SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

CONTENTS

Demarcation of the Yunnan-Burma Tai Minority Area in Warry's Report of 1891–97: A Critical Evaluation against the Background of Contemporary Chinese Historiography*

Hanli Zhou** and Volker Grabowsky***

William Warry (1854–1936) was a British intelligence officer who was sent to investigate Upper Burma and southwest China in 1889. The primary purpose of his mission was to understand the local history and society and, in particular, the Chinese influence in these areas. His report was intended to help the British government devise proper strategies for the Yunnan-Burma frontier negotiation with China. Warry's mission should be read in the context of the Chinese *tusi* system of "aboriginal commission," the imperial government's century-long strategy of governing the mainly non-Han frontier region of southwest China, which did not require a delineated border. This eventually turned into a serious crisis with the arrival of Western colonial powers who wanted to enter inland China via the Indochinese Peninsula.

Keywords: William Warry, demarcation, Yunnan-Burma, frontier, *tusi* system, Tai

Introduction

In 1885, after winning the last of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars, the British annexed Burma as part of British India. The British government then sent a note to urge the Chinese Qing court to sign a treaty recognizing its sovereignty. Nevertheless, the colonial control did not manage to penetrate the hill areas along the northern and eastern frontier zones of the defunct Burmese Empire, leaving states like Shan and Kayah de facto autonomous. Several Tai principalities near Yunnan, which were placed under a

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** 周寒丽, Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, Abteilung für Sprachen und Kulturen Südostasiens, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Flügel Ost, 20146 Hamburg, Germany
Corresponding author's e-mail: edicezhou@163.com
*** Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, Abteilung für Sprachen und Kulturen Südostasiens, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Flügel Ost, 20146 Hamburg, Germany

Sino-Burmese joint overlordship, continued to follow the prior arrangement. In the hope of curbing Chinese influence in the region, the British sent a request to the Qing court to delimit the shared border—which ran 2,000 km—with a treaty. The Chinese minister in London (1882–85), Zeng Jize, was tasked with the demarcation of the border between Yunnan and Burma. Although his suggestions were widely accepted by the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the proposed borderline was not added to the Sino-British treaty signed in 1886 in Beijing. With the issue unresolved, the British government sent William Warry, a top intelligence officer, on a fact-finding mission to investigate the border areas between Upper Burma and southwestern Yunnan in 1888.

Never published, Warry's report[1] is an original archival source. It now lies in the Asian and African Studies Section[2] of the British Library under the shelfmark "Mss Eur Photo Eur 384, (1878–1903)" in the European Manuscript Private Papers section. Unfortunately, this unique firsthand report has not garnered much attention among Western scholars in the field, let alone Chinese historians.

Warry's report carried high weight in the negotiations of the China-Burma border, which began in 1894. It provides rare accounts of the political, social, ethnographic, and economic situations in Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan during the critical period of the late 1880s and early 1890s, right before the current border was defined in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The British and the Qing court signed the Yunnan-Burma frontier treaty after Warry had returned from his journey.

Previous Western missions in Yunnan focused mainly on the facilitation of practical commercial routes from mainland Southeast Asia to Yunnan and beyond, such as the two missions in 1882 led by Cameron (Tracts, Vol. 606) and Archibald Ross Colquhoun and Charles Wahad (Tracts, Vol. 606). In December 1892, James George Scott, accompanied by Clement Ainslie, led another mission starting from Lashio (Ainslie 1893, 1). In his report, Scott described the geographic aspect of the routes running through the Shan States[3]

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1) The full name of this confidential document kept in the British Library is: "Photocopies of Selected Official and Private Papers of William Warry (1854–1936), acting assistant Chinese secretary, Peking 1881–82, special service, Government of India from 1885, political officer, Bhamo, Mandalay and Shwegu 1887–89, adviser to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, on Chinese affairs 1890–1904; including photocopies of maps of the Trans-Salween section of the Burmo-Chinese frontier." For the sake of convenience, this article will refer to this document as "Warry's report" in an abbreviated form.

2) Previously known as the Oriental and India Office Library, or the British Library: Asia, Pacific and African Collections (APAC).

3) The Shan States were under the jurisdiction of the colonial power, namely Great Britain. Moreover, "the single Shan State within the Union of Burma, including the former Wa States, was formed in 1948." For more details see Maring and Maring (1973, 223–224). Therefore, the term of Shan States will preferably be used in this article, because this term relates to the administrative and political context during the time of British jurisdiction. However, the footnote 23 is an exception, as Kokang is now part of the Shan State of present-day Burma.

following the course of the Salween River (Tai: Mae Khong) like a gazetteer. He also noted numerous random facts on local polities without a clear focus.

The little-researched Warry report is, therefore, a valuable primary source that can help researchers understand the background and evolution of the Yunnan-Burma frontier formation. In this article, the authors compare the report with various original archival materials to give a critical evaluation of Warry's report in the context of contemporary Chinese sources. The article also explores the very few traces that the Tai peoples in the region left in their historical records. The concluding section balances the various dissenting voices to draw a more comprehensive picture of the border negotiation, with the hope of getting one step closer to representing the historical truth.

Historical Background

Warry's Mission

A British intelligence officer, William Warry (1854–1936) was sent to Upper Burma and southwestern Yunnan to carry out a thorough investigation to provide the factual basis for future border negotiations between the British and the Chinese. Apart from that, little is known about his life. A short description of him can be found in the British Library's Asian and African Studies' Catalogue,[4] as well as Grabowsky (2006, 573–593):

> William Warry (1854–1936), acting assistant Chinese secretary, Peking 1881–82, special service, Government of India from 1885, political officer, Bhamo, Mandalay and Schwegu (the northernmost town of Kachin State) 1887–89, adviser to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, on Chinese affairs 1890–1904; including photocopies of maps of the Trans-Salween Section of the Burmo–Chinese frontier by Warry.

The American gemologist and award-winning author Richard Hughes (1999, 15–35) quotes from Crosthwaite (1912, 355):

> He belonged to the Chinese consular service, spoke Chinese well, and understood that difficult people as well as an Englishman can. He was on most friendly terms with the Chinese in Burma, and could trust himself to them without fear.

Later, in 2016, the Chinese scholar Li Yi (2016, 135–154) noted that Warry "obtained first-hand knowledge of China and the Chinese people, along with Chinese-language

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4) The British National Archives have a description of Warry in the catalogue Photocopies of Selected Official and Private Papers of William Warry (1854–1936), https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/76ae707b-3a1c-4323-b5b3-1dd5a956b58f, accessed August 4, 2019.

skills, from his work in the Chinese Consular Service." He was an adviser on Chinese affairs who had "joined the frontier missions in India, Tibet, Burma and China" since 1885. Moreover, Sao (1965, 278–312) quotes some valuable records from Warry's report in Chapter XIII of his book addressing the boundary with China, as Warry afforded a good deal of useful information on the Southwest Yunnan. From these snippets of information, Warry can be assumed to have been an excellent intelligence officer on the Yunnan-Burma borderline issue.

Even though we do not know much about Warry's personal life, Warry's report is a valuable primary source for the study of Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan in the late nineteenth century. Since the report was not published, very few know about its existence. However, it did come to the attention of one of the co-authors of this paper in the early 1990s when he was doing postdoctoral research on the history of Lan Na (Northern Thailand) in the British Library. Upon careful examination, he was stunned by its highly precise and sensitive description of the politics, society, economy, and ethnic make-up of Yunnan.

Demarcation of the China-Burma Border

Two reasons prompted the frontier negotiation between China and Britain. First, after its victory in the last of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars (in 1885), the British government urged the Qing court to sign a treaty that claimed Burma proper should become a colony as part of British India. However, in reality, the British were unable to exercise control over the whole country, especially the Shan States and the hill areas of Karen and Kachin in the north and east. Some of these territories had retained a tributary relationship between the Shan princes and the Qing court.[5] The British were afraid that the Chinese might interfere by claiming these territories under this pretext.

To incentivize the Qing court, the British Foreign Office offered concession as leverage for a durable borderline and trade relations. In 1885 Zeng Jize (曾紀澤 1839–90), the Chinese minister in London thus wrote a memorial proposing a solution to the Yunnan-Burma border issue. However, this particular concession did not find its way into the Burma Terms, which were signed in the 12th year of the Guangxu reign (July 24, 1886) in Beijing. Zeng's, as well as Britain's potential concessions, were kept in Zeng's memorial, which Xue Fucheng (薛福成 1838–94) (compiled, 1975, 9) made public when he took over Zeng's position of the Chinese ambassador in London on 25 Month

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5) All 18 dynasties in the history of the Chinese Empire may be regarded as the imperial court or Chinese Empire. In this article, the authors use "Qing court" to refer specifically to the last dynasty in the history of the Chinese Empire. Otherwise, "imperial court" or "Chinese Empire" is used.

1st Guangxu Year 17 (March 5, 1891).[6]

The Burma Terms stipulate in the third convention "the frontier between Burmah and China to be marked by a Delimitation Commission" (British and Foreign State Papers [1885–1886], Vol. 77, 123). As mentioned above, Warry's mission was sent to Upper Burma in 1888. Three years later, Yao Wendong (1853–1929) was sent to southwest Yunnan according to the Burma Terms, known in Chinese as the Peking Convention (Bei jing tiao yue 北京條約).[7]

The China-Burma borderline was to be fixed after a survey of the boundary from both sides. Therefore, the still unresolved frontier issue was the main objective of Warry's mission. This crucial background is reflected in Warry's report, which emphasizes:

> It would no doubt be inconvenient to admit China to the sole possession of a country affording so excellent a base for intrigue and indirect operations against us. We should be undertaking a heavy task and incurring a large responsibility. We should have to maintain order, to punish aggression, and to protect, single-handed, several trade routes leading from Burma to China. The Kachins are a savage race of mountaineers, without civilization or law, recognizing no common Chief, turbulent and warlike by nature, and living to a large extent by plunder and blackmail levied on trading caravans. They need to be sternly repressed, and they will only be kept in order by constant pressure both from the Chinese and the Burmese side. (Note by W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Burmo [Burma]-Chinese Boundary, dated the 14th May 1888)

Warry also acknowledged Chinese influence in these parts of Upper Burma dating from the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1271–1368). A considerable tract of the Shan country appeared to have acknowledged, for several centuries, the suzerainty of the Chinese Empire. These Shan or Tai polities were named Mengting, Mengyang, and Mupang.[8] However, Warry also conceded that Chinese influence in the region had declined since the middle of the Qing Dynasty, i.e., since the late eighteenth century (Note by W. Warry,

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6) Ancient Chinese calendar, also known as the lunar calendar. The Gregorian date is in parentheses.

7) The original convention paper is now kept in the National Palace Museum of Taipei: The Green Borderlands: Treaties and Maps that Defined the Qing's Southwest Boundaries; Dates: 2016-12-10–2017-06-18; Gallery: (Northern Branch) Exhibition Area I 104, https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh105/GreenBorderlands/en/page-6.html#main, accessed August 4, 2019.

8) Mengting: Mengding Tribal Prefecture (Meng ding yu yi fu 孟定御夷府) was established in 1382 during the Ming Dynasty. It was first established during the Yuan Dynasty in 1294 as Mengding Lu (the same rank as prefecture). For details, see Dao (1989, 271–278).

   Mengyang, Yunyuan Prefecture, was established in Moeng Ying (in Upper Burma) in 1382. It was renamed Mengyang Prefecture in 1384, and the Mengyang prefectural administration was abolished in 1449. For details, see Liew-Herres and Grabowsky (2008, 27).

   Mupang: Mubang Military-cum-Civilian Pacification Commission (Mu bang jun min xuan wei shi si 木邦军民宣慰使司) was established in 1289 by the Yuan Dynasty. Mubang Prefecture was established in 1382. For details, see Dao (1989, 317–338).

Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Burmo-Chinese Boundary, dated the 14th May 1888). Thus, additional important purposes of Warry's mission were to investigate the local history and society, the rubber trade issues, and the Chinese influences in this area. His report aimed at providing the British government with vital information to devise proper strategies for gaining control over Upper Burma and negotiating the Yunnan-Burma frontier with China.

The second reason that prompted frontier negotiations between China and Britain was that the Pacification Commissions (in the frame of the so-called *tusi* system 土司制度) caused border issues between China and Burma. Foon Ming Liew-Herres explains the Chinese *tusi* system:[9]

> The *tusi* system can be traced back to the so-called "prefectures under loose reins" established during the Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) periods, to integrate the "foreigners or barbarians", namely tribal peoples, of the southern border regions into the Chinese system of rule.
>   The *tusi* or so-called "Pacification Commissions" system was established in the Yuan period (1271–1368) and lasted until the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1636–1911) periods. The *tusi*'s places were inhabited predominantly by non-Han Chinese, the minority people. In Yunnan and upper Mainland Southeast Asia, the local rulers and princes were called *cao fa* or *cao mòm* in the local Tai language. In Chinese sources, their names were prefixed with *zhao* or *dao* or *tao*. . . . The local administration of the domain under the *tusi*, i.e., where internal affairs were concerned, was not under the direct control of the provincial governor. The local Tai rulers called *cao fa* were allowed to rule their subjects according to their own customs. They were the local kings and had authority to sentence their people to death without having to report to the Ministry of Justice under the Ming court. (Liew-Herres and Grabowsky 2008, 26)

The *tusi* system was an effective way for the Chinese Empire to govern the southwest frontier. It did not require a clear borderline, as the tributary system was put in place to administer the minority areas in the southwest, largely inhabited by non-Han peoples. The Qing court thus did not have the modern concept of a borderline prior to the arrival of Western colonial powers.

The tributary system, as Higgins (1992, 30) emphasizes, was a traditional Chinese system for managing foreign relations with neighbouring subordinate polities. The

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9) The *tusi* system was "a mechanism of territorial control and expansion, which was used by Chinese polities over a period of approximately 2,000 years" from the Western Han Dynasty (Wade 2015, 74). "The *tusi* system is actually a generic name for a variety of systems that successive Chinese polities used to control and exploit polities that bordered them," and it had various names over time. It "was a common phenomenon under many empires, Asian and Western." The *tusi* system was an attractive but also controversial topic. The authors believe it was a formal and strict bureaucratic system that was utilized to manage and expand the territories of the south and west non-Han districts (it was set up in seven provinces in the Ming Dynasty, while the expansion occurred mainly in Yunnan/Guangxi and Guizhou) from the Yuan until the Qing Dynasty.

tributary system, the origins of which might be traced to the Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220), has been called a "system of ritualized interstate relations" (Mote 1999, 383) in which ancient China was believed to be the centre of the world. To secure the safety of its Central Plains territories (comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Huanghe River), the Chinese Empire needed the provinces, vassal states, tributary states, as well as neighbouring countries to send their local products as a tribute and keep a stable hierarchical relationship. Meanwhile, the Chinese imperial court was expected to bestow official ranks to the rulers of subordinate polities and give them valuable gifts, the value of which had to exceed that of local products provided by these polities. China thus sent silk, tea, paper money, and other goods to its tributary states as was appropriate (for details, see Liew-Herres and Grabowsky 2008, 28–40).

Since the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the tributary system had been transformed into an economic relationship. Scholars of Chinese history believe that the tributary system constituted an essential administrative feature of the Chinese Empire. Hamashita Takeshi (1999, 31) points out that the tributary system was an extension of the relationship between the central government and the administration at the local level. He designed a diagram defining the chain of government as follows: central government–prefectures–*tusi* or aboriginal officials–vassal states–tributary states–mutual trade relationships. This hierarchical system was an organic whole. The Chinese Empire exercised a centralized political and administrative authority: of paramount importance was local governance in the Chinese core areas, followed by the *tusi* system in the non-Han areas, and finally, the tributary system aimed at governing semi-independent states via mutual trade to maintain good relationships with these countries. The Chinese Empire was at the centre of the world, surrounded by a myriad of inner and outer provinces, vassal and tributary states, as well as other, foreign, countries. Within this structure of intra-state relations, the *tusi* system was part of the tributary system.

Since intermarriage, conflicts, wars, and the changing of tributary relationships would cause the border to change regularly, there were no fixed or stable frontiers separating the different polities.[10] Even though the tributary system was an effective way to guard and maintain the Chinese Empire, the lack of a clear demarcation line among the various vassal states was a significant problem when the power of the centre court declined. Therefore, the issue of unstable and unclear borderlines between China and Burma became a serious problem only after the arrival of Western colonial powers seeking to gain economic access to inland China via the Indochinese Peninsula. The

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10) Even though several maps of the Qing Dynasty clearly show the borderlines between China and Burma, the demarcation had not been defined under international law. See Maps 1 and 2.

European powers, notably Britain and France, had internalized a concept of clearly defined borderlines separating the undivided and undisputed sovereignties of states since the Westphalian Treaty of 1648. This Western idea of a modern nation-state was transplanted to areas outside Europe, including Asia, by European colonial powers in the late nineteenth century, the heyday of Western imperialism. Such a concept was very different from the indigenous Asian concepts of frontier and border grounded in the historical experience of the peoples in East and Southeast Asia. The imposition of the idea of a modern nation-state on these premodern empires, therefore, constituted a big challenge for Asian countries, especially for China, as the European powers refuted the idea of shared and multiple sovereignties and overlapping frontier zones.[11]

That is the main reason why the borderline negotiation became an essential task for both China and Britain. In the following sections, the authors first present the main sources pertaining to historical events. Second, they illustrate the negotiations by studying the three disputed areas between Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan highlighted in Warry's report, while comparing his observations and statements with Chinese historical records. Third, they examine the final agreements between the British government and the Qing court.

Sources

The primary sources used for this article fall into three categories: (1) British archival documents, (2) contemporary (i.e., late nineteenth-century) Chinese government reports, and (3) written records left by indigenous Tai peoples living in the China-Burma borderlands. The principal British source, as already mentioned, is Warry's report. Warry recorded his mission and investigation when he visited Upper Burma with his team in 1888. His perceptive observations, concrete descriptions, and analytic reflections—all considered highly confidential—reveal fascinating insights into the complex situation in Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan at the end of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the Yunnan-Burmese frontier report in *Appendix to Memorandum on Questions of Chief Importance in the American and Chinese Department* was extracted from *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* (Nish *et al.* 1989/1995). This document is another reliable source of firsthand reports. Other important British archival materials include Sir Robert Hart's telegrams and letters (Chen 1991; 1995) about the negotiations between China and Britain. They also need to be closely examined.

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11) The clash between European and indigenous Southeast Asian concepts of sovereignty and border has been elucidated by Thongchai Winichakul (1994), using Siam (Thailand) as a case in point.

For the Intelligence Department of Britain, it was a challenge to keep up with all the reports and correspondence. Correspondence was dealt with in two ways when delivered to the colonial government of Burma:

> The various departments of the Government would hold weekly/monthly meetings where events would be discussed based on information received from all quarters. The written accounts of these meetings, including transcriptions of the documentation under discussion, were known as "Consultations" or "Proceedings." These records contain much of significance for minority histories of Burma and will be dealt with more fully later in this guide. These reports could be transmitted directly to London from Burma from 1871 onwards, although they would also be sent to the Government of India.
>   Until Burma was given administrative autonomy in 1935, communications other than Proceedings had to be transmitted first to the Government of India at Fort William, rather than directly to London. Again, not everything that had been sent to the Government of Burma would be forwarded in this way and another process of selection would take place. Correspondence could include a wide variety of Enclosures (diaries, journals, reports, maps, etc.) which were deemed significant to the subject of the cover letter. The Government of India might discuss these communications in their own Proceedings or else they might send some of the items to London as General Correspondence. (Sadan 2008, 11–13)

This means that all correspondence was categorized and submitted step by step. Only "the most significant correspondence was chosen to be forwarded to London, where it would be registered in the correspondence files of the appropriate department" (Sadan 2008, 12). It was in this manner that the British government used Warry's report and Scott's papers as well as the correspondence of other missions.

As for English academic studies of the China-Burma border issue, J. J. G. Syatauw (1961, 122–123) mentions that there was never any mission sent to investigate the situation in Upper Burma after the Burma Terms. He was probably not aware of the Warry report kept in the India Records Office of the British Library. Reclaimed materials that explicitly mention Warry's report are Hughes (1999) and Li (2016), both of which point out that Warry was an expert on Chinese affairs.

Theoretical concepts of tributary relations have been developed by Hamashita (1999) and Higgins (1992), whose ideas are useful in understanding the tributary system in ancient China. Concerning the concept of "frontier" in mainland Southeast Asia, Thongchai Winichakul (1994), Andrew Walker (2009), as well as Alexander Horstmann and Reed Wadley (2006) have developed profound ideas about the frontier issues on the Indochinese Peninsula.

Chinese primary sources include official records such as the QSL (*Qing shi lu* 清實錄), or *Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty*, an authentic record that documented the emperor's daily life. Basically, "the 'Veritable Records' are based on the 'Diaries of

Activity and Repose', called the *Qi ju zhu* 起居注, which are the 'Audience Records'" (Liew-Herres and Grabowsky 2008, 12–13). Therefore, QSL is more reliable than other documents.

QSG (*Qing shi gao* 清史稿), *The Draft of History of the Qing Dynasty*, was compiled using the Chinese traditional chronological writing system. It is called a "draft" because it had not been completed when it was published in 1927. The history of a dynasty could only be written by its successor following the traditional philosophy for writing history. Although QSG contains many mistakes and biased viewpoints, it has substantial materials that are highly beneficial to the academic world. In this article, one memorial of Xue in QSG is adopted as an important argument.

Also included in the research are *the Collections of Zeng's Telegrams* (*Zeng Jize Handian* 曾紀澤函電), Xue (1887–94), Yao (1892), and Xue (comp., 1975). All these officials were directly involved in the border negotiations and investigations of the situation along the border. As for official records, Wang Yanwei *et al.* (1987) edited the historical data pertaining to diplomatic activities during the Qing Dynasty, and thus these should be considered as crucial primary sources.

Chinese studies on the Sino-Burma frontier issue have abounded since the early twentieth century. Two contradictory opinions have been expressed regarding Xue's negotiations with the British and the clauses between China and Britain. One side, consisting of scholars such as Zhang Chengsun (1937, 50), Yin Mingde (1933, 418), Fang Guoyu (1987, 1026), and Yu Dingbang (2000, 240), heavily condemns Xue as a quisling. They mainly blame him for losing hundreds of square miles of southwestern territories. The other side, with scholars such as Lü Yiran (1995, 57–72) and Zhang Zijian (2007, 108–116), praises Xue's efforts. Among the scholars on the latter side is Zhu Shaohua (2007, 43–51), who argues that Xue did his best to maintain the southwest territories by taking back Cheli and Menglian,[12] keeping Kokang (old Bhamo), and even expanding the southwest territory of Yunnan. These articles and books were published mostly after the 1990s, based on numerous primary Chinese and English resources. They are essential pieces of recent scholarship on the Yunnan-Burma frontier issues.

Indigenous Tai records exist mainly in the form of their chronicles. The Tai people

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12) Menglian refers to 猛璉 or 孟璉 in Chinese historical documents; 孟连 is the Chinese name in modern times. The pronunciation of Menglian in the Tai language is Moeng Laem. To clarify, when referring to Chinese documents, the authors use Menglian as the pinyin pronunciation in Mandarin. But when referring to English or Tai documents, they use Moeng Laem. As for Cheli, Chinese classic documents write 車裏 or 撤裏. It is located mainly in present-day Sipsong Panna Tai Autonomous Prefecture (Xishuangbanna dai zu zi zhi zhou 西双版纳傣族自治州). In Warry's report, he used Khiang Hung to name the capital of Sipsong Panna. This was Chiang Rung in Tai, Jinghong (景洪) in Mandarin.

have their tradition of recording their history, culture, and religion. It is called *tamnan* (ตำนาน: Chronicle) or *phün/pün* (พื้น), rendered into English as "chronicle." A manuscript titled *Historical Events in Moeng Laem* (Lik Phuen Chao Hò Kham Moeng Laem: ลีกพื้นเจ้าหอคำเมืองแลม in Tai) records briefly: "In 1885, the British occupied Mandalay."[13] In 1890 the British came to Moeng Laem and stayed in Mang Jiang. In 1896 a British aeroplane landed in Na Lai Ang.[14] In 1898 the British came to Moeng Laem and surveyed the boundary, from the Nan Ka River to Lai Sanmeng (border of Moeng Laem, Chiang Rung, and Moeng Yang).

The Gengma *tusi* Han Futing and the story of his family, the territory of Gengma, and its history are valuable firsthand resources. In the end, there is a brief mention of the Anglo-Chinese border negotiations in the *Jengtung (Chiang Tung) State Chronicle* edited and translated by Sao Sāimöng Mangrāi (1981, 277).

All in all, what was the Qing court's reaction during the period 1885–94? What kinds of negotiation strategies did the Chinese and the British pursue? What were their goals? Where exactly were the disputed areas? What was their disagreement? The authors will briefly address all these questions.

The Qing Court's Reaction during 1885–94 and the Disputed Areas between Yunnan and Burma

The Concept of "Frontier"

At the outset, it is essential to provide a definition of the term "frontier," which further poses the question: What is considered the frontier of a nation-state?

Zhu (2007, 1) answers that a frontier can be seen as a symbol for a nation-state that

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13) The collector and oral translator is Bo San (Tai: Po Saeng Sam), a famous scribe in Moeng Laem. As Volker Grabowsky (Goldston and Stuart-Fox 2019, 311–312) transcribes, "Po Saeng Sam wrote his short biography on a sheet of mulberry paper, the traditional writing material, on the first day of the Buddhist New Year: 'In 1948, [I] was ordained as a novice until 1955. I married in 1959 and became a local administrative official in 1981. I started to work for the Buddhist religion in 1985. And then, I made up my mind to transmit [these scripts] to the generations of my children and grandchildren.' Throughout the Tai minority areas, Po Saeng Sam possesses one of the largest private collections of manuscripts, the vast majority of which he wrote himself." The manuscript is written in the Tai Lue version of the Tham script on mulberry (*sa*) paper. This manuscript records historical events from the years AD 1488 to 2001. The manuscript, copied in 2006, comprises 22 folios. This manuscript has been collected also in Yin *et al.* (2010).

14) Of the airplane that appeared in Menglian in 1896, there is no reliable evidence other than the Tai script records. The authors presume the manuscript may have mistaken the specific date. Such mistakes are common in Tai chronicles.

is essential to its sovereignty. Frontiers are regarded as demarcation lines separating different countries and states. The concept of a frontier appeared when the idea of the nation-state arose in the early nineteenth century. C. Pat Giersch (2006, 14) defines a frontier "as a territory or zone in which multiple peoples meet; at least one group is intrusive, the others indigenous." In keeping with Giersch's observation, most parts of the frontier of China—whether imperial China or the modern PRC—are inhabited by ethnic minorities. This is particularly true for Yunnan Province, where ethnic minorities such as Tai, Mon-Khmer (i.e., Bulang and Wa), and Tibeto-Burman (i.e., Hani) have been living along the frontier for hundreds of years.[15] They can be seen in this context as the indigenous group, intruded upon by Han immigrants. Integration in these areas of Yunnan Province has become an important issue.

In the case of Southeast Asia, Thongchai (1994) puts forward the concept of "geo-body." He argues that the embodiment of a nation is not merely equal to a nation's territory but also includes the cognitive image of a nation's territory—which is represented through maps and images, thus making it recognizable and imaginable—in the minds of its citizens. This image of the nation's territory is a principal source of "pride, loyalty, love, passion, bias, hatred, reason, unreason" among members of that nation (Thongchai 1994, 17). Thongchai developed the concept with Siam as a case study. He argues that in order to keep the sovereignty of its core area, Siam had to give up distant districts that were hard to administer. To an extent, because of the Mandala system, Siam did not see its borderline as an independent entity as Western countries did in the nineteenth century. After ceding the trans-Mekong territories in present-day Laos to France in 1893, King Chulalongkorn remarked:

> The loss of those margins along the border of the phraratcha-anachak [the royal kingdom] which we could not look after anyway, was like the loss of our fingertips. They are distant from our heart and torso, and it is these we must protect to our utmost ability. (Thongchai 1994, 134)

Horstmann and Wadley (2006, 3) provide another perspective:

> These ideas about boundaries and territoriality are particularly important in the contemporary world, where social groups aim continually to define and redefine the relations between social and physical space. People living on the fringes of the nation-state—by their very existence—question its monopoly of identification and help to transform concepts of nationalism that are otherwise taken for granted. Their routine practices of crossing international borders have important implications for our understanding of the spatial and social organization of society and culture.

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15) For details on the ethnic groups in Yunnan, see Ma (2014, 25–51), Unger (1997, 67–76), and Michaud (2009, 25–49).

There is no doubt that the conception of the boundary is essential for the functioning of a modern state. Without clear boundaries and their protection, a modern state would hardly be able to exert its undivided and undisputed sovereignty over its citizens. As many frontier areas were—and still are—inhabited by a diverse multiethnic population, of which the state often possessed only poor knowledge during the pre-modern period, many newly emerging nation-states were eager to acquire ethnographic knowledge about such peoples in order to secure and strengthen their "geo-bodies" from the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth.

In general, a frontier can be defined as the national margin, inhabited by different ethnic groups. A typical example is southwest China, which was—and is—inhabited by various aboriginal people. Intermarriage and conflicts among different local rulers could change the borderlines. Tributary relations was a useful economic strategy to help the Qing court guard its southwest territory (Giersch 2006, 13).

The Qing Court's Reaction

From the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, Yunnan faced borderline conflicts with both Burma and Vietnam, as well as parts of present-day Laos, as the indigenous ethnic groups did not integrate well into the province. The disputed area between Yunnan and Burma was located mainly in the *tusi* territory, which was inhabited mainly by the Tai and Mon-Khmer. As long as the tributary system was in place, the Qing court saw no need to define a clear borderline. This attitude was in line with the traditional diplomatic policy of imperial China: Gu zhe tian zi shou zai si yi 古者，天子守在四夷,[16] which was translated by James Legge (1939, 700) as "anciently, the defences of the sons of Heaven were the rude (savage) tribes on every side of the Kingdom." Thus, "all *tusi* and vassal states were considered properties of the Tian zi (天子, son of heaven)" (Zhu 2007, 26). Simply put, the Qing court expected its vassal states to guard the country, even though the vassal states might have carried on the tributary relationship only out of formality. Such a Sino-centric mentality played a vital role in the Qing court's diplomatic strategy toward the Yunnan-Burma frontier issue. With this background in mind, it can be understood that even though the Qing court produced a map of Yunnan Province in 1864 (Map 1), the borderline that was drawn by no means denoted the genuine frontier.

Two major historical events contributed to the Yunnan-Burma frontier dispute. First, after the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns,[17] the Ming court set up eight barriers

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16) Zuo Zhuan, Lord Zhao Year 23 (左传，昭公23年).
17) See Liew-Herres (1996).

Map 1   Yunnan Province in 1864 (Tongzhi Year 3)

Source: Library of Congress.

in Kachin State.[18]   The four barriers located on the upper banks of the Daying River (Taping River, or Ta Hkaw Hka in Kachin) were Wanren (萬仞), Shenhu (神戶), Jushi (巨石), and Tongbi (銅壁), which fall in today's Yingjiang County, Dehong Dai, and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture.   The other four, Tiebi (鐵壁), Huju (虎踞), Tianma (天馬), and Hanlong (漢龍), were along the banks of the lower reaches of the Daying River, most of which was demarcated into the Kachin State of Burma in 1960.   However, Zhang (1937, 23) remarked:

> "八關者，以控制關外諸土司，防緬內侵，非所以為滇緬之界也。"

> All these eight barriers acted only as points of control for the *tusi* on the outskirts to prevent an invasion from Burma.   These were not considered the frontier of Yunnan-Burma.

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18)   The Ming court set up three Sub-Pacification Commissions and six Pacification Commissions (San xuan liu we 三宣六慰) around southwest Yunnan, Upper Burma, and the northern parts of Thailand and Laos.   The three Sub-Pacification Commissions were named Nandian, Longchuan, and Ganya, while the six Pacification Commissions were Cheli, Miandian, Mubang, Babai Dadian, Mengyang, and Laowo.

The second event that contributed to the border dispute was that by the end of the Sino-Burmese War (1765–69) in the reign of Qianlong, an agreement was reluctantly concluded to both sides' disappointment.[19] While the Qing court was displeased with Burma not paying tribute, Burma was dissatisfied that only the control of the *tusi* of Mong Kawng (Menggong) was transferred while Theinni (Mubang) and Bhamo (Bamo) still belonged to the Qing court.[20] However, the two sides could not afford to fight again.[21] The situation persisted until April 1788, when Burma resumed paying tribute to the Qing court to counterbalance the rise of Siam. To return the gesture, Qianlong bestowed the seals of Theinni and Bhamo on the Burmese king. This could be interpreted as ceding the three *tusi* territories to Burma. However:

> "置三司于不問，任緬處置，猶得曰，緬已世世臣服，恭順無二，養拱諸地雖屬緬仍屬於我然。"

[The Qing court] let the three Commissions be under Burmese control without any concerns. That was because Burma had already submitted [to the Qing court]. It would remain loyal and obedient for generations to come. These territories (the three *tusi*—Chiang Tung, Theinni and Bhamo, as well as Meng Yang and Meng Gong) became vassals of Burma, and by association, vassals of ours as well. (Li 2001, 12)

Map 2 is a modern map of Yunnan annotated by the authors with the hatched lines to show the un-demarcated area for precise comparison. The areas in sections A, B, and C are barriers alongside the Tai and Mon-Khmer inhabited areas, while sections D and E show Mengting Prefecture, Cheli Pacification Commission, and Menglian Sub-Pacification Commission. The Qing court began to lose control of these distant places in the early nineteenth century. The areas now belong to the Shan States of Burma, inhabited predominantly by Wa people.

QSL records on 14 Month 12th Guangxu Year 10 (January 29, 1885):

> "諭軍機大臣等，曾紀澤電奏，緬甸王昏國亂。有華人據八慕城。……儻系亂民。似宜招降該華人。因拓雲南界。據通海之江。以固幸而防患。拓界事，亦宜早商英廷等語。"

[The emperor issues a decree to] the military subjects: "Zeng Jize presented a memorial by tele-

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19) Burma started the war because of the dissatisfactory tributary relationships with Mengding, Gengma, Menglian, and Cheli (see Zhang 1937, 77–80). But the underlying reason lay in the territorial ambitions of the Konbaung Dynasty (1752–1885) toward Siam. Cheli and Menglian were important passages for the provision of materials. See Harvey (1925, 241, 253, 261) and Giersch (2006, 4–6).

20) For more details, see Dai (2004, 145–189).

21) Burma became involved in the Burmese-Siamese War, while the Qing soldiers could not bear the subtropical climate.
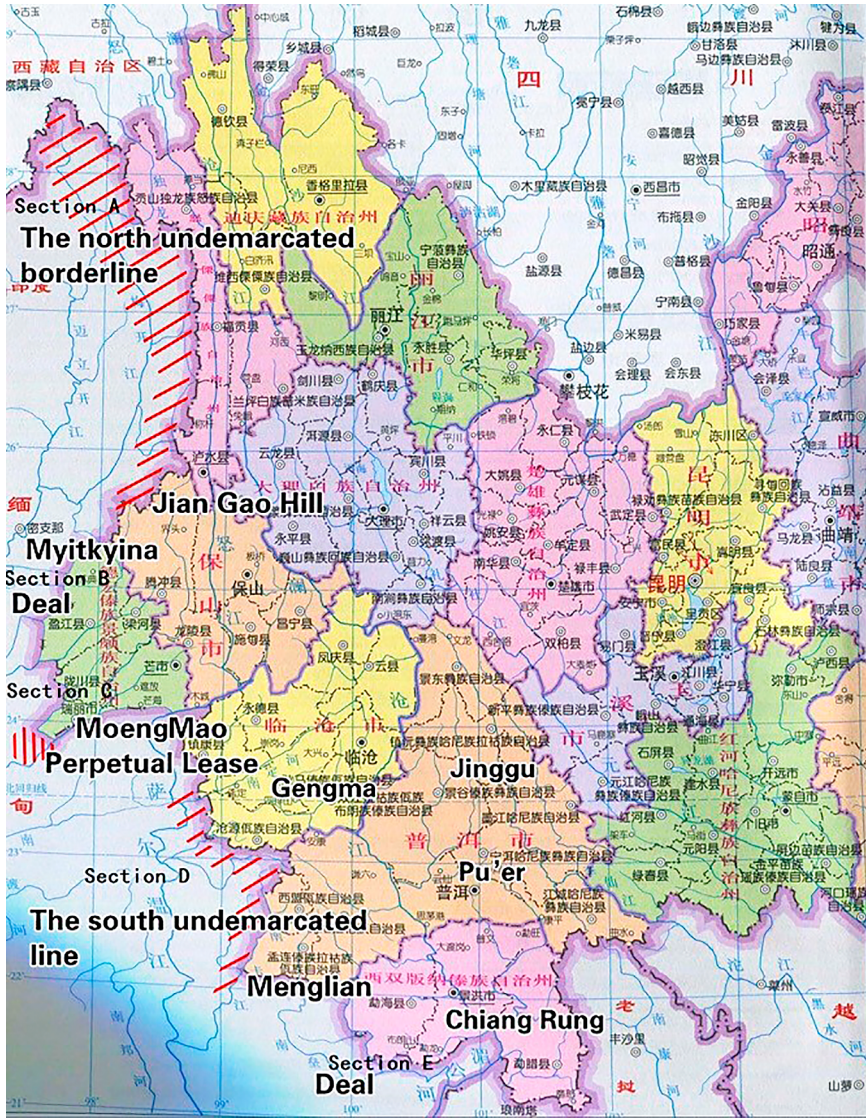
Map 2   Yunnan Provincial Administration
Source: Xingqiu Map (2009).

graph": The Burmese king is fatuous, and his country is plunged into chaos. There are some
Chinese immigrants having taken possession of Bhamo city. . . . If [they] are conspirators, it seems
better to pacify these Chinese, therefore Yunnan's border [should] expand, to reach the [Salween]
river which flows into the ocean, so that an advance border would be created. It is better to nego-
tiate with Britain the issue of border expansion at an early date. (QSL, GX 10/12/14, 54, 837 a-b)

Nevertheless, the Qing court refused this suggestion and instead advocated a more cautious approach:

> "又諭，電寄曾紀澤來電已悉。朝廷不勤遠略。豈有派兵拓界之事。……如英部談及此事。即本此意酬答。電檔"

[The emperor issues a decree again]: To telegraph Zeng Jize: [His] telegraphy is already known [to me]. [Our] court has never made any effort to strategize for the affairs of distant [countries]. (Note: This means that an invasion was never on the agenda of the Imperial Court.) Isn't it therefore preposterous to dispatch [our] army for the sole sake of broadening [our] territory? . . . If the British department refers to this matter, reply in accord to the court's intention. Telegraph. (QSL, GX 10/12/14, 54, 838 a)

A few months later, on 14 Month 9th Guangxu Year 11 (October 21, 1885), Zeng petitioned again, advocating a more offensive stance concerning a westward expansion of the borderline:

> "英久占南緬。今圖其北，防法取也。……取八幕，據怒江上遊以通商，勿使英人近我界。"

The British have occupied southern Burma for a long time. Now [they] conspire to get Burma's [Burma] north, to prevent the area from being seized by France. . . . [We should] take Bhamo and establish a station on the upper reaches of the Nu River (Salween River) to conduct trade. Do not allow the British to come close to our border. . . . (Wang *et al.* 1987, Vol. 61, 16)

Later, Cen Yuying (1829–89), who was the governor of both Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces in 1873–75 and 1881–89, issued a memorial on 4 Month 5th Guangxu Year 12 (June 5, 1886):

> "四月初二日，緬甸稔祚土司等派來阿麻己，發生弄等十人投遞緬字稟函，詢稱英人詐取緬都，緬民失所，懇乞代奏天朝，發兵救援，或簡派大臣前往英國調處，俾存緬祀。……如萬不能自存，只有各率子女來歸，乞為中國編氓等語。譯驗來文相符。……。"

On April 2, the *tusi* in Renzuo area of Burma sent ten representatives, including A Mayi and Fa Shengnong, to submit a petition letter written in Burmese. Upon inquiry, [they] claimed the British had taken the capital of Burma unrighteously. The Burmese were displaced. [They] beg [me] to draw up a memorial for the Heaven court to send troops to rescue [them] or send ministers to mediate with Britain; to [help them] sustain the Burmese King's lineage. . . . If [they] cannot save their country, [they] would lead their people to submit to [us]. They beg to be Chinese citizens. [I] have checked [their] statement which corresponds with their Burmese petition. . . . (Huang and Bai [punctuated] [2005], 368)

From these Chinese intelligence communications, it is clear that despite the defeat

of their military, the Burmese population at large still resented the British occupation. Widespread resistance to British rule was a definite possibility. The Chinese authorities were thus prompted to consider expanding their sphere of influence in Burma to push the British back as far south as possible. One month later, on 4 Month 6th Guangxu Year 12 (July 5, 1886), Cen Yuying wrote another memorial:

> "……據總兵丁槐，道員吳其楨稟稱：四月二十三日，關外木邦土司鐘文源由猛卯前來求見。據稱該土司曾屬中華，淪陷於緬，所管四十九猛，每猛煙戶二三千家，按戶挑派壯丁，可得眾萬余，緬國無主，決計來投，如蒙中華收恤，自當效力邊陲等語。……臣查英人占踞緬都，民心未服，其勢驟難安輯。木邦為緬甸東路咽喉，與滇境遮放土司連界，前明為羈康土府，又改宣慰使司，後為緬甸所滅。國朝乾隆三十一年，其頭目罕宋法舉眾內附，後仍淪入千緬。目下中英和好，若許該土司鐘文源之請，恐啟猜嫌；拒之不納，又慮率眾別投，轉為邊關之患。……伏乞皇太后，皇上聖鑒訓示。謹奏。"

> . . . According to the report of the [Tengyue] (today Tengchong, in the southwest part of Yunnan) Zongbing [who was named] Ding Huai (a military officer of the Qing Dynasty: the commanding officer of garrison troops of an area)/Daoyuan [who was named] Wu Qizhen (the administrated officer of the Qing Dynasty, ranking four): on April 23, . . . Mubang *tusi* (Burmese: Theinni, in the northern part of the Shan States) from outside the border named Zhong Wenyuan who came from Mengmao (Moeng Mao) to beg to see [the leading officials]. [He] claims that [Mubang] was once subordinate to China, [but now] it has fallen into the hands of Burma. [He] rules 49 *moeng* (*müang*). Every *moeng* has 2,000–3,000 households (*hu*). [They] choose one non-disabled man for each household; thus, they could raise over 10,000 [soldiers]. Now Burma does not have a king [any longer]. [They] decided to be [our] subordinates. If they were granted the chance to be subjects of China, they would serve as guardians of [our] borderline. . . . [I] (Cen Yuying) has confirmed that though the British have occupied the Burmese capital, [they] are resented by the population. It looks like [they] will not be able to pacify the country within a short time. Mubang is a strategic passage in northern Burma. [It] shares a boundary with the Zhefang *tusi* situated in the territory of Yunnan. [It] was a former Jimi[22] aboriginal prefecture in the Ming Dynasty. [Then it] was transformed to be a Pacification Commission. Finally, it was conquered by Burma. In the Qianlong Year 31 (1766), its chieftain Han Songfa led his people to surrender and then integrate into Burma. Now, the Chinese and British have a good relationship. [Thus,] if we heed the request of *tusi* Zhong Wenyuan, [it will] probably create suspicion. If we reject it, [it is] worrying that [he] may lead his people to surrender to others, which would eventually become a threat to [our] borderline. . . . [I] beg the empress and emperor to instruct [I]. (Huang and Bai [punctuated] [2005], 369–370)

A decree on the conscription of the ministers of the council of state (Jun ji da chen 軍機大臣) was issued on 3 Month 7th Guangxu Year 12 (August 2, 1886):

> "諭軍機大臣等，岑毓英奏，稔莋土司請發兵救援壹摺。……茲據該督奏，木邦土司，呈

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22) *Jimi*, also named the *Jimi fuzhou* system （羈縻府州制）, was a system of "prefectures under loose reins." Like the former *tusi* system, it was an autonomous administrative and political organization system used in China between the seventh and tenth centuries. See Peng (2004, 104–108).

請內附等語。……前稔祚請發兵。今木邦請內附。所謂鋌而走險。叛服無常。……現已飭總
理各國事務衙門，與英使訂立新約。斷無為壹二土司，另生枝節之理。……嗣後緬人再有籲
請如上項情事。……諭以中英和好有年。不肯輕開邊釁。……該土司等勿得瀆陳。撫以善
言。羈縻弗絕。總之……。固不宜顯示拒絕。亦不可輕議招懷。"

Cen Yujing issued a memorial (to the emperor) about the Renzuo *tusi*'s call for rescue by [our] troops. . . . The governor (Cen Yuying) petitioned that the Mubang *tusi* was asking to be (our) subordinate. . . . The Renzuo [*tusi*] previously asked for military support; now, Mubang is asking to be [our] subordinate. They are treading a dangerous path out of desperation. [They] sway between rebellion and subordination. . . . Now, [I] have issued a decree to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conclude a new treaty with the British envoys; there is absolutely no reason to raise conflicts just because of one or two *tusi*. . . . If any Burmese come to appeal for the same issue in the future . . . refer to decree: "The Chinese and British have retained a good relationship for years, [we] are unwilling to spark any frontier disputes." . . . These *tusi* should not appeal to [us] again. Pacify [them] with kind words and the Jimi will not cease. All in all . . . it is of course not appropriate to display apparent rejection nor is it to discuss subordination. (QSL, GX 12/7/3, 55, 99a–b)

Earlier, in 1884, Chen Jinzhong (a Siamese consular officer of Chinese ancestry in Singapore) advised the Chinese deputy Zheng Guanying in Singapore on June 14, 1884 (Guangxu Year 10):

"緬亡，則中國雲南恐不可收拾矣。君為中國官，當熟籌而深計也。"

If Burma perishes [because of the British], Yunnan will be plunged into turmoil that will be hard to deal with. As a Chinese officer, you should consider [all possibilities] thoroughly and devise appropriate tactics. (Xia 1982, 977)

It was not in Siam's interest to let Britain continue to expand its colony. Chen even warned Zheng that after seizing Upper Burma, the British would quickly enter Yunnan and inland China. As a Siamese consular officer, Chen was aware of Great Britain's territorial ambitions toward Burma and southwest Yunnan, which would trigger a boundary crisis. However, the Qing court stood firm on its traditional diplomatic strategy.

To sum up, the Qing court did not pay much attention to the affairs of these distant areas, whose primary purpose was deemed nothing more than guarding the hinterland. The Qing court even passed up on a great chance to expand the border by taking Bhamo and the Shan States. According to Zhu's study, if the Qing court had taken advantage of protecting some Chinese immigrants in Bhamo in 1884–85, the British would have let it. That was because General Adamson Major had received an order that he should not take Bhamo if it were already occupied by the Chinese (Zhu 2007, 65). Although some Qing officers took a proactive stance, the court remained reluctant.

It was not long until the traditional diplomatic strategy was challenged by the grow-

ing presence of Western colonial powers. After its defeat in the Sino-French War (December 1883 to April 1885), the Qing court gradually realized the severity of the southwest frontier issues when China was forced to abandon its tributary relations with all of Vietnam in 1885. Without the tributary areas as buffers, there was no way to prevent the French from entering China via Tonkin in present-day northern Vietnam. That is why the Qing court insisted that Burma should continue to pay tribute. It intended to keep the tributary relationship to save face and maintain the southwest border as before. Neither Cen's nor Zeng's proposals could persuade the court to change its mind.

The Disputed Areas

Why did Zeng fail to come to terms with the British Foreign Office before resigning from his duty and going back to China on 19 Month 3rd Guangxu Year 12 (April 20, 1886)? His suggestions never made their way into the Burma Terms proclaimed on July 24, 1886. The first reason was that the Qing court was not concerned about the ruler being Burmese or British as long as Burma paid tribute every 10 years, a stipulation that the British felt uneasy with (Wang *et al.* 1987, Vol. 62, 45). This condition cost the Qing court the best opportunity to negotiate with Britain (Zhu 2007, 51–62). The second reason was that Zeng had mistaken the Nu River (Salween River) for the Lu River (Irrawaddy River). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Qing Dynasty ordered him to correct this mistake before negotiating with Britain again (Wang *et al.* 1987, Vol. 64, 18). At that time, the Qing court's priority was to deal with the Yunnan-Vietnam frontier issue instead.

Later, when Xue Fucheng became the new Chinese minister in London (1890–94), he resumed the responsibility to negotiate with the British, who already had full control over Burma. He also aimed to understand the situation in Burma during the previous six years. Following his memoirs, we can trace China's territorial ambitions. Xue was an educated intellectual who knew clearly that the Yunnan-Burma frontier issue would endanger the hinterland if the British kept expanding their influence in southwest China. On 25 Month 1st Guangxu Year 17 (March 5, 1891), he wrote a memorial suggesting that the emperor pursue the demarcation of the Yunnan-Burma frontier in cooperation with the British. Furthermore, he highlighted the benefits China would reap after settling the border issue with Britain (Xue 1894, Vol. 1, 73):

> "英人所稱原讓潞東之地，……果能將南掌與拈人收為屬國，或列為甌脫之地，誠系綏邊保小之良圖。……臣閱外洋最新圖說，似老撾已歸屬暹羅。若徒受英人之虛惠，終不能實有其地……宜先查明南掌入暹羅之外，是否尚有自立之國，以定受與不受。"

The British claimed [they] could offer [us] the east bank of the Lu River . . . if we could take Nan Zhang (Lan Sang, notably the northern parts of present-day Laos) and the Shan [State] as [our]

subordinate or let it be [our] frontier, [then we are in] a good position to pacify the minorities and guard [our] border. . . . I have seen the latest Western map; it seems that Laos had been ceded to Siam. If we merely accept this faux offering from the British, it does not mean we can genuinely control these territories. . . . [We] should investigate whether any polities in Laos remained independent instead of succumbing to Siam. [Only then can we] decide whether to accept [the British offer] or not. (Xue 1894, Vol. 1, 73)

　　"其向附緬甸之拈人，地實大於南掌，稍能自立，且素服中國之化。若收為我屬，則普洱，順寧等府邊徼皆可鞏固矣。至曾紀澤所索八募之地，雖為英人所不肯舍，其曾經默許之舊八募者，亦可為通至大金沙江張本。若將來竟不與爭，或爭而不得，竊有五慮焉。夫天下事不進則退。從前展拓邊界之論，非謂足增中國之大也。臣聞乾隆年間，緬甸恃強不靖，吞滅滇邊諸土司，騰越八關之外，形勢不全。西南壹隅，本多不甚清晰之界，若我不求展出，彼或反將勘入。壹慮也。我不於邊外稍留餘地，彼必築鐵路直接滇邊，壹遇有事，動受要挾。二慮也。長江上源為小金沙江，最上之源由藏入滇，距邊甚近，洋圖即謂之揚子江。我若進分大金沙江之利，尚可使彼離邊稍遠。萬壹能守故界，則彼窺知江源伊邇，或浸圖行船，徑入長江以爭通商之利。三慮也。夫英人經營商埠，是其長技。我稍展界，則通商在緬甸，設關收稅，亦可與之俱旺。我不展界，則通商在滇境，將來彼且來擇租界，設領事，地方諸務不能不受其牽制。四慮也。……既入滇境，窺知礦產之富，或且漸生狡謀。五慮也。……既而英人不認允曾紀澤三端之說，謂普洱外邊南掌，拈人諸地，及大金沙江為公用之江，與八募設關也。"

The Shan States that was subordinated to Burma has a territory larger than that of Laos. It is somehow autonomous and does not give in to China's pacification. (Note: it is thus more Sinicized than Laos.) If we take the Shan States, then the border of Pu'er Prefecture and Shun Ning Prefecture would be reinforced. As for the Bhamo area that Zeng Jize asked for, although the British did not want to release it, they did give their tacit approval for [us to take the] old Bhamo area (Kokang, in the Shan State[23]), which leads to Da Jinsha Jiang (Irrawaddy River). If we do not fight for these areas in the future, or if we fight and fail, five concerns will arise. Under any circumstances, a person loses if he cannot gain. The discussion on border expansion was not done to enlarge the territory of China. I have heard that Burma leveraged its military strength and could not be pacified during the Qianlong Period; it annexed various regions near the border headed by rulers in Yunnan. [We have no idea about] the situation in Tengyue on the outer side of the eight barriers. The border at the southwest corner [of Yunnan] has always been unclear. If we do not seek expansion, we might let them (Britain) invade [us]. This is the first concern. If we do not leave a bit of a buffer, they will certainly construct a railway that leads to the Yunnan border. Whatever happens, our action would be limited. This is the second concern. The upper Chang Jiang River (Yangtze River) originates from the small Jin Sha Jiang (Jinsha River). The source lies in Tibet, and the river runs toward Yunnan, which is close to [our] border. Western maps call it the Yangzi River. If we expand to take the Da Jinsha Jiang (Irrawaddy River), we can still keep them (Britain) slightly away from our border. If we stand still on our current border, they will notice that the river source is close. [They] might try to [induce] overflow to sailboats into the Chang Jiang River to strive for commercial profits. This is the third concern. The British are good at running commercial ports. If we expand [our] border, then the business will be conducted in Burma. We can set up a customs

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23) Kokang now is in the Shan State of Burma.

point and collect tax in Burma to prosper together [with the British]. If we do not expand, then the business will be conducted in Yunnan. If they request to set up a concession, or consulate [in Yunnan], it will be hard for local affairs not to be affected. This is the fourth concern. . . . Once they enter Yunnan, [they will] learn of Yunnan's rich mineral resources, which might bring out their devious side. This is the fifth concern. . . . The British did not agree to Zeng's proposal of making Nan Zhang (the northern parts of present-day Laos), the Shan States, and Da Jinsha Jiang (Irrawaddy River) designated public areas for both buffer zones and making Bhamo a customs station. (QSG, 1977, Vol. 48, 14686-14687 [Vol. 528 Biography 315 Subordinate States 3: Burma, Siam, Nan Zhang (Laos), Su Lu (Saltanah Sulu)])

Xue made it clear that the British offer of Nanzhang (present-day northern Laos) and Shan States (present-day northeast Burma) to the Qing court did not carry much weight, as the areas were controlled by Siam and Burma, not the British. He pointed out that the frontier in the southwest region had always been unclear. If the Qing court did not seek to expand, the territory would be taken, and the situation might get out of control. The Qing court would then be put in an awkward position. In his memorial, Xue strongly suggested that the Qing court actively engages in negotiations with the British. At the same time, investigators were sent to scout the borderline according to Xue's suggestion. The goal was to persuade local rulers in the area to defend the Qing court and keep the Western colonial powers away from the hinterland. Therefore, Xue suggested making Bhamo a customs point to collect taxes and open up the Irrawaddy River for public use (mainly for the Qing court). According to Zhu's study and Xue's journal, it is clear that the Qing court merely wanted to extend its frontier to include the buffer areas. It is also evident that Xue intended to garner more leverage to bargain with the British. He knew that it was impossible to ask the British to follow the agreed arrangements that Zeng had proposed six years earlier as the British had already taken control over Upper Burma. Thus, he wanted to demand more concessions to gain the upper hand in the negotiation (Xue 1985, 585; Zhu 2007, 70–74).

On July 10, 1892, Xue was sent to negotiate with the British Foreign Office on the Yunnan-Burma frontier and a trade agreement. The negotiations did not go smoothly, according to two of Xue's journal entries of 27 Month 7th Guangxu Year 19 (September 7, 1893). The first one is titled *Memorial of the Summary of the Demarcation on the Yunnan-Burma Frontier* (*Dianmian fenjie dagai qingxing shu*: 滇緬分界大概情形疏):

"英人自翻前議，雖以公法為解，實亦時勢使然。……前歲英兵遊弋滇邊，以查界為名，闌入界內。……曾紀澤曾照會外部，請以大金沙江為界，江東之境，均歸滇屬，英人堅拒不納。……臣相機理論，稍就範圍，……據稱已與印督商定於孟定橄欖壩西南邊外讓我壹地曰科幹，在南丁河與潞河中間，蓋即孟根土司舊壤，計七百五十英方裏。又自孟卯土司邊外包括漢龍關在內，作壹直線，東抵潞江麻栗壩之對岸止，悉劃歸中國，約計八百英方裏。又有車裏，孟連土司，轄境甚廣，向隸雲南版圖，近有新設鎮邊壹廳，系從孟連屬境分出。英人

以兩土司昔嘗入貢於緬，並此壹廳爭為兩屬，今亦原以全權讓我，訂定約章，永不過問。……"

Britain repudiated the previous agreement (with Zeng). Although the British explained [the repudiation] on the basis of the international treaty (the Burma Terms), the true reason is that the situation has changed. . . . Last year the British army patrolled along the border of Yunnan to investigate the border and violated our territory. . . . Zeng Jize once proposed to the British Foreign Office to make Da Jinsha Jiang (Irrawaddy River) the border, with the territories on the east bank put under the control of Yunnan. But the British refused. . . . I waited for a suitable time to raise our arguments for territorial expansion. . . . [Britain] allegedly had agreed with the Indian governor to make Mengding and southwest Ganlanba, namely Kokang, a Chinese concession, which is located between the Salween River and the Nan Ding River with a total acreage of 750 square miles. Then draw a straight line from the border of Meng Mao, including (the customs point of) Han Long Guan (now in Burma), eastward until the Salween River and Mali Ba (today the capital of Kokang)—the area will be ceded to China, about 800 square miles. Then there are Cheli and Menglian, which is a large area that has always belonged to Yunnan. [We] recently have established a new prefecture, derived from Menglian, for the pacification of the border. The British [however] leveraged the fact that Menglian and Cheli had paid tribute to Burma to ask to make these shared territories. Nevertheless, now they agreed to let us have full sovereignty via a treaty and will not raise any questions on it again. (Xue 1894, Vol. 2, 22)

There are three main points raised in the above text: first, Zeng's previous proposal was rejected by the British; second, Xue highly recommended to the Qing court to expand the territory; third, Britain recognized the full sovereignty of the Qing court over Cheli and Menglian. Xue supplemented this first memorial with a second titled *Memorial of Taking Back of the Full Sovereignty of Cheli and Menglian* (*Shouhui Cheli, Menglian liang tusi quanquan pian*: 收回車裡，孟連兩土司全權片):

"再滇屬東南，羈縻之境，以車裏，孟連兩土司為最大。近年，新設鎮邊直隸廳，撫理孟連北境，計此壹廳，兩土司之地約可抵內省四五府。當臣與英廷爭論野人山地之時，英外部以車裏，孟連曾經入貢緬甸，亦堅索兩土司及新設壹廳，作為兩屬，以相抵制。臣查會典及壹統輿圖，車裏，孟連隸滇已久，鎮邊新設直隸廳同知壹官，若忽改為兩屬，尤屬無此體制，不得不盡力堅持。厥後，外部遂自轉圜，願以全權仍歸中國。果使撫馭得宜，固守封域，可以支格英法暹羅三國之窺伺，而臨安，普洱，思茅，元江諸府廳州當皆恃以無虞。不意英事甫定，法謀又起，近來法人迫脅暹羅割其湄江東岸之地，而車裏轄境之大半亦在湄江以東。法人疊次以分界為請。雖據稱並無侵佔滇地之意，彼知英人饒舌於先，未必不思效尤於後。然英究僅有索問之空言，並未獲絲毫之實利。臣今正與英廷互商條約，聲明車裏全屬中國與英毫無幹涉。約章壹定不吝借英助我作證。法人素性畏強侮弱。彼聞中國與俄爭帕米爾，與英爭野人山皆不遺餘力，倘竟知難而退，僅請分化界限，以杜爭端，則和平互商自易辦理，不茲口舌，不起風波，尤善之善者也，理合附片具陳伏乞，聖鑒謹奏。"

In the southeast of Yunnan, in the Jimi areas, the two biggest *tusi* are Cheli and Menglian. In recent years, a new prefecture named Zhen Bian was established to pacify the northern border of Menglian. There is only this one prefecture. The areas of Cheli and Menglian are equal to four or five sub-

prefectures in the hinterland. When the British officials and I debated on Yeren Mountain (Kachin Hills), the British Foreign Office leveraged the fact that Cheli and Menglian had paid tribute to Burma to claim control. They wanted to establish a new prefecture and designate it and the two *tusi* to be shared territories. I have looked up the *Huidian* (Code of the Great Qing Dynasty) and *Yitong Yutu* (Atlas of the Qing Dynasty): Cheli and Menglian have been parts of Yunnan for a long time. The new prefecture has just been established and its officer appointed. If we made these areas shared territories all of a sudden, there was no administrative system to put in place, so we stood firm on our stance. A moment later, the British Foreign Office convinced themselves to let China have full sovereignty over Cheli and Menglian. If [we] pacify and control [them] (Cheli and Menglian) suitably, [they will] guard [our] borderline and prevent spies from Britain, France, and Siam. Moreover, Lin'an and Pu'er, Simao and Yuanjiang Prefectures, could then be stabilized. Unfortunately, as soon as issues with the British have been settled, here come the French. Recently the French have forced Siam to cede the east bank of the Mekong River, and most parts of Cheli are situated there. The French requested several times to demarcate the border with us. Although they claim to have no intention to occupy Yunnan, if they know about the talk by the British, there is no guarantee that they will not follow suit. The British currently have only asked about it with empty words; they have not gained any real benefits. Now, I am negotiating the treaty with the British, claiming Cheli and Menglian belong solely to China and have nothing to do with the British. Once the treaty is signed, [I] will go as far as asking the British to be our witness to prove [that Cheli and Menglian are part of China]. The French always fear the powerful and prey on the weak. When they hear about how we spared no effort in fighting against the Russians for Pamir and the British for Yeren Mountain (Kachin Hills), it is hoped that they will proceed with the negotiation of demarcation peacefully with no arguments. Then the issue can be easily resolved without much drama. Here is my memorial, your Majesty. (Xue 1975, 22–23)

As Warry suggested in his report, the idea of ceding Chiang Rung (Cheli) might have been firmly rejected by the Qing court. Thus, he asked the British government to handle the issue with great caution. Moreover, Chiang Rung also could be a buffer area since the French had already taken Tonkin.[24] That is why when Xue demanded full sovereignty over Cheli and Menglian, the British did not object. However, the British were afraid that the French would annex Chiang Rung and Moeng Laem. The condition was then written into the clause: the Qing court was not allowed to cede Chiang Rung and Moeng Laem to a third country. This clause caused a series of problems, which will be discussed later.

Taking back Menglian and Cheli was a remarkable achievement of Xue's diplomatic career. He was praised by the Qing court. His efforts were, however, criticized by a number of scholars in the twentieth century as many believed Menglian and Cheli had been an inherent territory of China. However, now, many agree with Xue's point of view. Although Cheli and Menglian had paid tribute to the Qing court for a long time, the areas were far from the hinterland and hard to defend and control. Xue tried his best to bargain

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24) This will be discussed in later sections. Note by W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Trans-Salween Section of the Bhamo-Chinese Frontier, dated Mandalay, the 20th September 1888.

with the British and persuaded them to recognize China's full sovereignty over Cheli and Menglian. With the eastern borderline among China, Burma, and Laos clarified, the area became more organized, and fewer disputes occurred. Furthermore, Britain and France then had a "buffer." A balance of powers was achieved, with Xue as the pivotal figure.

In a nutshell, Zeng proposed the following: (1) expanding the Chinese border to include the Nan Zhang (Lan Sang)[25] and the Shan States, which were located outside Pu'er Prefecture; (2) designating Da Jinsha Jiang (Irrawaddy River) as a public area available to both sides for trade; and (3) establishing a Chinese customs point near Bamo (Bhamo) to collect taxes.

While his three suggestions sounded reasonable, Zeng's downfall came about because he mistook the Irrawaddy River for the Nu River when it was the Salween River. The Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zong li ya men 總理衙門) lost its faith in Zeng as he did not seem to know enough about Yunnan. He was ordered to be extra careful before reaching a final decision with the British Foreign Office. Today, only a few records on this matter can be found in the British envoy's office. The envoy remarked that the three suggestions were not acceptable and thus could not be part of the Burma Terms. The Qing court missed the opportunity to make the best deal.

Zeng's successor Xue knew it was not possible to continue pursuing Zeng's suggestions. He then tried his best to come up with the following demands: (1) make Irrawaddy River (Salween River) the border, with Yunnan taking the areas east of the river; (2) cede Kegan (Kokang), an area of about 800 square miles in the territory of Menggen (Moeng Khuen, i.e., Chiang Tung), to China; (3) let part of Yeren Shan (Kachin Hills) be included in the western border of Yunnan;[26] (4) recognize Chinese sovereignty over Cheli (Sipsòng Panna) and Menglian (Moeng Laem); (5) send Burmese officers to pay tribute to China regularly, and (6) let China establish a customs point in Bhamo to collect taxes. In exchange, the Qing court would give up Chiang Tung and Mupang (Map 3).[27]

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25) The Lao kingdom of Lan Sang (literally, "[the kingdom of] one million elephants") had split between 1707 and 1713 into the three kingdoms of Luang Prabang in the north, Vientiane in the center, and Champassak in the south, each of which claimed to be a successor state of Lan Sang. After 1778–79, all three Lao kingdoms fell under Siamese suzerainty and became vassal states of Siam. Following the ruthless suppression of a failed attempt by King Anu, the vassal ruler of Vientiane, in 1826–28 to restore Lao independence, only Luang Prabang—which had remained loyal to Bangkok—survived as a semi-autonomous vassal kingdom. Whenever Chinese sources refer to Nan Zhang (Lan Sang), they mean Luang Prabang, whose ruler also acknowledged Chinese overlordship. For details, see Stuart-Fox (1998, 99–141).

26) Kachin Hills belonged to both Burma and China. According to international practice, both countries were entitled to equal sovereignty.

27) This map was probably used as a source of reference by Xue Fucheng, the Qing envoy to Britain, in the negotiation over border demarcation between Yunnan and Burma with British Foreign Secretary Archibald Philip Primrose, Fifth Earl of Rosebery (1847–1929).
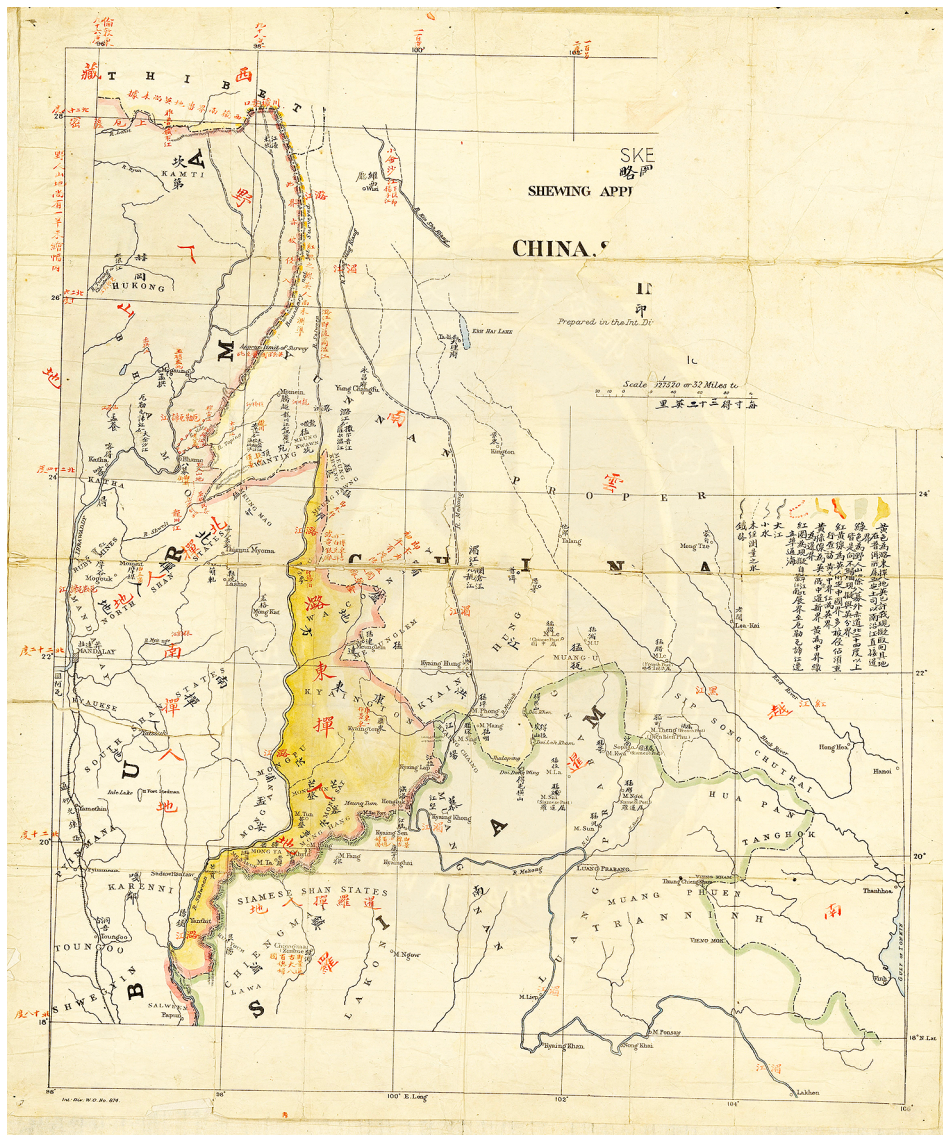
Map 3   Map of the Yunnan-Burma-Siam Border

Source: National Palace Museum of Taipei, Treaties and Maps That Defined the Qing's Southwest Bound-
aries, Exhibition Room North Yard Gallery 104.

British Reaction

According to the Warry Report

With the Qing court's stance made clear, we now compare it with Britain's stance, which

can be traced through the reports of Scott and Warry, who also drew Maps 4 and 5.

We begin with an extract from Warry's report:

> First, on the Trans-Salween section (Map 6) of the Bhamo-Chinese frontier of the 13 Trans-Salween Shan States, three only, namely, Mainglingyi, Kiangtung, and Kianghung have a frontier facing that of Yunnan. Before proceeding to trace the boundary line it will be useful to give a short account of the relations of these three States to China.
>
> (1) Mainglingyi (Menglian in Mandarin and Moeng Laem in Tai): Mainglingyi has been influencing by China since nineteenth century. . . . This small Shan district, usually called Myenlyin, which lies a march or two to south-east of Kengma (Gengma). But be this as it may, it is clear that the Chinese have exercised no interference whatever the affairs of Mainglingyi for at least a century. On the other hand, Mainglingyi has in recent times often been under the authority of Kiangtung when Kiangtung paid tribute to Burma; the present Sawbwa (Tai: *Chaofa*, literally "Lord of Heaven") of Mainglingyi was appointed by King Mindon, and this State may be properly classed among Burmese dependencies.
>
> (2) Kiangtung (Jingdong in Mandarin, Chiang Tung in Tai): This State was undoubtedly tributary to Burma. Its Chiefs were appointed by Burma, and in troublous times the Burmese Kings held a military come at its capital.
>
> (3) Kianghung (Jinghong in Mandarin, Chiang Rung in Tai): It is in respect of Kianghung that questions are most likely to arise when the question of delimitation is under discussion. Historically, . . . troops from Burma or Kiangtung have occasionally invaded western Kianghung and compelled a temporary recognition of Burmese suzerainty; and that on one occasion at least (1878) a Sawbwa of Kianghung was nominated by Burma . . ., from 1730 onwards for many years Kianghung was under the direct administration of the Chinese Prefect at Pu-erh. In more recent times Kianghung has been practically independent. . . . Its Sawbwas hold a high-sounding Chinese title the institution of which dates from the year 1387 A.D.; they refer important questions to the Ssu-mao (Simao) official from arbitration; and according to Mr. Bourne, who visited Ssu-mao in the winter of 1885, they still suffer the Chinese Sub-prefect at that place to exercise a concurrent jurisdiction over the eastern portions of their State. (Note by W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Trans-Salween section of the Burmo-Chinese frontier, dated Mandalay, the 20th September 1888)

According to both Chinese records and Warry's report, it is certain that Moeng Laem, Chiang Tung, and Chiang Rung paid tribute to Burma. Chiang Tung was even occupied by the Burmese several times. Warry also mentioned that Chiang Rung benefited from the Chinese allegiance through support against Burmese or Siamese invasion. As Foon Ming Liew-Herres *et al.* (2012, 49) points out, Moeng Laem and Chiang Rung were influenced by China and Burma for centuries: the "Chinese-Burmese condominiums were established since the sixteenth century and prevailed until the late nineteenth century." That is expressed in the Tai metaphor ฮ่อเป็นพ่อ เมืองเป็นแม่ (*Hò pen pò man pen mae*: The Chinese [Hò] are [our] father, the Burmese [man] are [our] mother). Imperial China was uneasy about allowing its vassal states to pay tribute to Burma. However, when the Burmese influence increased while the influence of the Qing court was still
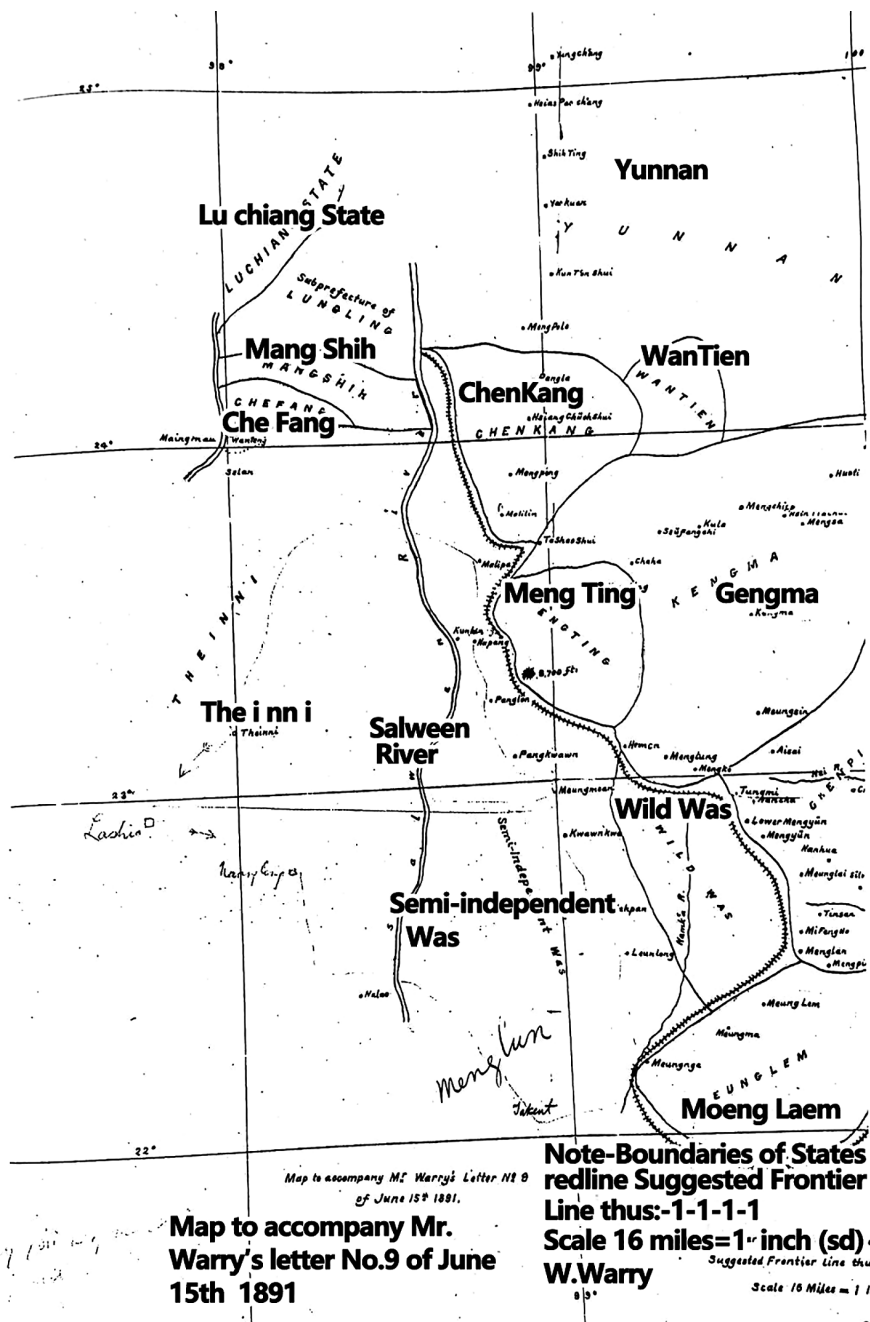
Map 4 Map Accompanying Warry's Letter No. 9 of June 15, 1891

Source: From W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma,
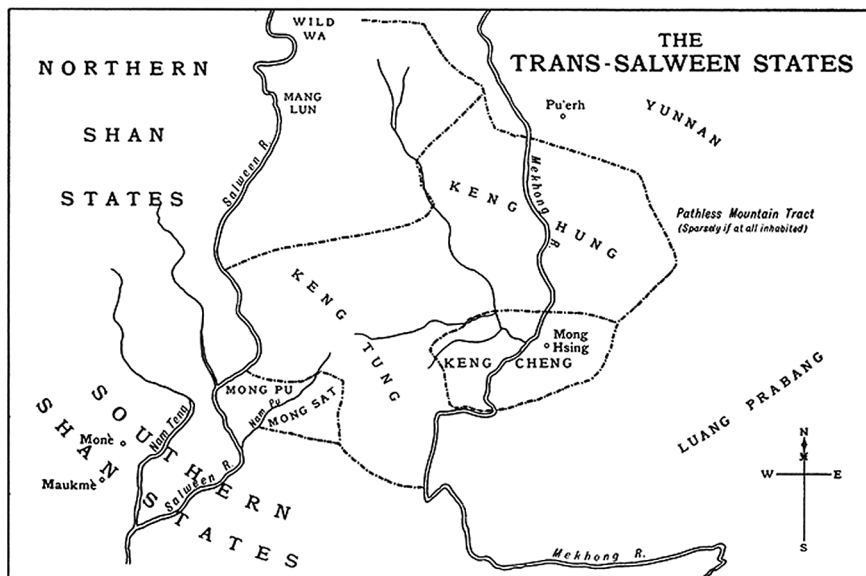-No. 9, dated Bhamo, the 15th June 1891.
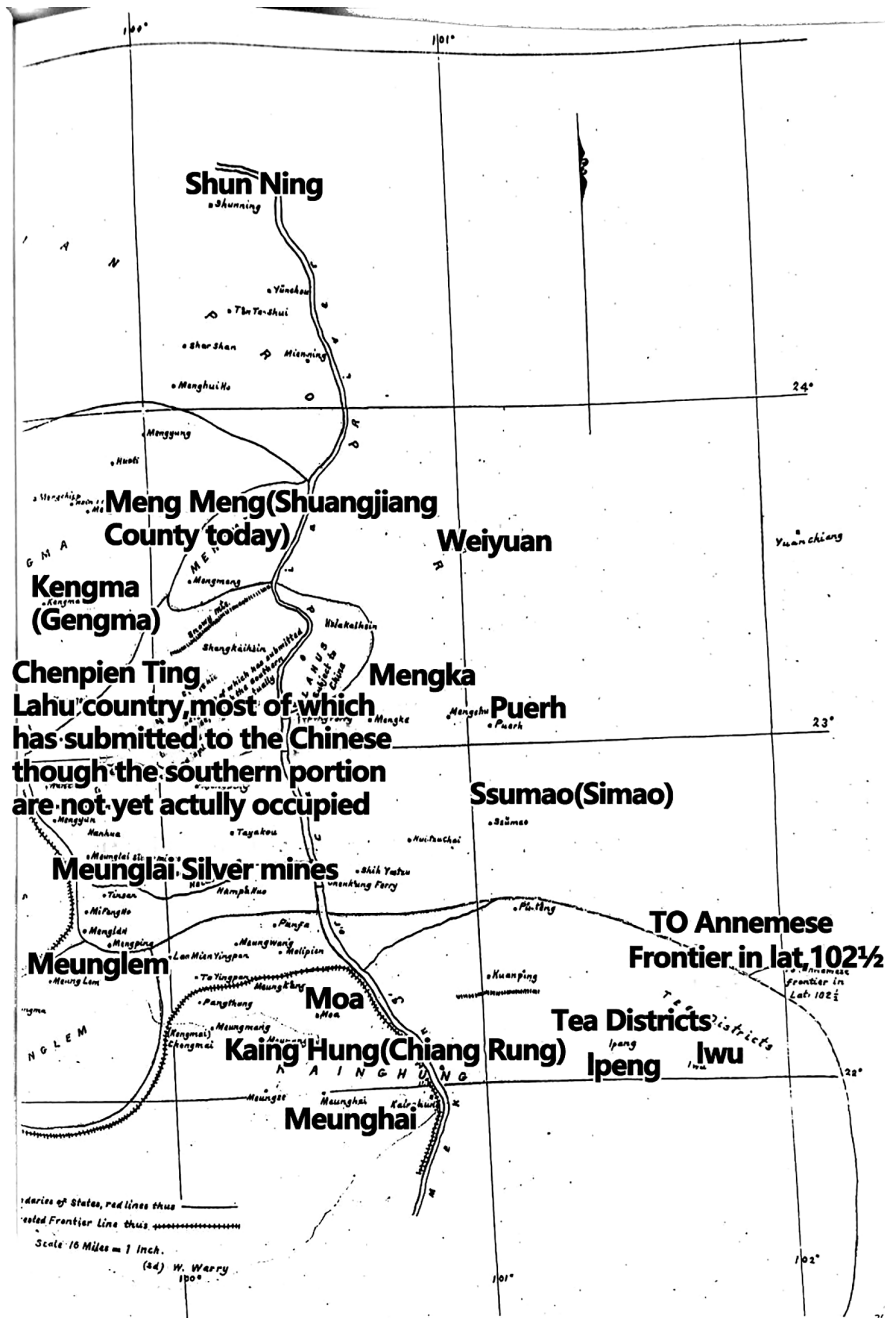
Map 5 Map Accompanying Warry's Letter No. 9 of June 15, 1891

Source: From W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 9, dated Bhamo, the 15th June 1891.

Map 6 The Trans-Salween States

limited in this area, the imperial Chinese court had to make a compromise with Burma and the frontier polities (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012, 49–56). This historical background must be taken into consideration when it comes to demarcation issues.

Warry's colleague Lieutenant H. Daly further reveals:

> In both Meung Lem and Kaing Hung the expression "China is our father and Burma our mother" is a stock diplomatic phrase, and it appears certain that for a considerable period prior to King Mindon's death no Chief of either State was regarded as duly and finally installed until he had been confirmed in his position by both Burma and China.
> So far as I am aware there are no reasons for advocating the inclusion within our limits of any of the Border States which owe undivided allegiance to China. (Warry's report: From Lieutenant H. Daly, Superintendent, Northern Shan States, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 6F., dated Bombay, the 12th June 1891)

Speaking about the Chinese influence in this region, Warry mentions that the rubber trade in the north of Kamaing[28] was run mainly by Chinese or Burmese agents of Chinese (From W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, No. 15, dated Shwegu, the 18th May 1890). He was worried that was not

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28) Kamaing is a town in the Kachin State of the northernmost part of the Union of Myanmar. It is also named Kamine.

only the rubber trade business influenced by the Chinese, but also considerable areas in the Shan States acknowledged the suzerainty of China:

> These districts owning allegiance were termed under the Chinese Ming dynasty the *San Fu* (三府) or Three Prefectures, and under the present Chinese dynasty. (From W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Mandalay, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, No. 11, dated the 15th July 1888) (Fig. 1 and Map 7)

However, he was also aware of the dwindling Chinese influence after the Qing-Burma wars at the end of the eighteenth century. In the end, the Mubang districts were absorbed into the Burmese kingdom, and the Chinese influence dwindled.

In considerable detail, Warry describes how China tried to pacify these recalcitrant Shan States:

> For the last eight or nine years, however, the Chinese have devoted much more attention to their frontier dependencies, and all the Sawbwas (*Chaofa*, "Lord of Heaven") now complain that they cannot raise enough money to meet the demands made upon them. Nowadays a Chinese official expects handsome presents from all Sawbwas in his charge when he takes up his appointment, when he visits the State when any cases connected with it come before him. The exactions of military officials are even more oppressive and capricious. For instance, the Kangai Sawbwa, who is the proud possess[or] of a long black beard kept carefully wrapped up in a silk bag, told me last year that this ornament had cost him tales 2000. He went on to explain that this was the sum which General Ting had fined him for having presumed to wear a beard when paying an official visit, this being held to be a disrespectful action in a subordinate. No wonder that the old Sawbwa desired incorporation with Yunnan, when such tyranny would no longer be possible, or that, failing this, he longed for the old times, when the States were free from Chinese inference. Not very long ago Mengmao and Chefang were at war for several years; many lives were lost, much property was

Fig. 1 世襲木邦宣慰司鈴記 [The hereditary wood seal of Mubang Pacification Commission. Some seals issued by the present Chinese dynasty are still hidden away in Upper Burma.]
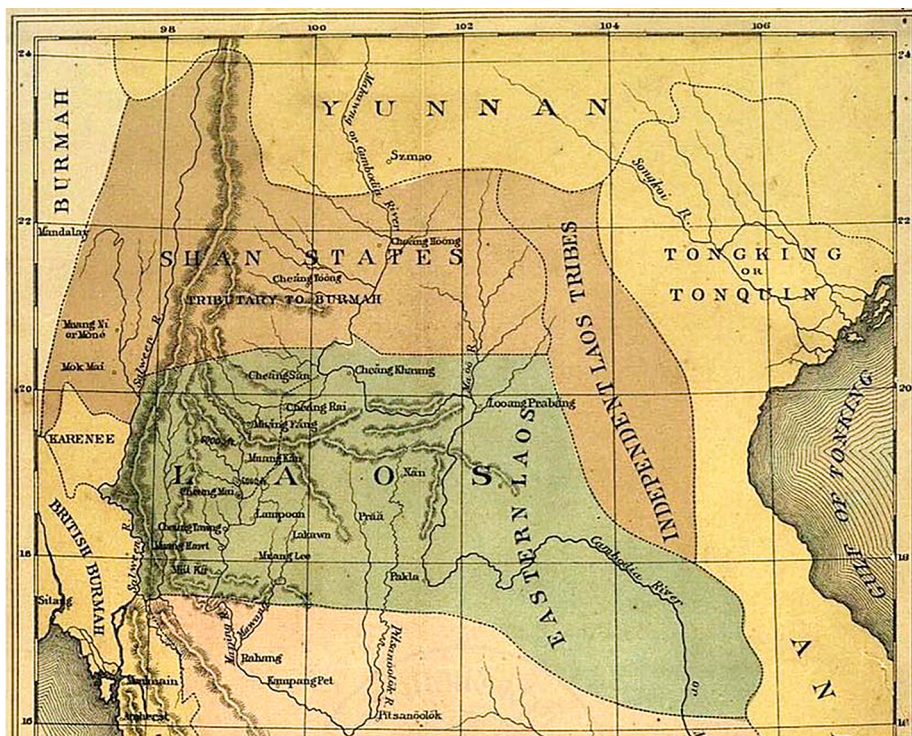
Map 7 Nineteenth-Century Map, Including the Chinese Shan States
Source: "The Shan States," Wikiwand.

destroyed, and general disorganization prevailed. "Why did you not step in and stop the fighting?"
I asked the Deputy P'eng when he was travelling with me last year. He hesitated a moment, and
then said "Well, to speak the truth, our officials never heard a word about it."

Warry first reminded the Chinese would actively resist the British government that
attempts to claim any part of Chiang Rung on the farther bank of the Mekong. He high-
lighted that this extension of territory would bring the British into direct conjunction with
the frontier in Tongquin (Tonkin), the borders of which were thought to match with those
of eastern Kianghung (Note by W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Trans-
Salween section of the Burmo-Chinese frontier, dated Mandalay, the 20th September
1888). Nevertheless, he suggested ceding Moeng Laem as it paid tribute to Burma as
Chiang Rung did. Second, he said Kiangtung (Chiang Tung) was undoubtedly tributary
to Burma, and Burmese appointed its chiefs. Burmese military forces guarded its capital
on many occasions.

Historically, Chiang Rung paid tribute to both Burma and China. Warry addressed
the issue of Chiang Rung, which was most likely to arise during delimitation. In more

recent times Chiang Rung was practically independent, despite having a strong leaning toward China (Note by W. Warry, Esq., Political Officer, Bhamo, on the Trans-Salween section of the Burmo-Chinese frontier, dated Mandalay, the 20th September 1888). Liew-Herres *et al.* (2012, 55) point out those Tai polities "had the advantage of playing the 'father' (China) and the 'mother' (Burma) against each other and of gaining a maximum of autonomy." In some cases, the "father" and "mother" could come to an agreement. In 1838 both sides reached an agreement to force these Tai polities—Chiang Rung, Chiang Tung, and Moeng Laem—to accept a peace convention (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012). In a traditional patriarchal family, the father is deemed superior to the mother. Therefore, as the "father," the Chinese spoke louder than the Burmese.

Reports from Other British Missions
Besides Warry's report, we can trace the British frontier strategy through a number of missions sent during the 1860s to 1890s to investigate the border between Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan. The other British missions were deployed to open up a practical and direct commercial route. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the British Chamber of Commerce had urged the British government to investigate Upper Burma and western Yunnan as soon as possible. Memorials No. 32 and 33 stated the following:

> No. 32 . . . the third from the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, dated 30 August 1866, and addressed to the . . . Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the other Lords of the Treasury; thus concluded:—The British government to "take all necessary measures for a survey of the country between Rangoon and Kiang-Hung (Chiang Rung, namely Sipsong Panna), with a view to the opening of a practical and direct commercial route to Western China."
>
> No. 33 . . . the second from the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, dated 30 November 1866, and addressed to the Earl of Derby, K.G., First Lord of the Treasury; thus concluded:—That your Lordship's will please forthwith to authorise and direct a proper official survey, by a competent civil engineer of this country, of the best route for railway communication from Rangoon, via Kiang-Tung and Kiang-Hung, to the south-western provinces of China. (Tracts Vol. 606, Direct Commerce with the Shan States and West of China, by Railway from Rangoon to Kiang-Hung, on the Upper Kamboja River, on the South-west Frontier of China. Memorial No. 48 Thereon. From the Wakefield Chamber of Commerce. To the Lords of her majesty's treasury, 15th of November 1868, London: 1869 [Parliamentary Paper, "Rangoon & Western China," 28, A. Sess. 1866, Pa. 12 and 14])

After emerging victorious in the Sino-French War, France conquered the north and central Vietnam, leaving the British wondering whether the French would get ahead in exploiting the benefits from the commercial competition in mainland Southeast Asia and China. The reporter "R.G." pressed the British government not to wait, otherwise "the Frenchman would make a way to China for us" (Tracts Vol. 606. Overland Communication

with western China. A brief statement of how the matter stands at present by R.G. with a map. Liverpool: Webb, Hunt & Ridings, 9, Castle Street. Overland communication with China. The Chambers of Liverpool and Manchester).

Later, on July 23, 1882, Cameron was stopped at Seumao (Simao, today Pu'er Prefecture) because the local authorities refused to issue him a permit to pass through Kiang Hung.[29] Meanwhile, the other mission, led by Colquhoun and Wahad, yielded fruitful results. The men departed from Canton (now Guangdong) on February 5, 1882, and went through Pe-se (today Baise, Guangxi Province) to South Yunnan through Kwang-nan (Guangnan), Linan (Lin'an), and Puerh (Ning'er County today) to Sao-mao (Simao). However, they had to depart from Simao to Dali, because Chiang Rung was in an unstable situation (Tracts Vol. 606, Overland China Mail, March 7, 1882; *Times of India*, August 8, 1882). Following are excerpts from Colquhoun's record:

> . . . [We] traversed the whole of South Yun-nan by . . . Puerh to Ssu-mao, the last south-western military and administrative centre of the Chinese Government in Yun-nan. . . . From Ssu-mao it was intended to pass through the Laos countries, either east or west of the Mekong to Zimme or Xieng-mai (the northernmost Siamese Laos state), and thence to South-Eastern Burmah. . . . The neighbouring state of Xieng-hong was in a disturbed condition, and civil war reigned there owing to a question of succession. . . . Mr. Colquhoun did not consider it prudent to enter the Xieng-hong territory. . . . I-bang is a Laos district tributary to China, situated seven stages south-east of Ssu-mao, and supplies most of the so-called Puerh tea; hence it is a Laos and not a China tea.

From the above reports, it seems evident that before the third Anglo-Burmese War British missions were sent with a primary interest in opening a practical commercial route. The purpose of the following missions then switched to surveying the borderline in order to get more benefits from the frontier negotiation. Warry's and Scott's missions then visited the northern Shan States and the Burma-Yunnan boundary successively from 1889 to 1904.[30]

Tracts Vol. 727 (Diary of Events of Military Interest in Burma for January 1894 Bhamo and the North) recorded the following: "Captain Davies was after all permitted to accompany Mr Warry to Manwaing. On January 8th (1894) Mr Warry, accompanied by Captain Davies and with a small escort of a corporal and four men of the Yorkshire Regiment, left Namkham with the Chinese officials." We can see that Warry accompanied

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29) Tracts, Vol. 606, under the catalog "Colquhoun Expedition into Burmah, Opinions of the Press London, 1882" and the sub-branch "The *Times of India*, 8th August 1882" (from our own correspondent). Cameron was refused by the local authorities because the French Mekong expedition arrived at Kiang Hung and tried to pass Simao through threat the local authority. The local authorities believed the mission's intention was too troublesome (Tracts Vol. 606).

30) Sir George Scott Correspondence on the Burma-Chinese Boundary during 1894–96. The documents are kept in the British Library under the Shelf Mark Mss Eur F278/88/89/90.

Scott on his mission after he had finished his mission in 1889. Together they made a record of the Chinese military forts and the attitude of Chinese officers toward foreigners. It is reported that the viceroy of Yunnan (Songfan 崧蕃 [1895–1900]) was very amicable and favourably inclined toward the British. Warry and Scott also investigated the military posts in the Chinese territory. This was a clever manoeuvre on the part of the British government to get as much useful information as possible before signing the treaty on March 1, 1894. Unlike imperial China, Britain was savvy at frontier negotiations, with plenty of experience under its belt. Thus, China found itself in a passive position in the borderline negotiation during the 1890s.

The Reaction of Moeng Laem and Chiang Tung during the Late 1890s

The border negotiations between Britain and China should have left some traces in the collective memory of the Tai ethnic groups living on both sides of the border between British Burma and the Chinese province of Yunnan. One might, in particular, expect some reflections on these negotiations in the indigenous historiography of Moeng Laem and Chiang Tung, the two Tai polities most severely affected by the border agreement. The *Chiang Khaeng Chronicle*, composed in 1905, gives much prominence to the Anglo-French border treaty of 1896, which led to the division of the small Tai Lue principality of Chiang Khaeng (with its capital at present-day Müang Sing) along the course of the Mekong River. The chronicle describes in detail the strategies employed by the local elites to prevent this border treaty as well as the local reactions to the final disintegration of the Chiang Khaeng polity (Grabowsky and Renoo 2008, 43–46).

Looking at the various extant versions of the *Moeng Laem Chronicle*, transmitted on mulberry paper manuscripts by Pò Saeng Sam, a prolific scribe from Moeng Laem with connections to the former ruler's court, we found no mention of the Anglo-Chinese border negotiations of the 1890s. For the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Moeng Laem Chronicle* deals with the conflicts between the lowland Tai and the intrusions of the Lahu (Musoe) hill tribe since the 1840s, which caused considerable political and social unrest in this small Tai polity. In the 1880s Moeng Laem was threatened by military intervention from Chiang Tung (*soek khoen*), which aimed at enforcing the extradition of a prince from Chiang Rung to Chiang Tung (in 1882), and by the fighting between Moeng Laem's ally Chiang Rung with its rebellious district (*panna*) of Moeng Cae (in 1888). Nowhere is Britain mentioned as a political player affecting the security of the local Tai polity in Moeng Laem.

The historiography of Chiang Tung, however, provides a different picture. The

Jengtung (Chiang Tung) State Chronicle (CTSC), translated and edited by Sāimöng Mangrāi (1981), pays a great deal of attention to the British victory over Burma in 1885. The defeat of Burma is described with a certain amount of satisfaction as it brought Chiang Tung some relief from Burmese military pressure, which had increased over the previous year. The British conquest of Upper Burma created a temporary power vacuum in the Shan areas, which enabled Chiang Tung to establish itself as a de facto independent polity during 1885–90 and expand its political influence deep into areas on the west bank of the Salween River. This situation abruptly ended in 1890, when "the Gāla Ingalik entered the state," as the CTSC states in a very brief entry for the year CS 1252 (AD 1890/91). Though the British now considered Chiang Tung a protectorate, the CTSC gives the impression of Chiang Tung as an autonomous though small kingdom, as is reflected by the ostentatious Sanskrit-derived title of Prince Kònkaeo, who ascended to the throne of the Tai Khuen polity in 1896. In early 1899 the boundary between China and the British protectorate of Chiang Tung was settled. The chronicle describes these negotiations in a way that gives the Chiang Tung ruler and his officials' disproportionate prominence as part of the British delegation:

> In the year 1260, Month Three (Dec. 1898/Jan. 1899) the prince, accompanying the commissioner [of Burma], went out to demarcate the boundary with China. On the Chinese side there were Taudhāy, as the head, and Denpīn. [The boundary line] began from the Namhlak, Hlabhuk, along the boundary of Möngphaen, Möngyāng, to Dā-āng, down to Latīp, going out to Bānnôy, Kāngbengnāng, Moengva, Jengkhāng, Bānjhô, Bānfảy, Mönghlōy, along the Namṅa until the Mekong was reached. On the British side there were the commissioner and the prince heading the officials; on the Chinese side there were Taudhāy and the Prince of Svaenhvīfā heading the officials, and they went to have a conference at Mönglōng [a substate of Jengtung]. When that had been done the prince returned to Jengtung City during Month Eight of the year 1261 (May/June 1899). (Sāimöng Mangrāi 1981, 277)

It is evident here that the Tai Khuen elites of Chiang Tung did not consider the Anglo-Chinese boundary demarcation of 1899 to be detrimental to their interests. The fact that local rulers and their high-ranking officials were allowed to become part of the British delegation refurbished the rulers' image as local actors in the borderlands of upper mainland Southeast Asia.

The Final Treaty

There were no objections from either China or Britain against Mupang (Theinni), Moeng Khuen (Chiang Tung), and Manmo (Bhamo) being absorbed into British Burma. The

controversial parts in the frontier negotiation remained the territories of Yeren Mountain (Kachin Hills, in Mengyang, namely Kachin State), Menglian, Cheli, and Kokang, and access to the upper Irrawaddy River.

On 20 Month 12th Guangxu Year 19 (January 26, 1894), Xue presented the final proposal (Map 8): China would cede territories east of the Irrawaddy River in exchange for expansion on the original frontier of an extra 20 miles. The northern section of the frontier would be temporarily demarcated, except Cheli and Menglian would become a definite part of Chinese soil. A straight line would be drawn from Moeng Mao (Namkam) to Maliba (Kokang), with the east and north sides belonging to China (Xue 1975, 5).

Instead of 20 miles, Britain agreed to an expansion of only 5 miles. Additionally, a clause forbidding Menglian and Cheli from being ceded to a third party was demanded by France. The Resumption Treaty of China-Britain on Yunnan-Burma's Border and Trade in Services of the Clauses (中英續議滇緬界務商務條款) was finally signed on 24 Month
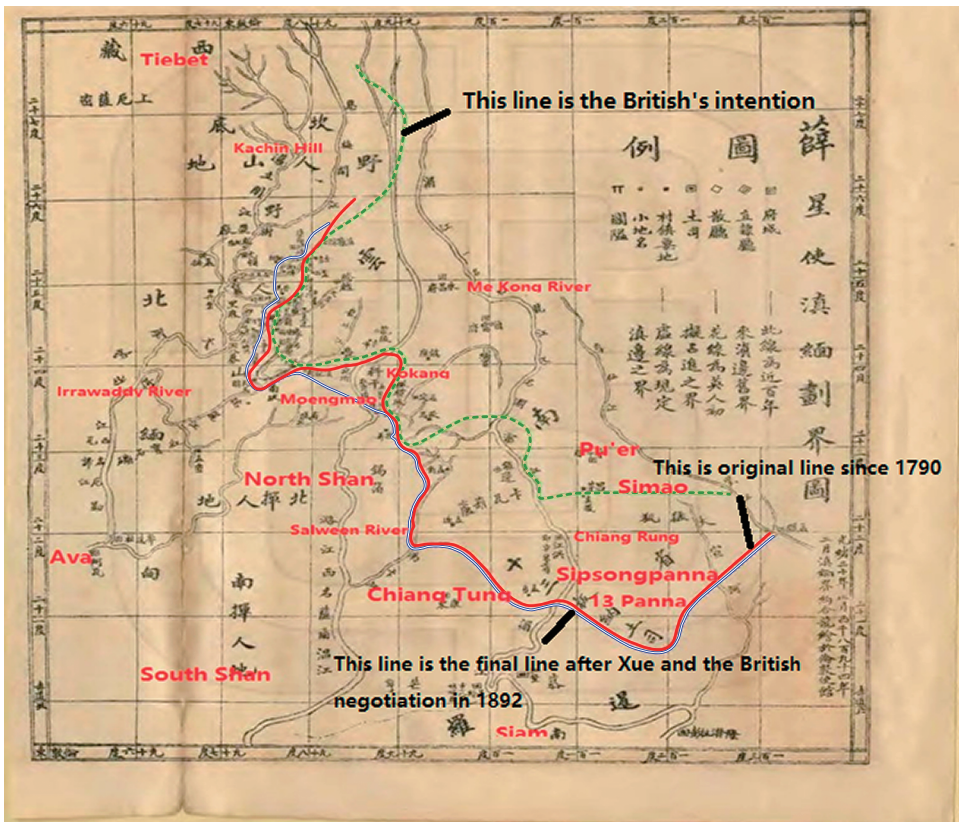
Map 8 This Atlas was the Final Demarcation Report in Xue Fucheng's Memorial in 1894.
Source: Xue (1975, 5).

1st Guangxu Year 20 (March 1, 1894) in London. There were 20 clauses in this treaty. As a Chinese record notes:

> "二十年正月，訂滇緬新約十九條，劃定自尖高山起，向西南行至江洪抵湄江之界線，大金沙江許中國任便行船，刪去八募設關壹條。於是緬事粗結。"
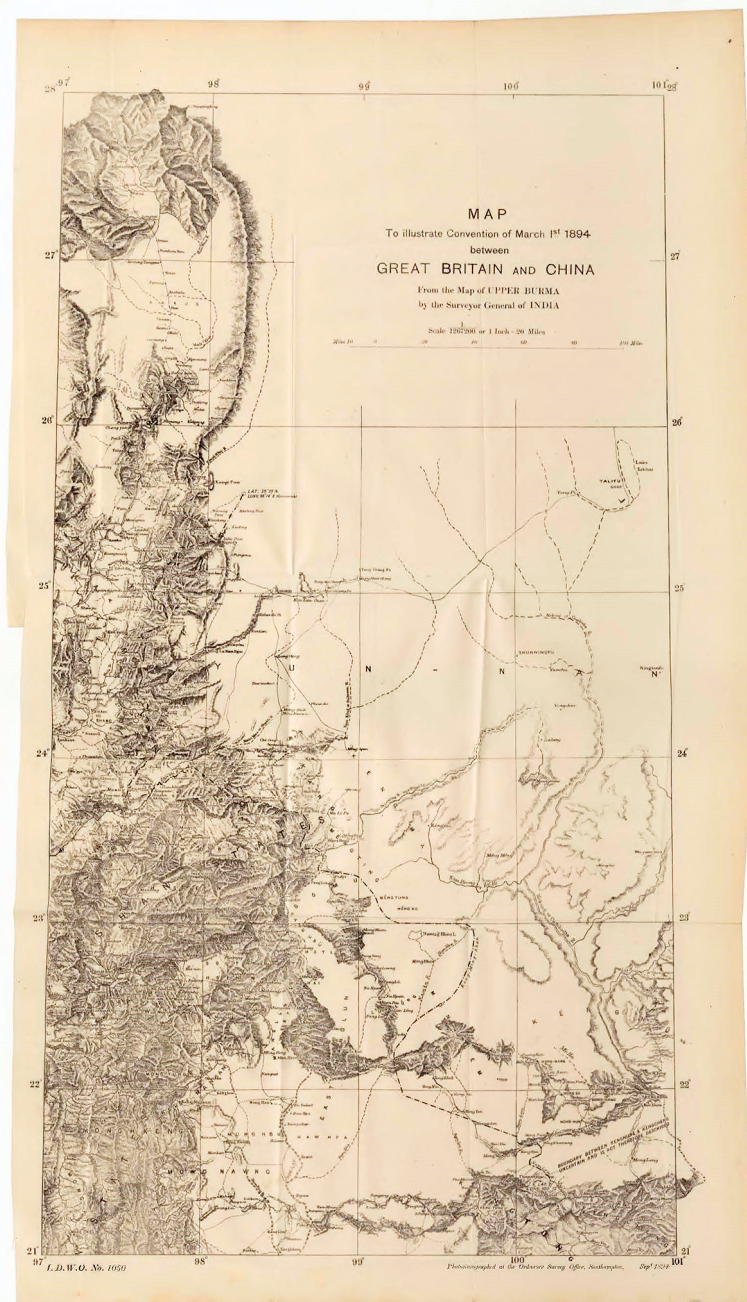
> [Guangxu] In the Year 20 (1894), in the first month of the lunar year, [we are] formulating a new Dian-Mian (Yunnan and Burma) treaty. This new treaty has a total of 19 [*sic*] stipulations. [The new border] is designated to reach Jian Gao Mountain (Teng Chong) in the north. In the southwest, the border runs from Jianghong (Chiang Rung, south of Sipsong Panna) to Mei Jiang (Mekong River). It allows Chinese ships to sail in the Irrawaddy River at any time, but the issue of establishing a customs station in Bhamo is deleted. Thus, the borderline issue between Yunnan and British Burma is roughly resolved. (QSG 1977, Vol. 48, 14689 [Vol. 528 Biography 315 Subordinate States 3: Burma, Siam, Nan Zhang (Laos), Su Lu (Saltanah Sulu)])

The treaty defined the middle and southern frontiers of Yunnan-Burma, but the north was defined as an undetermined frontier. The territories of Sipsong Panna, Menglian, and Mengding were demarcated. Thus, the first stage of the Yunnan-Burma frontier issues was concluded.

Xue did an excellent job for China's interests. This treaty not only kept Cheli and Menglian within China but also slightly expanded the southwest territory. Nonetheless, Zhang (1937), Liu (1946), and Yu Dingbang (2000) point out that Xue failed to negotiate over the loss of many territories, such as Bhamo, Mupang, and Chiang Tung. In contrast, Zhu (2004) holds that Xue tried his best to hold onto the southwest territories by taking back Cheli and Menglian, keeping Kokang (old Bhamo), and expanding the southwest territory of Yunnan. For the British, it was a successful treaty as it gave them what they wanted. The English version of the "1894 Convention between Britain and China" illustrated the frontier (Map 9), which perfectly corresponded with the Chinese version:

> . . . leaving to China the State of Kokang . . . and Meng Ting which belongs to China. . . . It will still continue to follow the frontier between those two districts, which is locally well known . . . and will then follow the line of water-parting between the tributaries of the Salween and the Mekong Rivers . . . leaving to China the Tsawbwaships (lordships) of Keng Ma, Mengtung, and Mengko . . . leaving Munglem to China, and Manglün to Britain. It will then follow the boundary between Munglem and Kiang Hong, which is locally well known; It will then follow the boundary between Kiang Tong and Kiang Hung. . . . His Majesty the Emperor of China shall not, without previously coming to an agreement with Her Britannic Majesty, cede either Munglem or Kiang Hung, or any portion thereof, to any other nation. (Treaty Series, No. 19, 1894, 4–7)

Map 2 shows that of sections A, B, C, D, and E, only sections B and E were settled, with a clause in section E determining that Cheli and Menglian could not be ceded to a third

Map 9   Map Illustrating the Convention of 1st March 1894
Source: Treaty Series, No. 19, 1894.

country. Section C (Moeng Mao) became a perpetual lease area, and sections A and D were un-demarcated areas.

Evaluation of the Clause

The authors believe that Zhu (2004) made an objective assessment. Even if China had obtained more territory in this treaty, it would not have been able to guard it as the country was too weak at that time. China lost the Sino-Japanese War in 1894–95, marking the failure of the Westernization Movement (Yang wu yun dong 洋務運動). China was deemed as an old, weak, and frangible nation that any powerful country could get a piece of. Moreover, Mupang, Bhamo, and Chiang Tung had already been subordinated to Burma for over a century, with little Chinese influence left in these areas. It was therefore not practical to ask for the return of these areas.

Its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War compelled China to cede Moeng Vu (U) and U De (U-Tai) to France in 1897 (Map 10). That was because earlier, on April 17, 1895, after the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed between China and Japan, France managed to force Japan to return the province of Liaoning (northeast China) to China and then demanded that one of the 12 panna, Moeng Vu (U) and U De (U-Tai) in northern Phongsaly in Laos today, be ceded to France as a reward.

France's demand, however, forced China to violate the treaty it had signed with Britain. In order to achieve a beneficial supplemental agreement with China for additional trade benefits, as well as curbing French colonial ambitions in mainland Southeast Asia and the Chinese hinterland, a new mission led by Scott was sent again to Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan. In 1895–96, Scott's mission submitted another confidential report in which he argued:

> We should be only a few miles distant from Puerh and Sumao, two of the most important towns in the south-west corner of Yunnan, and, should the trade of Yunnan fall short of expectations, we should be in a better position and have a better chance of creating a trade, being on the Mekong, than if we limit ourselves to the Kong Ming Shan range. . . . There remains the western part of the province, and whether a great trade will eventually be created there or not, we are running a commercial race with France, the prize being the possession of that trade. **If the retention of Mong Lem and Kèng Hung be a commercial advantage to us in the race, then let us keep these provinces.** . . . France regards Yunnan as the "natural Hinterland" to her Tonkin possessions, and she will sooner or later make a bid for a further advance northwards. Should this ever come to pass and Mong Lem (Meng Lian), Keng Hung (Jing Hong), and Chen Pien (Zhen Bian) remain Chinese territory, there will be a tongue of China between us and the French which, in the event of an alliance between the two powers ever becoming au fait accompli, would bring their forces
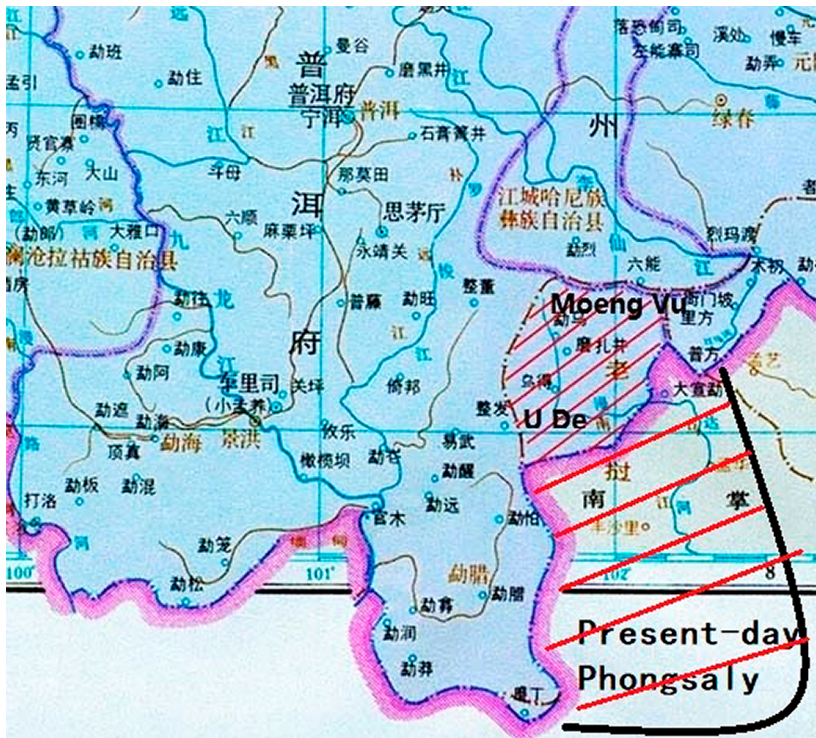
Map 10   Annotated from Tan *et al.* (1982, Vols. 6, 7, 8)

very close to the Salween. . . . On the Mekong we should be far more favourably situated, for we should then be on the direct flank of the French in the event of any further extension on their part taking place towards the north. (Property of the Government of India. Issued by the Intelligence Branch, Q.M.G.'s Department. This report is transmitted for the personal information of the Chief Secretary Chief Commissioner Burma by direction of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India and is to be considered Confidential. Supplement to Report of the intelligence officer on Tour with the Superintendent, Northern Shan States, 1895–96, 3)

Scott strongly recommended that the British government extend the frontier to include Pu'er (Ninger County, administered by Pu'er Prefecture today) and Sumao (today's Pu'er Prefecture), which meant annexing Mong Lem (Moeng Laem) and Keng Hung (Jinghong/Chiang Rung), if commercial benefit could be generated. On the other hand, he was worried about sharing a direct border with France. Therefore, this confidential report suggested that the British government carefully consider whether it was worth it to expand its territory toward Pu'er.

The British were also cautious about triggering military conflicts because they believed the Yunnanese probably possess higher fighting qualities than the Chinese who inhabit the sea-board and dwell in the valleys of the great waterways. They are well armed and, if properly led, it is not improbable that they would fight well. (Property of the Government of India. Issued by the Intelligence Branch, Q.M.G.'s Department. This report is transmitted for the personal information of the Chief Secretary Chief Commissioner Burma by direction of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India and is to be considered Confidential. Supplement to Report of the intelligence officer on Tour with the Superintendent, Northern Shan States, 1895–96, 3)

The British government thus hesitated to claim Menglian and Cheli.

Zhu (2007, 99) stresses that the British government insisted on compensation for the breach of the treaty for two reasons: first, Britain felt offended; second, it was afraid that France would take advantage of the commercial and strategic competition in the Upper Mekong Basin and enter the Chinese hinterland via Yunnan. According to the collection of original documents *Siam, France, and China. British Documents on Foreign Affairs* (Part I, Series E, Vol. 23, 159), Zhu also concludes that Moeng U and U Tai did not mean much to the British (Zhu 2007, 101). She reveals that the British could have asked for less territory in the Yeren Mountain area if they could have opened a commercial port in Xi Jiang (西江), from Yunnan to Guizhou/Guangxi and then Guangdong.

Therefore, when the Qing court refused to cede Cheli and Menglian to the British, the latter did not insist on it. As the Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs memorialized to the emperor on 15 Month 11th Guangxu Year 21 (December 30, 1895):

"查西江通商雖於厘金有損，尚有洋稅抵補，野入山地則系雲南屏障，且照英外部所索又不止野人山地，竟將包絡西南延及車裏土司壹帶，形勢全失。兩害相形則取其輕，目恐今日遷延不決又將別起波瀾，更難收拾，臣等共同密酌，擬將西江通商允準，而野人山界事仍與實力磋磨。"

[I] have looked into opening a commercial port in Xi Jiang. Although there will be a loss in the *lijin* (a local business tax that was utilized during the late Qing Dynasty), the customs taxes could offset [the loss]. Yeren Mountain is the barrier of Yunnan. Moreover, the British Foreign Department claimed not only Yeren Mountain but also the southwest [Yunnan], and sought to extend [the border] to Cheli. [Yunnan would] thus lose the [barrier] terrain. The lesser of the two evils should be chosen. Currently, [I] am afraid [if we] delay the decision, things would be unpredictable. It would be even more difficult to deal with. [We] have discussed together secretly, and plan to approve the opening of the commercial port in Xi Jiang, and the frontier of Yeren Mountain will be negotiated [with Britain] with strength. (Wang *et al.* 1987, Vol. 119, 5)

Finally, the Renewed Burmese Treaty between China and Britain (中英續議緬甸條約) was signed on February 4, 1897. China was willing to give up Kegan (Kokang) and the north of Danni (Theinni, part of Mupang), and the British were allowed to set up a

new commercial port in Xi Jiang. This was the last official negotiation between China and Britain, bringing an end to the border dispute.

The two powers had tested each other's bottom lines to maximize their benefit for the past 10 years. Both sought ways to garner trade benefits amid the demarcation of the Yunnan-Burma boundary. It is hard to say which side won the bargain. Britain had to abandon its territorial claims on Cheli and Menglian, while China also had to abandon some of its historical territories.[31]

Besides, China was forced to face an increasingly serious boundary crisis. The Qing court was prompted to retire its traditional diplomatic strategy and embrace being part of the modern world, in which China no longer stood in the centre. It was a hard pill to swallow. That was why many scholars in the early or middle of the twentieth century regarded Xue as an incompetent traitor who sold out on many of China's historical territories.

Conclusion

William Warry was a British intelligence officer who led a mission to investigate Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan during the years 1889–91. The main purpose of the mission was to obtain knowledge about the situation in these areas, such as ethnic groups, topography, and border issues; and then offer useful insights to the British government on matters such as handling the rubber trade and peacefully expanding business with India, Burma, and China, and ways to negotiate with the Qing court to maximize benefit in the frontier negotiation. Warry also promoted a railway extension from Burma to Yunnan. There is not enough information to gauge to what extent the British government adopted his suggestions, but the government in London did conclude a treaty with the Qing court a few years after the mission. The treaty was to define the border between southwest Yunnan and Burma. On March 1, 1894, both sides signed a treaty with 20 clauses, including those recognizing China's sole sovereignty over Moeng Laem and Chiang Rung, as part of Cheli, as Warry had suggested.

In the final days of the Qing Dynasty, from the late nineteenth century—when the tributary system had collapsed—the Qing court had to face a serious frontier crisis. This crisis was fueled by the rise of Western colonial powers internationally and the rise of

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31) Historical territories were tributary states that had close relationships with the Chinese court or were under the indirect control of the court, for instance, they paid tribute regularly and bestowed gifts and official ranks as appropriate. These tributary states were regarded by the Chinese as historical territories. For further details, see Perdue (2015, 1012).

Chinese nationalism domestically. Imperial China had to adjust itself to the rapidly chang-ing world dominated by the West.

Thongchai (1994) suggests that boundary issues were a concern mainly of the Brit-ish, while the Siamese did not find the existing boundary to be an issue and thus did not feel the need to do anything about it. In this case, Western colonial powers invaded the countries of mainland Southeast Asia, causing several frontier problems. The traditional tributary system, for which some Western scholars coined the concept of Mandala in Southeast Asian polities, was challenged by the new international rules, which were determined by Western colonial powers. China could not avoid being part of the world. After that, most Asian countries had to accept the modern rules formulated by the West-ern world. By giving up distant, multiethnic areas at the periphery of the empire and at the same time keeping their core areas intact, these Asian countries—such as Siam— were able to survive. As a result of this process, the geo-body of a modern nation-state emerged. States such as China and Siam knew clearly that the multiethnic areas along their borders were difficult to administer and integrate into mainstream society. Sacrific-ing these less important places and strengthening sovereignty over the Chinese and Thai core areas proved to be a wise strategy for the weaker Asian countries during the colonial period.

The only difference between China and Siam in this regard was that China held onto the idea that it was the centre of the world until the early twentieth century. China was afraid of losing face when it had to negotiate the Yunnan-Burma frontier with Great Britain. That was why it insisted on maintaining its traditional tributary system at the expense of giving up many practical benefits. However, Siamese policy was more flex-ible and pragmatic. As Rama IV, King Mongkut argued, the most important goal was to save and protect the Siamese Empire and to prevent it from being colonized. His suc-cessor, Rama V, or King Chulalongkorn, continued his father's policy. He ensured that Siam did not get involved in the colonial system of Western imperialist powers. Unfor-tunately, China did not have a wise ruler of comparative standing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The boundary is part of the concept of a nation-state and helps the latter to distin-guish itself from other authorities. For local people who lived along the newly drawn borderlines, in many cases, the boundary existed only on a map, not in their minds. Based on geographical proximity, people in the border areas always retained intimate economic or emotional relationships across national borders, especially when they came from the same ethnic group and shared the same language, culture, and even identity.

One such border area was Yuesong (岳宋鄉) in Ximeng County, which was inhabited by members of the Wa (of Mon-Khmer stock) and Tai ethnic groups. The county was

located in northwest Menglian on the right bank of the Salween River. The territory of Ximeng bordered the Burmese Wa State, which is marked as section D on Map 2, to the south of the un-demarcated line. On October 1, 1960, the Frontier Convention between China and Burma (中國人民共和國和緬甸聯邦邊界條約) was signed. Through this agreement, the frontier issue between China and Burma, which had lasted for 70 years, was finally resolved. The territory of Ava Mountain was split into two parts: one went to China and the other to Burma.[32] Thus, the Wa people became another one of the main transborder ethnic groups. Their national awareness is an interesting case study, which has attracted scholars since the 1960s (Guo 2012, 20–28). Wa people who live on both sides of the border still retain close relationships with one another. In 2008, one of the authors of this paper went to do fieldwork in Yuesong. She interviewed several Wa people from Burma who admitted that they frequently crossed the border to visit their relatives. The borderline marks administrative boundaries but does not serve as a partition wall for groups of the same ethnicity. The Wa people represent a common social phenomenon in southwest Yunnan and probably also mainland Southeast Asia. Yunnan is one of the most complicated areas in China. That was one of the reasons why Warry had to investigate Upper Burma and southwest Yunnan personally.

Between the Burmese territory and inland China, along the upper Mekong River and the Irrawaddy River, multiethnic groups have lived independently for hundreds of years. However, the rise of British colonial ambitions and China's growing awareness of frontiers changed the destiny for these multiethnic, distant areas.

The borderlines were formed after fierce negotiations between China and Britain. This demarcation defined most of the areas caught in the border dispute between Yunnan and British Burma. For Britain, the demarcation of borderlines was a successful expansion into the Indochinese Peninsula; for China, it was a big challenge to its century-old diplomatic strategy in dealing with "barbarian polities" at its southern periphery; for local polities, it was a life-changing event that was decided for them without much of their involvement. The truth is that preferential diplomacy would never be offered to a weak state.

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32) For details of the Demarcation Convention between China and Burma in the 1960s, see Feng and Qi (2006, 55–60).

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Post-1998 Changes in Rural Java:
The Rapid Expansion of the Middle Class*

Agung Wicaksono**

After the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis, for the first time the rural middle-class population in Indonesia grew faster than the urban population in relative terms. This was somewhat astonishing, given that in Indonesia the middle class has historically been synonymous with the urban population. This paper asks what factors allowed such a rapid expansion and what its impacts were on rural life. It argues that this phenomenon was partly the result of good governance, which dismantled most elements of state patronage. In tandem with the structural-economic changes characterized by a shift from the formal to the informal sector, this new setting paved the way for the aspiring lower class, which has historically been marginalized by the system, to climb the socioeconomic ladder. The transition also brought about a new morality regarding material affluence. Even though this new setting might suit the wishes of the aspirational lower class following the gradual dismantling of strong state clientelism, it has been accompanied by an increase in economic inequality.

Keywords: middle class, rural areas, state clientelism, democratization of village government, high inequality

I Introduction

The implementation of Law No. 6/2014 on villages may have marked a new watershed for Indonesian villages and their dwellers. The law sets out a framework for village autonomy, particularly in villages' capacity to manage their own budgets and resource allocations. Each village receives approximately 1 billion rupiah per year, with the central government having allocated 67 trillion rupiah to villages in 2015–16 (Republik Indonesia, Kementerian Keuangan 2018). The injection of such vast amounts of money undeniably boosted the economy of rural areas.

** Departemen Antropologi, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Jl. Nusantara 1, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia
e-mail: agung_wicaksono87@yahoo.com

If more attention is paid to rural Java, a remarkable change can be seen to have taken place since the mid-2000s. For the first time, the rural middle-class population has grown faster than the urban population, albeit in relative terms. From 1999 to 2009, the urban and rural middle-class populations increased by 41 percent and 111 percent respectively (ADB 2010). The increasing size of the rural middle-class population, as reported by ADB, is not an illusion. Evidence of middle-classness can be found wherever one looks, starting with ownership of a furnished house and a car.

The research site for this study consisted of six villages. Household survey data was gathered in these six villages in 1990 and 2012. A comparison of data for the two years shows that the percentage of middle-class households grew from 6 percent to 26.7 percent in these areas.

If the evidence suggests that the circumstances are in alignment with each other, one must ask: What are the factors that allowed such a rapid expansion, and what are the implications for rural life? Although these questions beg further inquiry, the increase in the rural middle-class population has not triggered critical studies by social scholars on what factor(s) engendered this rapid expansion and how it can be precisely worked out. Based on a research study carried out in six villages in the eastern part of Pemalang, Central Java, this paper aims to explain what factors enabled this phenomenon, how the process took place, and what are the implications for village life.

The rise of the middle class has often been linked to sound economic growth (Gerke 2002; Pinches 2005; ADB 2010). This is not a novel idea in light of the success of the industrial revolution in England (King *et al.* 1981; Gunn and Bell 2003) and the large-scale development programs in developing countries (Goodman and Robison 1996; Robison 1996), which provide ample evidence for this claim. The recent case of Indonesia also corresponds with that postulate: the gradual economic recovery after the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 was followed by a rapid expansion of the middle class (Kurasawa 2015). However, the assumption that sound macroeconomic conditions are the sole factor affecting the size of the middle-class population can be misleading. If this was the case, rapid expansion should have occurred in Indonesia from the New Order period, when the economy grew at an unprecedented rate, reaching nearly 7 percent per annum (Booth 2016, 67).

A political approach to the question of why the rural middle class remained small during the New Order regime seems to hold more promise. Until the late 1950s, the middle class was confined to a small cohort of technocrats and bureaucrats living in urban areas (Wertheim 1955). Some might argue that there was an indigenous business class in small towns; however, they could not be classified as the rural middle class. Political turmoil, economic crisis, and Sukarno's decision to embrace Partai Komunis Indonesia

(Communist Party of Indonesia, PKI) drove this cohort in toppling Sukarno in the 1960s (Dick 1985). In the following period, the urban middle class grew quickly in alignment with the expansion of bureaucracy and private enterprises supported by easy money from the oil boom and tremendous foreign direct investment. The further question is, why did the rural middle class in Java remain small until the end of Suharto's rule, despite rural Java also having received a substantial amount of state largesse?

The answer to that question might be found in the manner of Suharto's governance. As articulated by Harold Crouch (1979), the stability of Suharto's power was due to patrimonialism. Patrimonialism is a sociopolitical system in which the power of the ruler is reliant on their prowess in embracing the contending political elites, particularly through material distribution (Crouch 1979, 572). Suharto's patrimonial state was perfected thanks to his ability to homogenize the elites' ideology and produce politically quiescent citizens through the "floating mass" (Crouch 1979, 572). In the countryside, Suharto's patrimonialism transformed villages into an arena of political control and development (Antlöv 2005, 200). Political control took place when the elites functioned as the guardians of political stability by promoting consensus and harmony rather than liberal democracy (Antlöv 2005, 200). This was formalized by the implementation of Law No. 5/1979 on village governance, which enabled village heads to have considerable power in rural society (Antlöv 2003, 195). Occupying a strategic position also enabled village heads to reward their allies with the facilities to embark upon new businesses and, at the same time, discourage non-state clients (see Antlöv 2005, 193–194). It was therefore no surprise that the size of the rural middle class was perpetually tiny, confined to the small cohort of dominant rural groups centered on the village apparatus.

Becoming a state client was also indistinguishable from having material affluence. As a result, common villagers viewed the middle class and their prosperity with hostility and suspicion, as symbolizing decreased morality (Antlöv 2005, ch. 7; Heryanto 2005, ch. 6). The pervasive state patronage also created an apathetic mentality among the poor. This engendered an increase in mysticism and a frenzy of lottery ticket purchasing, given that the only other way to significantly increase one's wealth was to be a state client (Kleden 1990, ch. 13). In other words, the state's clientelism undermined the people's creativity.

The financial crisis in the late 1990s brought the pervasive state patronage to the brink of collapse. In addition, the global discourse of good governance quickly gained the spotlight in Indonesia, leading to the denouncement of the massive corruption, collusion, and nepotism (Thompson 2007). Lidia Schiavo and Pierre Vercauteren (2016) argue that good governance radically changed the state's role and redefined its function from being an active economic actor to becoming a mere market facilitator by providing the right

institutions under the credo of neoliberalism. Jolle Demmers *et al.* (2004, 2) show eloquently that technocratically, the phrase "good governance" implies efficiency, authority, and accountability of the state. This new set of institutional frameworks was assumed to stand against patrimonialism and clientelism. However, these frameworks seemed to simplify the political and economic dynamics, as the elites had proven their success in retaining or reconfiguring their power during the period of transition (Hadiz and Robison 2005).

Instead of restating the peculiarity or ambivalence of good governance, this study will look closely at the reforms that were achieved and their impacts. The political transition of 1998 brought about democratization of state institutions, including village government. It started with decentralization under the idea of good governance and yielded to Law No. 22/1999. This law not only outlined the district-level decentralization but also replaced Law No. 5/1979 on village governance (Antlöv 2003, 197). It recognized that the basis for the new regulations on village government was diversity, participation, genuine autonomy, democratization, and people's empowerment (Antlöv 2003, 197).[1]

The new law brought about significant changes. Under the scheme of autonomy, the village head was no longer positioned as the main instrument of central government. The law also limited the authority of the village head, as village officials came to be elected, appointed, or approved by the Badan Permusyawaratan Desa (Village Consultative Board) instead of being arbitrarily appointed by the village head, which was the case formerly.[2] The village head's maximum term of office was also reduced incrementally from 16 to 10 years in 1999 and only 6 years afterward.[3] To refine the quality of the state apparatus, the central government also issued Law No. 43/1999, which prohibited civil servants, including the village apparatus, from engaging with political parties previously entrenched under mono-loyalty.[4] This law, in tandem with Law No. 22/1999, attempted to strengthen reform at the village level by dissociating bureaucratic tasks from politics. The more democratic village institution, which was a result of the political transition in 1999, brought an end to political control and development. This led to many benefits for common villagers. The absence of political control and development meant that there was no more discrimination against non-state clients, which provided an incentive for them to improve their lives: common villagers' past efforts at self-improvement had been hampered by village officials.

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1) In the following period, the government issued Law No. 32/2000 and Government Regulation 72/2005.
2) Recently, the recruitment of village officials has been done through an open test.
3) See Antlöv (2003) and Law No. 6/2014 on villages.
4) Presidential Instruction No. 6/1970 forced civil servants, including the village apparatus, to support Golkar under the idea of mono-loyalty (Antlöv 2003, 196).

The structural-economic changes ushered in by the post-New Order regime helped to promote the rapid expansion of the rural middle class. The Indonesian economy post-1998 grew moderately. Paradoxically, the growth took place while Indonesia was dealing with deindustrialization, an economic condition in which the contribution of the manufacturing sector to both total employment and total GDP decreases (Priyarsono *et al.* 2010, 144). Indonesia's deindustrialization after the 1997–98 financial crisis was proved by the high contribution to its economy of coal and palm oil exports and the service sector. Moreover, although the government encouraged the development of downstream industries from 2009, this had little overall impact on the Indonesian economy (Mizuno n.d., 1–2). In other words, Indonesia's moderate growth was driven by the flourishing of its informal sector. The dismantling of most elements of state patronage, which eventually provided more inclusive economic opportunities, in tandem with the new structure of the Indonesian economy played a crucial role in encouraging people to climb the socioeconomic ladder through a variety of business activities. This paved the way for the rapid expansion of the rural middle class. This trajectory is in contrast with the traditional assumption that middle-classness is linked primarily to industrialization and the expansion of the formal sector.

Heavy reliance on the market has also changed villagers' conception of morality. In the past, the rich were satisfied with being hesitant capitalists carrying out rent-seeking practices and feeling secure enough to enjoy state support through various pro-farmer policies (Hüsken 1989, 326). Nowadays, with villagers perceiving material affluence as stemming from hard work rather than connections, they no longer view prosperity with hostility or suspicion. Unfortunately, several villagers are unprepared for this new economic setting. Consequently, although the rural middle class's growth can be attributed to economic growth, a better quality of life, and an increase in employment opportunities, the circumstances have also fostered economic inequality.

II   Definition of the Middle Class

In the Indonesian context, the middle class can be defined as *orang-orang mapan*.[5] The dictionary defines *mapan* as "*mantap [baik, tidak goyah, stabil] kedudukannya [kehidupannya]*," or a robust (sound, steady, and stable) position (life) (KBBI n.d.). In essence, a robust position is closely related to economic standing and somewhat congru-

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5) *Mapan* is, to some degree, congruent with the American rhetoric for middle-class living conditions, that is, comfort consisting of common and inexpensive means of enjoyment (F. Spencer Baldwin in Moskowitz 2012, 81).

ent with the Javanese definition. *Mapan* differs from *miskin* (poor) or *cukupan* (enough or sufficient), although the former cannot be classified as *hartawan* (tycoons).[6] To belong to the middle class, people must have a secure occupation that brings in a steady income and perform little, if any, manual labor. A steady income and the absence of manual labor imply the possession of assets.[7]

Mapan is contextual rather than a fixed concept. In the past, the rural middle class was restricted to a small group of state employees or those constituting the village apparatus and, to a lesser extent, big landowners. With the asset of an organization (bureaucracy) or property (land) in hand, they had a relatively high and steady income to cover their basic needs and lifestyles. More recently, although civil servants are still considered part of the middle class, there are many occupations that produce a high income based primarily on micro and small enterprises such as those in clothing, construction, food business, or retail. In essence, skill has become a crucial asset with which to carve out wealth.

At the village level, people can easily distinguish who belongs to the middle class or lower class, even in the case of those who do not work in the formal sector. The middle class is viewed as having less anxiety about the future as they rely on ownership of assets (property, organizations, or skills). Saprani, a manual worker in Trukosari village, commented that people like Pak Bagus, who was the head of a farmer group that organized jasmine farmers for supplying to tea factories, could live comfortably as they earned a stable income from their position. Meanwhile, as a physical laborer, Saprani frequently felt insecure as he was preoccupied with finding the next job in construction or agriculture once he had finished one task.

Conceptualizing the middle class as *orang-orang mapan* helps this study to assess the size of the rural middle class in the six villages studied. For 1990, this study defines middle-classness in terms of the possession of consumer durables: households that owned both a motorcycle and a television are categorized as middle class.[8] In 1990 these were valuable goods, and possessing them distinguished the owner from the lower class. Televisions and motorcycles also represented modern life and connected their owners with an urban—or even global—lifestyle. As argued by Solvay Gerke (2002, 137), con-

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6) Solvay Gerke (2002) has a different stratification model based on consumption.
7) I derive this concept from Mike Savage *et al.* (1992), who argue that people can be classified as middle class based on the possession of an asset, whether property, organization, or skill.
8) For 1980, Jamie Mackie assumed that households possessing either a motorcycle or a television could be classified as middle class (Mackie 1990). Using such a definition, middle-class households made up around 9 percent and 5 percent respectively. For 1990, such indicators had become too low and were consequently no longer relevant. Thus, this study argues that for 1990, rural middle-class households were indicated by the simultaneous possession of a motorcycle and a television.

sumerism could also be an independent standard of reference for social integration, involving the creation and communication of this identity to others by obscuring the different economic bases and facilitating social integration.

Using the same parameters to define the middle class at different times is misleading, because things that were considered valuable in the past might no longer have the same value in the present. For 2012, this study employs the income threshold, rather different from ADB's parameter. In its special chapter "The Rise of Asia's Middle Class," ADB clearly noted: "This report uses an absolute approach defining the middle class as those with consumption expenditures of $2–$20 per person per day in 2005 PPP $" (ADB 2010, 6). This study employs data based on income rather than expenditure data. The low threshold as employed by ADB has been strongly criticized as an accounting trick: "the per-capita household expenditure threshold has been reduced to a very low US$2 a day. . . . Anybody not in absolute poverty is assigned to the middle class" (Van Klinken 2014, 1). Although Van Klinken's criticisms are reasonable, one cannot deny that by rural standards a household with a per capita income of at least US$2 per day[9] can be classed as being middle class. To sum up, either the possession of a television and motorcycle for 1990 or a per capita income of US$2 per day for 2012 represents middle-classness or *kemapanan*.

III   The Research Site and Methods

Although the title seems to imply that this study discusses the growth of the Indonesian rural middle class, it does not mean that the entire region is covered. Rather, this study focuses on one particular region's socioeconomic dynamics. By determining the socio-economic dynamics in a particular historical range, we can analyze how the middle class emerged and expanded. Therefore, this study was carried out in a region that had previously been studied, and this is the reason why the six villages[10] in the eastern part of Pemalang were chosen.

This region is a suitable social laboratory since all villages around the former Comal Baru sugar factory were surveyed by the Dutch researcher J.F.A.C. van Moll in 1903–5. In that survey, all 2,889 households in 24 villages were questioned about their ownership of assets such as land, livestock, and plough as well as house value and annual agricultural yield. Van Moll's research provides comprehensive baseline data on the villagers' econ-

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9) Exchange rate 2012.
10) The pseudonyms for these villages are: Karyokasil, A; Parigaga, B; Kidulratan, C; Karanggondang, D; Trimakmur, E; and Trukosari, F (see Map 1).

omy in the early twentieth century. In an attempt to trace how this region had changed, two further surveys were carried out in 1990[11] and 2012[12]—this time in six of the 24 villages studied by Van Moll. The numbers of households interviewed were 500 and 1,000,[13] while the questionnaire was developed to accommodate new variables such as occupation, income, migration, education, and new types of material possessions. Since I was part of the third survey (2012), I have a right to utilize the entire survey data.

Having both historical and extensive household data gathered from the same villages allowed this study to inquire into both how the middle class was formed and its size during and after the New Order regime. A follow-up ethnographical study was carried out over a period of six months (two months in 2015 and four months in 2016) to gauge people's perception of the socioeconomic changes, the obstacles experienced historically, present opportunities, and the residents' future aspirations. This paper provides a historical socioeconomic study based on archival research and fieldwork on six villages in Pemalang District, Central Java. It starts with a nuanced description of the socioeconomic conditions of the six villages in the aftermath of the 1965 Communist purge and during the New Order regime. It then discusses the changing landscape of the villages with the coming of Reformasi in 1998.

IV   The Six Villages during the New Order Regime

Following the 1955 general election, the PKI gained 16.4 percent of the total valid votes (Mortimer 2006). The province of Central Java, where Pemalang District is located, was the main base for the PKI. This was a significant gain as the Party's agenda prior to 1959 was limited to an attempt to show that the "PKI was the party most concerned with the villagers' overall interests" (Mortimer 2006, 276). Although the Party's members and sympathizers increased quickly and the Party secured its position as the biggest Communist Party in any non-Communist nation in the early 1960s (Vickers 2013), the situation changed drastically in October 1965 when the Party was blamed for the massacre of seven high-ranking Indonesian Army officials. In the absence of a comprehensive inquiry, the rumor immediately spread that the PKI had carried out a coup. There was

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11) This was a collaborative research study by three institutions: P3PK UGM of Indonesia, IOC-UT of Japan, and Casa of the Netherlands.
12) This research was funded by the government of Japan and supervised by Prof. Mizuno Kosuke, Prof. Kano Hiroyoshi, and Dr. Pujo Semedi. All surveyors were Gadjah Mada University students.
13) The number of households sampled was around 10 percent in 1990 and 12 percent in 2012. The samples were determined through a random sampling method. I was personally involved in the 2012 survey as an assistant researcher.

a call for a purge of PKI members, followed by army-led massacres in Java and Bali. Many PKI members who were not killed were imprisoned without trial for years.

PKI sympathizers within each of the six villages probably made up 20 percent to 30 percent of the total population. Purges took place in Karyokasil (A), Karanggondang (D), and Trukosari (F) villages (see Map 1). Despite studies showing that many PKI members were killed during the political unrest of 1965–66,[14] I have no official data on these six villages. Familial ties, to some extent, were able to protect people affiliated with the PKI from the massacre.[15] In Karanggondang the village head escorted 150 PKI sympathizers to be dealt with by the Subdistrict Military Command (Hüsken 1996, ch. 8), in order to avert a brutal attack by members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party, PNI). As the new climate placed the PNI and NU as winners in the political turmoil, members of these two parties ruthlessly burned the houses of PKI sympathizers, looted their assets, and in a few cases harassed their wives.

The annihilation of the PKI marked the onset of the New Order regime. Aside from the removal of village heads affiliated with the PKI, as was the case in Trimakmur village, other village heads formerly affiliated with the NU and PNI immediately joined Golkar. They then encouraged the dominant rural groups to do the same, given that they were their allies. An exemplary case emerged from Trukosari when Truno, the new village head, succeeded in consolidating his power by embracing the *kiyais* and big farmers. He then appointed many of them to strategic positions, such as the administrator of a Koperasi Unit Desa (Village Unit Cooperative, KUD) or the head of a farmer group, which eventually led to material benefits. There seemed to be a similar pattern in other villages.

The material benefits for state clients came to fruition in various ways. After the failure of the block credit system of Bimas Gotong Rojong (mutual aid mass guidance) in the late 1960s, the government introduced low-interest loans to support new types of Bimas. However, access to such credit required not only a stringent minimum standard of irrigation and farm area but also the village head's recommendation (Hart 1986). Through this scheme, the village elites and village apparatus, which invariably had a sizable amount of land and could thus afford to take risks, became the main beneficiaries, while small farmers and the landless received the residue. The village elites also benefited from the government's policy to increase the floor price of rice rather than the ceiling price of fertilizer. Unfortunately, the KUDs were unable to control the floor price of rice because of their limited capacity to purchase farmers' yields during the harvest

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14) In Banyuwangi District, the official report stated that 6,008 were killed and 50,727 imprisoned (Luthfi 2018, 65).
15) There were three PKI activists in Trukosari. Two of them were sent to Buru island, while one was imprisoned in Pemalang.

period. The village elites exploited this niche by purchasing farmers' yields in the harvest period and reselling them to the KUD at a higher price when the supply declined, as the cooperatives usually consisted of either rice-mill owners or rice traders (Hart 1986).[16]

Another policy advantageous to village elites was launched in 1975, when Suharto issued Presidential Instruction No. 9 on Tebu Rakyat Intensifikasi (TRI). One aim of the TRI program was to increase sugarcane productivity based on the assumption that an increase in production would be accompanied by an improvement in the farmers' welfare. The field area where the sugarcane was to be cultivated was run through a rotation system stipulated by the Satpel Bimas. A sizable amount of arable land in the village was divided into three parts; each part would be planted with sugarcane cyclically in the first, second, and third years. Paradoxically, farmers' participation in this cultivation was based on state coercion and so was not voluntary.

Map 1 displays TRI cultivation by the Sragi sugar factory in the eastern part of Pemalang, in which the six study villages are located (A–F). Satpel Bimas's stipulation regarding the field in which sugarcane should be annually planted originally appeared in different marks from those on the map. The implementation of the TRI program was very effective even though it was carried out arbitrarily, without farmers' involvement. The effectiveness is evident from the survey data collected in 1990 summarized in Table 1 below.

Trukosari village is worth excluding when drawing conclusions about the data collected, as this area is dominated by dry fields and fishponds, which make it unsuitable for sugarcane. With that in mind, in 1990 the percentage of landowners involved in the program was approximately 23–45 percent, while the ratio of land planted with sugarcane was similar, making up 28–50 percent of the total area. This survey data is seemingly in parallel with the stipulation of Satpel Bimas above. Under the TRI program, sugarcane was cultivated through a collective system where all activities, such as land tilling and cane milling in the factory, were undertaken by a group of farmers. The landowner would earn a net income after the processed cane (sugar) was sold and the production costs were deducted. Although the profit was far less than that from cultivating paddy, the farmers had no power to go against the TRI program apart from engaging in sabotage (*Suara Merdeka* 1994). The lack of transparency allowed the heads of farmer groups to engage in corrupt practices. Since these heads were mostly members of the Golkar party,

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16) Kenneth Young provides an example of another trick practiced by village elites that is relevant to this issue. The KUD is responsible for buying rice, which is then to be sold at the government floor price to the local government purchasing warehouse (Subdolog). But it is not unusual for the village elites, in their capacity as elected managers of the KUD, to subcontract the entire rice acquisition process to private traders (Young 1990, 157).
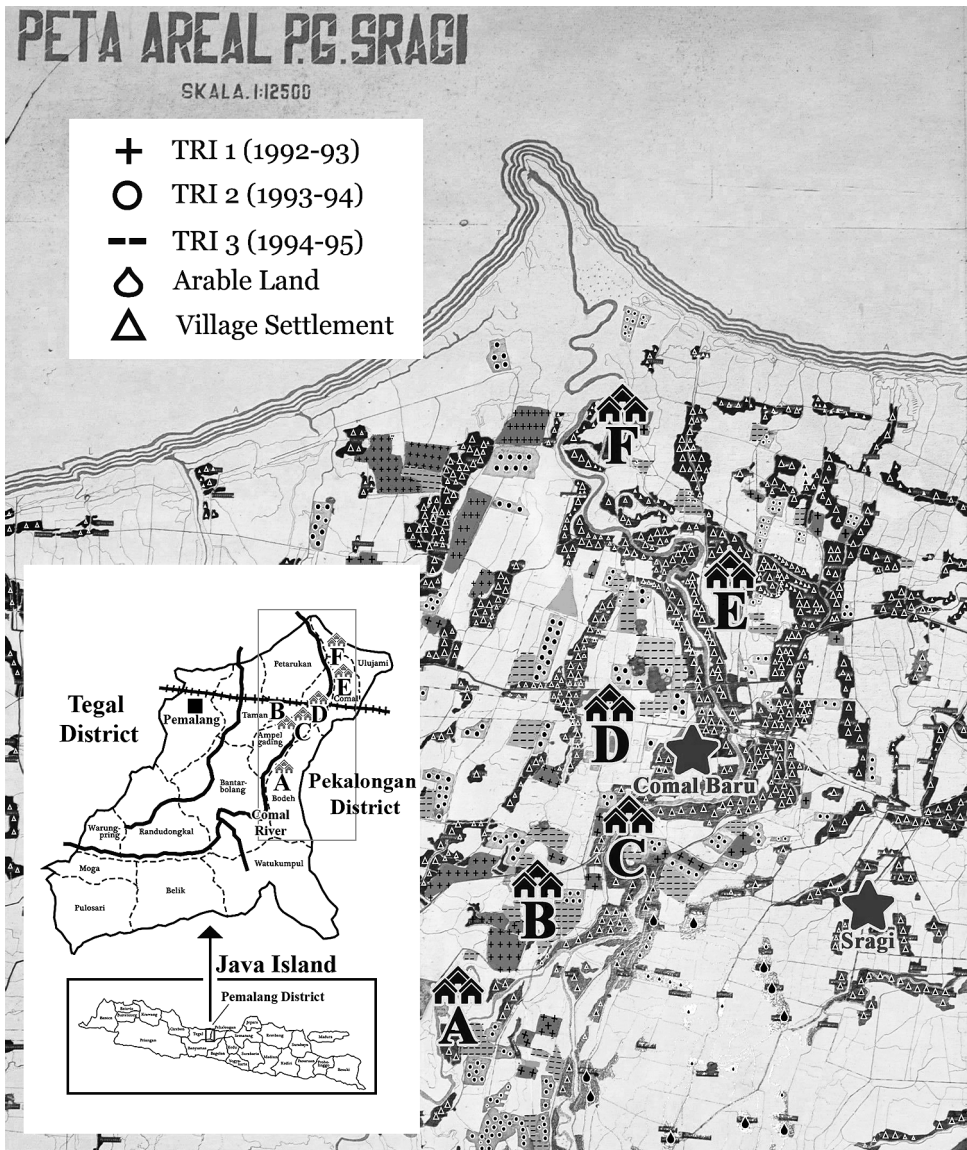
Map 1   TRI Cultivation under the Supervision of Sragi Sugar Factory
Source: Personal documentation.

who had a close relationship with the village apparatus, farmers were in no position to ask for a fairer deal. In other words, farmers' engagement with sugarcane cultivation tended to result in a relation of "adverse incorporation" (McCarthy 2010, 823).

The heads of farmer groups were typically rural rent-seekers who used their privi-

Table 1 Household Engagement in the TRI Program

Village	No. of Surveyed Households	No. of Landowners	% of Landowners Who Planted Sugarcane	Total Land Surveyed (ha)	% of Land Planted with Sugarcane
A	90	59	**45%**	26.9	**50%**
B	70	45	**42%**	20.2	**33%**
C	75	19	**32%**	4.7	**28%**
D	60	28	**50%**	8.6	**31%**
E	80	22	**23%**	5.1	**35%**
F	125	46	**6%**	12.3	**2%**

Source: Survey data (1990) (n = 500 households).

lege to exploit the government program. In 1992–93 the minister of cooperatives stated that the debt of cane farmers in Central Java Province had reached 100.59 billion rupiah (*Suara Merdeka*, January 6, 1993). The borrowers were usually big farmers who were simultaneously the heads of farmer groups, part of the village apparatus, or KUD members. Small farmers could not dare to take such loans. The big farmers also borrowed vast amounts of money from sugar factories using farmers' sugarcane as collateral. Using their status as state clients, village officials and their allies did not hesitate to abuse their power.

The regime also invested in expanding educational services. However, the lower class faced numerous barriers due to the pervasive discriminatory practices of government officials. With a limited range of employment opportunities, the lower class were set aside since the recruitment of new civil servants always involved "connection[s]" and bribery.[17] Under such conditions, the rural elites, equipped with their close connections to higher officials, invariably succeeded in taking advantage of each new opportunity (Young 1990). Consequently, the education system functioned as a form of social closure that effectively excluded the lower class.

In the non-bureaucratic and agricultural sectors, the villagers' efforts to embark upon entrepreneurial work were also discouraged by the implementation of the "disciplinary powers of registration" (Antlöv 2005, 194). In other words, village officials could endorse their families and allies for starting a new business and, at the same time, hamper their opponents and other villagers from obtaining commensurate services. Pervasive state patronage had a detrimental impact on village life because it facilitated rent-seeking practices among state clients and apathy among common villagers. The stark social cleavage between state clients and common villagers was indicated by the socio-

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17) A survey carried out by *Kompas* in the early 1980s on 70 respondents, consisting of top- and middle-level managers and professionals, showed how strong state clientelism was. The report concluded that 60.6 percent of respondents believed that their career was determined by "connections" or their ability to make use of connections (*Kompas* 1990).

economic conditions of sampled households from the six villages studied in 1990 shown in Fig. 1 below.

Based on the 1990 survey data, only 32 percent of household heads had finished primary school. Less than 8 percent had graduated from senior high school. Most household heads (61 percent) were farmers, although the aggregate labor force engaged in agricultural activities must have been higher. When considering that only 44.2 percent of surveyed households owned arable land—either rice or dry field—in 1990, this must mean that many villagers were working as agricultural wage laborers. The practice of land leasing and sharecropping in the six villages was less intensive than in other regions of Java (see White and Wiradi 1989, 279). In 1990, only 16 percent of landowners (37 out of 221) leased or sharecropped their land. Since the 1990 survey research focused on both rice and dry fields, the ownership and role of the home garden remain unclear. Another picture of village backwardness is reinforced by the fact that around 25.4 percent of respondents' houses still had a thatched roof, while 56.6 percent of respondents' houses had earthen floors. Meanwhile, only 15.8 percent and 8.8 percent of the surveyed households owned a television and a motorcycle respectively.

As mentioned earlier, for 1990, households that owned both a motorcycle and a television were categorized as rural middle class. Meanwhile, I classified households with either a television or a motorcycle as the sufficient cohort (*kelompok cukupan*) and families without either of these goods as the lower class. Social classification based on goods ownership is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that in 1990, only 6 percent of the sampled households could be defined as the rural middle class; this argument has been strengthened by other variables. First, the average landownership for this cohort (4,478 m^2) was almost four and two times higher than the lower class and the sufficient cohort respectively. The figure becomes even higher when landless households are excluded (7,070 m^2). With this amount of land,
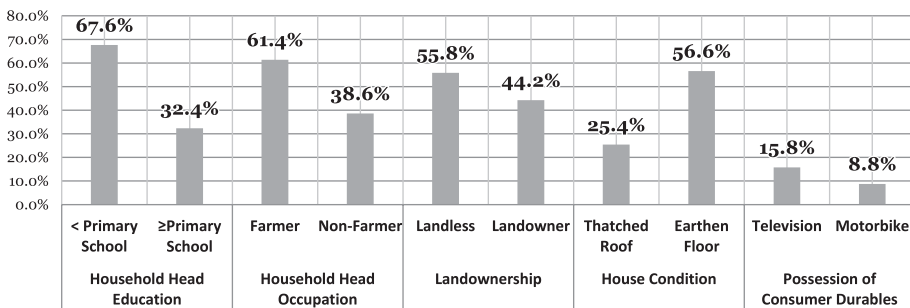

Fig. 1   Socioeconomic Conditions of 500 Surveyed Households, 1990

Source: Survey data (1990).

Table 2   Characteristics of Social Class in the Six Villages Studied

| | Possession of Consumer Durables | N | % of Sampled House-holds | Average Landownership | | Graduated from Primary School | Household Heads in Non-Farm Occupations |
				All Households (m²)	Landless Excluded (m²)		
Lower class	No motorcycle or television	406	81%	1,244	2,990	25.4%	27.3%
Sufficient (*cukupan*)	Television or motorcycle	64	13%	2,179	4,500	53.1%	62.5%
Middle class	Television and motorcycle	30	6%	4,478	7,070	83.3%	76.6%

Source: Survey data (1990) (n = 500 households).

the rural middle class were the main receivers of state subsidies in the agricultural sector.   The household heads' educational background also exposes the remarkable difference between the middle class and the lower class or—particularly—the sufficient group; the percentage of household heads graduating from primary school was 25 percent and 53 percent for the lower-class and sufficient group respectively, while it was around 83 percent for the middle class, indicating that educational services were accessed almost exclusively by the latter group.   The data above contradict the pattern at the national level, where more young villagers, even from the lower class, can attain a higher level of education.   Regardless of the pattern at the national level, villagers strongly believed that the promise of upward social mobility still depended on whether they had connections or not: for example, a senior teacher claimed that in 1986 he was able to easily achieve tenure because of his close connection with a higher official in Semarang.

The last column in Table 2 confirms the distinction between the middle and lower classes.   Although the average landownership level was higher for the middle class than the other classes, most households (76 percent) declared that they were not farmers. This implied that most respondents must have been part of the village apparatus, civil servants, small entrepreneurs, or heads of farmer groups thanks to their strategic position as government clients.

The data from the 500 surveyed households above reinforces the argument that the middle class were the main beneficiaries of state largesse because they owned large amounts of arable land.   Combined with a higher level of education and supposedly a close connection to upper-level officials, they could easily engage in non-farming sectors.   On the other hand, the lower class, without sufficient levels of landownership or adequate education, mostly stayed in the low-income agricultural sector and at the same time were discouraged from embarking upon entrepreneurial activities.   Consequently, pervasive state clientelism precluded the smooth social mobility of the lower class, which eventually hampered the growth of the rural middle class.

V The Gradual Dismantling of State Patronage

The political upheaval that brought down Suharto under the flag of Reformasi swept the big cities in 1998. To a lesser extent, the movement also ignited a myriad of villagers to vent their resentment both toward the government that had discriminated against them and toward their right-hand accomplices, the village apparatus. The issues of abuse of authority, repression, and corruption were consequently utilized to denounce the village apparatus. The feeling of discontent with Suharto's policies, however, had appeared years before Reformasi. When the regime's legitimacy and power started to recede, farmers began to abstain from the long-established practice of planting sugarcane under the TRI program.[18] This phenomenon is clearly revealed by the production data of Sragi sugar factory. Under the New Order's repression, the farmers' sugarcane cultivation area remained stable between 1986 and 1996, at around 5,000 hectares; but it dropped abruptly after 1997 (Fig. 2). This marks the decline of strong state patronage, considering the vast area of sugarcane cultivation enabled the heads of farmer groups to both receive state largesse and exploit small farmers.

The post-Suharto government was marked by various institutional reforms under the credo of good governance as demanded by the International Monetary Fund. These reforms were momentous for moderate Indonesian technocrats in promulgating a new type of governmentality based on decentralization. The technocrats' argument was that the model of administrative and economic centralization had drained the central government's energy to inquire into the dynamics of global financial and economic tendencies (Syaukani *et al.* 2002, 172). With decentralization, districts received significant autonomy
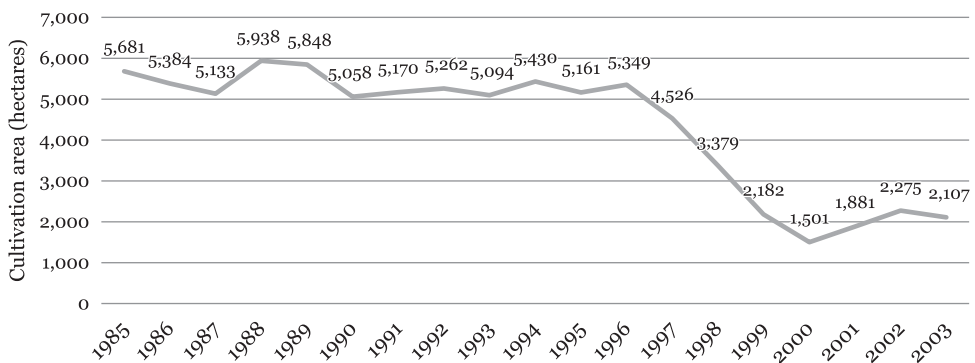

Fig. 2 Cultivation Area of Sragi Sugar Factory
Source: Production data of Sragi sugar factory.

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18) This was eventually terminated by Presidential Instruction No. 5/1998.

to take proper measures in creating and implementing local policies (Syaukani *et al.* 2002, 172–175).

As a product of Reformasi, Law No. 22/1999 not only outlined decentralization but also made village governments more democratic (Antlöv 2003). It diminished the village head's authority and at the same time dismantled political control and development. Previously, political control and development were employed by village heads to reward their allies and discriminate against common villagers. The more democratic state institution was perfected by the issuance of Law No. 43/1999, which prohibited civil servants, including the village apparatus, from engaging with political parties that had formerly provided them with strong legitimation to abuse their power. In sum, the disappearance of political backup combined with the villagers' awareness of transparency under the new type of governmentality led to decreased corruption in the village apparatus. This was because the continuation of corrupt practices would otherwise lead to political exploitation via the village apparatus's competitors.

The various institutional reforms carried out by the government to resolve the financial crisis brought about significant changes at the macro level, as demonstrated by the country's sound economic growth since 2004 (Booth 2016). Unlike in the past, the fruits of such growth were no longer distributed exclusively among state clients, as strong state clientelism had evaporated. Evidence of the more even distribution of prosperity can be seen in the survey data collected in 2012 appeared in Fig. 3 below.

As the population grew, the number of landowners dropped in relative terms from 44.2 percent in 1990 to 22.1 percent in 2012. Meanwhile, household heads' engagement in non-farming activities such as construction, small-scale manufacturing, and work in the service sector jumped from 38 percent in 1990 to more than 56 percent in 2012,
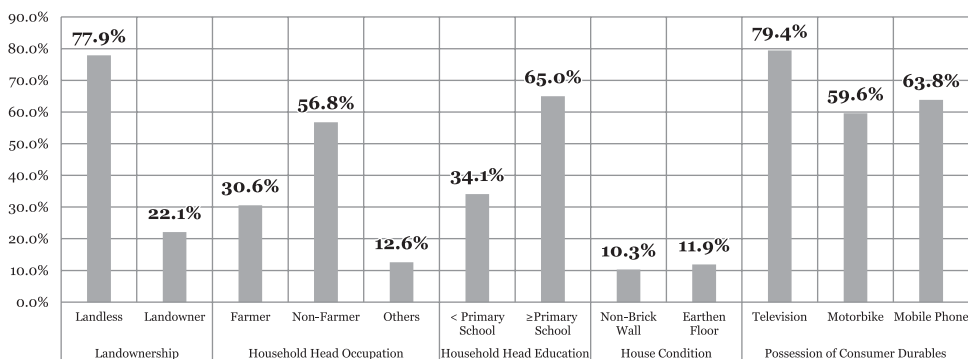

Fig. 3 Socioeconomic Conditions of Sampled Households, 2012
Source: Survey data (2012).

although the aggregate labor force involved in this sector remained high. In general, the educational level had also substantially increased by 2012. The improved conditions of rural life could be seen from respondents' housing conditions and their possession of durable consumer goods. By 2012 the number of houses with an earthen floor had plummeted when compared with 1990, while ownership of a television, motorbike, and even mobile phone, which used to be markers of middle-classness in the late 1990s, had become increasingly prevalent.

The ADB report (2010) notes that around 28.7 percent of the rural population could be slotted into the middle-class cohort if a loose definition was used: people with an expenditure per capita of more than US$2 per day. Using the income approach, the result of the six villages studied is congruent with this. If US$2 per day per capita is used as the lower threshold, 26.7 percent of the surveyed households belonged to the middle-class cohort. In other words, the size of the middle class had grown significantly compared to 1990. It is essential to analyze the distinction between the middle and lower classes in an attempt to discern what factors enabled many villagers to become middle class while others remained poor.

Table 3 shows that the ratio of household heads who completed senior high school was arguably low for both classes. The low educational background of household heads, particularly in middle-class families, indicates that most of them were not working in the bureaucracy or clerical jobs. Second, although there is a remarkable difference in the size of land owned between the two classes, only 32 percent of middle-class families had arable land. This result indicates that the majority of the new middle class were not big landowners. As the new middle class were neither bureaucrats nor big landowners, their source of prosperity had shifted away from land and bureaucracy, which were the main assets for becoming middle class in the past, to other assets, particularly skill, as this enabled villagers to embark on various types of entrepreneurship.

At the same time, the small size of middle-income farmers raises a crucial question. The survey data in 2012 revealed that nearly 70 percent of landowners lived around the poverty line. If agricultural wage labor is added, the number of people engaged in the

Table 3   Characteristics of Social Classes in the Six Villages Studied

	Household Income per Capita per Day (US$)	No. of Surveyed Households	% of Landowners	Average Landownership		Graduated from Senior High School	Household Heads in Non-Farm Occupations
				All Households (m²)	Landless Excluded (m²)		
Lower class	<2	733	20%	434	2,166	8.3%	54.6%
Middle class	≥2	267	32%	1,867	5,798	25.1%	63%

Source: Survey data (2012) (n = 1,000 households).

agricultural sector living near the poverty threshold had substantially increased. My preliminary assumption was that this phenomenon might have been shaped by the lack of cohesive political farmers—farmers who were able to ask for protection from the state or align themselves with a political group and whose ultimate goal was to work with the state government, not oppose it, as in the case of Thai farmers (see Walker 2012).

This condition, as we have seen from the previous discussion, might have been the outcome of the long-term practice of marginalization under the New Order regime, when farmers were not only tamed politically but also disadvantaged economically for the sake of national development. As any social movement by farmers to defend their rights was regarded as subversive, they tended to avoid rather than attach themselves to the state.[19] When the New Order collapsed, farmers were ill prepared to take cohesive political action—which would have been provided by their newfound democratic circumstances— to lift their well-being. This condition led to the perpetuation of local institutions used to exploit farmers, such as farmer groups. As in the past, farmer groups helped their members with various activities such as cultivation, harvesting, selling, and sometimes distributing government subsidies. Since the position of the leader was inherited rather than decided through democratic election, most of the farmer group leaders from the New Order held on to their position or passed it on to their children.

Having long experience in managing farmer groups, leaders have been able to inge-niously take economic advantage through various cunning means as they did in the past,[20] masked with generous acts such as lending money without interest or donating money to members when they face misfortune. Although farmer groups seem to provide social security for their members, it is the leaders' initiative to retain their members' loyalty.[21] This creates fragmentation and estrangement amongst farmers as their main goal is to have a benevolent patron in charge rather than struggle for common interests. The sense of dependency does not only undermine small farmers' potential political power to ask for more protection and subsidies from the government or politicians, but it also enables the heads of farmer groups to easily capitalize on their position by becoming canvassers.[22]

All in all, the permeation of patrimonialism at the village level precludes the smooth socioeconomic mobility of the lower class, as engagement with non-farming activities is

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19) Burning sugarcane fields was a typical example of this action.
20) In the case of jasmine farmer groups, the leader took around 20 percent of farmers' aggregate revenue (Goto, forthcoming).
21) Feeling economically secure, most of the wealthy farmers in Trukosari do not join farmer groups.
22) Bagus, Karsono, and Karto (the heads of farmer groups) became the canvassers for Samuri (PDIP), Tarjono (PDIP), and Sumono (Golkar). All were chosen in the general election of 2014. Tarto, a chosen parliamentary member from Gerindra, also used his younger brother's position as the head of a harvesting group to gain votes for himself.

more or less barred for them. This is particularly so when it comes to occupations requiring a connection with the government, such as the bureaucracy. As a result, there are just a handful who have succeeded in becoming wealthy through non-bureaucratic occupations. When the New Order regime decayed in the late 1990s, most elements of state patronage evaporated. Although the majority of small or tiny farmers and agricultural wage laborers still live in poverty, many villagers have been able to carve out wealth owing to more inclusive opportunities and, as will be discussed in the following section, the strengthening of the informal sector. The fairly rapid social mobility of the lower class is reflected in the comparison between data collected in the 1990 and 2012 surveys, which show that the number of middle-class households in the six villages studied jumped from 6 percent in 1990 to nearly 27 percent in 2012. Despite the rural middle class's statistical flourishing, the quantitative data is not enough to prove any argument that the oppression or marginality experienced by the common people during the New Order regime has been obliterated. Without resolving this issue, the impact of state patronage's decline on people's socioeconomic creativity remains unclear.

VI   The New Morality of the Rural Population

Jaman siki sapa-sapa gelem jibaku ya akeh berhasile (In this age anyone who does *jibaku* [works hard and dares to take risks] is likely to succeed).[23]

Pak Bagus's statement above seems to reflect the new morality, with the lower class aspiring to work hard and climb the socioeconomic ladder. This has replaced the apathetic mentality of the past, which viewed material affluence as a sign of greed, hostility toward village harmony, individualism, and menace. The dismantling of state patronage could not have been enough to engender this new morality, for it requires an appropriate economic setting.

At constant prices, the Indonesian GDP grew moderately through 2005–14: between 4.6 percent and 6.5 percent (Booth 2016, 110). The stability of Indonesia's economic growth is somewhat peculiar. Some scholars have observed that Indonesia underwent deindustrialization, noting the decline of the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP (see Priyarsono *et al.* 2010). In 2001 the sector contributed to about 30.7 percent of GDP, while in 2012 the figure dropped to less than 24.8 percent (Mizuno 2016, ch. 2). Since this drop was compensated for by soaring palm oil and coal exports, and an increase in

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23) Interview with Pak Bagus, September 12, 2016, Trukosari village.

domestic consumption (Mizuno 2016), the Indonesian economy was characterized by the strengthening of the informal sector. As this sector requires low capital and less advanced technology, and is easy to copy, myriad people, particularly from the lower social classes, could easily engage. The policy of no illegal fees stipulated by the central government in 2016 might also have aided the flourishing of the informal sector. In this new setting, the lower class, who could invest little in education, plunged into various small businesses, while the old middle class (civil servants and members of the village apparatus), feeling culturally superior, were hesitant to take those opportunities. This is not a fairy tale, as demonstrated by the household survey of 2012, summarized in Table 4.

Judging from the average annual income per capita, the types of occupation listed in Table 4 generate varied amounts of revenue. Compared with other occupations, agriculture yields the lowest earnings: 2.9 million rupiah per capita per year. This sector absorbs 37 percent of the total workforce. The manufacturing sector produces a slightly higher income than agriculture. The construction sector produces a moderate revenue. Since the agricultural sector seems to produce low income, even by rural standards, villagers from the lower social layers undertake various other economic activities to supplement their household income. When the demand for labor in the agricultural sector declines

Table 4　Number of Workers and Aggregate Revenue for Each Type of Work

Sector	Workforce		Character (million rupiah)		Average Annual Income per Capita (million rupiah)
	Number	%	Formal	Informal	
1　**Agriculture**	**717**	**37.7**	**10.4**	**2,105.9**	**2.9**
(Landholding peasants)	212	11.1	–	964	**4.5**
(Agricultural laborers)	547	24.5	–	661	**1.2**
(Others)	38	2	–	478	**12.6**
2　Fishery	76	4	–	469.9	–
3　Quarrying and mining	42	2.2	–	321.3	–
4　Manufacturing	167	8.8	724.3	778.7	4.6
(Factory workers)	60	3.2	–	–	–
(Household industry)	107	5.6	–	–	–
5　Electricity	1	0.1	–	56	–
6　Construction	260	13.7	21	2,799.7	10.7
7　Trade	265	13.9	85.1	5,575	21
8　Transportation	74	3.9	290.5	857.4	–
9　Finance	10	0.5	484.1	–	–
10　Private-sector service	145	7.6	192.7	2,182.6	15
11　Public service (civil servants)	94	4.9	2,547.9	–	27
12　Pensioners	20	1.1	325.6	–	–
13　Unclear	32	1.7	–	–	–
TOTAL	1,903	100	–	–	–

Source: Survey data (2012), analyzed by Kano (forthcoming).

(during the dry season or off season), male laborers frequently work in small-scale manufacturing, construction, brickmaking, or sand mining, while female laborers switch to the domestic sector, making, for example, palm leaf brooms. Many of the younger generation aggressively attempt to escape from this sector. In sum, the 2012 household economic survey indicates that almost all surveyed households relied on a variety of occupations.

Meanwhile, trading as well as private and public services (civil service) generate substantial income for households. Although the average income of a civil servant is higher than that of a person engaged in business (Table 4), this figure should not be taken at face value. Businesspeople tend to conceal their real income as they are afraid that the researcher will divulge their information to the tax office or competitors (Rutten in Savirani 2015, 45). Even if their figures are accepted, this cohort is tiny, making up 4.9 percent of the total workforce. All in all, the survey research from 2012 shows that the informal sector, such as manufacturing for the local market, trade (such as retail, food, and drinks), and other services characterized by informality have dominated the village economy. As shown in Table 3, 267 of the 1,000 surveyed households could be classified as middle class. If US$2 per day per capita is used as the lower threshold, 26.7% of the surveyed households (267 out of 1,000) belonged to this cohort. A new economic pattern in the villages becomes clearer when seeing the household head's occupation in middle-class families, as shown in Table 5.

Despite occupations such as farmer and civil servant still being important in creating middle-class families (33 percent), the new rural middle class mostly emerges from small entrepreneurs and company workers (27 percent). The latter figure is increasing because middle-class families whose household heads work in construction or as agricultural wage laborers rely on their children working as entrepreneurs. By 2016 the number of entrepreneurs had increased because many successful entrepreneurs who were relatively immature in 2012 became established, and more villagers became engaged in this sector.

Table 5 Occupations of Household Heads of Middle-Class Families, 2012

Household Head Occupation	Number	Percentage
Entrepreneur	47	18%
Civil servant	35	13%
Farmer	54	20%
Factory/company worker	23	9%
Construction or agricultural wage laborer	91	34%
Others	17	6%
Total	267	100%

Source: Household economic survey (2012).

Despite these quantitative measurements providing remarkable evidence of the new pattern of the rural economy, little is known about the process of becoming wealthy and its impact on rural life. Examples from Trukosari village will be used to understand the contemporary rural situation. Over the last few decades wheat consumption, including bakery products, among Indonesians has increased drastically. The high demand in this market has encouraged many young villagers, particularly from poor families, to plunge into the bakery business. This is a reasonable undertaking, given that in 2014 Asosiasi Pengusaha Bakery Indonesia (Indonesian Bakery Association, APEBI) reported that the total value of baked products reached 23 trillion rupiah, equal to US$1.24 billion (Yulisman 2014).

In Trukosari, Lantip is an example of a successful small entrepreneur in this business. After completing junior school in 1997, he went to Jakarta and worked in the construction sector. He then changed direction after a short encounter with a friend who enticed him into working as a bakery salesman. Aside from selling, he also taught himself baking, which eventually allowed him—along with his older brother and sister—to start his own business. Joint ventures based on either familial ties or friendship are commonly set up by new entrepreneurs to overcome capital insufficiency. Initially, Lantip and his siblings produced brownies and cakes and sold them on consignment in small retail shops or food stalls. The strong market allowed their business to grow quickly. Some years later, the joint venture broke up.

Nevertheless, Lantip's business continued to grow rapidly; he employed 24 salesmen in 2012. In early 2014, the heyday of brownies ended due to the market becoming saturated, and he shifted toward other bakery products such as layer cakes and muffins. In 2014 he opened a new stall in Citeureup, Bogor. The popularity of bakery products in this area earned him a lavish profit. Just two years later, he had three bakery stalls in Bogor: near PT Indocement, near Sentul International Circuit, and in Ciluar Market. Each stall employed two or three workers supervised by one trusted employee. Though the business was lucrative, the cost of production was undeniably high. At the time of my fieldwork in 2016, the cost of renting a small stall of 12 square meters was about 30 million rupiah per annum, and Lantip spent more than 100 million rupiah in rental costs alone. Lantip modestly confessed that his gross monthly revenue could reach 200 million rupiah, though the figure varied from month to month.[24]

In Trukosari, Lantip was not alone in exploiting this market; much of the younger

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24) In the production process, one small bucket of batter could be made into 12 boxed cakes (each box containing one round cake). If three or four types of cake were made daily, they sold at least 36 boxes each day. Since the average price of each box was at least 20,000 rupiah, the stall would receive 720,000 rupiah a day if all cakes sold.

generation were waiting to start their own businesses. In a small bakery stall near Petarukan Market, Ardi, a 17-year-old boy, bemoaned his situation to me: "I am tired of having [to work] for the boss, and I am going to embark [on] my own business." I knew that he had been involved in the bakery business since he was 14 years old. His is not an exceptional case in light of the high dropout rate of both junior and senior high school students, particularly among the lower class. One reason for the high dropout rate is that the Indonesian manufacturing sector is growing slowly, and so the big factories in and around Jakarta, which used to be the main destination of vocational students from the area, are now inclined to use short-term contract workers. An elderly villager lamented the future of his third son, whose two-year work contract in a company in Jakarta was almost over. "Now most companies are reluctant to employ a tenure," he moaned. Such insecure conditions have encouraged many juveniles to work rather than continue their education. Moreover, the informal sector, for instance the bakery business, has been proven to succeed in improving the lives of the lower class. Based on my fieldwork, many villagers have engaged in the bakery business, as shown in Table 6.

Trukosari village has seven hamlets, and the distribution of bakery entrepreneurs in each hamlet is slightly different. Generally, large-scale bakery businessmen have at least 4 stalls each, totalling 68 stalls among them. If each stall needs at least two workers, the businessmen employ a total of 136 laborers. Combined with medium and small-scale entrepreneurs, these businesses have absorbed a lot of labor from Trukosari village. Amidst the fierce competition in Java, some villagers have expanded their businesses to cities on other islands such as Sumatra, Bali, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and even West Papua. Although many of them have been able to develop their business, some have gone bankrupt. In this competitive market, *jibaku* and luck are viewed as the main

Table 6 Number of Bakery Businessmen in Trukosari*

Scale	Hamlet							Total
	TJ	BD	PT	KM	PG	PS	SM	
Big	3	6	3	2	1	n/a	2	17
Medium	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	3	15
Small	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	8	2	11
Total	11	6	4	2	1	12	7	43

Source: Author's research (2016).**

Notes: * I define the business scale according to its monthly turnover. A "big" business turns over more than 60 million rupiah; a "medium" business earns between 20 million and 60 million rupiah; a "small" business usually earns less than that amount and is operated by family laborers.
    ** The actual numbers are likely far higher; these were only the businessmen whom I managed to meet.
    1) Trukosari village has seven hamlets: TJ, BD, PT, KM, PG, PS, and SM. The distribution of bakery entrepreneurs in each hamlet is slightly different.

determinants of success. Such a mentality is not confined to the bakery business but pervades throughout other sectors. What I witnessed in Trukosari, in the case of bakery businesses and other small enterprises, was people's willingness to engage in high-risk investments.

As the villagers' material affluence now derives mainly from the informal sector, requiring no background in higher education or connections with bureaucrats or politicians, the new morality of the aspiring villagers is largely defined by *jibaku* (work hard and dare to take risks). A statement by Lantip in conversation with Wiwin, his close friend who worked as a teaching apprentice, illustrates the new villagers' subjectivity. He said to Wiwin:

> I tell you, Win, if you become a state employee [teacher], even after you have worked for 10 years you may not be able to purchase a Honda Jazz, unless you get involved in corruption. But if you get involved in this [bakery] business, I can guarantee that your life will change after only two years.

The message is clear: What might have been the main avenue for villagers to gain or retain middle class status in the past is now seemingly obsolete. Small-scale entrepreneurship holds more promise for guaranteeing middle-classness, in terms of both revenue and lifestyle. Since many of the new rich come from the lower social class through *jibaku*, most villagers no longer view material affluence as an indicator of deficient morality. Prosperity is now something that is longed for rather than treated with derision. What villagers now reproach is the failure to adhere to this new ethic, *jibaku* or hard work. Dirman, a villager with a bachelor's degree, is an example of a person who is unable to adhere to the new ethic. Some of the villagers have given him a nickname: Wiranto. The nickname does not refer to the former Indonesian Military chief but is an acronym for *wira-wiri ora nggota* (busy pacing back and forth without doing anything). Amidst the abundant opportunities in the informal sector, the villagers perceive Dirman as indolent.

Nonetheless, an indolent personality per se is not adequate to explain why many villagers remain poor despite the ample opportunities provided by the informal sector. Although this is a complex problem, some assessments can be made. First, engaging in the informal sector requires certain skills, and to become a skillful person requires a lot of effort. Second, as most villagers work in the agricultural sector (37 percent of the total labor force), the absence of political farmers might hamper them from having better living conditions. Third, most poor families do not have enough young and productive laborers who can easily jump into the vibrant informal sector. The survey data of 2012 reveal that poor households tend to have more family members but fewer productive laborers, while in middle-class families it is the opposite.

Table 7   Gini Index, 2012

Scope	Six villages (1,000 households)	Indonesia (BPS)
Approach	Income approach	Expenditure approach
Per capita Gini index	**0.55**	**0.425**

Sources: Survey data (2012); BPS (2020).

Although the flourishing informal sector has allowed for dramatic socioeconomic change, it has also brought about another consequence: high economic inequality (see Rosser *et al.* 2000). This postulate corresponds with the result of the household economic survey analysis undertaken in 2012, as shown in Table 7.

During the New Order regime, inequality—measured by people's expenditure—was stable, from 0.35 in 1964–65 to 0.34 in 1990 (Akita *et al.* 1999, 202). However, it rose from the early 2000s (see Booth 2016, 170). The Badan Pusat Statistik (Central Bureau of Statistics, BPS) report states that it was 0.425 in 2012, measured in terms of the expenditure approach (BPS 2020, 170). Meanwhile, the analysis of income distribution in the 1,000 sampled households revealed an astonishing result: the Gini index for the six villages based on per capita income for 2012 was extremely high (0.55). Although both measurements show the increasing economic inequality from the early 2000s, villagers' feelings of widening economic inequality may best be represented by the income rather than expenditure approach, as this calculates rich people's savings (see Booth 2016, 185).

The fairly low level of economic inequality during the New Order regime was a direct impact of state patronage. As state patronage begs clients' loyalty, the New Order regime attempted to ensure an even and proportionate material distribution among its clients. At the same time, the New Order also strictly constrained clients' economic aggressiveness. The emergence of economically aggressive and independent groups would have raised many challenges within the context of the New Order's supremacy. In this sense, middle-classness was determined not only by one's connections with the state but also by one's compliance with its order. Meanwhile, the lower class were excluded from most opportunities to climb the economic ladder, although their condition was slightly improved thanks to the increase in productivity of staple foods under the Green Revolution program. The unaggressive middle class and apathetic lower class helped to reduce economic inequality statistically.

Unpredictable political and economic circumstances since the late 1990s have overturned that landscape. The fall of the New Order regime, followed by a gradual erosion of state patronage, in tandem with the strengthening of the informal sector has opened up more exclusive economic opportunities for aspiring villagers to create wealth. Under

the belief of *jaman duit*, "the age of money" (Antlöv 2005, 195), aggressive economic expansion and accumulation of assets became the main aspirations of the middle class. This was different from years past, when the rich were satisfied with being rent-seekers. Unfortunately, the new economic creativity in the informal sector through various types of entrepreneurship has not been accompanied by a new political creativity, which would potentially aid farmers in improving their livelihood through various democratic means. This condition is a result of the New Order's long repression, which disorganized the farmers' movement. Although the patron of businesspeople has shifted from the state to the market, the (small) farmers' patrons remain the same: the heads of farmer groups. However, it is worth noting that these heads no longer function as instruments of the state in controlling farmers. Along with the increase in the size of the rural middle class, the uneven political and economic processes have increased inequality rather than decreased it.

VII   Conclusion

The rapid expansion of the Indonesian rural middle class, as this paper has shown from the six villages studied, is not the result of sound economic growth after the 1997–98 financial crisis per se; it is a result of the gradual erosion of the pervasive state patronage that existed under patrimonialism. Suharto's patrimonialism tended to benefit dominant rural groups (state clients) while discriminating against the common people, thus stifling the latter's creativity. This landscape changed with the financial crisis. The fall of Suharto encouraged the new government to adopt a model of "good governance," which is commonly translated as transparency, accountability, and the democratization of state institutions. This did not only minimize the role of the state, rendering it as a mere market facilitator that provided to the right institutions, but also created a friendly environment for business. The more inclusive opportunities available, in tandem with a new macroeconomic situation and the flourishing of the informal sector, paved the way for the lower class to become middle class through various entrepreneurial activities. The immediate impact of this was that the size of the middle class grew rapidly—from 6 percent in 1990 to almost 27 percent in 2012.

The availability of historical and ethnographic data helps to show more precisely some (unexpected) impacts of the growing middle class on rural life. First of all, we have seen that it engendered a new moral framework centered around *jibaku* and a respect for material affluence. This new form of morality eroded the old prejudices that largely viewed material affluence as dependent on rent-seeking practices. Although the new

middle class started to change the face of villages, it also brought about the unanticipated outcome of stark economic inequality.

What we can learn from this case is that the democratization of state institutions, such as village governance, dismantled the phenomenon of strong state clientelism. Although this boosted the villagers' economic creativity, their political creativity remained underdeveloped. Such a situation occurs when myriad small farmers and agricultural wage laborers, assumed to be economically vulnerable, cannot rely on more democratic means to enhance their well-being. In these circumstances, despite most villagers earning their income from a variety of economic activities, the agricultural sector becomes a pool for poor households. As the Indonesian economy grew moderately with the strengthening of the informal sector, any further expansion of the rural middle class might exacerbate rather than remedy inequality. The political, economic, social, and historical assessments in this study help to elucidate what has been taking place in the rural areas post-1998.

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The Rubber Boom Assemblage and Internalized Friction: Attitudes of the Government, NGOs, and Farmers in Northeast Thailand

Fujita Wataru*

Northeast Thailand experienced a rubber boom that began in the 2000s with a sudden swing away from the trend toward sustainable forest management that had been widely accepted by society in the 1990s. The rapid expansion of rubber cultivation caused various ecological changes in the farmers' living environment. Faced with environmental issues, various actors in society were reluctant to take the measures necessary to stop these changes, even when there were legal provisions to do so. Among the bureaucracy, agriculture agencies were indifferent to deforestation and, in some cases, gave subsidies to non-titled lands despite regulations against this. Conservation agencies hesitated to regulate illegal cultivation strictly in the forestlands. At the study site, the Tambon Administration Organization stressed the importance of forest conservation but never criticized or prevented rubber cultivation. Villagers reached no consensus on regulating forest clearing or herbicide use but changed their customs to allow the enclosure of non-timber forest resources in private forests. Various actors, without mutual communication, perceived a political atmosphere in which poor people's hopes of a socioeconomic upgrade via rubber could not be denied under the conditions of electoral politics, despite environmental degradation. These were all elements of the rubber boom assemblage. The friction arising from rubber cultivation combined with anxiety regarding environmental degradation became internalized in the actors because the forces driving the rubber boom were so powerful. Therefore, at a glance, all actors suddenly seemed to become optimistic about rubber.

Keywords: Northeast Thailand, rubber boom, assemblage, social process

I Introduction

Northeast Thailand experienced a rapid expansion of rubber cultivation beginning in the 2000s. This was due mainly to the increase in the price of rubber in response to the

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* 藤田　渡, College of Sustainable System Sciences, Osaka Prefecture University, 1-1 Gakuen-cho, Naka-ku Sakai, Osaka 599-8531, Japan
  e-mail: watarufujita@gmail.com

growth of the automobile industry in emerging economies such as China and India, and the subsequent demand for tires. This rapid expansion occurred not only in Thailand but also elsewhere in Southeast Asia, such as Southwest China, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Despite differences in the acquisition and holding of rubber farms and the distribution of profits by country or region, a common factor in all of these areas was that previously self-sufficient areas became connected directly to the network of the global economy and industry via rubber (Fox and Castella 2013).

This rapid expansion of rubber cultivation resulted in ecological changes. The villagers acknowledged this, but they made no institutional arrangement to prevent the changes; and almost none of the environmental NGOs took action. Until extremely strong forest conservation policies were put in place by Thailand's military government in 2014, no governmental agency took effective measures in this regard, hesitating to exercise their legal authority. All actors were seemingly optimistic about the trend of the rubber boom. A social consciousness of sustainable natural resource management grew during the 1990s, after the logging ban. Optimism about the rubber boom and ignorance of the ecological degradation caused by the expansion of rubber cultivation suddenly swung the pendulum of opinion in the other direction.

Considering the trend since the 1990s in which the government, NGOs, and local communities had been seeking sustainable forest management and usage, this sudden swing by all sectors to prioritize rubber, in disregard of the law, seemed strange. This article analyzes the rubber boom as an assemblage. The world is being ceaselessly shaped and reshaped by assemblages consisting of heterogeneous elements, either in the direction of "territorialization"—making order from the center in a segmented structured way like a state—or "deterritorialization"—deconstructing the order into a multiplicity of linear movements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, ch. 1). Assemblages are continuously rearranged in this process (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, ch. 11).

The formation and rearrangement of heterogeneous assemblages can explain social change. In her case study of a community forestry project, Tania Li (2007) reveals the process of power formation by which outsiders intervene in local communities with a "will to improve," by analyzing how various elements are assembled into a concrete project scheme. Michiel Köhne (2014) argues for the opposite, bottom-up direction of assemblage formation. According to him, the governance of an institute of a multi-stakeholder initiative for palm oil is formed through an assemblage of practices in a number of places, with variations somehow contradicting each other. In these ways, elements at different geographical scales interact, and these assemblages transform society as well as the assemblages themselves. Such assemblages not only exist in terms of what can be physically observed, like field-level projects, but can also be formed by human

and non-human actors on a global scale (Collier and Ong 2005; McFarlane 2009).

These studies assume a human actor to be a subject or agent holding a consistent idea. However, an individual human actor can also be an assemblage of heterogeneous elements. In this article, I analyze individual human actors as assemblages, as well as social events and phenomena, including those observed in local communities and those developing on broader geographic scales. In doing so, I explain the sociological mechanism of the rubber boom.

II Rubber, the Forest, Living Environments, and Assemblage

II-1 *Rubber in the Context of Forest Conservation*
Until the end of the 1980s, Thailand experienced serious deforestation as a result of commercial logging and farmland expansion. The gap between forestland in a legal sense and actual forest cover increased (Uhlig 1988; Pasuk and Baker 1995, ch. 2; Fujita 2003). In the 1990s, the government took measures to resolve the problem of this gap. Although the forest department enclosed core natural forests with high conservation value in terms of biodiversity and watersheds as protected areas, patches of secondary forest near local communities where the locals exploited natural materials for subsistence were to be managed and utilized by the local communities as community forests. Degraded forestlands were transferred to the Agricultural Land Reform Office in charge of giving cultivation rights certificates to local inhabitants. Through the implementation of these policies, especially the negotiation of community forests, the significance of sustainable forest management appeared to be widely accepted within society.[1]

Studies on the sociopolitical aspects of natural resource management have usually assumed that people are in a state of tension or conflict, and have analyzed the negotiations between them. Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Peluso (1995) and Peluso and Vandergeest (2001) view the history of forest policy in Thailand as "territorialization" of the forest by the state, excluding people's access to resources.[2] Thus, the forest has been a place of conflicting interests between the state seeking forest enclosure for development or conservation and the people depending on forest resources for their livelihoods, or what they call the "political forest." Colonialistic forest policies and legal

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1) In the long debate about "community forest law" from 1990 to 2007, all actors agreed upon the need to manage community forests sustainably, including the Forest Department, conservation-oriented and local-people's-rights-oriented NGOs, and local community representatives (Fujita 2008).
2) Their use of the term "territorialization" differs from that of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), as it is more focused on actual contested rights over forest resources.

institutions sometimes caused physical conflicts, including the violent eviction of people by the government or guerrilla-like counterattacks against the state by the people. More often, however, the implementation of these policies and institutions were compromised by the decisions of field-level officers or through negotiations with local residents. Regardless, criticisms of colonialistic forest policies led to community-based natural resource management becoming a global standard and reduced conflict over resources between the state and the people.

Case studies have revealed that community-based forest management projects are crafted by outside actors via governmentality (Agrawal 2005; Li 2007). Unlike these studies, there are many cases in Thailand in which locals spontaneously initiated and practiced de facto community forest management. They later received assistance from NGOs, local academics, and forest officers to organize and institutionalize community forests with clear demarcation, written regulations, and management committees. It is true that in the process of establishing such community forests in a formal or institution-alized way, the actual design of community forests was affected by the power relation-ship—there were unequal amounts of expert knowledge between the locals and NGO workers or forest officials; NGO workers and officials were friendly with the locals in giving necessary advice. However, the expansion of community forests in Thailand since 1990 was fueled by the demands of locals facing resource scarcity and the necessity to protect their rights, and was approved by the Forest Department, influenced by the global trend to promote community-based resource management for sustainable use (Fujita 2011).

In the 2000s, contrary to this trend of sustainable forest usage, forests were invaded for rubber cultivation, especially in nontraditional cultivation areas such as the northeast region. The last remaining forests were converted into rubber gardens. Herbicide use in the rubber gardens polluted surrounding areas. Despite this, there were very few voices from government agencies, NGOs, or local entities demanding a halt or limit to the expansion of rubber. Society as a whole seemed to accept the rubber boom, with few conflicts between the state and rubber-growing communities.

II-2 *Rubber and Agrarian Change in Northeast Thailand*
Farmers in Thailand have been committed to a market economy for longer and more deeply than farmers in many other countries and areas. In Northeast Thailand, in par-ticular, upland cash crops such as kenaf, cassava, and maize have been widespread since the 1960s (Pasuk and Baker 1995, ch. 2). Prior to the 1990s, however, cash-crop cultiva-tion did not raise the socioeconomic status of poor Thai farmers (Rambo 2017). High volatility of crop prices, accompanied by a poor—or lacking—social safety net, kept

farmers socially marginalized and economically vulnerable (Hirsch 1990). Instead, as many previous studies (Rigg and Salamanca 2011; 2015; Rigg *et al.* 2014; Rigg *et al.* 2018) have argued, migrant work in Bangkok and other urban areas, as well as various non-farm activities, were long the main sources of cash income, while farming decreased.

Since the 2000s, due to the growth of global market needs, prices of industrial crops such as rubber and cassava have remained high. I observed in this study that rubber cultivators have become rich; they are able to purchase cars, tractors, and electrical appliances as well as daily food materials. Their children are able to attend college. They have never before experienced such an economic boom. The statistics also show that the average income in Ubon Ratchathani Province, where this study is located, almost reached the national average in 2011, but the gap subsequently widened following a decline in the price of rubber (Figs. 1 and 2).

Many previous studies that argued for agrarian change in Northeast Thailand dismissed the impact of the rise in crop price, probably because those studies were conducted in Khon Kaen and Maha Sarakham Provinces, where there was no remaining frontier land for upland crop expansion in the 1980s (Rigg and Salamanca 2011, 557; 2015, 300). However, other case studies in Khon Kaen Province reported a significant contribution of rubber cultivation to villagers' income, for both owners of rubber gardens and hired laborers (Patarapong *et al.* 2011; Uraiwan and Aran 2013).

Thus, the spread of cash-crop cultivation and its economic impact have not been
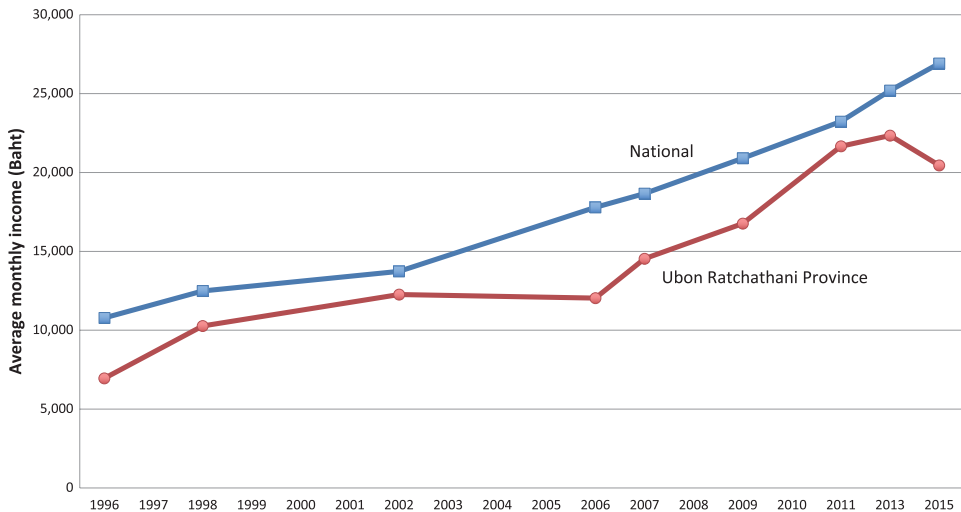

Fig. 1 Average Income: National and Ubon Ratchathani Province

Sources: Thailand, National Statistical Office (1996; 1998; 2006; 2007; 2009; 2011; 2015); Ubon Ratchathani Provincial Statistical Office (2002).

Baht/kg

Fig. 2   Price of Rubber, 1997–2015
Source: Thailand, Office of Agricultural Economics (2015b).

uniform. The study site of this article was one of the most peripheral in terms of cash-crop cultivation. Cassava cultivation spread in the 2000s, at the same time as rubber. Before that, villagers' cash income derived mostly from migrant work in urban areas or miscellaneous wage labor around the village. Therefore, relatively rich natural forest resources were preserved, which allowed for a self-sufficient mode of life. Rubber, with its significant economic impact, not only replaced existing crop fields but also destroyed the scarce remaining natural forests.

II-3 *Assemblage*

These changes in rural areas of Northeast Thailand can be explained in terms of assemblages as follows: Since the 1990s, when the drastic policy change took place favoring sustainable forest management, including the establishment of community forests, the assemblage of farmers' livelihoods involved major factors such as unstable, insufficient crop prices; non-farming activities and migrant work in urban areas; and sustainable natural resource management. In the early 2000s, this assemblage was rearranged into the rubber boom assemblage, with the increase in rubber prices. In the cultivable areas in the Northeast, many farmers planted rubber seedlings, which began to provide their main income six or seven years later and allowed the farmers to avoid migrant work. Natural resource management remained within the assemblage, but as a less important element. In this process of assemblage rearrangement, did friction arise between con-

flicting elements, and if so, how was it resolved? Below, I examine actors' performances in detail, as part of a study in a village in Ubon Ratchathani Province.

III Study Site and Methodology

The arguments in this paper basically depend on field research in N village in Ubon Ratchathani Province and in surrounding villages. I have made regular visits to N and neighboring villages since 1997 and carried out ethnographic research on relationships between villagers' livelihoods and natural resource use. The description and arguments used in this article are based mainly on ethnographic data from participant observation prior to 2015, as well as questionnaire surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015, interviews with key informants in both Bangkok and the area around N village, and analyses of documents such as newspapers and websites.

Most villagers in N and surrounding villages are Isan people. N village is located adjacent to Pha Taem National Park, established in 1991. Around the village, the land is gently sloped. The lower lands are occupied by paddy fields, while the hilly area was once cultivated for upland rice by a form of shifting cultivation that had been abandoned for decades because of reinforced forest patrols against swidden practices after the establishment of the national park. The main form of subsistence has long been paddy cultivation, while various resources for daily living have been extracted from the surrounding natural environment, such as bamboo shoots and mushrooms from the forests, fish from the streams and paddy fields, and wild animals hunted in the forests. Unlike many other villages in the Northeast, cash crops such as cassava, maize, and kenaf had seldom been cultivated until cassava cultivation began in N village and the surrounding area in the 2000s. In 1997, to secure the natural forests for sustainable use, the villagers designated the hilly forest area in the village as a community forest and institutionalized regulations and organization for its management.[3]

Rubber cultivation began to expand rapidly in the village in the early 2000s, in line with the general trend in Northeast Thailand, although some farmers had practiced it before. Large parts of private forests were cleared and converted to rubber gardens as well as cassava fields.

Countrywide, about 90 percent of newly planted rubber gardens from 2003 to 2014 were converted from low-vegetation areas, probably crop fields, while only about

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3) The establishment of N village's community forest in 1997 was de facto, with approximately 80 percent of villagers in agreement, while its formal establishment, with complete agreement, was in 2002.

10 percent were converted from natural forests (Hurni and Fox 2018, 209). Sorat Praweenwongwuthi *et al.* (2017) reported higher percentages: 827 ha out of a total of 1,353 ha of rubber gardens planted in Mueang District between 2006 and 2010 were converted from natural forests, as were 1,312 ha out of a total of 5,498 ha in That Phom District, Nakhon Phanom Province. These data show that in some areas, conversion to rubber gardens caused much more severe deforestation compared with the general trend. Only 10 percent was enough to damage the last remaining natural forests, including rich natural ecosystems, in some protected areas.

According to a questionnaire survey in N village in 2012, 59 of 109 households had rubber gardens occupying 664 rai within the village, while in 2015, 131 of 144 households had 973.3 rai.[4] In 2012, only 17 of 109 households still maintained secondary forests adjacent to farmlands, called *pa hua rai plai na*, of their own, totaling 88 rai. Fig. 3 shows the years of cultivation and planting of rubber seedlings, covering 417 rai out of 664 rai in 2012. Forest clearing preceded the planting of rubber seedlings, because the villagers tended to cultivate cassava for several years before planting rubber. Both clearing of secondary forests and planting of rubber seedlings increased markedly after 2003.

The community forest was well conserved, partly because the villagers respected their own regulations and partly because a large part of the community forest was located on rocky land that was unsuitable for cultivation. The expansion of rubber gardens accompanied various changes in the environment. On the one hand, it pushed people into a more convenient, consumption-based lifestyle by providing cash income; and on the other, it discouraged them from natural resource extraction, such as fishing and wild mushroom gathering, due to chemical pollution and decreases in natural resources. There were also changes in villagers' daily lives. Some of them may have once considered preventing resource degradation by regulating herbicide use; in the new reality, however, they tried instead to adjust their social and customary order of open access to natural resources regardless of landownership to the new conditions brought about by rubber cultivation in which landowners could prohibit access to natural resources.

Indeed, a large proportion of the rubber gardens and cassava fields did not have any land title, with the exception of enduring farmlands that had So Po Ko 4-01 titles or those recently investigated by forest officers and qualified to be given So Tho Ko titles.[5] In fact, the recent clearing of forests was mostly illegal. The land was all located outside the national park. Thus, the park guards did not monitor the villagers' agricultural activ-

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4) 1 rai equals 0.16 ha.
5) Both So Po Ko 4-01 and So Tho Ko are limited land titles giving cultivation rights but not rights for sale and mortgage. The former title is issued by the Agricultural Land Reform Office, while the latter is issued by the Royal Forest Department.
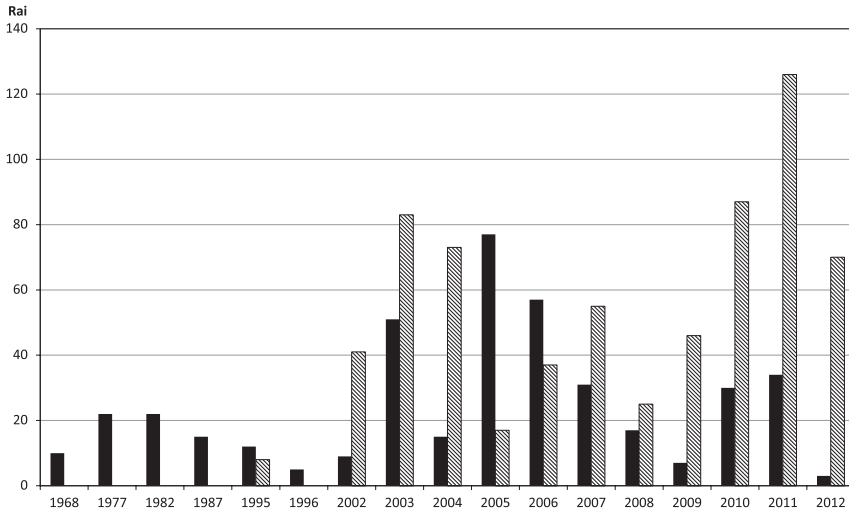
Fig. 3 Clearing and Planting of Rubber Trees

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2012.
Note: Unshaded bars show the area of clearing that is current rubber gardens.
      Shaded bars show the area of rubber planting.

ities. The forest protection unit (*nuai pongkan raksa pa*) located near the village, and other forest authorities in charge of managing national forestlands outside the park, overlooked the villagers' clearing of the forests, as the officers understood the need for them to do so to generate a livelihood. NGOs, including one that had committed to promoting the establishment of community forests in this area and to assisting the villagers, also did not publicly alert the authorities or rubber cultivation smallholders to the environmental damage. In that sense, the governmental authorities, villagers, and probably NGOs all supported the rubber boom. In the following sections, I will examine in detail the context of the rubber boom and the responses of each actor to it.

IV   Development of the Rubber Boom

IV-1 *Rubber Promotion Policy*

In the past, rubber cultivation was limited to the southern and eastern parts of Thailand. Except for a negligible number of people who had experience working as rubber tappers in the South and had begun to cultivate the crop earlier, major cultivation in the Northeast did not begin until 1989, when the government initiated a rubber promotion policy. Arak, an officer at the Rubber Research Institute, under the Department of Agriculture,

reported that the government began to consider promoting rubber in the Northeast and North in the late 1970s. During that period, Malaysian plantation companies decided to switch from rubber to palm oil (they executed these plans in the early 1980s) due to the continuing low price of rubber. However, the Thai government anticipated a shortage in rubber supply and sought new areas for rubber cultivation in the North and Northeast. First, an experimental plantation was started in the newly established Chachoengsao Rubber Research Center.[6] Seeing the successful results of the experiment, the government started a rubber promotion policy in 1989, the first phase of which continued until 1996 and resulted in approximately 280,000 rai being brought under cultivation in the Northeast. The promotion of rubber in this phase aimed at reforestation as well. The following phase, from 1997 to 2001 (and then extended), targeted an additional growth area of 200,000 rai and a total cultivation area of 800,000 rai (*Phu chat kan rai wan*, March 10, 1997; *Matichon*, April 4, 2001). Two further phases, in 2003–6 and 2011–13, set more ambitious targets of an additional 1 million rai (700,000 rai in the Northeast and 300,000 rai in the North) and 800,000 rai (500,000 rai in the Northeast, 150,000 rai in the North, and 150,000 rai in the central region) respectively (*Khao sot*, June 14, 2003; *Deli niu*, October 8, 2009; *Krungthep thurakit*, January 15, 2011; Yuphin 2013). In each phase, the promotion project provided participating farmers with rubber seedlings at no cost and low-interest loans to support expenditures until rubber began to be harvested.

IV-2 *Difficulties in the Initial Phase*

The rubber promotion policy was not effective, especially in the initial phase. For example, the second phase, 1997–2001, targeted a 200,000-rai increase in cultivation area. Because the target was not achieved within the planned period, the project phase was extended (*Matichon*, April 4, 2001). The rubber price was as low as 20 baht per kilogram until around 2002–3. More important, most farmers in the Northeast were skeptical that rubber could grow in their region, where natural conditions such as weather, moisture, and soil differed significantly from those in the South.

Panya Woraphithayaphon, who had been working to promote rubber cultivation as a staff member of the Office of Rubber Replanting Aid Fund in the Northeast since 1987 and was the director of the Ubon Ratchathani branch office in 2013, reported that it took five years (1987–93) for him to convince farmers to cultivate rubber. Farmers in this region tended to think in the short term. They were also likely to be easily convinced by rumors without verifying facts for themselves. Thus, in the initial period, a rumor was spread throughout the region that said "If you plant rubber trees, what comes out is

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6) Interview with Arak Chanthuma, Rubber Research Institute, March 26, 2014.

tears (*nam ta*), not latex (*nam yang*)," metaphorically saying that rubber could not grow well in the Northeast and that farmers would suffer. Actually, latex was harvested in the research center in Nong Khai, demonstrating that rubber could grow well in the Northeast. However, farmers at that time were not easily convinced.[7] In the same way, a newspaper reported that a village headman in Mukdahan Province who planted rubber and tried to encourage other villagers to do the same was called a fool (Suchat 1998).

IV-3 *Rubber Boom*

Farmers in the Northeast began to plant rubber enthusiastically around 2002–3 (Fig. 4), when the Thaksin government adopted the accelerated rubber promotion policy often called the "1 million rai project." It is true that the government made a significant policy shift to boost the target to an additional 1 million rai of cultivated area and that the Thaksin government needed to revoke a previous cabinet resolution that limited the rubber cultivation area in the whole country to not more than 1.2 million rai (*Khao sot*, May 9, 2003). Expecting the project to lead to improvements in living standards, many people formed long queues to join the project (*Phu chat kan rai wan*, July 12, 2007; *Krungthep thurakit*, January 15, 2011). However, the government's project was not the
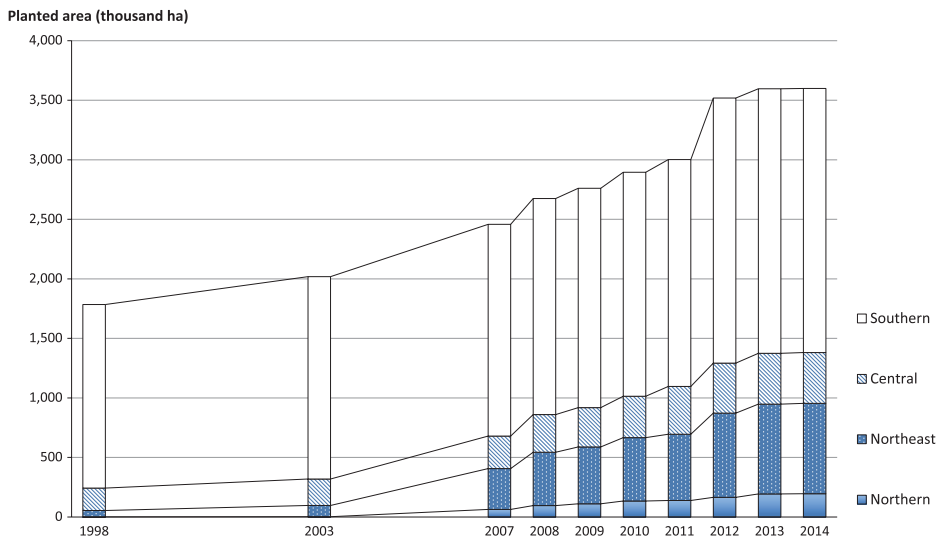

Fig. 4   Expansion of Rubber Cultivation Area by Region

Sources: Khana Kamakan Nayobai Yang Thamachat (2010); Thailand, Office of Agricultural Economics (2010; 2012; 2015a).

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7) Interview with Panya Woraphithayaphon, ORRAF Ubon Ratchathani branch office, March 1, 2012.

main driving force behind farmers planting rubber. Farmers planted many more rubber trees without any support from the project. Of the 4 million rai increase in rubber cultivation area between 2003 and 2009, 3.2 million rai were planted spontaneously through farmers' own investments (Saran 2011). The government's project was so problematic that it did not fully benefit farmers. The production of seedlings could not keep up with demand. Seedlings arrived too late in the season for planting, in insufficient numbers, and were of poor quality. Additionally, corrupt politicians were involved in the process (Saran 2011; *Phu chat kan sut sapda*, April 23, 2011).

Northeast farmers' attitudes during this period were reported in the mass media. For example, a daily business paper reported that in one village in Nong Khai Province, migrants from the South purchased land from local inhabitants for rubber cultivation. However, in another village in Loei Province, villagers refused to sell their land to outsiders because they wanted to plant rubber themselves. Farmers in the Northeast "woke up" to rubber in 2002–3 (*Krungthep thurakit*, December 24, 2005). Furthermore, in the following years, seeing a sharp increase in rubber price—up to nearly 100 baht per kilogram (Fig. 2)—farmers formed long lines to join the project. The project could not provide enough seedlings to distribute to participating farmers, while other farmers obtained informal loans at high interest rates to pay the initial costs of rubber cultivation (*Phu chat kan rai wan*, July 12, 2007).

The research site also followed this trend. Rapid expansion of rubber cultivation began in 2003. Rubber was first cultivated in this area in 1989, when a few retired teachers migrated to P village, next to N village. In 1990 about 10 more P villagers began cultivation, with the support of a project by an NGO, the Progressive Farmers Association. N villagers began to cultivate rubber around 2000. From 2003, following the rubber price increase, rubber cultivation increased. N villagers made their decision to plant rubber not only due to the price in the market; they also saw that those who had planted rubber before them were doing well. They learned that rubber grew well in the area and could reward them with enough income to support a livelihood without working in Bangkok, to buy a pickup truck and a tractor, and to build a new house. Such firsthand learning about the success of their neighbors effectively pushed the villagers into rubber cultivation.

It was not only farmers who rushed into rubber. Noi, a policeman at the nearest police station, bought land from a local farmer in 1995 and planted rubber in 2005 and 2009. He managed his rubber garden by hiring labor from neighboring villages. In fact, most of the staff at the police station had rubber gardens. This was true of other public officials, such as school, forestry, and district office personnel. Moreover, many from the South purchased land for rubber gardens. The community forest of C village, next to

N village, was cleared illegally by a man from another district to plant rubber. A young girl in N village, whom one of my friends knew, was married to a rich man from the South who managed rubber gardens.

The following were all elements of the rubber boom assemblage: experimental plantations in Northeast Thailand, the fact that rubber could grow in Northeast Thailand, the rubber promotion policy of the government, increases in the price of rubber, and the economic success of the growers. In this context, empirical events such as seeing neighbors rush to plant rubber and their improved living standards were core elements that directly affected farmers, with the result that they wanted to plant more rubber.

The price dropped after 2012, as shown in Fig. 2, to around 40 baht per kilogram. However, in 2013 I still observed N villagers planting rubber; and, as reflected in questionnaire surveys, there was a higher percentage of rubber-growing households in 2015 than in 2012, as shown in Section III. In 2014 and 2015 villagers no longer planted rubber, and most of the seedling suppliers near the village disappeared or ceased to do business. Villagers who had already begun to harvest latex reported that they could tolerate the low price.

The rubber boom has passed. Rubber is at the center of farmers' livelihoods. The rubber boom assemblage has transformed into a more stable assemblage.

V Ecological Changes due to Rubber

V-1 *Damage to Protected Areas*
The rapid expansion of rubber cultivation was inevitably accompanied by ecological changes. As discussed above, the promotion of rubber cultivation was aimed initially at rehabilitating degraded forestlands. Northeast Thailand in general had experienced severe deforestation until the 1980s due to agricultural expansion, which involved both self-sufficient paddy cultivation and cash-crop cultivation of plants such as maize, cassava, sugarcane, and kenaf. Replacing the fields with rubber was considered much better because rubber gardens could cover the surface of the land so that soil erosion could be prevented and moisture preserved (Wichit n.d.). In fact, in some places rubber did come to replace existing crop fields in the way that the project originally assumed. For example, in Loei Province many farmers converted swidden to rubber gardens, which was reported as a shift to sustainable agriculture (*Khao sot*, June 8, 2000).

However, it was revealed that rubber cultivation caused much more deforestation than forest rehabilitation in some areas. National forestlands, including protected forests such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, were illegally encroached on and cleared

for rubber cultivation. In the Northeast, probably the biggest deforestation case was that of 1,250 rai in Thap Lan National Park, in Nakhon Ratchashima Province, while in Ubon Ratchathani Province a case was exposed in the Buntharik-Yot Mon Wildlife Sanctuary (Phongphon 2011). It was not only locals who were engaged in the illegal cultivation of supposedly protected forests. Businessmen, mostly from the South, bought land that the locals cleared. A case in Loei Province involved businessmen buying local people's land with So Po Ko 4-01 deeds, which could not be legally sold, by formally claiming them to be "rentals." Other businessmen who could not buy So Po Ko 4-01 land employed local inhabitants to clear the forests illegally. The fee for the land clearing would be paid about two years after the planting of rubber seedlings. In the event of subsequent official exposure, the businessmen insisted that they bought land that had already been cleared by the local population. In this way, businessmen invaded protected areas step by step (Wichai 2006). A similar problem was reported in Nong Khai Province (*Krungthep thurakit*, December 24, 2005). Destruction of protected areas by rubber cultivation was not limited to the Northeast. Even in the South, where rubber had long prevailed, cultivation expanded further in ways that endangered the final enclaves of the Sakai hunter-gatherer people in the remaining patches of protected areas (*Krungthep thurakit*, June 9, 2011).

V-2 *Degradation of the Living Environment*
N villagers did not have conflicts with the national park, as they were not adjacent to it, although farmers near the boundary and in the inner villages allegedly practiced illegal cultivation of rubber and other cash crops within the protected area. However, even outside the national park, degradation of the living environment was a serious problem.

Most of the rubber gardens, 973.3 rai according to the questionnaire survey in 2015 (as shown in Section III), were converted either directly from secondary forests called *pa hua rai plai na*—literally meaning forests fringing paddy fields— owned by individual villagers or following some years of cassava cultivation. Thus, that total area of forest disappeared, mostly in the last 15 years. Many villagers naturally pointed out that due to the conversion of *pa hua rai plai na* forests to rubber gardens, the source of natural food materials had declined and they had to rely more on the community forest that was still conserved by the villagers.

Some villagers attributed the flooding of the Huai Se—a small river running through the village—that affected the village almost every year after 2010 to the loss of forests due to rubber cultivation. There was an argument against this, however: according to some elders, there had been more severe floods in the past, when rubber was not planted, before the river was ever dredged to prevent floods—so the floods were not necessarily

caused by deforestation.

What was more shocking, and more talked about by the villagers, was contamination by herbicides. In rubber gardens weeds proliferate, especially in the five years between the planting of seedlings and the closure of the crown. Weeding in this period is thought to be critical for growing the rubber seedlings and is reflected in the harvest. Villagers, therefore, sprayed herbicides once or twice during the five years. One application of herbicides could keep a garden free of weeds for a few years. At the same time, however, the herbicides widely contaminated the villagers' living environment. After being sprayed in the rubber gardens, they flowed into neighboring land with rainwater. In the early 2000s, the villagers were shocked by an incident in which an old woman was killed by herbicide poisoning after eating wild mushrooms that she collected from the villagers' own secondary forests adjacent to the rubber garden. Previously, the villagers had not been familiar with chemical contamination. However, after this incident they became nervous about herbicides. Now, the middlemen who buy wild mushrooms that the villagers collect accept only mushrooms from the community forest, located on higher land and thus thought to be free from contamination. Some villagers reported that they had seen many dead fish in the stream. Others said that they could no longer collect edible plants along the side of the street and eat them as they had done before the expansion of the rubber gardens. Even though the villagers felt threatened by herbicides, they could not regulate them. Thus, a general and broad anxiety prevailed regarding their living environment as a whole.

Additionally, a number of resources are disappearing due to the chain of changes in livelihood ecology. For example, *phak kadon*, the shoots of the *Careya sphaerica*, which were among the most popular wild vegetables in Northeast Thailand, are now difficult to find. The kadon is a tree that typically grew on the dikes of paddy fields. Villagers were likely to conserve kadon trees that naturally grew from seeds. However, recently it has become common for villagers to use large tractors in paddy fields. These tractors plow too deeply for kadon seedlings to germinate. Cow manure is also hard to find in the village now. The villagers once raised many cows and buffaloes. However, the expansion of rubber gardens has made it difficult to herd cows and water buffaloes that might eat or fell young rubber trees. Since most villagers have abandoned cattle grazing, they have to buy manure to make organic fertilizer. Such a causal chain of events related to rubber has been transforming the living world of the villagers, step by step. It is also changing their lifestyles, as shown in the next subsection.

A similar situation was reported in the Dong Khum Kham and Dong Phu Kham forest area, in the same district as N: rubber cultivation destabilized the villagers' subsistence basis, leading to conflicts among villagers over natural resources (Samakhom

Pa Chumchon Isan n.d.). In the Dong Saramoen forest area, also adjacent to N village, rubber cultivators even destroyed the community forest.[8] In both areas, villager groups had been making efforts to encourage sustainable resource use. However, they did not prevent the cultivation of rubber.

V-3 *Changes in Lifestyle*

Income from rubber cultivation in N village was estimated at 10,195 baht per rai in 2014, after the sharp drop in rubber prices.[9] Although initial investments and costs until the beginning of harvesting must be considered, this income would be enough to support basic everyday consumption. In fact, in past years the price was as high as 100–180 baht per kilogram, which was more than two to four times the current price. Thus, some villagers could buy new cars and tractors and build new houses. Their children were able to receive at least a high-school education and, if they wanted, college. In parallel with the degradation of villagers' living environments, as shown above, the high price of rubber caused the villagers' lifestyles to change.

The increasing penetration of a cash economy is apparent in both daily consumption and livelihood work. Villagers hire more labor and use machines for farmwork, buy more food materials, and use less resources from the surrounding natural environment. The continuing high price of rubber has partly facilitated their change of lifestyle to one oriented to a market economy.

Regarding the hiring of labor, some villagers reported that they currently hired much more labor for paddy cultivation, such as transplanting and harvesting, so as to finish it in the shortest time and minimize the loss of rubber harvesting time. However, the results of the questionnaire survey in 2015, containing questions on expenditures for paddy cultivation, were not consistent with this. The average expenditure for hired labor per rai of paddy cultivation in 2014 was 540.7 baht for the 38 households who answered that they had rubber gardens to harvest, whereas it was 636.8 baht for the 72 households who did not (the other 34 households did not answer). This contradicts the villagers'

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8) Personal communication with members of the Dong Saramoen Forest Network.

9) The questionnaire survey in 2015 was partly unsuccessful, as many villagers were unable to quan-tify the cost of rubber. The calculation was as follows: In N village, 48 households of a total of 144 held rubber gardens already harvested at the time of the survey in July and August 2015; the rubber trees were eight or more years old. Assuming the annual average harvest per rai in Ubon Ratchathani Province to be 215 kg, following the latest available statistics (Thailand, Office of Agri-cultural Economics 2015a, 98), the average price of unsmoked rubber sheet in 2014 was 53.93 baht (Thailand, Office of Agricultural Economics 2015b), and fertilizer use was 500 g per tree for 70 trees on 1 rai. In the Si Muang Mai District town where most villagers bought fertilizer, the cost of fertilizer was 700–1,000 baht per 50 kg, depending on the brand; assuming it to be 1,000 baht, the income per rai of rubber garden was estimated to be 10,195 baht.

explanation that those who had rubber to harvest put more effort into finishing other farmwork.

Regarding sources of food materials, many villagers reported that they bought more daily food materials than in the past because, as they explained, those who had rubber gardens to harvest did not have the time or energy to go hunting, fishing, or gathering after finishing the tapping and harvesting of rubber at night. In the past, especially before there was much rubber cultivation, few foods were purchased; most were extracted from the natural environment or planted/raised. The questionnaire survey in 2015 contained questions about sources of daily food materials other than rice, asking about the ratio extracted from nature versus planted/raised and purchased, both in 2015 and in 2000. The answers were not intended to show the real sources of foods but rather to explore the villagers' understanding of the subject. The results (Table 1) simply do not support the villagers' explanations.

In 2000, the three households that had already begun to harvest rubber showed higher ratios of purchased and planted/raised food with a lower dependence on nature.

In 2015, those who had started to harvest rubber depended more on the market economy than did those who had not yet begun to harvest rubber. Additionally, not only the former but also the latter showed a higher percentage of purchases in 2015 than in 2000. In other words, dependence on the market economy increased as a general trend regardless of villagers' engagement in rubber cultivation. Rubber provided income opportunities not only for cultivators but also for those who did not have their own harvest, because more labor was required either for paddy cultivation or for work in rubber gardens.

These negative or controversial events are also elements of the rubber boom assemblage, causing ecological degradation on the one hand and making lifestyles more market dependent and separated from nature on the other. The rubber boom proceeded.

Table 1 Villagers' Perceptions of Food Sources in 2000 and 2015

		2000		2015	
		Rubber Harvest (3 households)	No Rubber Harvest (113 households)	Rubber Harvest (47 households)	No Rubber Harvest (82 households)
Rainy season	Purchased	36.0%	19.7%	55.0%	50.4%
	Raised/planted	33.0%	28.1%	21.4%	18.6%
	Wild	31.0%	52.2%	23.6%	30.9%
Dry season	Purchased	38.0%	21.9%	61.8%	55.8%
	Raised/planted	33.0%	25.1%	19.7%	17.9%
	Wild	29.0%	53.0%	18.4%	26.3%

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2015.

VI   Outside Actors

VI-1 *Government Policies and Implementations*
The continuing high rubber prices created the conditions for a rubber boom, in which people were influenced by the rich consumer lifestyle enjoyed by others who had profited from rubber cultivation. As an almost inevitable side effect of this rubber boom, forest destruction and other related environmental changes occurred. Many actors, government authorities, NGOs, and local entities were involved in this process. However, all of them tended to adapt to the rubber boom, except for occasional strong measures to violently evict farmers from forestlands by forestry officials.

With respect to government authorities, the development and extension of rubber cultivation is the responsibility of the Rubber Research Institute, the Office of Rubber Replanting Aid Fund (ORRAF), and partially the provincial/district agricultural office. The Office of Agricultural Economics is also involved in policy making, especially as Khana Kamakan Nayobai Yang Thamachat (Natural Rubber Policy Committee) is headed by the vice prime minister.

Those authorities, directly committed to rubber policy in terms of agricultural development, seemed little concerned about environmental issues. Basically, the government's scheme of support for rubber cultivation in the Northeast, planned and funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and implemented mainly by ORRAF, officially required that only lands having legal title were eligible for support. The Progressive Farmers Association, the first organization to carry out a rubber promotion project around the research site in 1989, also had the same regulation. However, according to an ORRAF officer in the Ubon Ratchathani branch, the district/provincial agricultural office implemented part of the promotion project, in which, despite the official guidelines, it granted support to lands without legal title, which might also have included recent illegal, encroached lands. The ORRAF officer further reported that ORRAF had also endorsed lands without titles to be supported by the project, under pressure from a parliament member petitioned by the farmers. Once planted, supported by the project or not, having land title or not, rubber gardens could all be registered with ORRAF, so that replanting could be funded by ORRAF.

There remains the view, although it is not widely held, that rubber contributed to environmental improvement. Montri Kosalawat, secretary-general of the Progressive Farmers Association, stressed that rubber gardens provided fuelwood that could substitute for timber from the forests.[10] Sukhum Wong-ek, the director of the Rubber Research

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10) Interview with Montri Kosalawat, July 29, 2014.

Institute at the end of 2007, also stated that rubber could substitute for green forests because it could create a moist environment and enrich the land much more than many other crops (Phanphichaya 2007). Officers in charge of rubber at the Office of Agricultural Economics were astonished when I told them that many natural forests had been converted to rubber gardens, because they thought that rubber had replaced other annual crops, not natural forests. A ranking officer of the Rubber Research Institute was of the opinion that rubber should be planted on suitable land that did not include previous paddy fields, steep slopes, or national forest reserves. He did not want villagers to burn the forests and believed degradation of forests through rubber cultivation was not beneficial to villagers.

VI-2 *Foresters' Dilemmas*

Conservation of natural resources is the responsibility of the Royal Forest Department for land outside protected areas, and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation (National Parks Department) for protected areas. These departments did not effectively prevent the conversion of forests to rubber gardens. As shown above, even protected areas were invaded. As organizations, they were caught between their legally required task of conservation and favoring a social climate geared toward rubber. In 2007 it was revealed that the National Parks Department was ready to submit a report on the illegal occupation of national forest reserves to the minister; the director general of the department pointed out that the government's rubber promotion policy had caused illegal occupation and cultivation of national forest reserves. He added that officers felt pressured because the initiation of legally correct measures would have gone against government policy, and therefore they could not strictly control and protect the forests. Because of this situation, many officers resigned. The director general questioned whether society would accept the disappearance of protected forests. He stressed that society should make that decision, otherwise the department alone could not conserve the forests (*Matichon*, July 13, 2007).

There is no clear evidence that the government prioritized the expansion of rubber cultivation over nature conservation. However, as the director general pointed out, the officers perceived such a sentiment spreading through society and believed that the government would favor it. Forest clearing was overlooked also in N and surrounding villages, as shown below, mainly due to local officers' sympathy with the villagers. It was also reported that some corrupt officers took part in illegal encroachments. In a case in Kanchanaburi Province, brought to light in 2011, it turned out that officers, including some from the Royal Forest Department, the Department of Land, and the Department of Local Administration, had illegally "sold" national forestlands to investors from the

South for rubber cultivation. After an investigation, the Royal Forest Department decided to transfer 12 officers and established a hearing committee (Chanchira 2011). Apart from this scandal, a forestry officer working in Ubon Ratchathani, a close friend of mine, told me that officers in the Forest Protection Unit accepted bribes from farmers to overlook illegal clearing of forests for rubber cultivation. More than simply bowing to social sentiment, some forest officers positively took advantage of the rubber boom.

However, there were eventually several campaigns against illegal encroachments of national forestland and, in particular, protected areas. The most well known was during 2011–12, when Damrong Phidet was the director general of the National Parks Department. As well as physically destroying resort hotels that were illegally constructed and operated by powerful businessmen in Khao Yai National Park, Damrong ordered strong measures against illegal rubber gardens in a way that had rarely been done under previous directorships. In Buntarik District, Ubon Ratchathani Province, villagers cultivated rubber in a wildlife sanctuary. They resisted officers by blockading roads. Finally, the director of Samnak Borihan Phuen Thi Anurak Thi 9 (Ubon Ratchathani) (Protected Area Management Office 9 [Ubon Ratchathani]), under the National Parks Department, sent the officers under his control out at dawn to destroy all rubber gardens as quickly as possible and to return before the road was blockaded.[11] In 2015, the current military government also ordered that all rubber trees in the protected areas must be removed by the end of July. Otherwise, the officers in each protected area—national park or wildlife sanctuary—would destroy them. As I observed in a village in Pha Taem National Park, this order was implemented. However, such strong measures were not taken on a regular and systematic basis and so did not change the social sentiment generally supporting the rubber boom.

VI-3 *Local Administration and NGOs*
What was remarkable when considering ecological changes due to rubber, especially in comparison with previous local environmental movements—such as those concerning anti-logging efforts and community forests—was the lack of commitment by environmental NGOs, both national and local. In previous times, they had supported local movements seeking sustainable natural resource usage. However, in the face of apparent threats to local environments, as shown above, almost all the NGOs kept quiet. On the other hand, at the research site there were some local initiatives toward more balanced resource use, although none of them disallowed rubber. Officially, local municipalities, Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs), adopted policies that called attention to

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11) Personal communication with an officer of the Protected Area Management Office 9.

the environment and supported conservation actions by villagers. Both NT TAO, to which N village belongs, and NP TAO, of the adjacent subdistrict, had presidents with a background of working in local community forests. Both supported villagers' activities regarding the maintenance of community forests in terms of budget allocation. However, this was a small part of the total budget, and both presidents naturally had to respond to the various needs of the people. NT TAO also organized a training course on rubber cultivation for the villagers.

A more evident and concrete initiative was the "family forest" project, *pa khropkhruea*, largely carried out by Lom, ex-president of NT TAO. He undertook this project before he was elected as the TAO president. Lom had grown up in a different province. After graduating from university he joined a local NGO, Nature Care, as a volunteer and later became a staff member. His task was to advise local people on the establishment of community forests and to organize an inter-village network. Even after leaving Nature Care, Lom remained in the area and worked as an adviser for the villagers' community forest network. Although the network organization became inactive for several reasons, Lom obtained funds from UNDP and implemented the project with his staff in 2008 and 2009. This project helped villagers to make parts of privately owned *pa hua rai plai na*, secondary forests adjacent to farmlands, into "family forests," *pa khropkhruea*, with clearly demarcated boundaries and written regulations established at participants' meetings in each village. Although the project targeted 100 participants in NT and NP subdistricts, it attracted more than 150, whose family forests totaled 1,076 rai. Throughout the project, participants seemed well aware of the importance of family forests, even though the number of participants was limited. With the exception of one household with nine participants in N village, eight households who preserved family forests in 2010 still do so. This project, as shown later, reflected a change in the villagers' mindset regarding natural resources.

As shown above, the attitudes varied by organization due to administratively or socially assumed roles. However, one thing they had in common was that they did not act negatively against rubber cultivation. The social climate that required prioritization of the economic benefits of rubber was so strong that the director general and other officers of the National Parks Department assumed that it was an unspoken government policy and hesitated to strictly follow the laws. At the local level, officers were sympathetic toward the poor villagers trying to improve their economic status through rubber, and so did not regulate rubber cultivation. This nationwide social climate resonated with the farmers' hopes at the grassroots level. The actors were agents of such a social climate while they simultaneously held on to the contradictory position of sustainable forest management, which was suppressed or represented only in an indirect way, as in the

family forest project. In this way, conflicts between the elements within the rubber boom assemblage were internalized in each actor.

VII   Villagers' Adaptation

VII-1 *Attempts to Moderate Ecological Changes*

Facing the ecological changes described above, N villagers at least recognized the problems and considered ways to solve them. Indeed, the regulation of a community forest for the village, established through village meetings, contained a provision that prohibited clearing without the permission of those with private forests. This provision could be a tool to prevent the extreme expansion of rubber cultivation. However, the villagers' understanding seems to have been vague. For example, the head of the village community forest almost forgot the rule, stating that according to the regulations of the community forest, felling trees in private forests, unlike community forest, did not require permission. However, the *kamnan* (subdistrict headman), recognizing the provisions of the community forest regulations, reported that villagers in the subdistrict, including N village, would inform him before clearing private forests. He would check on site to see whether there were large trees and send a report to the Forest Protection Unit so that clearing would be overlooked because the officers understood the villagers' need to do so for their livelihood. He explained that if he found a rich forest with large trees, he would refuse to report it to the Forest Protection Unit and persuade the holder not to clear it.

From the time he took the position in January 2011 until I interviewed him in 2012, the *kamnan* had heard reports of more than 50 cases in the subdistrict. Some of the cases had been rejected, although he did not remember the exact number. However, in fact, not all villagers informed the *kamnan* in advance of clearing private forests. In the questionnaire survey in 2015, of the 36 households that had cleared forests after 2000, lands that were currently rubber gardens, 16 households answered that they had informed the *kamnan*, 1 answered that they had directly informed the Forest Protection Unit, 13 households said they had not made any report, and the other 6 did not respond. Furthermore, of those who answered that they had informed the *kamnan*, four households answered that they had cleared secondary forests with large trees or primary forests. This shows that even the *kamnan*'s guidelines could not be implemented completely. The *kamnan* himself had to loosen the standards because villagers had the idea that they could cultivate their own land in any way allowed in the local customary context. The *kamnan* could not enforce anything beyond the customary rules that might be maintained

or modified by the villagers' consensus. He could refuse to talk to the Forest Protection Unit and overlook uninformed cases, but he could not punish the villagers.

In this regard, any modification or addition to village custom needs majority approval, although there is no institutionalized process for this. The establishment of the community forest is a typical example. The community forest organization and regulations were established through a series of village meetings, to which all villagers were invited. The process of establishing the community forest was formally organized with forest officers' assistance. Consensus could be promoted in informal ways. The regulation of rubber cultivation and related activities has not reached a consensus. For example, some villagers would like to regulate the use of herbicides. However, one explained it was impossible to regulate herbicide use through the villagers' own initiatives because people from outside had bought land in the village and would not comply with group directives. However, this explanation is not reasonable because there has never been any explicit attempt to regulate herbicide use, even among the villagers, although some villagers individually made decisions not to spray herbicides because their lands were near residential areas. The villagers have overlooked the issue of contamination in the interest of convenience regarding their own rubber cultivation.

VII-2 *Increasing Concern about Rights*

With the rapid ecological changes, villagers' concern about rights over resources, particularly private forests, has increased. Some have attempted to enclose their own resources and exclude others. The custom was that everyone could take wild resources from anyone's land. For many years, extracting timber from private forests without permission from the owner has been prohibited. However, collecting mushrooms and bamboo shoots, for example, has been considered open to anyone. This situation is now ambiguous.

The family forest project, described above, reflects the villagers' conflicted attitudes. Each participant was given signboards to place at the entrance of the family forest, showing the regulations for family forests. At a glance, this project merely encouraged owners to consider sustainable resource use, and thus, as some villagers suggested, its target seemed to be vague. However, in fact, this project contained important modifications of village customs, because the regulations—collectively established through village meetings and commonly applied to all participants within the village—included provisions that persons other than family members were not allowed to enter or extract resources from a family forest without permission. Moreover, penalties were specified. These were significant changes in custom. However, unlike the regulations for community forests, which most villagers respected because of their passage through village meet-

ings, participants in the family forest project seemed hesitant to respect family forest regulations. The discourse and actions of the villagers in relation to family forests remain ambiguous.

When I interviewed a *kamnan*, Khon, in 2010, he stated that despite the regulation of family forests, collecting mushrooms and bamboo shoots in others' forests was not prohibited because all villagers were living in cooperation with each other. Sommai, a participant in the project, stressed that he had the right to conserve his own forest by himself. He stated that he could overlook his relatives freely collecting resources. However, I found that he did not put up a sign setting out the regulations. He explained that he had previously put it up at his family forest, but he kept it in his house now because he wondered whether the sign would be damaged by exposure to wind and rain. He insisted that he would put it up again when officers came to inspect it so that he could show he was conserving the forest in the way the regulations stipulated. Rin, another participant, told me that he put up the sign at his family forest. However, this was not true. In fact, no participant in N village put up the sign.

Each village operated under different conditions. For example, in Na Thoi, neighboring N village, some participants did put up signs showing almost the same regulations as those for N village, although all villagers apparently understood that, contrary to the regulations, collecting mushrooms and bamboo shoots was open to anyone. One participant in Na Thoi reported that although other villagers had extracted timber from his forest before, after the project was launched they came to ask permission in advance. Thus, the project substantially strengthened owners' control of family forests.

VII-3 *Changing Customs*

Regardless of the family forest project, among N villagers the idea has been spreading gradually that natural resources should be extracted from one's own forests. When I interviewed an assistant of the *kamnan* at that time (and the current *kamnan*), Sit, in 2010, he reported that villagers collected bamboo shoots and fuelwood from their own forests, and that if they entered another family's forest they needed to get permission from the owners. Mushrooms, however, were still open to all because mushrooms went bad quickly. According to him, this change in custom had been established since around 2002, when the community forest was formally established. Sit's explanation was contradicted by Khon. Khon, the *kamnan* at that time, showed a more formal understanding, while what was actually happening was as Sit suggested. In other words, the change in custom was still too uncertain to formally enforce it among all villagers. As proof, one villager who had converted all his forests to rubber gardens did not hesitate to gather mushrooms and bamboo shoots from other families' forests. However, nobody formally

complained.

In 2013, I was astonished by the accounts of a number of different witnesses. One villager told me some villagers had prohibited others from collecting mushrooms and bamboo shoots in their forests for two to three years, because they were afraid that they would collect too many and then sell them. I asked Khon, an ex-*kamnan* at the time, for the truth. He revealed that most villagers had done so for five years, triggered by an incident in which a villager had guided an outside collector to extract large amounts of mushrooms and bamboo shoots from others' forests for the purpose of selling them. However, he added, it was presumed that N villagers could collect them in others' forests with permission from the owners. Thip, a villager present at the time, stressed that permission had to be given on request. In reality, however, there were cases in which the owner refused to give permission. This was completely contradictory to what Khon said in 2010.

Assuming that the incident that caused changes in the villagers' behavior occurred around 2010, the custom might have changed between 2010 and 2013 and those villagers who refused others permission to collect mushrooms and bamboo shoots in their own forests gradually became the majority. There has never been any institutionalized mechanism for the modification or reinterpretation of customs in the village. The customs at each moment simply reflect the collective thoughts and actions of the villagers. The villagers, on the one hand, accepted ecological changes in exchange for the wealth they could acquire through rubber cultivation. At the same time, they came to consider the need to enclose their own forest resources, which had become increasingly scarce due to rubber cultivation. The collective attitudes of the villagers resulted in changes in their customs.

As shown above, the responses of local communities to the ecological changes caused by rubber were complex. Two *kamnan* tried to conserve private forests by requiring applications for clearing forests, but their attempt failed. Some villagers believed that herbicide use should be prohibited, but this was not realized. Village customs changed to admit the enclosure of non-timber forest products in private forests. Village customs can be formed and modified by informal consensus as well as through formal village meetings. Informal consensus is shaped as a collective response on the part of villagers to an action inconsistent with existing customs. Individual interpretations are shared in daily chats among villagers. When consensus is reached in this way, customs may change. Based on various events related to rubber—good and bad—individual opinions were established that could change village customs, as above. All these elements were features of a rubber boom assemblage in the village.

VIII   Conclusion

As shown above, each actor's behavior supported the rubber boom. During the rubber boom that began in the early 2000s, farmers' spontaneous efforts, rather than government policies, played a key role. Farmers learned that rubber prices were high and profitable, and that rubber could grow as well in the Northeast as in the South. They saw neighbors who had planted rubber becoming rich. People from the South bought land for rubber gardens. Many civil servants also invested in rubber. With all these experiences, farmers were driven to rubber like a pandemic, which finally resulted in the rubber boom spreading through much of society.

This rapid expansion of rubber cultivation had ecological impacts. The mass media reported illegal cultivation within protected areas. Outside protected areas, such as the study site, patches of secondary forests that farmers had customarily occupied were also cleared. Increased floods were suspected to have been caused by deforestation. Contamination by herbicides threatened villagers. Beyond these events, indirect ecological changes related to the villagers' environment and livelihood were also observed, such as decreased daily food resource extraction from the natural environment because rubber cultivators had to tap at night, reduced cattle raising due to difficulty in securing space for herding, and the disappearance of some wild tree-leaf vegetables around paddy fields due to the introduction of large tractors.

However, no actor was on principle negative toward rubber cultivation. Regarding the bureaucracy, agricultural agencies insisted they were not responsible for deforestation because qualified promotion projects involved land with title. However, rubber gardens without land titles were also given technical assistance and qualified to receive replanting funds when trees became old. Under pressure from politicians, officers gave funds for land without legal title, land that was unqualified for the projects due to regulations. Regarding herbicides, officers of agricultural agencies maintained a neutral position. Conservation agencies overlooked local people's clearing of secondary forests outside protected areas. Some officers were involved in corruption as well. Even executive officers doubted whether strictly enforcing regulations might go against the government's policies. So they took measures such as evicting illegal rubber cultivators in the protected forests only occasionally, with well-prepared operations. Local administrations attempted to disseminate the importance of forest conservation. A former NGO worker carried out the family forest project but did not discourage rubber cultivation.

N villagers did not reach any consensus on regulating private forest clearing or herbicide use by amending their customary rules, although many experienced anxiety over these issues. Instead, in response to resource scarcity, the villagers increasingly

enclosed their private forest resources, resulting in changes in customary rules. However, the village's community forest, established with the villagers' consensus, was firmly conserved. A considerable portion of the community forest is rocky and uncultivable. However, the cultivable area has never been invaded, in contrast to private forests, where most of the land has been converted to rubber gardens. It is equally illegal to cultivate rubber in community forests and private forests. The community forest was saved for no other reason than the villagers' strong consensus on this point. Here one can see something of the villagers' sense of balance.

These were all factors of the rubber boom assemblage. Some factors extended over broad geographical areas, such as rubber prices, laws and institutions, the material and biological characteristics of rubber, and the cultivability of rubber in each locale. In addition, there were a number of micro-level elements, such as the various events that the farmers experienced. All these factors had an effect on each other and, assembled, constituted the social climate of the rubber boom. During the rubber boom, the importance of sustainable natural resource management was not completely neglected. Instead, it was internalized in each actor. Actors in whom multiple agencies existed in contradiction to each other and who suffered from a sense of internal contradiction declined to take any action against rubber cultivation. This differs from what Anna Tsing (2005) has described as friction between networks of conflicting values with regard to forest resources. The friction was internalized because the rubber boom took place in the context of an overwhelming desire for socioeconomic improvement in rural areas.

In fact, many actors recognized the problems of ecological degradation but felt that these problems were unavoidable and regrettable. Such an emotional atmosphere in society is thought to have reflected the political environment during Thaksin's government, as well as that of his successors following his ouster by the military coup in 2006. The leaders owed their political power to the strength of their election based on overwhelming support in the North and Northeast of the country. Conversely, reckless measures against illegal forest encroachment were taken by the military government after the coup in 2014. Many rubber cultivators who had long encroached on national forestlands were violently evicted, prosecuted, and jailed. There was no evidence that Thaksin prioritized the expansion of rubber cultivation over nature conservation. However, the political environment during the pro-Thaksin governments was also an important element of the rubber boom assemblage.

Within the rubber boom assemblage, elements such as rubber price, improving farmers' living standards, and democratic political environments formed a sub-assemblage of forces driving the rubber boom. These were so powerful that their friction with sustainable natural resource management and other environmental issues became

internalized. Therefore, it appears that no action was taken against rubber cultivation by any of the actors, and that there was a sudden swing in support of the rubber boom.

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Revisiting Transnational Media Flow in Nusantara: Cross-border Content Broadcasting in Indonesia and Malaysia

Nuurrianti Jalli* and Yearry Panji Setianto**

Previous studies on transnational media have emphasized transnational media organizations and tended to ignore the role of cross-border content, especially in a non-Western context. This study aims to fill theoretical gaps within this scholarship by providing an analysis of the Southeast Asian media sphere, focusing on Indonesia and Malaysia in a historical context—transnational media flow before 2010. The two neighboring nations of Indonesia and Malaysia have many things in common, from culture to language and religion. This study not only explores similarities in the reception and appropriation of transnational content in both countries but also investigates why, to some extent, each had a different attitude toward content produced by the other. It also looks at how governments in these two nations control the flow of transnational media content. Focusing on broadcast media, the study finds that cross-border media flow between Indonesia and Malaysia was made possible primarily in two ways: (1) illicit or unintended media exchange, and (2) legal and intended media exchange. Illicit media exchange was enabled through the use of satellite dishes and antennae near state borders, as well as piracy. Legal and intended media exchange was enabled through state collaboration and the purchase of media rights; both governments also utilized several bodies of laws to assist in controlling transnational media content. Based on our analysis, there is a path of transnational media exchange between these two countries. We also found Malaysians to be more accepting of Indonesian content than vice versa.

Keywords: Nusantara, Indonesia, Malaysia, transnational media, cross-border content, broadcast media

Introduction

The effect of globalization on national media systems has encouraged various countries

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* Department of Languages, Literature, and Communication Studies, Northern State University, 1200 S Jay St, Aberdeen, South Dakota, 57401, The United States of America
Corresponding author's e-mail: nuurrianti.jalli@gmail.com
** Departemen Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Jl. Raya Jakarta Km 4 Pakupatan Kota Serang Provinsi Banten, Indonesia

to reconsider the effectiveness of their media policy. While the presence of foreign media content is not new for most nations, the intrusion of material produced by other countries has long been considered a national threat (Crofts Wiley 2004; Cohen 2008). This is more so in states that aim to protect their national identities from the infiltration of foreign cultures, which are viewed as unsuitable for local audiences, via imported media content. Today, with the proliferation of the Internet, Indonesia and Malaysia are expressing concerns over the media flow from foreign countries through global channels such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and Viu, among others. Leaders in Malaysia and Indonesia have raised concerns over the potential impact of loosely regulated media content on local cultural and religious values, especially content related to LGBTQA+, violence, and leftist political ideologies (Anton Hermansyah 2016; Kelion 2016; Katrina 2019).

Notwithstanding the current reality, where global media companies like Netflix have already infiltrated Malaysia and Indonesia through the Internet, this paper aims to provide a historical overview of transnational content in both countries before 2010. Since previous studies on transnational media have emphasized transnational media organizations and tended to ignore the role of cross-border content (Esser and Strömbäck 2012), this paper hopes to fill this theoretical gap by providing data focusing on these two nations. More data on this topic will help to cross-examine the significance of country and regional studies from the perspective of global communication and media studies (Flew and Waisbord 2015). Additionally, this research hopes to assist in providing insights into prognosticating reactions from both governments to trends in global media consumption, based on policies implemented by both countries in the past decade.

The relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia has always been defined based on the idea of *serumpun* (kinship), the sharing of racial and religious affinity (Islam), linguistic similarity, geographical proximity in the Malay Archipelago (or Nusantara), and a shared history (Khalid and Yacob 2012). Yet the two countries have adopted restrictive media policies toward transnational/foreign media content from each other—along with other countries in the region. Cross-border flow of media content eventually became a political debate in Indonesia and Malaysia (Mohamad Rizal 2010), but what influenced the laws and regulations put in place to deal with this issue remains unanswered. Thus, we argue that comparing the media regulations between Indonesia and Malaysia would further explain what factors determined their decisions in media policy-making processes, especially their critical stance toward Western media content. We also look at the media exchange between Indonesia and Malaysia and investigate the channels of transnational media in these two states in the decades up to 2010. Finally, this study also explores factors influencing the acceptance of cross-border media content in both countries.

For this study we used a historical method, focusing on the comparison of media policies in Indonesia and Malaysia and how these countries developed their strategy on the flow of transnational media content. Among the secondary data we used were past publications, government reports, as well as online databases. This paper aims to answer three research questions: (1) How was the practice of transnational media content flow in Indonesia and Malaysia before 2010? (2) How did the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia control transnational media content? (3) What factors influenced the acceptance of transnational media content in both countries? The discussion is focused on broadcast media before 2010. It is essential to also understand that, despite the objectives, this paper does not aim to measure the acceptance level of media content in Malaysia and Indonesia. We aim to provide insights on matters related to the practice of transnational media flow and government approaches to cross-border content, and to explore potential factors influencing the acceptance of transnational media content in both countries.

Globalization and Transnational Media

With globalization, societies are becoming more transnational. Globalization also creates problems that cannot be handled at the level of nation-states, and this forces governments to think at the supranational level (Kearney 1995). Globalization can be illustrated by the increasing cross-border activities, from interactions among people from different parts of the world through social media platforms to people in different locations enjoying similar content provided by global media-services providers like Netflix. While these transnational phenomena cannot be simplified as logical consequences of the increasing popularity of global media widely accessed by global audiences, it is somewhat difficult to diminish the impact of media on the advancement of globalization. As a result, the transnational flow of media content can also be seen as one of the effects of globalization.

Edward Herman and Robert McChesney (2004) explained that significant changes are taking place within society and in our relationship with media due to the influence of global media. These changes include increasing cross-border flows of media content as well as a growing number of transnational media organizations. However, the authors also warned of the negative consequences of global media, mainly an increase in commercialization and centralized control over media. On the one hand, thanks to the globalization of media, many people in underdeveloped countries can easily watch high-quality programs produced by television stations in developed nations. On the other hand, the infiltration of transnational media content, mostly from Western countries, is seen as a threat to national cultures. Even the dominance of news content from the

Western world through global media into Third World countries like Malaysia and Indonesia has often been perceived as an attack on the free flow of information (McBride 1980). Additionally, within the perspective of cultural imperialism, the international flow of communication is seen as favoring industrialized nations and threatening sociocultural values of developing countries (McBride 1980; Kraidy 2002). In some states, foreign television programs have been accused of promoting consumerism (Paek and Pan 2004). Even though policy makers in different countries have varying attitudes toward the presence of global media, governments in many developing nations tend to exhibit hostility toward unwanted transnational media content.

One of the most interesting debates concerning the threat of global media and transnational flows of communication took place during the UNESCO meeting in Kenya in 1973. During the initiation of the New World Information and Communication Order, a debate session hosted at the UNESCO meeting, some countries argued over whether the advancement of transnational media flows would be positive. According to Marwan Kraidy (2002), Western countries, which had more advanced media industries, argued that the free flow of information should be seen as positive, while the other nations did not agree and were afraid that liberalization of the flow of information would benefit only Western countries (McBride 1980). Even today it is argued that there is an imbalance in the transnational flow of information, especially since media content tends to flow from developed nations to developing ones.

There have been several attempts to define the term "transnational media." For example, Leo Gher and Kiran Bharthapudi (2004) defined it as "communication, information or entertainment that crosses international borders without the regulatory constraints normally associated with electronic media." Other scholars have explained the different types of transnational media. Michael Brüggemann and Hagen Schulz-Forberg (2009) categorized it into four types: (1) national media that has a cross-border mission, (2) international media, (3) pan-regional media, and (4) global media as illustrated in Table 1.

Diplomatic Relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia

The diplomatic relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia has existed for several decades, since the time of Malaya's independence in 1957 (Muhammad 1964; Malaysia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). However, this relationship has not always been stable and is bittersweet. When Malaysia was formed (through the amalgamation of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak) in 1963, Indonesia, led by

Table 1   Types of Transnational Media

National Media with Cross-border Mission	International Media	Pan-regional Media	Global Media
Dominated by state-owned or government-sponsored media that consequently develops the transnational agenda. Tends to reach audiences as far as the national borders and even beyond.	Built upon cooperation between two or more countries that share common interests, mainly to encourage mutual understanding between those nations.	Initiated as a medium that can reach a particular geographical region that shares similar cultural features.	Global media does not have to be bound in a single nation. It aims to reach audiences all around the globe.

Source: Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009).

President Sukarno, was not happy with the idea. The Indonesian government's opposition to the formation of Malaysia led to a violent conflict, better known as Konfrontasi, that lasted three years—1963–66. According to James Mackie (1974), this diplomatic dispute was an undeclared war, with most of the action occurring at the border between Indonesia and East Malaysia in Borneo; it included restrained and isolated combats and was most likely driven by Sukarno's political purposes. However, Konfrontasi ended with Indonesia finally acknowledging the formation of Malaysia.

In more recent times, tensions between these two countries expanded to issues of territorial boundaries, Indonesian illegal immigrants, ill treatment of Indonesian workers in Malaysia, human trafficking, and the infamous annual forest fires in Indonesia that resulted in a terrible haze over Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore for more than a decade from the mid-1990s (Kanapathy 2006; *Kompas* 2007 in Heryanto 2008; Killias 2010; Elias 2013). There were also several disputes between these countries over ownership of items of cultural heritage, such as the Pendet dance, folk songs like "Rasa Sayang" and "Terang Bulan," and *wayang kulit* shadow puppetry (Chong 2012). However, despite the endless conflicts between these two countries, governments on both sides worked hard to arrive at a better understanding and a more stable diplomatic relationship. This could be seen through the efforts by both governments to strengthen bilateral ties. In 2018, during a diplomatic visit to Indonesia by Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, he and Indonesian President Joko Widodo pledged to improve the relationship between their countries and focus on resolving outstanding border issues, enhancing protection and welfare for migrant workers, and potentially reviving the old plan of an ASEAN car project (Chan 2018).

Media in Indonesia and Malaysia

As in many Southeast Asian countries, the broadcasting system in Indonesia was introduced during the colonial period. Under Dutch colonial rule, radio was used to relay messages from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies as well as provide entertainment for colonial elites (Kitley 2014). When Japan took over, radio became a propaganda tool for the colonizers, with Japanese programs delivered to local audiences. When Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, radio eventually became the primary tool to broadcast nationalistic and revolutionary messages around the country. Once the national radio system became more established, the Indonesian government set up a national television network, Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI), in August 1962 through the Decree of the Minister of Information No. 20/1961. The initial reason for this was that Sukarno, the Indonesian president at the time, wanted to deliver the image of Indonesia as a modern country to the whole region (Kitley 2003). As the host of the Asian Games in 1962, Indonesia wanted to broadcast this sporting event to other Asian countries transnationally. However, after the Asian Games TVRI suffered a lack of funding, which resulted in the discontinuation of the network (Kitley 2014). Consequently, TVRI was overwhelmed by American television programs: it was much cheaper to broadcast those than to produce local programs.

Indonesia's second president, Suharto, who overthrew Sukarno in 1965, enjoyed his control over the country's broadcasting system. He exercised powerful control over the media in general, mainly through "licensing mechanism, media ownership regulation, paper distribution, media associations, Press Council membership and so on" (Agus Sudibyo and Patria 2013, 258). He prohibited broadcast media from delivering political messages, which in turn encouraged the growing popularity of entertainment content. Music, both local and Western, dominated radio shows at that time. While Suharto still allowed national television to broadcast limited transnational programs, such as American TV shows, he prohibited TVRI from airing advertisements over concerns that television commercials might promote consumerism (Ade Armando 2011). The Indonesian government tended to be permissive with imported programs due to business reasons. However, on some occasions government officials still warned the public not to be influenced by Western cultures that were promoted through foreign television programs.

Indonesia's first private television network, Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI), was introduced in the late 1980s. One of the reasons why Suharto permitted a private television network was to distract Indonesian viewers from foreign broadcasting (Ade Armando 2011). It seems that the increasing use of satellite dishes at that time encouraged local audiences to access international broadcasts illegally. Through shared

signals from a satellite dish, even people in a small village could watch overseas television programs that were not available on local broadcasting channels. Unable to prohibit the use of satellite dishes, the government issued an "open skies" policy and legalized the use of parabola satellites, but many people still used them to access foreign channels (Sen and Hill 2006). Therefore, rather than further control the use of satellite dishes, which was seen as impractical, the government tried to attract local audiences by introducing private television channels.

The strict Suharto government finally fell after the countrywide Reformasi protest movement in 1998. In the aftermath of Suharto's defeat there was media liberalization, which allowed the growth of press freedom and creativity (Kakiailatu 2007). Films that were deemed as sensitive or critical of the government were publicly broadcast, and various new creative products could be shared with international audiences. However, some critics argued that although there were improvements in terms of cultural expression, some media content was still heavily censored (Sen and Hill 2006), such as pornography, extreme violence, and content deemed too critical of the Indonesian government or its policies.

In Malaysia, too, the media was tightly controlled by the ruling power. The government or its affiliated companies owned broadcasting stations, especially during the Barisan Nasional (BN) government and its predecessor Parti Perikatan government from the country's independence in 1957 until 2018. This resulted in minimal media freedom in the country and not much variety in media content available to the public (Kim 2001; McDaniel 2002; Mohd Sani 2004; George 2006; Iga 2012; Willnat *et al.* 2013). It also led to media monopoly. In addition to free-to-air (public) channels such as RTM1, RTM2 (operated by the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia), TV3, NTV7, 8TV, and TV9 (operated by the government-affiliated Media Prima Berhad), the other media giant in the country was—and is—the sole satellite television service provider, Astro, owned by Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad. Unlike free-to-air channels, Astro satellite service offers 170 television channels and 20 radio stations that include all free-to-air channels along with international channels such as HBO, Cinemax, and Fox (Astro 2019).

Over the years Astro has received multiple criticisms not only from subscribers but also from local politicians, even though it provides so many interesting channels (Khairil Ashraf 2014).[1] Subscribers' complaints usually concern what they consider unnecessary fees for the average service that Astro provides, with constant disruptions especially during the monsoon season. Other complaints involve excessive advertising—showing Astro's obvious capitalistic motives rather than a desire to provide excellent service to

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1) Khairil Ashraf (2014) mentions Bung Mokhtar, a local politician from Sabah.

customers. Despite the negative feedback about Astro since it began broadcasting in 1996, the satellite service provider has never had serious competition in the market. With strong demand for a variety of channels, the people have only one legal option for satellite service—although many, especially in the rural areas, have opted to purchase unregistered illegal satellite dishes. Using such satellite dishes, they can receive multiple channels from outside the country without having to pay monthly fees; plus the content is not filtered by any government body, which allows users to enjoy original uncensored content.

Malaysia has always been strict when it comes to filtering media content from foreign countries, particularly content originating and produced in Western nations. Media content that is seen as inappropriate, especially opposing Eastern and Islamic cultures and values, is banned from public viewing. The Film Censorship Board of Malaysia under the Ministry of Home Affairs plays a vital role in deciding what content can be broadcast in the Malaysian media. Film censorship laws, specifically the Film Censorship Act 2002,[2] not only filter and oversee exported content but also oversee the production and showing of local films (Wan Mahmud *et al.* 2009). According to Wan Amizah Wan Mahmud (2008), the censorship system in Malaysia was not initially created by the Malaysian government per se but was one of the effects of British colonization. The British, according to Paul O'Higgins (1972), introduced such a policy in order to uphold and defend their dignity as masters in the occupied territory—which at the same time instilled the idea of censorship among local leaders as one of the ways to maintain their own status as the highest class in the societal hierarchy. It is believed that the main legacy of the British Empire in the field of media was not the craft of producing films, but the outline of the censorship system (Van der Heide 2002), which can still be seen today. It is also important to note that the Censorship Board reviews not only films but also trailers, newsreels, posters, advertisements, and short comedy films (Wan Mahmud *et al.* 2009). Hence, in order for local and international producers to have their content nationally broadcast, it is crucial for them to follow the guidelines provided by the Censorship Board.[3] If they fail to follow instructions, their content is banned from national broadcasting; and extreme content can also be charged under the Film Censorship Act (2002). Some of the media laws in Indonesia and Malaysia that could be used to oversee transnational media content can be referred to in Table 2 below.

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2) The first Act to be adopted was the Cinematograph Films Act 1952 (Amendment 1966), followed by the Film Censorship Act 2002 (Act 620), which is still in force today (Malaysia, Ministry of Home Affairs 2012).

3) Decisions are made based on rules and criteria stipulated in three basic documents: the Film Censorship Act, Censorship Guidelines, and Specific Guidelines Censorship (Malaysia, Ministry of Home Affairs 2012).

Table 2 Media Laws in Indonesia and Malaysia that Could Be Used to Oversee Transnational Media Content*

Indonesia	Malaysia
Press Law No. 40 of 1999 Broadcast Law No. 32 of 2002 Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law 2008 Copyright Law No. 28/2014	Broadcasting Act (1988) repealed to Communication and Multimedia Act (1998) Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission Act (1998) Malaysian Copyright Act (1987) Film Censorship Act (2002)

Note: * The media laws in the two countries are not limited to those listed here. Other colonial laws, especially in Malaysia, are also used for media control.

Although Indonesia's censorship laws are not as strict as Malaysia's, Indonesia also pays careful attention to content that is considered to be against Islamic values. For instance, in 2014 both countries banned the Hollywood film *Noah* claiming it went against Islamic beliefs (Nathan 2014). With Islam being the official religion in both countries, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments pay extra attention to any content that can affect Islamic values. In 2019 an Indonesian filmmaker, Garin Nugroho, received death threats for his film *Memories of My Body*, which portrays a male dancer exploring his sexuality and gender identity. In Indonesia there is no specific law to oversee content related to the LGBTQA+ community except in Acheh. However, for the majority Muslim population in Indonesia, such "Western" content is not acceptable (*Malay Mail*, May 11, 2019).

Transnational Media Flow: Indonesia and Malaysia

Historically, in many countries uncontrolled media flow has been viewed as a threat to national sovereignty and has shaped media policies (Hardt and Negri 2001; Flew 2012). Information flow from developed countries into Third World countries threatens the latter as foreign media content effectively surpasses the jurisdiction and authority of nation-states, eventually challenging the notion of national sovereignty and its effectiveness. Therefore, according to scholars like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, government and politics "come to be completely integrated into the system of transnational command" (Hardt and Negri 2001, 307). In this section, we highlight some examples of how media content flows between Indonesia and Malaysia, with a specific focus on broadcast materials such as films, TV dramas, radio, and music.

Transnational media content flows between Malaysia and Indonesia mainly through two modes of transmission: (1) illicit or unintended media exchange, including, especially at the national borders, the availability of illegal satellite dishes and DVD dealerships to accommodate local demand for foreign content; and (2) legal and intended media exchange
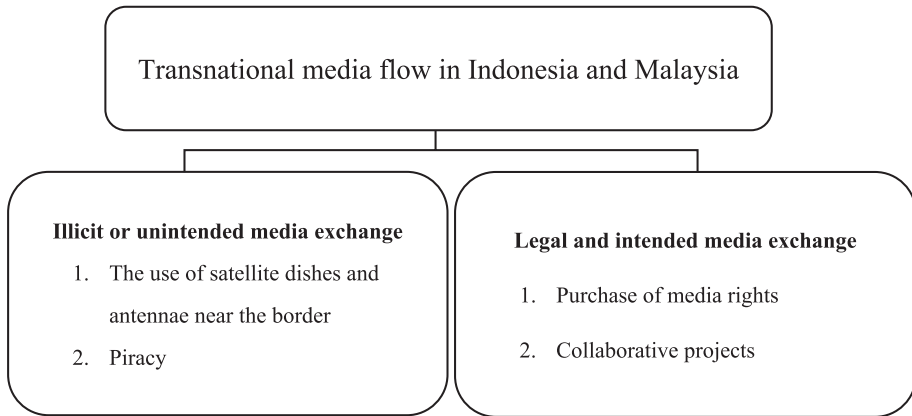
Transnational media flow in Indonesia and Malaysia	
Illicit or unintended media exchange 1. The use of satellite dishes and antennae near the border 2. Piracy	**Legal and intended media exchange** 1. Purchase of media rights 2. Collaborative projects

Fig. 1   Transnational Media Flow in Indonesia and Malaysia

(refer to Fig. 1). The intended media exchange discussed here focuses on content from Malaysia and the island of Java, where the Indonesian capital—Jakarta—is located and extensive use of the official Bahasa Indonesia rather than the Javanese language is recorded (Poedjosoedarmo 2006). Due to the diversity of languages in the Indonesian archipelago (Goebel 2013; 2016), media consumption in the country also varies (Sen and Hill 2006). Most media companies and government agencies are located in Java, but there are some also in Bali and Sumatra (Nugroho *et al.* 2012).

In Indonesia and Malaysia, one of the catalysts facilitating transnational media content was satellite TV. With limited TV channels provided by the state, the use of satellite dishes was deemed necessary to increase options for media content. However, for many Indonesians and Malaysians, especially in the 1990s, satellite dishes were considered a luxury. Nonetheless, transnational satellite TV was a concern for both governments since content from the Western world was deemed a threat to the Asian values upheld by both nations (McDaniel 2002). For example, the introduction of Rupert Murdoch's Star TV in 1991 was received differently by audiences and governments in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Many media policies were set up to handle the transnational flow of media content enabled by this new media technology.

The common view of upholding Asian values was not exclusive to Indonesia and Malaysia. In many other Southeast Asian countries with authoritarian regimes, the discourse on media policies was also centralized in censorship.[4] Censorship was deemed

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4) Vietnam, Singapore, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, and the Philippines also have media policies focused on censorship, due to their respective authoritarian governments (see Sen and Lee 2008; Slater 2010).

necessary to prevent unwanted foreign media content. In the late 1990s, using the argument of preserving Asian values, Southeast Asian governments' efforts to maintain censorship—to protect the public from "unsuitable" materials—faced an unlikely dilemma (McDaniel 2002). In Malaysia, for example, thanks to advanced media technologies—from satellite dishes to videocassettes—people living near the national borders in particular could easily access media content from neighboring countries without having to be concerned with the government's censorship policy (McDaniel 2002). Why government policies concerning the cross-border flow of media content were ineffective during that time is yet to be fully understood.

Radio and Music

The history of the infiltration of Malaysian media content into Indonesia can be traced back to the increasing popularity of radio broadcasts in both countries in the post-independence period. Due to geographical proximity, broadcast signals from Malaysia are relatively easily received by Indonesian audiences, and vice versa. As a result, it is common for Indonesian listeners to tune into Malaysian radio stations. In West Kalimantan, for example, 18 Malaysian radio channels—including Muzik FM, TraXX FM, Klasik Nasional FM, Hot FM, Hitz FM, ERA (formerly Era FM), and Cats FM—are available for free to Indonesians living near the Malaysian border. To attract Indonesian listeners, Malaysian radio plays Indonesian pop songs.

In comparing the Malaysian music industry to the Indonesian one, it is safe to say that the latter is more advanced and prominent than the former (Heryanto 2008). Indonesian bands such as Peterpan, Sheila on 7, and Cokelat, among others, are well known among Malaysians. And in 2007, instead of choosing a local Malaysian band, Celcom—Malaysia's largest and oldest telecommunications company—officially appointed Indonesia's best-known music group, Peterpan, as the company's new "power icon" as part of its marketing strategy (Heryanto 2008). Malaysia's warm reception of Indonesian music is not recent: it goes back several decades to the success of artists such as Titiek Puspa, Lilis Suryani, and Vina Panduwinata (Sartono 2007, quoted in Heryanto 2008). In contrast to the success of Indonesian musicians in Malaysia, only a few Malaysian artists—such as Search, Siti Nurhaliza, and Sheila Majid—have managed to penetrate the Indonesian music industry (*Tribune News*, July 2, 2013).

The Indonesian and Malaysian governments have tried to cooperate in making collaborative broadcasts (McDaniel 1994). In the case of radio, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) has long collaborated with Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) in broadcasting pro-

grams to reach audiences in both countries. One of the most famous such programs was *Titian Muhibah* (Bridge of harmony), broadcasting Indonesian and Malaysian songs to listeners in both countries. Similar programs were later introduced on television; TVRI broadcast a program with the same name in the 1990s. The television program was discontinued after Suharto resigned and the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia became troublesome. In 2013 RRI made an unsuccessful attempt to work with RTM to produce a similar show, with the primary aim being to reach out to audiences living near the national borders of these neighboring nations, including areas like Pontianak, Sintang, Entikong, and Sarawak (*Tribune News*, July 2, 2013). Many of the programs co-produced by RRI and RTM were cultural shows, and one of them— *Bermukun Borneo*—continued until 2019. Intentional or legal transnational flows of media content were considered inconsistent and profoundly influenced by the internal political conditions in each country as well as the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

TV Dramas and Films

Unlike scholarly articles on the development of Indonesian cinema, little has been written about the history of Malaysian cinema (White 1996). Scholars have suggested that Indonesian media content has long been accepted by the Malaysian public (Van der Heide 2002; Heryanto 2008). This can be traced all the way back to the 1930s through the overwhelming popularity of media content such as the film *Terang Boelan* (Bright moon) in Malaya and Singapore. The success of *Terang Boelan* inspired the production of Malay films. This could be seen through the establishment of an Indonesian film house in Singapore in 1938 to cater to local demand for Malay media content (Norman Yusoff 2019). The popularity of *Terang Boelan* also inspired Shaw Brothers in Singapore to set up Malay Film Productions, which became one of the successful film companies in the region.

According to William van der Heide (2002), the popularity of the Malayan movie actor P. Ramlee in the 1950s beyond the Peninsula was regarded as having the potential to boost the export of Malayan movies to Indonesia. But Indonesia reacted negatively by imposing a strict protectionist policy—demanding that three Indonesian films be screened in the Peninsula for every Malayan movie exported to Indonesia—which resulted in a limited number of Malayan films being circulated in Indonesia (Latif 1989). Despite little success, some strategies, such as inviting Indonesian directors and actors to produce Malayan movies, were used to ensure the smooth distribution of Malayan films in Indonesia (Alauddin 1992).

The introduction of television in the early 1960s also contributed to the declining popularity of Malaysian movies among local audiences. Meanwhile, due to the technical superiority of Indonesian films, Malaysian viewers became more interested in their neighboring country's films. Providing Malaysian audiences with Malay-language content, Indonesian movies of various genres—from action to dangdut musicals—became more popular in the 1970s (Sirat 1992). Even Perfima—the film company set up by P. Ramlee and a few others—initially imported popular Indonesian films before it produced local content (Van der Heide 2002).

In the 1980s Indonesian films could be accessed via state-owned channels operated by RTM, through programs such as *Tayangan Gambar Indonesia* (Indonesian film show) on TV1. At the same time, locally produced media content was shown on programs such as *Tayangan Gambar Melayu* (Malay film show). Due to the lack of local media products, RTM had to purchase rights to Indonesian films for RM3,000–5,000 from local distributors. The cost to purchase Indonesian content was considered reasonable to fill in the vacant slots on RTM TV channels. The same approach was taken by TV3, a private TV channel that was established in 1983 (Abdul Wahab *et al.* 2013). TV3 at that time, aware of the trend, also featured Indonesian films alternately with Malay films through its program *Malindo Theater* (Norman Yusoff 2019).

In the early 2000s, some of the Indonesian films popular in Malaysia were *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (What's up with love, 2002), *Eiffel I'm in Love* (2003), *Heart* (2006), and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Verses of love, 2008). *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta*, which was released in Malaysia in 2003, received positive feedback, especially from young adults. Observers of the local art scene posited that the film contributed to the emergence of a subculture centralized in Indonesian poetry in Malaysia. In 2016 a prequel of the movie, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta 2*, was released in the Malaysian market, 13 years after the release of its predecessor. Recorded as the highest-grossing Indonesian movie in Malaysia, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta 2* reaped more than RM2.5 million in box office takings within a week and surpassed RM4 million revenue after its 12th day of screening (Chua 2016a; 2016b).

Indonesian TV dramas, better known as *sinetrons*, also became popular in Malaysia. According to Josscy Aartsen (2011), the popularity of Indonesian media content as an official import to Malaysia was initially due to cheaper copyrights compared to Western media content, especially during the financial crisis in the 1990s. The overwhelming acceptance of Indonesian sinetrons led to the establishment of exclusive slots on Malaysian TV networks. For example, in 2006 TV9—a channel under Media Prima, one of the largest media agencies in Malaysia—dedicated a daily slot to broadcast Indonesian TV dramas (Abdul Wahab *et al.* 2013). This was seen as an effort to compete with other TV stations that were also actively broadcasting Indonesian sinetrons. Some Indonesian

Table 3 Some Indonesian *Sinetrons* and Films in Malaysia

Sinetrons (year released in Malaysia)		Film (year released in Malaysia)
RTM 1 & RTM2	*Malin Kundang* (2005)	*Terang Boelan* (1937)
TV9	*Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (2006), *Mutiara Hari* (2006)	*Tiga Dara* (The three maidens, 1956) *Kabut Bulan Madu* (Honeymoon fog, 1972) *Wajah Seorang Laki-Laki* (A man's face, 1971)
Astro	*Cinta Kirana* (Love Kirana, 2010), *Puteri Yang Ditukar* (The exchanged daughter, 2010), *Benci Bilang Cinta* (Hate saying love, 2011), *Kejora dan Bintang* (Venus and the stars, 2011)	*Penangkal Ilmu Teluh* (The cure to dark magic, 1979) *Cubit-Cubitan* (Pinch, 1979) *Begadang* (Staying up late, 1978) *Badai di Awal Bahagia* (Storm in the happy beginning, 1981)
TV3	*Bawang Merah Bawang Putih* (2006), *Jelita* (2009), *Upik, Abu, dan Laura* (2009), *Sejuta Cinta Marshanda* (A million love Marshanda, 2010)	*Kerinduan* (Longing, 1979) *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (2002) *Eiffel I'm in Love* (2003) *Heart* (2006) *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2008)

dramas were hugely popular among Malaysian viewers: for example, *Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (The end is near, 2003) had a viewership of over 1 million. And *Mutiara Hari* (Pearl of the day), which was initially released on SCTV in Indonesia in 2005, had a viewership of 1.6 million on TV9 (Abdul Wahab *et al.* 2013). Tabulated in Table 3 above are some of the Indonesian sinetrons and films broadcasted in Malaysia over the years.

Unlike the penetration of Indonesian films into Malaysian media, Malaysian media content was not well received in Indonesia (Van der Heide 2002). This could have been due to a few factors, such as the plethora of choices within Indonesia and slower develop-ment of the entertainment industry in Malaysia. According to Khairi Ahmad (1988, 9), at least in the 1980s, Indonesian audiences found that Malaysian films were not as attrac-tive as local content or other foreign films. Some Malaysian films that succeeded in breaking into the Indonesian market were those by P. Ramlee, such as *Seniman Bujang Lapok* (The three bachelor artists), *Nujum Pak Belalang* (Pak Belalang the necromancer), *Bakti* (Services), among others (Khairi Ahmad 1988). *Bakti*, which was released in 1950, received a particularly overwhelming response from the Indonesian public due to the widespread publicity provided by newspapers in Singapore such as *Utusan Melayu*, *Utusan Zaman*, and *Mastika* (Sahidan Jaafar 2019; Abdullah Hussain 2003):

> The Oranje Theater was a first-class stage that usually showed only big movies from the West. At the time the film *Bakti* was aired on the Oranje Medan Medan stage in the 1950s, some of the main streets around the theater were jammed with vehicles and humans. (Abdullah Hussain 2003, 17)

Other than films by P. Ramlee, in the 1990s other films also managed to break into the Indonesian market. One was *Fenomena* (Phenomenon). The success of this film was catalyzed by the popularity of the lead actor, Amy Search, who was also a member of the popular Malaysian rock band Search. In 1989, a year before the film was released in the

Indonesian market, the rock band released its album *Fenomena*, which received over-whelming support from Indonesian audiences—over 2 million copies were sold (Raja 2017).

Various efforts to co-produce movies between the two countries were initiated after the formation of ASEAN in 1967, but they materialized only in the late 1980s. Eventually several films were produced, including the popular *Irisan-Irisan Hati* (Shreds of the heart) (Lim 1989). There were also successful attempts by filmmakers to incorporate celebrities from Indonesia and Malaysia in their films. For instance, *Isabella* (1990) was directed by the Indonesian director Marwan Alkatiri and featured the Malaysian actor Amy Search and Indonesian actor Nia Zulkarnain. Other collaborative films included *Gadis Hitam Putih* (The black and white woman, 1986), directed by Wahyu Sihombing, and *Gelora Cinta* (The surge of love, 1992) by Aziz Sattar (Norman Yusoff 2019). While such collaboration was applauded by the Malaysian film industry, it gained little interest from its Indonesian counterpart (Said 1991).

Unlike successful Indonesian sinetrons in Malaysia, only a small number of Malaysian TV shows managed to penetrate the Indonesian market. In the late 1980s there were only two notable Malaysian television shows popular in Indonesia: the soap opera *Primadona* (Primadonna, 1989) and the variety show *Titian Muhibah* (1990). One of the best contemporary examples of Malaysian media content popular in Indonesia is the animation series *Upin & Ipin*, by Les' Copaque Production. The children's show has been broadcast on the Indonesian TV channel MNCTV since 2007.

Media Piracy in Indonesia and Malaysia
Audiences in both countries also enjoyed relatively easy access to transnational media content through pirated media. In Indonesia, for example, the government found it difficult to eliminate media piracy. The development of videocassettes in the 1980s is viewed as having kickstarted media piracy in Indonesia (Rosihan Anwar 1988). Locals made copies of videocassettes in order to meet the demand for a variety of films without having to spend much money going to the cinema. The booming piracy business led to a decline in the production of Indonesian movies in the early 1980s (Rosihan Anwar 1988). New films were recorded as soon as they were available in theatres, and videocassettes of the films were promptly distributed by video rental shops. Many of the recordings were made illegally and disseminated without obtaining video rights from the producers. Efforts were made by the Indonesian government to eliminate piracy and exert more control, but no significant success was achieved (Khairi Ahmad 1988).

In the 1990s, pirated media content in most Southeast Asian countries was distributed via counterfeit VCDs or DVDs due to the lack of access to online media. Even

though pirated media is illegal in Indonesia, 90 percent of the VCDs distributed in the market were pirated copies (Van Heeren 2012). Most pirated media offers relatively cheap access to transnational content. Hollywood box office movies were "often for sale on the streets before they even premiere in local theaters" (Baumgärtel 2007, 53). Pirated VCDs and DVDs also offered pornographic materials, Western music albums, and computer software and games. The only regulation that could be used to eradicate the practice of media piracy was Copyright Law No. 28/2014. However, the issue was more law enforcement than regulation.

Following the increasing penetration of the Internet in Indonesia, this newest medium has provided an alternative way for Indonesians to access transnational content. While it is true that a variety of media content from many countries is now easily available to Internet users in Indonesia, there is also a tendency to utilize this relatively cheap medium to access and distribute pirated media content. Even though the government tried to minimize online piracy through the implementation of Information and Electronic Transaction Law No. 11/2008, the government's efforts to prevent the distribution of online pirated content seemed to focus mainly on blocking pornographic websites.

Even though censorship has been in place in Malaysia since the country's independence in 1957, citizens can bypass bans through illegal Internet downloads. Banned media content can also be purchased from pirated VCD/DVD dealers (Yow 2015). Thus, it is not surprising that even though the Malaysian Censorship Board banned *50 Shades of Grey* in 2015, people in the country are able to get their hands on an illegal copy of the movie through the ever-free Internet and illegal VCD/DVD dealers. The introduction of Malaysian Copyright Act 1987 proved that the government took piracy seriously and eventually hoped to put an end to it. Unfortunately, although illegal VCD/DVD dealers have been subjected to numerous raids by the authorities, their numbers are unlikely to decrease as the demand for illegal content is very high among Malaysians. For those who have slow Internet speed, it is more practical to buy illegal copies of VCDs or DVDs from unlawful dealers at prices starting from RM10 each, with discounts available for bulk purchases. The existence of illegal VCD and DVD dealerships not only raises questions about the relevance of stringent censorship but also explains one of the ways in which transnational content can be exchanged between countries.

Satellite Dishes and Antennae to Access TV Shows and Films
As in the case of radio, which was discussed in the previous section, Indonesian television owners in Northern Sumatra and West Kalimantan were able to access Malaysian television programs due to leaks of the broadcasting signal. In the late 1980s, television programs from the Malaysian channel TV3 were so popular in Sumatra that most Indonesian

audiences were not aware they were enjoying programs from another country (Sen and Hill 2006). Other than TV3, two other mainstream Malaysian TV channels were also available for free beyond the Malaysian border in West Kalimantan—RTM1 and RTM2. Malaysians living near the border also have access to a few Indonesian television channels. In Johor, for example, residents can easily watch the three oldest Indonesian channels for free without having to subscribe to any cable or satellite service. Johor is located near Singapore and Indonesia. Hence, Singaporean and Indonesian channels are easily transmitted beyond the Malaysia-Indonesia and Malaysia-Singapore borders. By purchasing a standard outdoor antenna, viewers can enjoy TPI, RCTI, and SCTV from Indonesia as well as television channels from Singapore (Mohammad Faiq 2007). This can be considered as an unintended or unintentional transnational flow of media content, since the content comes via either illegal or unofficial transmission.

Likewise, the use of parabolic antennas in rural areas is seen as an essential unofficial medium for audiences in Indonesia to obtain transnational programs, including television programs from Malaysia, and vice versa. Compared to before the early 1990s, these days the numbers of satellite dishes in the country has decreased remarkably. In 1991, to control information flows from outside the country through alternative means such as privately owned satellite dishes, the Malaysian government announced a ban on all privately owned satellite dishes. The ban was described as highly necessary and a matter of highest national unity and security and also one of the ways to preserve Malaysian morals and values (Davidson 1998). With the ban in place, the Malaysian government aimed to control the massive flow of foreign media content into the country, worrying that without censorship, "dangerous" media content could easily influence Malaysians and not only jeopardize Malaysian culture but also threaten national harmony. However, as previously discussed, by the mid-1990s Astro Holdings was given the exclusive rights to provide satellite broadcasting services in the country. Ownership of satellite receivers other than Astro's is considered illegal without a license—and owners of such receivers without the proper documentation and permits face confiscation of equipment as well as a hefty fine if discovered.

Private enterprises attempted to further encourage cross-border content broadcasting between Indonesia and Malaysia. One of the most prominent examples was the establishment of Astro Nusantara in 2006. As Malaysia's sole satellite television service, this company signed an agreement with a local Indonesian company to establish its business in the Indonesian media market. Unfortunately, due to a stock dispute between the two majority shareholders, Astro Malaysia and Lippo Group, Astro Nusantara was dissolved in October 2008 (*Malaysia Today*, May 1, 2012). There was another reason why the Indonesian government supported the disbanding of Astro Nusantara. Indonesian

Member of Parliament Dedy Malik argued that the Malaysian broadcasting company violated the broadcasting rules set by Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information, especially the reciprocity clause (*Tempo*, March 3, 2006). Astro Malaysia was given a license to broadcast Malaysian content to Indonesian audiences, but this Malaysian satellite service did not transmit Indonesian content to Malaysian viewers.

Better Acceptance of Indonesian Content

We found that there were several reasons for the better acceptance of Indonesian media content in Malaysia than vice versa. Audiences in Malaysia found that Indonesian radio and television programs shared similar cultural values as their own; thus, it was easy for them to accept Indonesian content. Researchers such as Latifah Pawanteh *et al.* (2009) observed that at least for Malaysian media audiences, Asian media content such as Indonesia's had relatable storylines and was relevant to their daily lives. The use of relatively identical language in the two countries in addition to Muslim-friendly content facilitated better acceptance of Indonesian content in Malaysia (Khairi Ahmad 1988). Moreover, since the majority of the population in both countries is Muslim, that further facilitates the flow of media between the two countries, mainly from Indonesia to Malaysia. Our analysis of media laws in both countries found that their regulations outlawed content that was deemed to be against Islamic values, such as explicit sexual content and gambling. In the case of Indonesian audiences, local media content is more popular than Malaysian content since Indonesia has a more advanced media industry and there are diverse options to choose from. Local media content is more popular among Indonesians also as it reflects Indonesian values. Some of the local media content is even produced in indigenous languages such as Javanese and Sundanese (Goebel, 2013), which makes it more appealing to local audiences (Sen and Hill 2006).

The entertainment industry in Indonesia is seen to be a step ahead of Malaysia's. In 2017 Indonesia was the world's 16th-biggest film market and the largest in Southeast Asian (*Jakarta Post*, December 14, 2018). Unlike Malaysian media products, Indonesian content is not only widely accepted by a global audience, but much of its profit is derived from the local market. With a population of 241 million in 2018 (Freedom House 2019), Indonesia undeniably has a larger talent pool than Malaysia. Due to Indonesia's large population, its media market has greater potential for distributing local products. Its large population also makes Indonesia one of the most promising markets for the entertainment business in Asia (*Jakarta Post*, December 14, 2018; Chan 2019).

Low English proficiency among Indonesians is also deemed to be one of the factors

contributing to the flourishing media industry in Indonesia. According to Itje Chodidjah, (2007) the dispersed geography of the Indonesian archipelago made it difficult to spread an English education. Low English proficiency led Indonesian audiences to prefer local rather than foreign content. Although Indonesia has diverse ethnicities and different languages, Bahasa Indonesia is the state's officially mandated lingua franca (Rahmi 2015). Malay was used as an official language of Indonesia in 1918 (Moeliono 1993), primarily because colonial officials were concerned that if Dutch was extensively used, Indonesians would have easy access to political ideologies from abroad (Alisjahbana 1957; Lamb and Coleman 2008). In the 1920s, during the nationalist uprising in Indonesia, the nationalist movement declared Bahasa Indonesia as the language of solidarity for all Indonesians (Lamb and Coleman 2008). All these factors led to better acceptance of local media products than foreign materials and eventually contributed to the ever growing local media industry. Also, among the working class in Indonesia, local content was viewed as more relatable as it was imbued with familiar daily Indonesian values; this further contributed to the thriving entertainment industry in the state. Since the Indonesian entertainment industry was deemed good enough for Indonesians, foreign content— including that of Malaysian origin—was deemed inferior. The flourishing media industry in Indonesia provided better opportunities for the production of diverse media content than Malaysia. This was especially true after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, ending stringent control over media in Indonesia. The liberalization of the press in Indonesia resulted in the production of colorful media content that is still well received by international audiences, including Malaysians.

Conclusion

Our findings revealed that the Indonesian and Malaysian governments paid more attention to the flow of Western media content than to content from neighboring countries that shared the same religion and cultural values. As illustrated previously, hostility toward Western content could be seen through a more stringent body of laws in both countries prohibiting—often through censorship—materials that went against local norms (Wan Mahmud *et al.* 2009). At the same time, there is no record of an aggressive approach having been taken by either government when dealing with the illegal transmission of media content between these two countries, particularly near the border. Other than concerns over different religious and cultural values, governments were also concerned about the introduction of a consumer culture and liberal political ideologies from the West. Therefore, Western media content was more closely monitored and controlled

through stringent media laws and policies (Ade Armando 2011). Such media content was viewed not only as an economic threat but also as a potential threat to national security.

As for the transnational flow of content between Indonesia and Malaysia, minimal documentation has been found to indicate that there were extensive official media exchanges between these two countries. In fact, scholars such as Van der Heide (2002) posited that scholarly discussion on the film industry in Asia often overlooked the Malaysian context. Based on our exploratory analysis, there was a lot of Indonesian entertainment content in Malaysia but minimal Malaysian content in the Indonesian media space. This was due to factors such as a better-developed entertainment industry in Indonesia, and a freer media environment in Indonesia, particularly after the fall of Suharto. Indonesians were found to prefer local rather than Malaysian content due to factors such as language and the sense of familiarity with Indonesian values depicted by locally produced broadcast media.

Also, minimal records have been found to indicate that either country paid close attention to media flows, especially the illicit transnational media flows in border areas. Not much action was taken to control the cross-border flow of content. It can be assumed that content from both countries was considered "safe" due to the countries' common shared cultural and religious values; also, illegal content could flow transnationally only near the national border areas, and no significant amount of exchange was reported. Illicit cross-border broadcasts and content are believed to spread not much farther than the border areas of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Since the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia has been somewhat unstable for several decades, media exchange may be seen as one way to rekindle the relationship. It is surprising that although several efforts have been made to improve the relationship, especially through strategic agreements, minimal efforts have focused on extensive media exchange. In the 1990s the two countries tried to work together on programs like *Titian Muhibah*, but since then no similar efforts have been made. Increased media exchange between Indonesia and Malaysia can serve the diplomatic purpose of improving the bittersweet bilateral relationship between these Nusantara countries.

Since this study was conducted through historical research, it is exploratory in nature. Minimal resources were found about official media exchanges between Indonesia and Malaysia. The issue can be further explored through interviewing media providers from both countries to see whether there are any bilateral agreements on broadcast media content. Research can also focus on interviewing diplomats from both countries to better understand the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia. Through these interviews, researchers will be able to gain updated information on Indonesia's and Malaysia's media exchange initiatives and better understand how media

exchange can serve as a diplomatic approach. Since there is also minimal proper documentation on unintended transnational media flows near the national borders, it would be best to explore this topic by interviewing and requesting official documentation from the relevant authorities in both countries.

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The Institutional Environment of the Palm Oil Value Chain and Its Impact on Community Development in Kapuas Hulu, Indonesia

Albert Hasudungan* and Jeffrey Neilson**

The aim of this study is to present the multi-scalar institutional environment that has emerged around the palm oil value chain, and to analyze how this influences community development outcomes in the Kapuas Hulu district of West Kalimantan. A common narrative presented by many environmental organizations, and indeed often reinforced in the academic literature, is one where local communities actively resist the expansion of oil palm plantations but are ultimately powerless to halt it. This narrative tends to depend on, and reinforces, a portrait of traditional communities as being dependent on subsistence food provisioning and natural resources for their livelihoods, thus making them particularly sensitive to the widespread environmental changes caused by this highly transformative—in a landscape sense—type of commercial agriculture. This research draws upon mixed method data collection techniques, including eight months of participant observation fieldwork across three villages in 2016 and 2017, group discussions, household surveys, and semi-structured interviews. Conceptually, we develop an understanding of the institutional environment as applied within global value chain theory, which we present as a complex amalgam of social structures from within the value chain (especially governance by lead firms), those external to it (including formal state institutions and NGOs), and the changing customary institutions within production landscapes. The ability of local communities to participate in the construction of this broader institutional environment, and to benefit from it, is of critical importance when assessing the impact of incorporation within the palm oil economy. This study thus helps present a more nuanced analysis of community engagement with palm oil and the processes driving contemporary agrarian change.

Keywords: institutions, institutional environment, global value chains, palm oil, swidden, agrarian change, Indonesia, Kalimantan

* School of Business and Economics, Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, BSD City Kavling Edutown I.1 Jl. BSD Raya Utama, BSD City Kabupaten Tangerang Banten 15339, Indonesia
Corresponding author's e-mail: albert.hasdung@gmail.com; albert.hasudungan@pmbs.ac.id
** School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

I   Introduction

The ongoing expansion of oil palm plantations in Indonesia has been actively challenged by various advocacy groups and foreign governments on both social and environmental grounds, whilst being strongly supported by the government of Indonesia. The negotiating space within which decisions are made regarding this expansion connects primary producers, processors, exporters, importers, product manufacturers, retailers, and final consumers within the value chain with a much broader set of societal actors, including traditional landowners, community groups, nongovernmental organizations, and governments, that are essentially external to the value chain. Collectively, these actors mutually construct a continually emergent institutional environment within which industry and community outcomes are shaped. We borrow the concept of the institutional environment as applied within global value chain (GVC) theory, and use it in this article to refer to the complex amalgam of social structures both from within the value chain (especially governance by lead firms) as well as external to it (including formal state institutions and NGOs, but also extending in our case to customary law arrangements). Despite such complex multi-scalar institutional connections, industry critics tend to highlight the negative environmental, social, and economic impacts occurring in remote rural regions as a simple consequence of exploitation by downstream corporate actors (Paganini 2018). The market dominance of powerful corporations is associated with the economic marginalization of swidden-based farming communities in Kalimantan, which are heavily dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods (Colchester *et al.* 2006). Yet, as described by J. F. McCarthy (2010), outcomes on the ground in rural communities are highly variable and include successful wealth accumulation—especially by local elites— often occurring alongside "adverse incorporation" and deepening poverty for others. Blanket claims about the industry are often made without adequate consideration of the ways many smallholders actively seek to rearrange the terms under which they engage with the palm oil economy.

This paper presents the multi-scalar institutional environment within which local communities have become enmeshed by virtue of their participation in the global value chain for palm oil. This study contributes to our knowledge of how the outcomes of community engagements with the palm oil industry are shaped by the strategies of NGOs, customary landowners, the government, and agribusiness and food processing firms. An understanding of the institutional environment thus created can also be helpful to identify points of leverage to effect change. It furthermore makes a contribution to our understanding of contemporary agrarian change as being shaped by a broad constellation of actors, including those operating at a distance through the global value chain.

Fig. 1   The Study Site of Kapuas Hulu District in West Kalimantan, Indonesia
Source: Authors, prepared using ArcGIS Software.

The aim of this study is to present the multi-scalar institutional environment that has emerged around the palm oil value chain, and to analyze how this influences community development outcomes in the Kapuas Hulu district of West Kalimantan (Fig. 1). According to understandings of value chain governance, lead firms will position themselves strategically amongst competitors to serve their own interests while also meeting consumer expectations in respect to economic, social, and environmental conditions, resulting in particular strategies to manage a globally coordinated production process (Neilson *et al.* 2018). Drawing upon eight months of fieldwork in Kapuas Hulu, this paper demonstrates the way in which the multi-scalar institutional environment presents room to maneuver for communities and individuals engaging with the palm oil sector. This study unpacks the complex interactions of agribusiness firms, the government, and NGOs with local customary arrangements. Downstream firms play a key role in governing the value chain to ensure faster and more efficient supply chain deliveries by extending their reach into local communities through the establishment of physical infrastructure such as roads and manufacturing mills, but this is also mediated by the broader institutional environment.

II   The Institutional Environment: The Global Value Chain and Beyond

Our understanding of the institutional environment shaping development outcomes in the palm oil economy is greatly assisted through recent conceptual developments in GVC theory. GVC analysis helps us, in the first instance, to understand how value is added through an input-output structure, by tracing production from upstream producers (such as farmers) to primary processors, exporters, importers, product manufacturers, retailers, and on to final consumers. In the contemporary global economy, these value-adding processes are often geographically dispersed across regions and countries and have their own "territoriality." Within a value chain, moreover, there is often a dynamic relationship among different actors that governs the flow and allocation of profit and human resources throughout the chain (Hassler 2009). When examining the entire chain, it becomes clear that different groups make their own rules to regulate and allocate resources among their members and to dictate the actions of others elsewhere in the chain. Such rules of the game can be thought of as being embodied within governance structures that are often strongly dictated by the most powerful actors in the chain— those lead firms located at strategic value-adding nodes. The critical conceptual contribution of GVC analysis has thus been to highlight the ability of such firms to dictate chain governance structures.

G. Gereffi (1995) described how a (value) chain does not only possess an input-output structure, a territoriality, and a governance structure but is also contained within an "institutional framework." He defined this as "how local, national, and international conditions and policies shape the globalization process at each stage of the chain" (Gereffi 1995, 113). Subsequent work in GVC studies, however, for instance by J. Neilson and B. Pritchard (2009), has further developed an understanding of the institutional framework of GVCs that borrows more explicitly from the work on institutions in new institutional sociology and economics such as that by D. C. North, who explained:

> Institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights). Throughout history, institutions have been devised by human beings to create order and reduce uncertainty in exchange. (North 1991, 97)

In this paper we follow the clear distinction in North's (1990) study between "institutions" and "organizations," the former being the "rules" and the latter the "players." We also respect North's fundamental distinction between "institutional arrangements" as discrete arrangements between economic units and the broader "institutional environ-

ment" as the "fundamental political, social and legal ground rules that establish the basis for production, exchange and distribution" (Davis and North 1971, 6–7). According to Neilson and Pritchard (2009), it is necessary for GVC analysis to move beyond a concept of the institutional framework as something that GVCs are "framed within," toward one that is both external and internal to chains. They argue that "The institutional environment is a pre-determining characteristic of the governance structures which subsequently emerge within the chain and which, in turn, then act upon those arrangements in continual feedback" (Neilson and Pritchard 2009, 56).

To examine palm oil dynamics in West Kalimantan, we borrow and apply this understanding of the institutional environment of a GVC as an amalgam of rules, norms, and conventions set by lead firms from within the chain along with those constructed by extra-firm actors who are essentially external to it. The approach builds on the insights generated by J. F. McCarthy *et al.* (2012), where oil palm development outcomes in Indonesia were examined by drawing together insights from GVC theory with the literature on state formation and regime interests. We have also been influenced by the earlier work on dynamic legal pluralism in political ecology by R. S. Meinzen-Dick and R. Pradhan (2002), who highlighted the ambiguity of rules and coexisting multiplicity of legal systems and institutions with respect to natural resource access and exploitation. Importantly, various local, national, and global institutions (formal and informal) intersect in a multi-scalar process to ultimately shape how natural resources are allocated and controlled (Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan 2002).

This article applies a value chain analysis to examine the complex relationships among different layers of institutions connected to the value chain. In this multi-layered institutional environment, different actors negotiate rules to determine the right to access and use resources under specific conditions (McCarthy 2006). In the case of oil palm, T. M. Li (2015) found a degradation of customary institutions when local villagers were incorporated into palm oil value chains. We extend those observations by scrutinizing how local customary institutions are constantly challenged by various institutions associated with the palm oil value chain in Kapuas Hulu. We specifically examine the changing labor and resource access arrangements influenced by palm oil value chains.

In their application of GVC theory to the global cocoa sector, N. Fold and J. Neilson (2016) argue that while firms are increasingly able to determine the rules and standards in the global value chain, they act in a dialectical relationship with extra-firm actors, including state-based actors and NGOs. While the government often supports proposals for oil palm development in Indonesia, several NGOs strongly reject oil palm development (Levang *et al.* 2016), continually recreating spaces of negotiation. Similarly, the "inextricably entwined and mutually constitutive" interests of the state and large agri-

business are highlighted by McCarthy *et al.* (2012), who demonstrate how these interests coalesce to shape development pathways.

In Kapuas Hulu, we find community and household attitudes toward oil palm are far from homogenous, are difficult to predict, and appear to be highly contingent. This is suggested elsewhere, for example, in the diverse outcomes reported in Jambi, Sumatra (McCarthy 2010), and West Kalimantan (Potter 2011), where local community engagements as relatively independent landholders and highly dependent contract farmers were respectively reported. In the palm oil economy, local communities are seen to pursue quite diverse livelihood portfolios (Elmhirst *et al.* 2016), which clearly affects disparate development outcomes, and these outcomes frequently reflect a shifting set of local cultural institutions. This study examines how particular institutions, within and external to the global value chain and operating across multiple scales, coalesce in an institutional environment to shape different modes of oil palm community engagement with impacts on processes of agrarian change.

III   Research Methods

This research uses a case study approach, and fieldwork was conducted across three villages in Kapuas Hulu District, West Kalimantan, as shown in Fig. 1. Each village was selected based on particular geographies, ethnic composition, and modes of engagement with oil palm development. Village A and Village B (both located proximate to the Malaysian border) were chosen partly due to their relatively recent incorporation within the palm oil economy, which occurred from around 2012 and was driven partly by territorial competition at the national scale with Malaysia. On the other hand, oil palm development in Village C commenced in the early 2000s and was promoted by local government elites as a means to replace the swidden practices that they considered an unproductive use of land resources. The development model in Village C included a significant smallholder production base, and it attracted migrants to either work directly on their own smallholdings or to work as plantation labor (Leonald and Rowland 2016).

A key reason for the inclusion of both Village A and Village B in the study was the reported dominance of ethnic Malays in the former and Iban Dayaks in the latter. Household livelihood surveys were conducted on a sample of 40 households within each of the three villages (120 household responses in total), where households were invited to participate based on a random selection from listings provided by administrative village heads. Table 1 shows the approximate ethnic composition of the villages based on this survey, which confirmed information provided by earlier interviews.

Table 1 Ethnic Composition of Each Village

Village	Ethnicities
Village A	Malay (50%), Iban (30%), Others (Javanese, Sundanese, Arab, Padang, Dayak Ahe) (20%)
Village B	Dayak Iban (62.5%), Malay (22.5%), Others (Javanese, Batak, Chinese, Dayak Suruk) (15%)
Village C	Javanese (42.5%), Dayak Sebaruk (27.5%), Malay (15%), Others (15%)

Table 2 List of Semi-structured Interview Informants

Village heads
Swidden farmers
Oil palm laborers
Oil palm farmers
Customary leaders
Migrant residents
Local business owners
	Traders
	Palm oil cooperative representatives
	Firm land acquisition staff
	Local NGO representatives
	International donors
	Conservation NGOs
		Government staff in agricultural
		  agencies, environmental agencies,
		  forestry department, and land agency
		Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
		  representatives
		Industry representatives (Gabungan
		  Pengusaha kelapa Sawit Indonesia,
		  Indonesian Palm Oil Association)
		Subdistrict heads (Camat)

Qualitative data collection techniques were undertaken in 2016 and 2017, comprising participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions. Participant observation is a way of collecting information about social activities within a particular society using both verbal and non-verbal clues (Schmuck 1997). It was conducted in Kapuas Hulu to trace local attitudes toward farming systems and livelihoods linked to oil palm, and lasted a total of six months, with two months in each of the three villages. Semi-structured interviews sought to capture various institutional forms of oil palm development and perceptions toward oil palm development. The selection of informants was based on their ability to communicate their ideas and experiences relevant to the research investigation (Dunn 2005). In both village and local urban centres, a total of 40 interviews with a variety of informants and stakeholders were undertaken, as presented in Table 2. Interview topics within the village environments included local demographic change, perceptions of the introduction of oil palm in their villages, and changes in land access, labor arrangements, and livelihood strategies. Group discussions were organized to obtain responses regarding palm oil development in local areas and were used to observe the interpersonal dynamics between different individuals. Discussions were either organized explicitly by the researcher (as in Village B) or involved attending regular village meetings (as in Village A and Village C).

IV The Multi-scalar Institutional Environment in Kapuas Hulu

The following analysis is based on a three-fold assessment of the institutional environ-

ment, which we present in terms of: (i) governance structures resulting from lead firm strategies within the global value chain; (ii) institutions constructed by extra-firm actors who are essentially external to the value chain (including the government and NGOs); and (iii) informal customary institutions peculiar to place-based sites of production. While we recognize that these three forms are, in a sense, arbitrary in that they are actually mutually constituted, we present them separately here for analytical purposes. It is, however, our intention that they be considered as collectively coalescing to construct a broader multi-scalar institutional environment that in turn shapes the nature of palm oil–community engagements.

Governance Structures within the Palm Oil Value Chain

Indonesia produces significant volumes of several agricultural commodities for the global market, including palm oil, rubber, coffee, and cocoa, such that the activities of global lead firms in these sectors often exert a powerful influence on sites of production. For example, chocolate manufacturing firms have been generally reluctant to get directly involved in farm-level cocoa production due to the relatively low cost-capability ratio for that activity (Neilson *et al.* 2018). While chocolate firms would struggle to manage labor more efficiently than smallholder farmers, their influence on agricultural production is exerted (at a distance) through various commitments to sustainability programs and certification schemes (Neilson *et al.* 2018). Moreover, chocolate firms have also outsourced primary processing of cocoa beans to specialist grinding firms rather than absorbing these costs themselves, and it is these firms that frequently implement farm-level development programs. The economics of palm oil, however, are different. The end users of palm oil are more diverse across a number of consumer products, such that ultimate lead firms (generally branded food manufacturers) are unlikely to be involved in agricultural production. They do, however, rely on large agribusiness firms as suppliers of palm oil products, and these firms (unlike cocoa processors) are intimately involved in agricultural production themselves.

The cost calculations of oil palm plantations are far more dependent on capital (manifest particularly in access to land and fertilizers) than cocoa plantations, which have lower capital-labor ratios (Budidarsono *et al.* 2012). Therefore, being a competitive oil palm producer in Indonesia, and a strategic supplier to global lead firms, generally depends on obtaining access to large areas of land, with reliable access to finance and a disciplined labor force. For such potential investors with the necessary connections to political decision makers, Kapuas Hulu seemed to provide the right combination of factors.

The combination of financial and political capital possessed by agribusiness firms in the palm oil sector is disproportionate to that possessed by local communities as the

customary landowners, whose rights over land are highly variable and determined by an assortment of both formal and informal institutions. As a result, the terms of community engagement with these firms are overwhelmingly shaped by firm-specific priorities. In Village A and Village B, PT Buana Tunas Sejahtera (PT BTS)[1] made a contractual agreement with the community where local community members were enrolled as laborers, and where the firm was in direct control of production. In that negotiation, the firm acquired a 30-year Hak Guna Usaha (leasing concession right, HGU) from the government over customary land after obtaining written consent from representatives of the community. In return, the firm was to pay 20 percent dividends from its profit to the original landowners (KOPSA MGB and BTS 2010). According to community representatives, this contract reflected an attempt by the firm to formally limit the activities of smallholder farmers while ensuring access to labor.

The processes through which agribusiness firms are able to access land to begin with are critical and complicated (Hasudungan and Neilson 2020). First, agribusiness firms routinely construct a discourse around poor smallholder agricultural capacity and productivity in order to accumulate land and assert control over resources. To convince the government of the superiority of large-scale plantations over local agricultural systems, investors present local swidden cultivations as backward and unproductive (Potter 2011). This provides a conducive environment for the subsequent lease negotiations between firms and the state at the district and national levels. To then ensure optimal land access, agribusiness firms seek ways to negotiate contractual agreements that allow them greater direct control of upstream production sites. This means that agribusiness firms need to engage in active negotiations and bargaining with actors outside the value chain, including government and local communities, the latter primarily as gatekeepers of land but whose members often later participate directly in the value chain as either fruit suppliers or laborers.

Community consent emerges as a key milestone in ensuring access to land, but since negotiating with all the landholders is costly, time-consuming, and uncertain, firms inevitably choose to pursue contract negotiations mediated through a more limited number of customary elites (Li 2015). Our fieldwork in multiethnic Village A, where a Dayak leader occupied the position of village head, found that the allure of promised future prosperity was an important factor in eliciting consent. One firm's representatives took village leaders to the firm's other plantation in Riau, on the east coast of Sumatra, where

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1) We were unable to confirm with certainty the ownership status of PT BTS. However, a subsidiary of Sinar Mas Group reported (in 2018) that PT BTS was a third-party supplier to Sinar Mas, and that it was owned by the Chinese-listed Evershine Group Holdings Limited (Golden Agri-Resources 2020a).

the visitors were exposed to apparently high levels of material prosperity, which they associated with corporate control of oil palm production. In this case, however, it led to later disappointment:

> About 30 village leaders were invited to a comparative study in Riau. They were shown the development in the firm's concession, and in return we gave the land to them. Yet those promises were misleading. What they promised was different from the current reality. (Respondent J, Iban, 2016)

Through these field trips and other activities, the firm expected key leaders in the village to convince others to agree to land transfers, and these leaders were often recruited for this specific purpose. As negotiations progressed in this case, the firm sought to directly influence internal community dynamics and increasingly relied on existing institutions of patronage through which customary leaders would provide material and social support to their "clients" in return for obedience and recognition of their superior social standing. Through the successful recruitment of such local patrons as supporters of the firm, the likelihood of acquiescence from other community members was greatly increased, resulting in more secure access to the natural resources available on community lands.

In these contested land deals, some customary Dayak elites rejected the contractual conditions while others became strong advocates in favor of the offered agreements, leading to sometimes-serious intra-community conflict. One Dayak community member sold access rights to large tracts of land with the expectation that his children would be given supervisor-level jobs within the firm. The upstream influence of agribusiness firms within communities divided aspirations in ways that sometimes led to horizontal conflict and violence. Another Dayak man revealed how he had been verbally abused as a result of his father-in-law opposing the firm contracts, the terms and conditions of which he felt were unclear. In another instance, it was recounted that a man who supported the firm ended up in a duel (using a machete-like weapon known as *mandau*) with another man who opposed it. Such conflicts also led to imprisonment, such as a case in Village B, when an Iban man contested his neighbor's recently placed boundary markers for land sold to the firm, leading him to physically threaten a firm representative with his *mandau*. The Iban man, whose frustration at his inability to assert his rights was palpable, was later sentenced to jail:

> My older brother was convicted by the law because of that conflict over the land (boundary). He couldn't find a legal solution to that issue, so he brought his *mandau*, and the firm representative claimed he was attempting to kill him. He was prosecuted in Putussibau. (Respondent N, Village C, 2016)

Lead firms in a global value chain, moreover, position themselves strategically amongst

competitors to meet consumers' expectations in respect to various quality, economic, social, and environmental requirements (Neilson *et al.* 2018). This is often associated with a stronger buyer-driven governance structure within the chain. Gereffi (1994) emphasized how lead firms enact such governance within a chain, not necessarily through the direct ownership of upstream firms but through decentralized production settings, outsourcing, and indirect control. Large agri-food firms, such as Sinarmas Group (which owns Golden Agri Resources, GAR) and Indofood, operate as lead firms in the palm oil value chain. Both these Indonesian-owned conglomerates, for example, are manufacturers of diversified consumer products including cooking oil, while also engaging upstream with plantation production.

For the most part, these lead firms enact relatively strict supply chain traceability programs on third-party suppliers. On the GAR website,[2] the firm provides detailed information regarding third-party suppliers and its attempts to manage them. For example, a GAR internal monitoring team found indications of 2018 clearing of high-conservation-value forest in West Kalimantan by PT BTS (a GAR third-party supplier), which was subsequently deemed to be non-compliant with GAR's grievance process.[3] An alternative model is evident in Kapuas Hulu, where PT Riau Agrotama Plantation is a subsidiary of Indofood Agri, a major agribusiness conglomerate with a reported 247,630 hectares of oil palm across Indonesia in 2017 along with 26 palm oil mills and five refineries (IndoAgri 2016). Both Indofood Agri and Sinar Mas Agro Resources and Technology are important suppliers for the domestic market, for which they manufacture consumer products, while also exporting to various markets across Asia-Pacific and Europe.

Specific norms around corporate social responsibility have emerged within the palm oil sector that in themselves constitute institutional forms (that is, accepted patterns of behavior). Lead firms enact interventions along the value chain primarily in an attempt to ensure long-term stability over palm oil supplies, which often involves upstream commitments to stimulate local development surrounding the mills (SMART 2016). To meet their supply needs (and consumer expectations), lead firms have funded the building of mills, roads, schools, and facilities around Kapuas Hulu. Indofood Agri has initiated social investments through its Solidarity Programme (IndoAgri 2016), which delivers improved community health and education facilities in an explicit attempt to improve relationships with the local community of Village C. Such social infrastructure development has been replicated in Village A and Village B by other agribusiness firms to fulfill their corporate interests to integrate more productive and capable potential laborers in their supply chain. Indeed, relatively high rates of satisfaction with education and health infrastructure were

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2) Golden Agri-Resources (2020b).
3) Golden Agri-Resources (2020a).

reported by respondents to our household survey, as presented in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, even if satisfaction with education facilities was somewhat lower in the more established oil palm plantation of Village C.
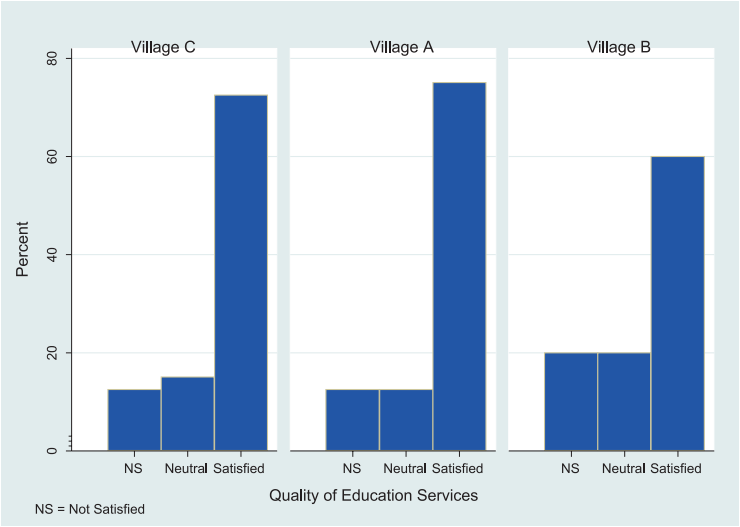

Fig. 2   Satisfaction with Education Services in Oil Palm Villages
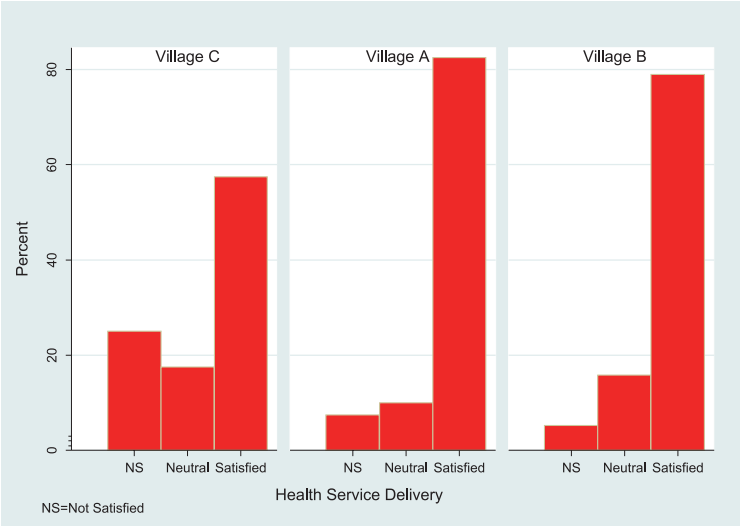Source: Authors' survey, 2016.

Fig. 3   Satisfaction with Health Services in Oil Palm Villages
Source: Authors' survey, 2016.

While an expanding corporate infrastructure program primarily serves strategic business interests, rural households with adequate capability assets can leverage this to configure diversified livelihood strategies where they effectively engage with multiple value chains simultaneously (Bolwig *et al.* 2010). For instance, with improved access to education and health care, some members of the local community are able to access better jobs on the plantations and elsewhere. In an interview with a younger, high-school-educated Dayak man, he explained that the ability to write, read, and understand basic numerical calculations allowed him to work as a field supervisor on a plantation and improve his overall economic situation.

Indeed, many community members have successfully upgraded their positions within the value chain to occupy more lucrative positions as collectors or middlemen, where they use the improved infrastructure to supply mills in Sintang, a processing hub farther down the Kapuas River. They act as local market conduits from smallholders to downstream value chain actors, and use their economic position to coordinate and increase smallholder production. These chains continue to be effectively governed by lead firms, which create limiting institutions for participation, including through price and standard settings, although collectors also retain a degree of autonomy.

The characteristics of oil palm fruit have a powerful effect on the value chain structure and the relations between actors. Fresh fruit bunches generally need to be processed within 48 hours to maintain oil quality, and prices paid are severely discounted or rejected outright if delivery is delayed. A relatively capital-intensive processing mill will thus often be surrounded by a hinterland of producers who are virtually tied to it with few alternative marketing options, with resulting highly uneven power relations between the two sets of actors. It can also have the effect of empowering transport operators who provide a critical service linking them together. During the period of fieldwork in 2017, when general market prices for oil palm fruit in West Kalimantan were around IDR 1,600 per kilo, local middlemen in Village C would pay as little as IDR 1,300 per kilo due to these local dynamics.

We observe how contractual deals for large-scale oil palm plantations can affect social relations among customary leaders as a result of firm-specific strategies to assert control over supplies. Despite that disruption, the palm oil value chain functions in other ways to facilitate local participation in this value chain and in other economic activities. Previous research has emphasized that smallholding oil palm plantations can indeed be a way for local villagers to adopt commodity production largely on their own terms (Cramb and Sujang 2013; Potter 2015). In our study, the business capabilities of some individuals were enhanced as a result of their exposure to corporate sustainability programs initiated by downstream value chain actors, especially improved social and physical infrastructure,

enabling them to engage in new small business opportunities.

Extra-firm Actors and the Institutional Environment of the Palm Oil Value Chain
The palm oil value chain consists of various direct economic actors, including smallholder growers, collectors, agribusiness firms, processors, exporters, product manufacturers, supermarkets, and financial organizations. These actors and their value-adding activities constitute the fundamental input-output structure of the chain, with a buyer-driven governance structure dictated by the needs of lead firms that manifests itself in the various institutions described in the previous subsection. These economic actors are then embedded within a broader set of institutions shaped by various external stakeholders, many of whom have a major impact on oil palm cultivation at the local level (the "institutional framework" in Gereffi's 1995 formulation). In Kapuas Hulu, the Indonesian government, operating at various scales, is clearly an important driver of this broader institutional framework and acts to either promote or inhibit the spatial expansion of plantations. Meanwhile, various environmental and conservation interests, including international NGOs, have performed a further critical role in bringing public attention to the damaging environmental impacts of the palm oil industry, and their actions, agendas, and interests are reshaping the way smallholders engage with the palm oil sector and their ability to develop their own livelihood trajectories.

J. Ribot (1998) emphasized how state institutions shape access to resources, which in turn influences profit distribution along a value chain. In Kapuas Hulu, there are various state actors—including the local government, national and provincial land agencies, financial regulators, and conservation agencies—that shape the contours of industry expansion. Principal amongst these state actors' roles is allocation of land access to preferred economic actors, where Badan Pertanahan Nasional (National Land Agency, BPN), agricultural authorities (through Permentan No. 98/2013, for example), and the local government are all pivotal. National and local authorities facilitate the expansion of oil palm cultivation through improving labor supply (including through *transmigrasi* schemes) and by providing subsidies, loans, agricultural extension services, and infrastructure development.

Plantation expansion has been a key pillar of state policies through which to promote agricultural modernization in border areas such as Kapuas Hulu, further encouraging large-scale appropriation of land resources (Hasudungan and Neilson 2020). These state interventions are mediated through local government agencies such as Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (Regional Development Planning Board, BAPPEDA), which also oversees the spatial planning process. In Kapuas Hulu, agribusiness firms actively negotiated with local authorities, such as BAPPEDA, to acquire land for oil palm

development, due to such authorities' influence over local land use decisions.

BPN is the only state institution legally allowed to issue HGUs in Indonesia, although if the lease area is below 1,000 hectares, authority falls upon the provincial land agency. Prior to gaining concession rights, firms are legally required to negotiate with local communities about their proposal to establish a plantation. In these situations, state agents often view swidden cultivation negatively while embracing and supporting the need to develop modern, large-scale plantations. A frequent problem is that state agents overlook the informal, customary rights of swidden cultivators. Certain representatives of the state were quite explicit about their attitudes toward customary rights, which were seen to be subservient to state claims over land:

> Here [West Kalimantan], customary rights do not exist. These would require satisfying formal requirements, such as the presence of local customary and collective rights. In fact, these cannot be observed—they are just able to claim access to sacred forests to collect local resources. The firm was granted the [legal] concession based on the prior legal status of that being state land. (Interview with a staff member of the West Kalimantan Provincial Land Agency, Pontianak, 2016)

Furthermore, to discourage swidden farmers' control over their swidden territory, the state imposed various rules to restrict their farming practices, such as demarcating the land as state land where legal sanctions could be imposed on any parties carrying out swidden burning. In Village C, environmental policies were being pursued on such "state land," with many Dayaks now reluctant to undertake swidden planting. Such policies tend to create a regulatory dichotomy between state land and freehold land, which implicitly suggests an absence of informal rights or customary tenure. This false dichotomy has contributed to multiple conflicts, competing claims, and ultimately the ability of firm interests to access land at relatively low cost.

In 2015 a presidential decree[4] established an independent authority, directly under the high-profile coordinating minister for economic affairs and known as Badan Pengelola Dana Perkebunan Kelapa Sawit (Palm Oil Fund Management Agency, BPDPKS), to essentially channel loans and other support to the palm oil sector. It was an extension of a previous program to provide micro-credit to smallholders. BPDPKS is financed from an industry levy imposed on palm oil exports, and in return it provides subsidized loans through state-owned banks and other support for research and development and replanting. Despite government claims that the fund would support smallholder farmers (Dara Aziliya 2016), in the Kapuas Hulu case study sites at least, funds were channelled primarily into "plasma plots" that had long been under the indirect control of large firms rather

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4) Peraturan Presiden (Perpres) No. 61 of 2015.

than independent smallholders. Plasma plots refer to smallholdings surrounding a larger "nuclear" estate that are compelled to sell their produce to the estate. Most of the actors provided with financial assistance were finance organizations, such as local banks and credit unions, that channelled the funds to farmers for accessing fertilizers, herbicides, and motorcycles (for transporting fruit).

Agricultural assistance is provided also through the Directorate General of Estate Crops, which in 2016 provided the local community in Village B with planting material and fertilizers through sporadic projects. The local agricultural development office is also a conduit for the distribution of subsidized fertilizer, formally intended for use on local food crops.[5] This subsidized fertilizer is widely used for oil palm, even if it is accessed through food crop farmer groups. A government program to issue "fertilizer cards" in 2018 to prevent such misallocation largely failed, and subsidized fertilizer scarcity is an ongoing problem in Kapuas Hulu, leading to hoarding and illegal sales by traders. Swidden farmers are generally ineligible to access subsidized fertilizers.

In contrast, nongovernmental organizations link oil palm expansion with the loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, greenhouse gas emissions, and the pollution of soils and waterways (Levang *et al.* 2016). These NGOs, furthermore, expand their focus to highlight negative social impacts in order to generate broader public opposition. In Silat Hilir, agribusiness firms were accused by one international NGO of exploiting child labor and paying low salaries while destroying rain forests and orangutan habitats (Greenpeace 2017). This public opposition has included criticism of financial institutions for unethical investments in the palm oil sector. For instance, Chain Reaction Research (2017) highlighted the critical role played by banks in financing oil palm expansion, claiming that NGO pressure on financiers had resulted in the latter's adoption of more stringent environmental and social policies.

Environmental organizations thereby also actively reconstruct the institutional environment of the chain at various scales. At the local level, NGOs have worked with some villagers to oppose oil palm and successfully reshape local opposition toward its expansion (Acciaoli and Dewi 2016). In Village B the influence of NGOs was exerted through engagements between village activists and NGO staff, where the latter actively urged local villagers to reject oil palm expansion. Community members in one village received pamphlets from a Jakarta-based NGO about the negative impacts of palm oil, which identified the lack of employment and dispossession resulting from palm oil development:

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5) Regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 47/Permentan/SR.310/12/2017 Regarding the Allocation and Maximum Retail Price of Subsidised Fertiliser for the Agricultural Sector in 2018.

> Oil palm plantations destroy local livelihoods. The local community has been cultivating food crops
> for hundreds of years. Rotation and swidden cultivation in particular has allowed for the regrowing
> of forests. Palm oil development erased that subsistence food and other agroforestry incomes such
> as rattan, resin rubber, and pepper. (Local pamphlet from an NGO, NN, Embaloh Hulu, Kapuas
> Hulu, 2016)

Such NGOs tend to present villagers as having lived in harmony with the environment
as ecologically "noble savages" prior to the introduction of oil palm, and as being power-
less to resist the changes enacted upon their livelihoods (as described also by Levang *et
al.* 2016). In Kapuas Hulu an influential NGO, Lanting Borneo, worked with around 24
local communities; its discourse emphasized a dichotomy between oil palm development
and the interests of the "customary community":

> Currently, we advocate the endorsement of customary rights in Kapuas Hulu. With regard to palm
> oil development, we ask the customary community to calculate the costs and benefits of accepting
> palm oil development. We can conclude that the customary community received only 0.1 percent,
> yet they lost their rights for 35 years along with their rubber. In fact, by working in their rubber
> fields they can use this cash income for their daily shopping needs. (Interview with DU, head of a
> local Kapuas Hulu NGO, Putussibau, 2016)

This approach, where environmental activists advocated protection of customary rights,
gained favorable traction among local communities. Nonetheless, the inability of NGOs
to differentiate between oil palm as a smallholder crop (grown on terms set by community
members) and large-scale oil palm plantations meant that they often distanced them-
selves from prevailing community interests (Levang *et al.* 2016). In the pamphlet dis-
seminated by activists, oil palm was linked to labor exploitation:

> In the Indonesian palm oil sector, labor rights such as decent pay, freedom, and their ability to
> negotiate are suppressed. Agreements and expectations from palm oil firms about employment
> are rarely met. Many people face a worse situation than before the arrival of oil palm. (Local
> pamphlet from an NGO, NN, Kapuas Hulu, 2016)

This argument seemed to ignore the reality of active community participation in the palm
oil sector across Kapuas Hulu, both as smallholders and as plantation workers, and the
mutual existence of palm oil laboring and swidden farming. From another perspective,
the oppositional stance taken by activists tended to raise local expectations about the
prospects of alternative livelihood improvements, which were rarely realized in
practice (Acciaoli and Dewi 2016). NGO activists in Putussibau, for instance, promoted
swidden cultivation and rubber as a way to sustain livelihoods, as presented in a local
seminar: "[Rubber is] a founding local livelihood. While the local community shifts to
other crops, rubber plays an important role to sustain household economies. Rubber is

the social capital for local development" (Swandiri Institute in the BAPPEDA office of Putussibau, April 19, 2016).

While activists insist on the economic and social viability of rubber, the local community views it as having declining importance and (at least at the time of fieldwork) being far less important than either pepper or oil palm. Farmers tended to harvest rubber only during periods when they urgently needed cash, as suggested by one farmer:

> Even though I have rubber, I have not yet tapped it. These days I am more comfortable cultivating *padi* (swidden) and working as an oil palm laborer. . . . I follow other people to work as an oil palm laborer . . . working in palm oil mills is not complicated, just chopping down [trees]. Previously, I got rid of the [rubber] bark and would harvest it . . . but today I am chopping it down. (Respondent TT, Iban, Village B, 2016)

Indeed, aspirations and monetary needs in West Kalimantan had been growing, and this resulted in greater interest in education, health care, and goods such as motorbikes and electronic equipment (Levang *et al.* 2016). Involvement in the palm oil economy appeared to offer realistic opportunities to meet these desires and needs through increased involvement in the cash economy. In areas that had rejected oil palm cultivation, such as the communities surrounding the buffer conservation areas of Embaloh Hulu and Batang Lupar subdistricts, local people were frequently confused about what livelihood alternatives could be realistically pursued given broader structural constraints. In these communities, which had closer relationships with various environmental activists from Jakarta and Putussibau, local people were more likely to complain about their economic situation and the difficulties they faced in meeting their basic needs.

At the global scale, exposure by NGOs of the relationship between deforestation and oil palm expansion has had profound effects on the institutional environment of the palm oil value chain. These include the setting up of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil in 2004 as a voluntary certification standard that has established new behavioral norms for firms seeking access to ethically aware consumers. This standard demands, amongst other social and environmental requirements, that plantation firms obtain prior informed consent from customary landholders. This has resulted in slowly shifting institutional norms on the ground in Kapuas Hulu. International finance organizations are also under increasing pressure to obtain independent verification that their investments are not contributing to environmental and social degradation. As a final example, the European Parliament responded to consumer and NGO pressure by issuing a resolution in 2017 to phase out biofuels made from palm oil, a decision that has had profound effects on trade and was, at the time of writing, strongly contested by the Indonesian government.

It can be seen that the broader institutional framework of the palm oil sector, most

notably the influence of the state and environmental NGOs, created conditions that influenced—sometimes in contradictory ways—the nature of community engagement with the sector. In some instances these institutions provided opportunities for positive engagement that could be strategically leveraged by individuals and organizations, while at other times they could shut down negotiations. Furthermore, these institutions were often powerfully reinforced through the discursive interventions of these actors in a battle for the attitudes and perceptions of local communities exposed to the palm oil economy.

Customary Institutions in Kapuas Hulu

The Ibanic Dayak community in Kapuas Hulu has complex customary cultural institutions that manage natural resources and address conflicts (Yasmi *et al.* 2007). For instance, in Ibanic customary culture the community lives in a longhouse consisting of 10 to 30 households, with a longhouse head called the *tue rumah*. During the 1950s and 1960s, Village B consisted of 12 households living in one longhouse, while Village A had 20 to 30 households in a longhouse. To demarcate the territory between longhouses, it would be customary for communally managed agroforests called *tembawang* to be established. The *tue rumah* imposed sanctions on any outsiders collecting resources without their approval, and the negotiation of territorial claims among longhouses was decided based on the negotiation between the *tue rumah* and higher leaders of several longhouses, known as *patih*.

Incorporation within palm oil value chains has been associated with a shift in preferences for individual, rather than longhouse, residency. In Village B, scarce timber resources combined with past conflicts among customary leaders also contributed to the decline of longhouse unions and their accompanying institutions. Here, the role of the *tue rumah* to regulate land and labor access has been diminishing, such that many Dayak communities now depend on customary decisions to be made at the higher level of *patih*. While longhouses are often important sites for various social gatherings (as we observed in villages where less oil palm was grown), the Iban community in Village B was not really functioning in this way, due to increased intra-community conflicts. Conflicts within Dayak communities were frequently perceived by local migrants and non-Dayaks as a sign of weak customary institutions that would increase the ability of firms to gain further access to resources.

Customary institutions once had a significant influence on the regulations of subsistence-based swidden cultivation in allocating land access and facilitating reciprocal labor exchange. For instance, villagers would obtain exclusive rights to ancestral land after it was transferred by their grandparents. Farmers would take the risk and invest

their time and energy to open up forest areas for swiddening, but only after gaining local approval from the *tue rumah*. Clearing primary forest, in particular, posed major risks, including dangers of encountering crocodiles, sun bears, or venomous snakes. In addition, the *tue rumah* would also monitor labor reciprocity among the households within the longhouse, and they would impose customary sanctions on any reluctance to appropriately engage in labor exchanges.

Ibanic Dayak culture and institutions are strongly associated with swidden cultivation. M. R. Dove (1985) highlighted past studies of swidden cultivation that demonstrated its economic and cultural importance for Dayaks in terms of inheriting collective norms and ensuring food production. These cultural practices continued even as rubber became integrated as a complementary cash crop alongside a subsistence crop economy for Dayak households (Dove 2011). Nevertheless, external influences associated with oil palm development have changed local attitudes toward swidden cultivation. In the previous discussion of government institutions, national and local elites enacted regulatory interventions that restricted local swidden-linked burning practices. Their assumption was that the swidden cultivators were incapable and reluctant to participate in oil palm development. In fact, a new tentative coexistence seems to be emerging between swidden farming and oil palm at the case sites. In Village B and Village C, some farmers have largely incorporated oil palm cultivation into their swidden plots, but with a marked generational pattern. Older informants revealed their continued commitment to swidden land, while at the same time they had begun to embrace oil palm cultivation. Yet, for younger Dayaks, swidden cultivation is often seen as a mostly unproductive livelihood strategy and one with decreasing social value. The generational shift was explained by a Sebaruk farmer:

> I work in a palm oil firm here. . . . I am not involved in swidden cultivation, but my parents are. However, I am involved in oil palm and rubber cultivation. The oil palm [fruit] has not yet been harvested, but the rubber has. For me, swidden cultivation is insufficient for us. (Respondent AS, Sebaruk, Village C, 2016)

Swidden cultivation is poorly valued by younger farmers due to its inability to generate significant cash income and due to the influences of urban lifestyles and mass consumerism (as also described by Cramb *et al.* 2009). With better formal education and training, youths are abandoning swidden farming and participating more in various livelihood activities linked to oil palm. In Village B, a 41-year-old Iban man described the process through which he abandoned swidden cultivation and embraced oil palm cultivation:

> In 2013 I went to Lubok Antu to visit my relatives in Malaysia. One of them shared his story about the unpleasant experience of planting pepper, rubber, swidden, and running a local shop. A Chinese

man persuaded my brother in Malaysia to plant oil palm, saying it was more beneficial than pepper. I then took 500 (oil palm) seeds. I started to plant despite the warnings of local villagers. Nowadays I no longer practice swidden cultivation, as I expect more from the oil palm harvest. (Respondent YE, Village B, 2018)

Dayaks in Village A shared similar opinions about swidden cultivation. For example, a well-educated Dayak man in his mid-40s explained how swidden cultivation had largely become irrelevant to his livelihood as he instead invested cash resources into rental properties. Another Iban man in Village A, in his mid-30s, had moved away from swidden cultivation to local trading after receiving a university education in Java. He preferred purchasing rather than growing food: "I was born here. I am a local trader but not a farmer. I purchase my own food, as I cannot depend on this local society. I purchase it from Malaysia" (Respondent J, Village A, 2016).

In Village C, Dayaks are a minority compared to Malays and other migrants, who often aggressively criticize customary swidden farming by Dayaks, which they claim is destructive and polluting. A local Malay leader explained:

I need to explain the effects to indigenous farmers. I already told them the smog will go overseas [to Malaysia]. I did not blame the swidden cultivation, but just the way land is converted through slash-and-burn practices. We observed little progress [in government attempts] to reduce slash-and-burn farming. It took two months to socialize that to farmers. (Respondent N, Village C, 2016)

A decline in customary resource tenure institutions has also facilitated a further powerful mechanism driving exclusion and unequal land possession among villagers—that of the market itself. In addition to contractual deals negotiated by firms, growing numbers of villagers from Village A and Silat Hilir have become engaged in land markets associated with oil palm, such that increasing economic differentiation has emerged. It has been reported elsewhere in Southeast Asia how the local transition to perennial cash crops resulted in an increasing pattern of individualized land tenure and the weakening of community governance (Cramb *et al.* 2009). This was observed, for instance, in both Village B and Village C, where customary institutions that had traditionally demarcated village boundaries based on natural signs (such as rocks, rivers, and trees) obtained from village elders were now being challenged as the physical landscape itself was transformed through oil palm. A Sebaruk man explained how he preferred using GPS and a letter of consent from the village head (Surat Keterangan Tanah, SKT) to demarcate land boundaries when purchasing swidden land from other villagers.

In addition to an increasing trend toward perennial cash crops, declining traditional practices of labor exchange have also been observed (Cramb *et al.* 2009). In the past,

reciprocal labor exchange arrangements, known as *kabanbelayan* among the Iban (Sather 2006), were employed within longhouse communities to overcome labor bottlenecks during planting, weeding, and harvesting times (Dove 2011). When the arrangement was strictly enforced, not even material returns or surplus rice was allowed to be substituted for labor. In Iban culture, cooperation between local community members is particularly useful when it comes to labor-intensive activities such as felling trees and harvesting subsistence food crops (Cramb 2007).

In contemporary Kapuas Hulu, however, instead of complying with traditional labor exchange rules, many instances of labor exchange now involve monetary contributions, as reported by a Dayak man in Village C who paid IDR 80,000 per day for local assistance on his swidden, and an Iban Dayak in Village B who paid IDR 50,000 per day for outside labor to assist with the rice harvest. For perennial cash crops, labor arrangements are almost universally based on monetary exchanges; in both Village B and Village C daily labor was reportedly paid up to IDR 100,000 to harvest oil palm fruit.

Across Southeast Asia there has been a trend toward off-farm livelihood diversification, but often as part of a multipronged strategy to continue farming or as a strategy to accumulate resources and invest in larger smallholding plots (Rigg *et al.* 2016). Land dispossession due to plantation development has been reported elsewhere, leading to highly unequal access to land and processes of agrarian differentiation (Hall *et al.* 2011), such that off-farm work can even help reduce distress land sales. Similar outcomes were observed in Village B, as explained by a Dayak Iban (a single mother):

> The advantage of working in palm oil mills is that I can earn money while still engaged in swidden cultivation. I work from 7 in the morning to 2 in the afternoon. Afterward, I continue my swidden work. . . . Fifteen years ago, women could not seek a financial income apart from swidden cultivation. Yet I can make it to work on the palm oil plantation. (Respondent VM, Dayak farmer, Village B, 2016)

While work on the oil palm plantation did not provide the abovementioned single mother with significant money to meet all her needs, she found this work beneficial because it allowed her to flexibly meet her daily cash economic needs.

Customary institutions in Kapuas Hulu (such as those linked to swidden cultivation) once played a critical role in determining livelihood aspirations and engagement with new economic opportunities. These institutions are still important for some Dayak communities, especially the older generation, and they can be seen to have mediated the integration of these communities into the palm oil economy. Yet, over time, the influence of these institutions has tended to evolve (and indeed decline). Local institutional adaptation is a key feature of the social landscape in Kapuas Hulu and has resulted in new systems

of resource access that frequently build upon past customary institutions in a largely path-dependent way. The ability of communities to draw legitimacy and strength from these institutions appears to be a key determinant of social outcomes arising from engagement with the palm oil economy.

V   Conclusion

This research presents the complex multi-scalar institutional environment emerging around the palm oil value chain as it manifests itself in Kapuas Hulu. While we recognize that livelihood outcomes for rural households are often site specific, our study has highlighted the multi-scalar sets of institutions that intervene in the relationship between agrarian communities and the palm oil sector. We have further demonstrated how livelihood change and rural development outcomes can be helpfully analyzed, and indeed understood, through a global value chain lens, especially one that is sensitive to the broader institutional environment of the chain.

In this case study, large-scale oil palm development has resulted in land appropriation and the exclusion of some individuals from accessing traditional land resources. This has occurred as a result of various mechanisms, including the regulatory processes associated with spatial planning, formalizing private concessions (HGUs), constructing discursive strategies, and establishing patronage relationships with local customary elites. While local communities have, at times, been able to call on external institutions to mobilize support for their struggle against land appropriation, they are generally engaged in a negotiating space with highly unequal power relations. National and local elites have more successfully configured alternative strategies to incorporate regulations, force, discursive constructions, and market pressures to achieve access to land (to borrow from the powers of exclusion presented by Hall *et al.* 2011). The outcome of this process has been a large-scale landscape transformation across Kapuas Hulu away from a mosaic of forests, agroforests, and swidden land toward mostly monocultural oil palm plantations, even as this process remains incomplete.

The process of allocating large-scale concessions combines regulations and discursive narratives to accommodate the interests of lead firms in global value chains. These interests are able to concentrate land resources into their hands, or at least their supply chain, through regulatory mechanisms that ensure this is achieved at relatively low cost. They rely heavily on negotiating and networking with various national and local elites within the state apparatus who support their desire to encourage a shift away from swidden-based land practices. With such formal regulatory support, plantation firms can

secure land access and exert pressure on customary institutions to facilitate resource access. The degradation of customary institutions was also influenced by competing aspirations among Dayak communities themselves to reject or accept firm land contracts, and was ultimately associated with an increase in market-based land transactions (a relatively new institution) and subsequent loss of indigenously controlled land.

While there has been a countermovement by environmental activists and other NGOs to recognize customary rights and to reject oil palm expansion, this countermovement has largely failed to consider the reality that many community members are actively embracing the crop and voluntarily engaging with the broader oil palm economy. Many swidden farmers expressed their disappointment with environmental advocacy groups, since they had been largely unable to generate alternative income-generating activities for the local community. As a result, many of these farmers have established their own oil palm smallholdings to secure a cash income. In the current broader context of the Indonesian agrarian political economy (and the institutional environment described in this article), there appears to be limited room for maneuver for many rural households beyond the palm oil sector—at least in Kapuas Hulu.

While agribusiness firms are generally able to increase their control over land through various contractual agreements, there is another associated process of establishing palm oil related infrastructure. This infrastructure development provides some (albeit limited) choice and improved access to local inhabitants, so that they can engage with the larger value chain that reaches beyond Kapuas Hulu, and often in quite beneficial ways. Local actors occupy different positions in the value chain in order to improve market access and strengthen their social and economic position. The broader market access associated with global palm oil value chain interventions encourages more local engagement with smallholding palm plantations, as found also by previous smallholding oil palm studies (Cramb 2015; Potter 2016). Our approach of examining the broader institutional environment of the GVC for palm oil generates insights into the possibilities for reforming governance structures in ways that might allow community engagement to occur on terms more amenable to community interests.

Our research findings also have implications for understanding agrarian change and rural development trajectories in Indonesia. Smallholder households are clearly not just functioning as passive objects of development assistance or corporate accumulation, but they are actively configuring new roles as producers and broader agents within the local economy. However, their attempts to assert a vision for appropriate rural development pathways in this case are ultimately dependent on their capacity to engage with, and actively reshape, the broader institutional environment of the palm oil value chain. Efforts to promote rural development should consider a much wider set of leverage points

and actors embedded at different scales within an institutional environment that is continually under construction.

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Malay Seals from the Islamic World of Southeast Asia:
Content, Form, Context, Catalogue
Annabel Teh Gallop
Singapore: NUS Press, in association with the British Library, 2019.

This beautifully produced book, published by NUS Press in cooperation with the British Library, presents a color-illustrated catalog of 2,168 seals from Muslim Southeast Asia. These are introduced by a set of short essays that present both technical aspects of the region's sigillography and insights into the ways in which these materials reflect broader dynamics of diplomatic and cultural history. Drawing upon her decades of groundbreaking research in this area, Annabel Teh Gallop brings together an extraordinarily broad and rich body of material to produce a landmark new reference work for the history of Islam and Muslim societies in Southeast Asia.

Gallop defines the scope of her work as "seals from Southeast Asia or used by Southeast Asians, with inscriptions in Arabic script" (p. 55). The qualification at the end is important, as Gallop presents Malay seal inscriptions as "self-consciously Islamic compositions" (p. 23) while at the same time highlighting the diversity of local forms that these markers of Islamic identity have taken in various parts of the region over the past five centuries. This includes the incorporation of Malay and Sanskrit royal titles, the presentation of lotus shapes of animal forms, and the selective appropriation of Islamic talismanic symbols, as well as local adaptations of Persianate forms in Maluku, and of Ottoman models in Aceh and Pahang.

Beyond the formal selection criterion of the employment of Arabic script, moreover, Gallop also at times stretches to a broader conceptualization of the sphere of cultural production so as to be able to include in this publication some remarkable materials that might otherwise remain unknown. These include seals set in the Lampung/Rejang/*Kaganga*, Batak, Bugis/Makassar *lontarak*, Javanese and other scripts, including some in Roman script used by Southeast Asian Muslims as well as Arabic-script seals used by European colonial officials operating in the region. Perhaps the most intriguing inclusion of a seal that would otherwise sit outside the formal criteria by which Gallop defines "Malay seals" comes from Banten but is composed entirely in Armenian. We see in such examples a reflection of the rich range of aesthetic expression, as well as the cultural

symbolism of local motifs and visualizations of trans-regional connections presented by this distinctive medium for marking authority and claiming ownership.

Gallop presents stimulating interpretations of the ways in which the choice of script, as well as of shape, layout, and ornamentation of particular seals come together to construct "visual icons" that present expressions of identity for their owners as both "Islamic" and "local" (p. 48). She then continues to develop the point through a striking characterization of the ways in which these powerful conceptions of cultural reference combine in the visual icons of Malay seals: "While the content of Malay Seals reveals a conscious attempt to position the seal owner as a member of the *ummah*, the worldwide community of Muslims, it is in their external form that their inherent Malayness is most strongly evident" (p. 51). It may be argued, however, that while the narrative points to important aspects of the complex dynamics involved in the historical development of vernacular forms of Islam in the region, the image of diverse and imaginative manifestations of local genius contrasted to "normative and Arabizing tendencies" (p. 51) is drawn a little too sharply at times.

The primary source material assembled here includes both matrices and seal impressions that provide examples of seals from nearly all of Muslim Southeast Asia (broadly conceived), including materials from what are today the modern nations of the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, and Brunei as well as from across the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago. Chronologically, these seals date from the period of the acceleration of Islamization across the region and the consolidation of major sultanates in the late sixteenth century to the advent of modern sigillographic cultures in the twentieth. This wealth of source material is very well organized and presented, following models for the documentation of historical seals established for European seals in the UK Public Record Office.

The catalog itself presents a comprehensive reference recording each seal with valuable information on the content of inscriptions, onomastics and royal titles, toponyms, dates, religious expressions, talismanic elements, calligraphic style, ornamentation, and images. Each numbered record in the catalog is laid out in a uniform template presenting (where such information is available) the name of the seal holder, a transcription and translation of the inscription, as well as date, shape and size, number of known impressions with citations, bibliography, and notes with further information on its historical context. Each seal is also illustrated with at least one photograph. However, not all of these photographs were taken by the author herself, which is reflected in some places by an inconsistency in the quality of the images. There are also a few problems with glare, especially on images of some of the red wax seal impressions from Banten.

To contextualize the material in the catalog, the preliminary chapters of the book provide rich introductions to the production and usages of the seals, and the historical development of sigillographic traditions in the Malay Muslim world. Beyond the preliminary chapters, each geographically organized chapter of the catalog opens with a short but generally very informative and insightful essay that sets the context for and offers interpretations of a particular local tradition of

seal production and use. These essays provide broad historical background on the specific area treated in that section, as well as careful readings of inscriptions and illuminating interpretations of the images and objects presented by particular seal impressions or matrices. We see a great example of this in Gallop's reading of an 1859/60 seal of Sultan Abdul Jalil Jalaluddin of Siak in which she highlights the ways in which the ambiguous use of the Arabic term *al-manṣūr* was deployed in the context of Siak's subjugation to Dutch rule (p. 216). This particular seal not only provides a window to how Malay seals might be approached as historical source material, but also reflects an aspect of an important broader point that Gallop argues at several points in the book about the significant influence of Dutch colonial practice on the ways in which seals came to be used in Indonesia (p. 52). With such perceptive interventions into the cultural history of the region, Gallop's outstanding work in compiling this book gives us a dynamic framework for contextualizing the specific material presented in this catalog in relation to a complex constellation of cultural interactions involving Europe as well as diverse parts of the Muslim world. Taken as a whole, then, this catalog and the interpretive chapters that frame it provide a valuable new resource for the history of Muslim Southeast Asia that manages to simultaneously supply an immense wealth of new primary source data while also inspiring readers with fascinating details and thought-provoking insights on almost every page.

R. Michael Feener
Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
Associate Member, Faculty of History, Oxford University

Traces of Trauma: Cambodian Visual Culture and National Identity in the Aftermath of Genocide
BORETH LY
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020.

Scholarship on post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia (1979–present) has paid significant attention to collective memory, trauma, and reconciliation among the Cambodian public following the atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–79). This aspect of academic discussion is exciting and crucial not merely because of the many long-term impacts on people's mental health, especially the feelings of anxiety, anger, and revenge resulting from the traumatic events of those years. It is exciting also because the re-emergence of Cambodia's collective identity and culture following Khmer Rouge destruction has been associated—in one way or another—with the massacres and hardships that people suffered under the regime and beyond. Khmer Rouge rule has been widely condemned by the Cambodian public, including artists and filmmakers, for its many

crimes against humanity. At the same time, what happened under the regime has become a source for the collective identity and cultural reconstruction of post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia. Over the past 40 years, incidents related to the Khmer Rouge have been popularly featured in films, paintings, performances, books, magazines, political speeches, NGO campaigns, museum and art exhibitions, television programs, songs, sculptures, memorials, and even rituals.

Traces of Trauma touches on the aspect of visual culture, which is a refreshing approach in the field of Southeast Asian scholarship. The narrative is exciting to read due to its clear structure and effective approach to capturing the post-Khmer Rouge traumatic experience and collective memory and identity. Boreth Ly (p. xii) reminds us that the book aims to answer three major questions: What role do the arts play in capturing the traumatic experiences (of US bombing, civil war, and Khmer Rouge survivors)? Can they help to transcend and thus heal the personal and collective trauma? What are the potentials and limitations of the arts in their ability to answer these difficult questions?

Ly's description and analysis are rich with empirical information and theoretical concepts that allow him to comprehensively answer these questions. His approach of selecting and examining the works of contemporary Cambodian and diasporic Cambodian artists, filmmakers, and poets to shed light on traumatic individual and collective experiences is well thought out. In the discussion of Rithy Panh's autobiographical film *The Missing Picture*, for example, Ly compares the film to Panh's remembrance of and mourning for the loss of his family under the Khmer Rouge regime. The film combines news and documentary footage with clay figurines to visualize a series of traumatic past events surrounding Panh's family; and based on Ly's analysis, it presents a good example of how trauma can be conceptually defined within the Cambodian context:

> Unlike the Freudian-derived theory of trauma that defines trauma as a psychic wound, the Cambodian definition points to an experience of a broken body comparable to a broken pot that, in turn, produces the affect and effect of broken courage (loss of strength to persevere). (p. 17)

The Missing Picture is Panh's search for what he calls "the missing picture" to fill in the lacunae (p. 28). Even when he found clay figurines to bridge these gaps, Panh's experience of losing his entire family over 30 years ago continued to haunt him and cause him to suffer from insomnia connected to the childhood nightmares (p. 28).

Ly's extensive knowledge of visual culture and art history, particularly film, installations, painting, and court dances, produces exciting discussions that allow the reader to appreciate the great value of these artistic and cultural products. At the same time, his critiques on selected art pieces, including those produced by survivors of S-21 Prison, clearly highlight the potential of the arts in capturing memories of the traumatic experiences caused by the regime. These visual cultural products convey both the context of their creation and the metaphorical meaning intended by their creators. As Ly correctly puts it, they "represent and mediate our understanding of

memory, trauma, conflict, morality, ethics, recuperation, healing, and aporia in the aftermath of the genocide" (p. 124).

   Traces of Trauma raises many other important points, particularly in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, that advance our understanding about various circumstances of Cambodian society during and after the Khmer Rouge years. It also introduces a scholarly discussion on post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia's collective memory and identity from a visual cultural perspective. But how much did artistic works really mean for collective memory and identity in the aftermath of Khmer Rouge destruction? Ly tells us very little about how many Cambodians actually came to see, share, and learn from Amy Lee Sanford (née Ly Sundari)'s installation and performance *Full Circle* in Phnom Penh in 2010. Chanthou Oeur's stone sculpture titled *Snarm* (Scare), produced in 2006 and placed in a sculpture park in New Hampshire, is probably known to a very small number of Cambodians. Even Panh's Oscar-nominated *The Missing Picture*, released in early 2014, was not among the top preferred films of the year among Cambodian youths in cities such as Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

   These artistic creations arose from the producers' innovative skills and remembrance of their own story as well as collective stories. Clearly, they visually and metaphorically present how these individual Cambodian and diasporic Cambodian artists, filmmakers, and poets have dealt with the trauma of their difficult times during the 1970s and the aftermath. But their works are also intended for public consumption. Thus, the question of how much artistic works mean for post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, including the diaspora, is very important. These products have had a role to play within the broader visual and popular culture of Cambodia since 1979. Given the existence of numerous other visual cultural products concerning the Khmer Rouge, especially those produced and widely promoted by the Cambodian government in the form of performances, documentaries, photo exhibitions, museums and memorials, television programs, and rituals, most of the artistic products examined by Ly did not have a wide appeal among Cambodian audiences. How much, then, do they really represent collective memory and identity and the way in which larger Cambodian communities dealt with their traumatic experience in the aftermath of Khmer Rouge atrocities?

   Ly's discussions on popular cultural concepts concerning the *krama* (scarf), palm tree, and court dance are thoughtful and make enjoyable reading. The author accurately discusses the tale of *Preah Thong Neang Neak*, the founding myth of the Khmer kingdom, which has been associated with both court and mass culture, especially at weddings. The tale has long been recorded in Khmer palace chronicles, including the *Nong* text of 1818 (Mak 1980), throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Besides the palace manuscripts, as Ly correctly mentions, it has been part of the court dance repertoire since the colonial years (p. 109). But the author's association of the tale with a tenth-century story originating in an Angkorian inscription of two figures named Kambu and Mera is ahistorical simply because there is no evidence to prove the connection. Instead, according to Ang Choulean's studies, *Preah Thong Neang Neak* appears to be associated more

closely with a twelfth-century story displayed on the bas-reliefs and other features of the Bayon temple (Ang 2007, 364–381).

Apart from these issues, *Traces of Trauma* is clearly a groundbreaking work that takes a refreshing look at Cambodia's dark past of the 1970s and the long-term impacts of the violence on survivors. Through its interdisciplinary approach of examining a range of visual cultural materials, together with the author's broad knowledge of contemporary Cambodian history, art, culture, and politics, Ly's *Traces of Trauma* has many original contributions to offer to both Cambodian and Southeast Asian scholarship as well as the fields of art history, cultural studies, memory studies, cinematic and performance studies, and many more.

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Thun Theara ធុន ធារ៉ា

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

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The Crown and the Capitalists:
The Ethnic Chinese and the Founding of the Thai Nation
Wasana Wongsurawat
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019.

Histories of modern Thailand have long reserved a prominent place for the role of the country's ethnic Chinese. Wasana Wongsurawat's new book, *The Crown and the Capitalists: The Ethnic Chinese and the Founding of the Thai Nation*, focuses on a crucial element of this history: the relationship of the ethnic Chinese with Thailand's monarchy. Wasana traces the history of this remarkable relationship against a backdrop of tumultuous changes in Thailand, Southeast Asia, and China, starting with the Opium Wars, through the European colonization of Southeast Asia, the rise of Chinese nationalism, the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the overthrow of Siam's absolute monarchy in 1932, Japanese imperialism in China and Thailand during the Pacific War, and the Cold War. Through a discussion spanning a period of approximately a century, Wasana shows that while the relationship between the ethnic Chinese, the Thai monarchy, and China experienced enormous stresses and strains on all sides throughout this long period, it has endured intact. This makes Thailand's relationship with China, built in significant part on the relationship between the ethnic

Chinese and the monarchy, arguably the closest of any Southeast Asian nation.

Wasana begins the story as Siam gradually distances itself from its old tributary relationship with imperial China and is drawn into the orbit of the British Empire. One of the crucial turning points in the book is the signing of the Bowring Treaty between the Thai court and the British governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring, in 1855 (pp. 4–5). The Bowring Treaty was modeled on the Treaty of Nanjing, drawn up after China's defeat in the first Opium War a decade earlier. It contained a crucial provision that, according to Wasana, would have a huge influence on the status of Siam's ethnic Chinese: the principle of extraterritoriality. Under the treaty, a subject of one of the colonial powers could not be tried by a Thai court but was instead subject to colonial judicial authority. Conventional historiography tends to view this provision as one of Thai history's "bad things," an infringement of Siam's sovereignty—which it undeniably was. Yet it was precisely this freedom from Siamese authority that made Siam attractive to ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs in an era of European colonial domination of Southeast Asia (p. 5). The Thai court, for its part, cultivated the leading ethnic Chinese merchants by awarding them noble titles and giving them favorable economic treatment. Thus, despite the loss of sovereignty due to the Bowring Treaty, through its deft handling of the relationship with the British Empire and a mutually beneficial relationship with the large ethnic Chinese community, Siam's royal government was able to take advantage of the economic opportunities created by European colonial rule in the region.

Extraterritoriality created a unique situation where, Wasana argues, ethnic Chinese residing in Siam could be classified into three groups: citizens of Chinese descent who were now Siamese subjects, Chinese who had registered as European colonial subjects, and subjects of the Chinese Qing Empire (p. 91). The rise of Chinese nationalism in the early twentieth century posed a problem given the royal government's lack of authority over large sections of the Chinese community. Chinese nationalism had the potential of radicalizing ethnic Chinese in Siam. Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen traveled to Siam on at least four occasions to seek support from the ethnic Chinese (p. 21). It seems that he was deported in 1908 for making republican statements in his speeches. From this time Chineseness in Siam started to become associated with republicanism, which was alarming for the Thai monarchy.

One of the principal vectors of Chinese nationalism in Siam was Chinese-language schools, to which Wasana devotes the first chapter of the book (pp. 12–46). The Siamese court in the early twentieth century was concerned that Chinese schools not only tended to foster Chinese identity and Chinese nationalism but were also suspected of nurturing republican thinking, especially following the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. Chinese schooling thus became something of a battleground between the Siamese government, which progressively sought to gain greater control over these schools, and the Chinese nationalists, whose overseas education policies aimed to use the schools to instill loyalty to the Chinese nation among overseas Chinese.

The Crown and the Capitalists has an unlikely hero, King Vajiravudh, also known as King Rama

VI. In Thai history King Vajiravudh tends to get a bad press. He pushed a conservative, monarchy-centered nationalism. He is often seen as a not very successful administrator who was more interested in his literary and artistic pursuits. He is infamous for penning a notorious racist essay about the Chinese in Siam in 1914 titled "The Jews of the Orient" (pp. 67–68). But Wasana argues that the king's view of ethnic Chinese in Siam has been misunderstood. In fact, the king was a much more sophisticated manager of the relationship with Chinese entrepreneurs than the essay would suggest—particularly given the unique circumstances he faced where extraterritoriality limited the authority of the royal government over many ethnic Chinese in the kingdom. Wasana claims that "there was little policy or legislation to back up the king's incendiary rhetoric against the ethnic Chinese community" (p. 68). No Chinese schools or newspapers were closed down. The king appeared adept at skillfully playing off the different groups in the politically divided Chinese community at the time (pp. 69–70). His main target was the working-class Chinese republican nationalists who posed a security threat to the Thai kingdom. For much of his reign he tried to discredit the Chinese revolution and its supporters and encouraged ethnic Chinese in Siam to give their loyalty to king and country (pp. 100–101).

For Wasana, a crucial turning point in the story of this triangular relationship between the monarchy, the ethnic Chinese, and China came with the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in June 1932 by the People's Party and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy (pp. 34–36). Wasana argues that this was "the first time since the establishment of the Chakri dynasty in 1782 that the Crown-capitalist alliance was partially dismantled" (p. 109). Many readers may not be aware that among the first foreign governments to congratulate the People's Party was the Nationalist government in China. It appears that the Nationalists saw the People's Party as a republican-oriented party in their mold, which had been inspired by the Xinhai Revolution and the establishment of a Chinese Republic. Wasana discusses a little-known secret document issued by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs some months following the coup against the monarchy called the "Guidelines for Sino-Siamese Nationalist Movement." The document appears to suggest that the Nationalist government supported a second "antimonarchist" revolution in Siam that would turn the country into a republic. The objective was to make Siam "a more reliable ally of China than it had ever been of the United Kingdom, even under Oxford-educated Vajiravudh." The Nationalists' guidelines urged their "Sino-Siamese revolutionary comrades" to organize themselves in such a way as to bring about "the liberation of the Sino-Siamese people . . . and the transformation of [Siam] into a truly democratic nation" (p. 34).

But the People's Party did not join with the Chinese Nationalists. Instead, Wasana shows that the People's Party's consolidation of power ushered in an unprecedented period of harsh laws and other measures targeting ethnic Chinese merchants and businesses. In 1938 the People's Party government finally succeeded in negotiating an end to extraterritoriality. Wasana argues that this was not simply a matter of national pride—putting Siam finally on a par legally with Western

nations—but it was also crucial to the domestic political agenda of the People's Party. Now that the government had full authority over the ethnic Chinese within the kingdom, it could start to dismantle the economic advantages enjoyed by Chinese merchants under the old semicolonial regime, and in so doing break the "formidable alliance between the royalists and the Chinese entrepreneurial classes" (p. 82). The new regime also moved against Chinese-language schools. It limited the number of hours during which the Chinese language could be used and required that all other subjects be taught in the Thai language. Many Chinese schools were eventually forced to close.

The pendulum swung once again following imperial Japan's invasion and occupation of Thailand at the end of 1941. The story is complicated, but Wasana argues that the events of World War II were crucial to the restoration of the mutually beneficial relationship between ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs and the Thai monarchy that had existed prior to 1932. One of the fascinating aspects of this section of the book is the little-known but important role played by China's Nationalist government and Thailand's ethnic Chinese community in supporting the Free Thai Movement, the famous underground anti-Japanese resistance fighters (pp. 11–36). Chiang Kai-shek's support for the Free Thai Movement contributed significantly to Thailand's favorable outcome following the war, despite the government's earlier decision to ally with Japan (p. 130).

The book also throws light on two tragic race riots in Bangkok's Chinatown area that have been virtually erased from Thai history. The "Yaowarat Incident" occurred on September 20, 1945, when ethnic Chinese in Bangkok's Chinatown area, exuberant at China's victorious emergence from years of war against Japan, rehearsed the upcoming celebration of the Republic of China's National Day by displaying Republic of China flags. When Thai police acted to remove the "foreign flags," violence erupted. The police called in the military, and later that night shooting broke out between security forces and supposedly armed rioters (pp. 141–145). The Phlapphlachai Riot of 1974 appears to have been sparked by an incident in which the police demanded that an ethnic Chinese taxi driver pay a fine. When he refused to pay he was arrested and taken to the police station. Crowds gathered to protest the police's handling of the man. Later that night crowds surrounded the police station, where they were joined by student activists, demanding the man be released. Eventually the police station was attacked. The situation was so serious that a state of emergency was declared. The military was called in, and they duly arrived backed by tanks. Security forces began firing into the crowd, killing 24 and injuring 124, according to official figures. The violence continued for several more days (pp. 145–153). Yet these incidents are today virtually forgotten. Wasana argues that both the Thai state and, ironically, ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs had a mutual interest in playing down the memory of these riots:

> It is not simply a case of the Chinese being beaten into submission or conservative politicians being bribed into cooperating with the Chinese business associates. Active participation characterizes both sides. Atrocities are ignored and there is much overt praise and mutual support, despite all

the bad blood in the past. This formula for cooperation serves their mutual interest in dominating their true common opponents, the masses of the working class and supporters of left-wing socialist politics. (p. 154)

Wasana ends the book with more recent observations of the relationship between the People's Republic of China and Thailand. Some readers may be surprised to learn that the first country that Deng Xiaoping visited after he became China's paramount leader in 1978 was Thailand, where he was granted a royal audience with King Bhumibol. And in 2009 the Chinese government presented Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn the award of "Best Friend of the Chinese People," on her 29th visit to China. She was the only person from Southeast Asia to receive such an award (p. 159). It seems that the triangular relationship between the ethnic Chinese, the monarchy, and China is as strong now as it has ever been.

Some may see *The Crown and the Capitalists* as a conservative attempt to reestablish the monarchy at the center of discourses of Thai nationalism. Perhaps even more challenging is the way the book seeks to place the relationship between ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs and the Thai monarchy at the heart of the history of Thai nationalism. This is a provocative book that promises to reopen debates about the relationship between Chineseness, Thai nationalism, and the Thai monarchy.

Patrick Jory
School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, University of Queensland

In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast
SANJIB BARUAH
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020.

The Indian Northeast is one of the most complex regions of the subcontinent culturally and geo-politically. Not only foreigners but also Indians from the rest of the country find it difficult to understand its historical and political space. Unlike other parts of India, however—and despite the international implications of the territorial disputes between China and India—the geopolitical and historical complexities of this region have not attracted enough attention from the major international media. Arunachal Pradesh, the most evident example of Indo-Chinese territorial disputes, is still at the center of a long dispute—together with other areas along the Line of Actual Control, particularly Aksai Chin—that resulted in a war in 1962 with the People's Republic of China, which considers it part of Tibet.[1] Sanjib Baruah's text proposes various readings of the difficulties and

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1) Following the 1962 war, the Chinese gained control of Aksai Chin, considered by New Delhi to be part of Ladakh.

complexities of the region. The author provides a series of interpretations along with facts, anecdotes, and opinions that are of great help to the political scientist as well as to the historian who wants to look at the recent evolution of the Northeast in a broader perspective.

In the first chapter, "The Invention of Northeast India," the author challenges the very concept of the Northeast, understood as—citing Anssi Paasi—"'ad-hoc spatial units' put together for mundane administrative reasons or for purposes of economic planning" (p. 25). The text quickly reconstructs the region's main geographical, economic, and demographic characteristics. Baruah provides a historical perspective to the construction of the definition of the Northeast, starting in the colonial era as the frontier of the empire, highlighting the difficulties faced by a frontier territory. He emphasizes the difficulties amplified by the international framework, by the ethnic-cultural as well as political-administrative mosaic of the Excluded Areas, Partially Excluded Areas, and Tribal Areas of Assam. A part of the chapter is dedicated to the Nepalese presence in Bhutan, "a legacy of the informal empire" (p. 36). The author outlines the region's problems after India's independence, particularly those concerning the continuity of its historical path. He discusses the beginning of the fragmentation of Assam, with the birth of Nagaland, and the construction of the Northeast "as a region with its peculiar governance structure" (p. 44).

The second chapter, "Partition's Long Shadow: Nation and Citizenship in Assam," deals with the legacy of the partition of India, particularly the not very well known issue of migration from East Bengal to Assam, which began in colonial times and continued even after independence, creating demographic pressures. A bitter issue that remains at the center of political debate, both local and national, is the citizenship of these migrants. The difference in treatments reserved for Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants was, in fact, at the center of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill, which led to widespread protests primarily in the Northeast in 2019.

The third chapter, "Development and the Making of a Postcolonial Resource Frontier," deals with the relationship between natural resources and human presence, with particular attention on tribal groups and immigrants, within the complex framework defined by the delicate environmental balance. The Northeast, in this context, is defined by the author as "the perfect example" of "both a settlement and a resource frontier" (pp. 76–77). The Northeast shows its peculiarities, such as in Meghalaya (a state that is given particular attention in the chapter), where "the person who controls the surface land owns the mineral wealth," while in "India's other mining regions . . . mineral rights lie with the state" and "not with the land owner" (pp. 80–81). Legal and social issues, as Baruah explains, have a direct impact on the social and cultural balance of tribal groups, particularly the "use" that can be made of the very definition of the word "tribe" as well as the risks and violence related to the mining industry (coal) and migratory flows.

The text continues with a chapter dedicated to "The Naga Conflict," analyzing in detail Nagaland's nationalism and independence, its cultural and identity space, as well as its legal problems, conflict and the peace process, and contradictions. Baruah tackles the question first on a

historical level, quickly introducing the reader to the different movements and events of Naga separatism since 1947. However, the author also explains problems relating to the exact definition of Naga and the development of the concept of "nation." In particular, referring to the historian John Thomas, he analyzes the connection between national sense and religious dimension. Beyond the identity issues, the legal and administrative problems that surround the status of Nagas in their relationship with New Delhi are dealt with, as well as the projection of the problems beyond the borders of Nagaland to the space of "Nagalim."

The penultimate chapter focuses again on Assam, particularly its separatist conflict but specifically the reaction to it. In 1990 Assam, as Baruah points out, was defined as a "disturbed area." The state was therefore subject to the provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), with the simultaneous ban of the United Liberation Front of Assam. Baruah underlines the contradictions of the military action, denounces the tragedies and bitterness that his state has been subjected to, and denounces the problems in the attempted pacification implemented by the government: "[E]ven the government's approach to peace began to be significantly shaped by the army's counterinsurgency doctrine" (p. 130). It should be emphasized that Baruah throughout the book repeatedly criticizes the use of the term "insurgency" to describe the conflicts in the region. Thus, the author challenges a substantial part of the political-military discourse around the crisis. Even in this crisis, migration has played a role.

The last chapter, "The Strange Career of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act," is dedicated to the AFSPA, which several areas in the Indian Northeast are still subject to. The criticism of the AFSPA, and therefore of the unscrupulous deployment of the army rather than the normal police force, is summarized thus by Baruah: "AFSPA provided legal cover for some of the most repressive methods available in the repertoire of counterinsurgency used against Nagas and Mizos, including village regrouping" (p. 159). The chapter is a broader analysis of the use, as well as abuse, that has been made of the tools available by law in the region with the exception of Sikkim. Abuses continue to emerge even after several years, such as a particularly painful case mentioned in the conclusion of the book. The issue remains an open wound in the debate on Indian democracy, witnessed by Irom Sharmila's hunger strike and other widespread stances and protests by civil society, not only in the Northeast. Baruah is pessimistic about the possibility of reform, particularly after the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, whose position is actually not so different, in historical memory and as the author himself well recalls, from that of Congress while the latter was ruling the country.

The book, as seen, addresses several central questions on a historical level as well as on current political debate in India. It outlines specific as well as the most painful, bitter, and controversial political and cultural issues. The conflicts that have bloodied the region occupy a substantial part of Baruah's intellectual effort. Very little space is given to Sikkim, which although officially part of the North Eastern Council remains somewhat different. The small state, an exception within

an exception, defines its identity on a unique historical path, culturally anchored in the Tibetan world and politically oriented toward different models of development and environmental sustainability.[2]

The political and geopolitical issues at the center of the book often result in armed violence. The issues analyzed in this book not only afflict the Northeast but also serve the author as sources for analyzing and understanding the region. For this reason, Baruah's book, which addresses these issues as different threads of the same fabric, outlines the region itself. It provides the political scientist with reflections on the singularity, or rather the "singularities," of the area. At the same time, it provides the historian who wishes to study the region both in the colonial era and in the period after independence with a series of opinions that can help put events in a broader perspective. Baruah pays close attention to the many legacies of colonialism that continue to be a heavy burden on the cultural and social growth of the region. These colonial legacies still corrode the region's relationship with the rest of India, including the deployment of the army in the region. The army, however, acts as a counterpart to a renewed democratic conscience. According to the author, the challenges of the region have to act as a stimulus to improving and reforming Indian democracy. The issues highlighted in the book can also provide an opportunity to define new forms of participation, autonomy, and citizenship that would involve a recognition of the Northeast "as a true part" (p. 193) of the country.

Scholars of Southeast Asian history and politics will find much of interest in this work on a region that has historically been the geographical and cultural hinge between the Indian subcontinent and Mainland Southeast Asia. The analyses presented here of problems relating to the environment, inter-ethnic and inter-religious issues and the legacies of colonialism can facilitate potentially constructive comparative study. Its findings on the challenges of Indian democracy in this region can, moreover, provide useful insights to those who study democratic institutions and processes of democratization across the broader region.

Matteo Miele
Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

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2) Sikkim was an independent kingdom under first British and then Indian *suzeraineté*. On British and Indian relations with the kingdom see, *inter alia*, Rao (1972).

Contested Territory: Đien Biên Phu and the Making of Northwest Vietnam
Christian C. Lentz
New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019.

Đien Biên Phu, the site of the decisive battle against French colonial rule, is a key element of Vietnamese national memory. In his brilliant study of Đien Biên Phu, the geographer Christian Lentz employs an innovative conceptualization of "territory" to write an alternative history of the place that breaks down its narrow association with military tactics and national independence. A remote upland Tai principality on the upper Black River before integration in the Vietnamese geobody, the place became "a beacon of anticolonial liberation before quietly but forcefully staking a sovereign claim at territory's edge" (p. 236). Lentz's account locates the military campaign in a broader historical context, taking into account preceding and subsequent sociopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics.

Contested Territory combines historical and political geography with a good dose of ethnography. This links the book with recent anthropological works on upland Southeast Asia as a trans-ethnic space. Lentz situates the culturally diverse upper Black River basin and its complex sociopolitical dynamics within the disruptive historical forces of colonialism and the Cold War. He explores the historical contingencies that led to the integration of a vaguely defined upland frontier region into the confines of Vietnamese national territory.

The book is divided into six chapters that span chronologically from the first attempts of revolutionary mobilization during the late-1940s to the aftermath of the battle and the establishment of Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) rule in the uplands. Lentz introduces a "long 1950s" (p. 2), embedding the anticolonial struggle and its climax in 1954 within larger sociopolitical dynamics. He demonstrates how territory—understood not as just a given spatial container—is produced and contested: "a spatial outcome of contingent contests in specific contexts" (p. 243). Territory is both process and strategy, with bodies/labor and (contested) agrarian resources playing key roles in shaping the emerging Vietnamese geobody. Lentz's innovative theoretical approach is flanked by meticulous studies of newly available archival sources, most notably local accounts written by Kinh and Tai cadres.

It is certainly one of the main merits of this excellent book that it recognizes the historical contribution of ethnic minorities to Vietnamese national independence. By carefully analyzing the various interactions and contestations in the Lao-Vietnamese borderlands, Lentz draws a complex picture beyond the simple colonizer vs. colonized binary. The region was shaped by diverse sociocultural hierarchies and interactions that later informed the control and mobilization attempts by French colonial and Vietnamese revolutionary forces—both vying for alliances with local Tai elites.

Chapter 1 starts with the Japanese intervention in March 1945 and the escape of 200 Communist prisoners from a French prison in Son La by the Black River. This small event heralded

"a longer and contested process of Vietnamese state making" (p. 23), with the First Indochina War as a violent arena. One goal of local cadres in the Black River valley was to overcome colonial divide-and-rule politics that had privileged certain Tai clans and now drove disaffected Tai leaders toward the Vietminh.

Focusing on the role of local Tai cadres in the anticolonial struggle and their views of national unity sheds new light on how traditional *muang* statecraft was slowly transformed into DRV administration. Even though the first revolutionary movements were subdued by the French in 1950, they created lasting relationships and ideas. Notions of Tai-Kinh revolutionary solidarity emerged and corresponded with new administrative configurations. As Lentz puts it: "the state did not just climb hills but was pulled upward as well" (p. 33).

Lentz stresses local agency in state making in the hills and related discursive processes (e.g., the "vast land, scarce people" narrative). This can be read as criticism of the simplistic binary of state-making lowlanders vs. autonomous "Zomians." Tai cadres contributed to shaping the idea of a socialist state and tacit administrative reforms, even though many Hmong and Dao groups remained wary of Tai dominance in the region.

The military conflict of the First Indochina War entailed agricultural crisis and famines due to *corvée* and food requirements. New ideas of rural development emerged while Vietnamese cadres observed and reported local conditions and created new discourses of agrarian subsistence. Salt distribution became one means to recruit popular support for the revolutionary cause. The affective dimension of these early revolutionary exchanges and the implications for Tai-Kinh solidarity are key to understanding later events.

Lentz describes the Vietnamese postcolonial state as a contingent outcome of contested state-making processes. In Chapter 2, the crossing by the People's Army of the Red River in 1952 and the shift from guerrilla warfare to regular combat marked a new stage in this process. The uplands emerged as the "Northwest Zone" and became an "integrated part of Vietnam's geobody" (p. 76). With the diverse mobilization attempts and stronger Kinh presence in the region, ideas of "ethnic minorities" and "development" took shape. Kinh cadres still sought after recruiting Tai elites, arguably "prioritizing national unity and territorial stability over social transformation" (p. 81). Tai elite control over agrarian resources (land and labor) remained—an ongoing contradiction for non-Tai minorities and radical cadres.

Chapter 3 addresses the crucial agrarian question that informed the peasants' plight and revolutionary reform attempts. Shifting between "enthusiasm and anxiety" (p. 96), the population betrayed a deep ambivalence toward the new, emerging political configurations with their ongoing contests over land, bodies, and food. Lentz makes a strong point when he moves agrarian resources from the realm of mere subsistence to being "inextricable from relations of territorial rule" (p. 97).

Again, Lentz stresses the affective dimension of subsistence struggles in times of political reform and military mobilization. Contradictions between social transformation and the lingering

reliance on local hierarchies for local governance and territorial administration increased. Tai peasants suffered from dependencies within old muang structures and their corresponding tax and corvée requisitions (increasingly translated into service for the new state). In combination with war effects and trade blockades, the misery triggered public discontent and sometimes migration waves to Laos.

Despite spreading ideas of class struggle, uncertainties and tensions within the DRV shaped administrative reforms—or lack thereof—in the Black River region. The fact that radical reform was not implemented was arguably key to the success of the Đien Biên Phu military campaign. Radical cadres and poor peasants could not (yet) challenge Tai elites' control of land and labor. Consequently, "securing territory and population trumped reforming class and status" (p. 105).

Rather than land reform, mobilizing labor (for transport and infrastructure construction) became crucial for shaping Vietnam's geobody in the uplands. Lentz's discussion of the *dân công* labor service is one of the most compelling discussions in the book. It is key to understanding the entanglements between land, labor, and resources in the context of the military campaign. Labor requisitions increased the predicament of agricultural labor, not least because female labor became increasingly removed from agriculture.

Next to shifting gender relations, the dân công system also entailed a stronger integration of upland groups that were previously exempt from corvée requisitions. More generally, body and geobody became intertwined. Anxieties about harvest prevailed; Vietnamese cadres arrived "to protect the crop" (p. 115). Resulting food shortages fostered general feelings of an "existential struggle" (p. 123). How hunger threatened legitimacy could have been explored in more depth through additional oral history research.

Chapter 4 deals with the logistics of the military campaign—a meticulous, almost nerdy analysis of a vast amount of archival sources. The DRV's organization of food and ammunition required detailed "spatial knowledge of things and people" and demonstrated effective "state learning practices" (pp. 134–135). As Lentz's reconstruction of the final stage of the Đien Biên Phu campaign reveals, France's underestimation of the DRV's capacity to transform agricultural resources into portable provisions was a crucial factor in the French defeat.

Chapter 5 discusses the same story from a bottom-up perspective, illustrating the contingencies and tensions within the unfolding of the Đien Biên Phu campaign. In this chapter, Lentz is back to full epistemological strength: bolstering his compelling arguments with a wide array of hitherto unnoticed, surprising sources. Giving voice to local cadres and peasants, Lentz illustrates the everyday experiences during the campaign—from the anxieties of peasants turned dân công, worrying about their subsistence, to Kinh cadres who entered into close relationships with local Tai families, both tendencies hinting at complex affective and sociopolitical relationships.

Lentz gives a beautiful account of state making under war conditions, describing the (aggressive) mobilization of people and resources and the diverse responses of the population with their

anxieties and hopes. Most peasants kept on yielding resources due to a mix of coercion and consent. Meanwhile, the growing militarization and discourses of class struggle toward the final stage of the campaign intensified the rural predicament. Violence and terror became everyday experiences for many, belying the narrative of the struggle against foreign oppression.

Territorial struggles did not cease after the victory of Đien Biên Phu. As Chapter 6 vividly illustrates, the new state continued to be shaped by contestations about territory and its diverse population. The forceful agrarian transition provoked anxieties and unrest in the newly established albeit short-lived Thái-Mèo Autonomous Zone. Taking the example of millenarian movements, Lentz discusses the ambiguous effects of DRV territorialization on populations that had experienced severe transformation of their lifeworlds.

Toward the end of the book, Lentz pays more attention to non-Tai ethnic minorities and how territorial politics increasingly concerned with security affected their lifeworlds. Any alternative ideas of political or economic sovereignty provoked severe responses from the state. DRV rule now shaped lives in the remotest villages in the postcolony. Finally, the Black River region had became "Northwest Vietnam." As Lentz summarizes in the epilogue: "Place, region, and people became Vietnamese through mass mobilization of residents, incorporation of Tai muang political structures, and military conquest of space" (p. 244).

The state's power to mobilize the population, administer territory, and deploy an army crucially altered social relations toward the end of the long 1950s. The social and economic costs of this process resulted in violent reactions later, in peacetime. Meanwhile, Đien Biên Phu turned into a symbol of the heroic "Vietnamese" struggle against foreign dominance, obscuring the internal diversity and tensions of the campaign: contested meanings instead of contested territory.

On each page of this compelling book, the reader can feel the author's commitment and the more than 10 years of intellectual work that inform it. Lentz's fine writing opens up new perspectives on how global history unfolds on the ground, and on the contingencies and ambiguities of state-making processes. This book will certainly remain the definitive study of Đien Biên Phu and should inspire related projects at the interstices of history, geography, and ethnography.

Oliver Tappe
Institut für Ethnologie, Universität Heidelberg

Cina Timor: Baba, Hakka, and Cantonese in the Making of Timor-Leste
DOUGLAS KAMMEN and JONATHAN CHEN
New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2019.

"God made Timor for sandalwood and Banda for mace and the Moluccas for cloves," wrote Tomé

Pires in his *Suma Oriental* about five centuries ago (1512–15), referring to the trade of these exotic commodities among Malay merchants who made their fortunes in Malacca's busy market. It was also for Timor's sandalwood that Chinese merchants came to the island. They bought it in exchange for porcelain, gold, and other goods, and flooded the market of the Middle Kingdom, which treated it as the base material for incense and skincare products, among others. The presence of Chinese on the island and their thriving trade were well noted by early European travelers in the archipelago. Contemporary scholars are not yet certain whether the Chinese at that time were just sojourners for intra-Asia commercial activities or had already settled on the island. Archival sources suggest that it was only later, in the early nineteenth century—a century after the fierce competition among European merchants for monopolistic trade in the region that led to the establishment of colonies—that the Chinese settled along the island's coastal areas. Douglas Kammen and Jonathan Chen's monograph discusses the start of the formation and the making of "Chinese Timorese" communities (known colloquially as Cina Timor) from this time period until the early twenty-first century.

Kammen and Chen rightly note that as a research subject Chinese Timorese "have received far less attention than their counterparts elsewhere in the region" (p. 6). The study of various Chinese communities in Southeast Asia became a noteworthy subject for research among (Western) sinologists from the mid-twentieth century, and over the last two decades we have seen expanding contributions (notably, in the English language) by young researchers who are mostly based in and affiliated with academic institutions in Northeast and Southeast Asia. Even with such encouraging developments in the field, the history and social lives of Chinese Timorese communities are rarely discussed. It is worth noting that even a book that discusses the issues of "global Hakka" (Leo 2015) fails to mention anything about the Hakka communities in Timor, which are the dominant speech-group on the island. In that context, this monograph has "rescued" the two-centuries-long history and identity adaptations of Chinese Timorese from academic ignorance and oblivion. It fills the gap in the scholarship by cementing the study of Chinese Timorese as part of a larger comparative study of Chinese in Southeast Asia, and the Hakka migration within and across regions.

Based on sources in Chinese, Dutch, English, Indonesian, and Portuguese, this monograph offers a fascinating history of Chinese Timorese at the intersection of colonial and post-colonial state practices, cultural and identity formation, and the rise of the People's Republic of China in the Southeast Asia region. It brings a political economy analysis to the subject that is often overlooked in conventional sociological studies. Such analysis underscores the changing political landscape in the metropole (be it Lisbon or Jakarta, at different periods of time) that affected the colony and its people, which Chinese were a part of, the choices made by the Chinese community in organizing during the Cold War, and the discrimination Chinese have had to endure in dealing with the state. It explains the economic conditions of Timor as an often-neglected outpost in the

Portuguese realm, an underprivileged province of Indonesia, and a young nation in the twenty-first century—each with its own challenges and opportunities for Chinese to adapt, live with, and participate in. It also highlights the important, and in some cases pioneering, roles Chinese played at different times—in trade, local administration, education, and struggles for independence—despite the fact that Chinese made up not more than 1.5 percent of the population (p. 8), which is comparable to Chinese Indonesians, estimated at about 1.2 percent of the population (Evi *et al.* 2017).

Beyond the "process of creolization of the Chinese in Southeast Asia" (Skinner 1996), becoming Chinese Timorese—in the past as well as now—is a challenging experience: whether the markers are based on proficiency in the Hakka language, the celebration of a common origin/ancestor, a shared history of migration, citizenship of a certain nation-state, or the hopes for a safe life wherever they wish to build their homes. The authors accurately conclude that "it would be a mistake to reduce this experience to one of identity politics, minority status, or the role of economic middlemen" (p. 177). Bearing in mind a similar conclusion on Chinese communities elsewhere in the region, we see how Chinese Timorese shape their lives and continue to be "Chinese" over other identities.

With its fresh analysis and detailed description, this monograph is an important contribution to the scholarship. I sincerely hope the authors will consider its translation to Tetum, Indonesian, and Chinese in order to reach a wider audience.

Jafar Suryomenggolo
Centre Asie du Sud-Est
Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Jeonbuk National University

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Fighting for Virtue: Justice and Politics in Thailand
Duncan McCargo
Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2020.

Since King Bhumibol's galvanizing speech in April 2006, urging judges to "serve and save the nation," the judiciary has played a key role in Thailand's political chaos, drawing unprecedented

attention to this once apolitical institution. The phenomenon is known by many names: judicialization of politics, judicial activism, and juristocracy. Despite the attention, the Thai judiciary remains one of the least studied subjects. Although it is often mentioned, there are not many detailed works on it. There are a few studies on the constitutional courts, focusing mostly on a series of decisions that disrupted the political landscape and helped political elites maintain their upper hand. Only a few examine the court of justice, which is the most prestigious body and has actually tried hundreds, if not thousands, accused of thought crimes—lèse-majesté, computer crime, sedition, contempt of court, and so on. However, they all focus on the end products, the court decisions, criticizing how unreasonable or arbitrary they were. Barely any scholar has addressed the crucial question of how the judiciary is made to carry out such blatant injustice in the name of the law. Duncan McCargo's *Fighting for Virtue* offers a rare insight into the world of the Thai judiciary. Even lawyers, unless they pass the judge entrance examination, would not know judgeship well. Being an outsider, McCargo does not take things for granted as most legal scholars would: he identifies and questions many irregularities he encounters.

McCargo's main message is that legalism, or hyper-legalism—an obsession with the judiciary and law as being the solution to Thailand's political ills—is misplaced. He has expressed this skepticism since his early works. *Fighting for Virtue* tracks the making of judges and how they performed in selected cases, in order to confirm that they are not the answer to Thailand's troubles. More often than not, they worsen the situation, in effect ruining their own reputation and that of their master.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first half—three chapters—tracks how a judge is made. McCargo portrays an ambitious young law graduate who endures much hardship in studying for an arduous examination that few end up passing. His or her choice of career offers high job security and prestige in exchange for obedience. Judges are expected to live a quasi-monastic life, to distance themselves from moral distractions and remain independent, but also to isolate themselves somewhat from social reality. The communitarian culture requires conformity to the group rather than individual creativity. As McCargo puts it, judges are bright, but perhaps not as bright as they think they are. Blinded by collective disposition, they are possibly dangerously overconfident.

In Chapter 2 McCargo explores the judiciary's point of pride, its affiliation to the king. Judges were different from employees in other branches of the government because they worked directly on behalf of the benevolent King Bhumibol. At least, that is what they were told. This bond was strengthened, as McCargo shows, through direct audiences with His Majesty, lore, as well as symbolism. By claiming a connection to the most revered man in the kingdom, the judiciary enjoyed the moral high ground and immunity from criticism, which arguably radiated from the king himself. Interestingly, the author questions whether royal involvement in judicial activities can really lead to justice. He points to the difficult question of royal pardon power as one example

where a periodic pardon leads to moral hazard among judges.

Chapter 3 is about challenges. Overall, the judiciary is a very conservative body. In the twenty-first century, it faces several challenges. It is accused of being discriminatory against Thaksin's men. Its partnership with authoritarianism is exposed. Thai judges feel increasingly uneasy, but the Thai judiciary's conservatism, siege mentality, and archaic organization hinder it from necessary reform, deepening the public's resentment of the once revered institution.

The second half of the book—five chapters in all—is about selected cases. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 McCargo follows three cases of enemies of the establishment. They are accused of lèse-majesté and computer crime. None of them are tried for treason, but, as McCargo argues, the judiciary seems to treat them as if they are, as if their real crime is disloyalty to the monarchy. A trial becomes a test of loyalty and allegiance, to the king and to the nation. Observers of Thai politics may be familiar with these cases, but McCargo offers his firsthand observations from the courtroom. His notes reveal the nature of the cases and trials.

Frankly, McCargo is very fair to the judges, who shoulder the unenviable task of navigating through dangerous political waters in these highly politicized cases. As McCargo has shown in previous chapters, most judges look for a cosy, uncontroversial, life, but now that they are com-pelled to enter into the messy world of politics, they become frustrated. However, McCargo reminds his readers that both sides have erred. When redshirt lawyers try to use the courtroom to expose the judges' political beliefs and irritate the judges, that does no good to the hapless defendants. There are many what-if criticisms, and some of McCargo's views might not be received favorably by redshirts, the pro-democracy movement. But they are worth listening to. McCargo reveals the nature of the trials: rife with difficulties, they exhaust judges, who find themselves locking horns with lawyers. None of this produces liminality, he suggests. These cases could have been farces were the tragedies of the defendants not real.

Chapter 7 gets to the root of the problem, Thaksin Shinawatra. McCargo puts it accurately and succinctly when he writes that the rise of legalism was mainly about uprooting Thaksin. Thaksin's real crime was disloyalty, but—as McCargo rightly points out—he did not commit it until 2017. Thus, despite a series of criminal trials, the cases against him led the judiciary further into a quagmire. Such a tactic—employing the law against the state's political opponents—could not destroy Thaksin's influence on Thai politics.

A shift in Chapter 8 from the court of justice to the constitutional court may raise a question in the minds of Thai readers, who often view the two courts as separate entities. Three of the nine constitutional court judges must be nominated from among the supreme court judges, but for many the constitutional court is already a political court. However, McCargo is able to show that, contrary to the deep state argument that the constitutional court is simply a mechanism of the elites to control and even destroy their political enemies, the constitutional court treads dangerous waters to offer a practical solution, both for the upset elites and for Yingluck Shinawatra. McCargo's period

of study falls within the calmer period of Thai politics during which Yingluck was said to have acquired the palace's permission to rule. This fragile peace later broke down, and the constitutional court grew more ruthless in dismantling the Yingluck administration and endorsing the junta of Prayuth Chan-ocha. It is doubtful whether McCargo's reading of the constitutional court still holds.

McCargo concludes in his final chapter that legalism has failed to solve Thailand's substantive political problems. It has actually exacerbated them. Instead, McCargo argues, the judiciary should adopt tribunality—a concept from Judith Shklar—the pragmatic and judicious resolution of complex political problems. In McCargo's words, he encourages fudging legal niceties to achieve a workable outcome in order to provide liminality, an episode of catharsis through the use of legal rituals and formality. This proposal, however, can be problematic as McCargo does not explain clearly what exactly tribunality is. How, in his opinion, should a court fudge legal niceties, and what are niceties? To a lawyer, his idea would sound almost as if he were urging a judge to depart from the text of the law in order to obtain a desirable outcome. That leaves the serious question of what the law is if not a set of rules and precedents to replace the whims of a man. Is this not what a judge is trying to do, to depart from legal precedent in order to defeat Thaksin and simmer a legal crisis? Nonetheless, it is obvious that Thai judges are ill equipped to find tribunality. Their understanding of the law is too rigid, and their affiliation to the crown leaves them with few choices when it comes to the matter of Thaksin.

Fighting for Virtue is both timely and thought provoking. The volume is packed with details and highly recommended to those who are interested in Thai politics as well as the judiciary.

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Khemthong Tonsakulrungruang เข็มทอง ต้นสกุลรุ่งเรือง
Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University

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