's military aid policy (p. 97). In the case of the Kampong Som petroleum refinery project, the fragmentation of China's vast network of bureaucratic institutions that oversaw energy and petroleum severely limited China's ability to exert its influence over DK's energy sector which would potentially lock down DK's dependence on China's crude oil in the long term. The Chinese could not shape DK's energy policy even when the relevant DK authority was in disarray (pp. 108–109). However, in the case of the DK's foreign trade development, China was able to assert enormous and lasting influence over DK trade and commerce institutions because the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and Ministry of Communications were able to overcome bureaucratic infighting. This, he further argues, is because the DK Ministry of Commerce was “institutionally complex and fragmented” but still a viable partner for Chinese counterparts (pp. 120, 125). Mertha asserts that this is the only area where China was able to exert significant influence over DK in this highly asymmetrical relationship.

This book is not without its shortcomings. I will highlight two issues. First, by privileging the causal role of bureaucratic politics as the key theoretical framework for this study, Mertha brushes aside the role of top decision-makers in shaping policy outcomes (pp. 16–19), and more importantly argues that there was no notable difference between the leftists and pragmatists in Beijing when it came to China's DK policy. Both ignored the “negative externality” of their policy on human suffering in Cambodia and prioritized China's ideological and strategic interests in Cambodia during this period (pp. 17–18). This assumption is somewhat problematic because the change of leadership in Beijing in July 1977 had a significant impact on the direction of China's overall foreign aid policy. When Deng Xiaoping was at the helm in Beijing in late 1977, he immediately began to restore China's economic health, which had been severely damaged by the Cultural Revolution in 1966–76 (Teiwes and Sun 2007). This raises an important question: what did prag-

matists like Deng and his allies in Beijing want from DK after 1977? This leadership change had a significant impact on China's management of foreign aid and Chinese bureaucratic institutions that handled China's aid to the DK. Deng and his economics-minded allies, especially Vice-Premier Li Xiannian, aggressively pushed to manage China's economy in general and in particular, cut down on waste in China's material aid overseas. This was a major shift from Mao Zedong's "give whatever the Vietnamese ally requested" during the Vietnam War, 1965–73. In fact, economics-minded leaders like Vice-Premier Li Xiannian and Foreign Trade Minister Li Qiang were extremely displeased with the mismanagement and waste of Chinese material aid in North Vietnam as early as 1973 (see Path 2011). Hence there was a sobering lesson and strong sense of "generosity" fatigue in Beijing as they moved to aid DK after 1975.

The shift described above most likely had a direct impact on the configuration of China's aid to DK, as discussed in Mertha's three empirical cases covering the period of China's aid to the DK during 1975 and 1978. In the eyes of the pragmatists like Deng Xiaoping, Pol Pot's anti-Vietnamese stance and his war against Vietnam obviously served Deng's desire to stage a punitive war against Vietnam. But the scope of Cambodia's post-1975 nation-building under the Pol Pot genocidal regime (pp. 5–53) also presented a huge economic burden for China (pp. 50–53). To reduce Cambodia's reliance on Chinese aid, Beijing needed to help Cambodia stand on its feet and the development of DK foreign trade and commerce was the next logical step forward. Interestingly, in this book Chinese reports from Phnom Penh back to Beijing in 1977–78 are riddled with a litany of complaints about Cambodia's misuse and waste of equipment and material aid, and the severe lack of skilled workers, professionalism, and capable leadership (for instance, see pp. 104–111 in chapter 5). It is likely that for the pragmatists, the economic cost of propping up a failed state like Cambodia under the Pol Pot regime outweighed the expected gain in terms of political influence. The extent to which a new leader like Deng Xiaoping ordered the bureaucrats to cut down on the misuse and waste of Chinese material aid somewhat undercuts the centrality of Mertha's "bureaucratic politics" argument.

Second, although this book provides new insight into the scope of China's aid to the DK, the exact size of that aid remains unknown. For instance, the figures for economic and military aid documented in this book (pp. 80–82) are "China's pledges of aid" and we still do not know how much of that was actually delivered to the Khmer Rouge. In short, the exact scope and size of China's aid to the DK remains a subject for further research. As Mertha suggested, access to Chinese sources on this topic would provide a fuller picture.

This book is the first to provide such insightful details on China's aid to the DK between 1975 and 1978, but certainly not the last one on this subject. To historians, this book is certainly a major breakthrough in the history of China's aid to the DK. But as a political scientist, Mertha's central aim in this book is the generalizability and applicability of the findings in this particular case to China's foreign aid decision-making at present. The last chapter (chapter 7) of this book lays claim

to its important relevance to the bureaucratic-institutional level of analysis of China's foreign aid policy today. This book is a useful resource for students of China's foreign aid policy.

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