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SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

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Vocabulario de Iapon, a Seventeenth-Century Japanese-Spanish Dictionary Printed in Manila: From Material Object to Cultural Artifact

Patricia May Bantug Jurilla*

In order to survive, books in the Philippines have had to contend with multiple forces: the humid tropical climate, typhoons, floods, fires, earthquakes, termites, wars throughout the nation's colonial history. This fact is often raised in studies on the history of the book in the Philippines, but how and why the book survives in spite of such conditions has hardly been given attention. Such a lacuna in Philippine book history is what this study seeks to fill. It explores the survival of Philippine incunabula (books printed from 1593 to 1640), with a focus on the transformation from material object to cultural artifact that the book undergoes in the course of enduring through the centuries. This study examines the case of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* (Japanese vocabulary), with a particular interest in the copy in the Bernardo Mendel Collection at the Lilly Library of Indiana University. The *Vocabulario de Iapon*, which was printed in Manila in 1630, is both typical and unique among Philippine incunabula for the circumstances it saw from its publication to its survival. It has much to tell about publishing in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, the reception of books through the ages, and the culture of collecting in modern times.

Keywords: Philippine book history, Philippine incunabula, survival of books, Japanese-Spanish dictionary

A great irony about the printed book is that each is created as an object among many exactly like it, yet it usually—if not inevitably—ends up becoming one of a kind. The manufacturing of a printed book renders it identical to the hundreds or thousands of other copies in its edition; its survival ultimately nullifies this uniformity and makes it unique. Once a book has been acquired, whether by an individual or by an institution, it is no longer—and will never be—the same as any copy that was like it. It gains a new and distinct character in both concrete and abstract forms—customized by its owner with

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labels, annotations, covering, or rebinding; and afforded a historical, cultural, or sentimental value. A book's condition also adds to its distinction, and how it has stood the test of time is just as dependent on its owner who may have used and cared for it well or not, who may have kept it in an environment conducive to its preservation or not.

Rare old books display well this process of transformation from uniformity to uniqueness in the course of their survival.¹⁾ Some of these books further exhibit the progression from material object to cultural artifact, one that bears a special significance for a community, society, or country. Such volumes make for important study because they can deepen our comprehension of the survival of books, the last and the least understood event in the life cycle of the book, and ultimately broaden our knowledge on the book, culture, and history in general (Adams and Barker 2001, 37). Rare old books that have become cultural artifacts can reveal much about the publishing experiences and practices of their periods, the reception of books through the ages, and the culture of collecting in modern times. In this respect, and with reference to Philippine incunabula in particular—i.e., books printed locally from 1593 to 1640—Jacinto Esquivel's *Vocabulario de Iapon declarado primero en portugves por los padres de la Compañia de Iesus de aquel reyno, y agora en castellano en el Colegio de Santo Thomas de Manila* (Japanese vocabulary declared initially in Portuguese by the fathers of the Society of Jesus of that kingdom, and now in Castilian in the Colegio de Santo Thomas of Manila) (1630b) serves as a salient example. Of its surviving copies, that in the Bernardo Mendel Collection at the Lilly Library of Indiana University particularly stands out as a case that invites examination.

The Study of the Survival of Books and Philippine Incunabula

In 1993, as the history of the book was emerging and rapidly developing, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker proposed a new framework for the discipline in their manifesto titled "A New Model for the Study of the Book." They identified the events in the life cycle of the book as publication, manufacture, distribution, reception, and survival. Of

1) "Rare" books are not necessarily old, just as "old" books are not necessarily rare. The distinction between the terms is particularly blurry in the case of Philippine books given that, in general, they are published in low print runs and tend to have short shelf lives due to conditions in the local environment that threaten their survival. A recently published book, for instance, might become a rarity shortly after its release if it were issued in a small edition that sold out and there remained a demand for it while out of print. The definition of a rare book itself is not always clear and simple for bibliographers and bibliophiles, although John Carter in *ABC for Book Collectors* notes that "Paul Angle's 'important, desirable and hard to get' has been often and deservedly quoted" (Carter 1994, 175).

these five events, the last—survival—was the least studied at the time. The authors made the following observation:

The multiple forces which have worked and still work to allow books to survive for us to study so that we can have a “history of the book” at all are little understood, or rather their interaction within themselves and with the other factors which must be taken into account is little understood. (Adams and Barker 2001, 37)

It has been more than two decades since Adams and Barker presented their model, and the history of the book is a well-established and ever-growing discipline. The survival of the book is now better understood, as many studies have been conducted on various aspects of the subject—from book collecting in the Renaissance (Hobson 2012) to the plunder of Jewish private libraries during World War II (Grimsted 2004), from archival development in imperial Ming China (Zhang 2008) to the destruction of libraries from antiquity up to contemporary times (Raven 2004; Knuth 2006; Polastron 2007; Báez 2008). In the Philippines, however, not much is known or has been made known about the survival of books. It remains a little understood subject. On the one hand, this is not surprising, for the history of the book is still practically in its infancy in Philippine studies. On the other, it is startling, and disturbingly so, for the survival of books in the Philippines is a pressing matter.

Books in the Philippines have an almost ephemeral quality to them due to the conditions they are subjected to—the humid tropical climate, typhoons, floods, fires, earthquakes, termites, wars throughout the nation’s colonial history—and, generally, the inferior materials used in their manufacture. That the book has to contend with these multiple forces in order to survive is often raised in studies on Philippine book history, but how the book survives and why it does so in spite of such forces have hardly been given attention. Studies on Philippine incunabula, for instance, are generally descriptive bibliographies with a focus on the production and the physical elements of the books. Among these is P. van der Loon’s “The Manila Incunabula and Early Hokkien Studies” (1966), a survey of printing in Manila from 1593 to 1607 that examines six of the earliest Philippine imprints.²⁾ There are also the monographs on early books, each with a fac-

2) The books studied by Van der Loon in his survey are: *Hsin-k’o seng-shih Kao-mu Hsien chaun Wu-chi t’ien-chu cheng-chiao chen-chuan shih-lu* (A printed edition of the veritable record of the authentic tradition of the true faith in the infinite God, by the religious master Kao-mu Hsien) (1593); *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala* (Christian doctrine in Spanish and Tagalog) (1593); *Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua china* (Christian doctrine in Chinese letters and language) (c. 1605); *Ordinationes generales provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum* (General ordinances of the Philippine Province of the Holy Rosary) (1604); *Memorial de la vida christiana en lengua china* (Memoir of the Christian life in Chinese) (1606); and *Simbolo de la fe, en lengua y letra China* (Symbol of the faith, in Chinese language and letters) (1607).

simile of the volume it deals with: Edwin Wolf 2nd's *Doctrina Christiana: The First Book Printed in the Philippines, Manila, 1593* (1947); J. Gayo Aragón and Antonio Domínguez's *Doctrina Christiana: Primer libro impreso en Filipinas* (*Doctrina Christiana: the first book printed in the Philippines*) (1951); J. Gayo Aragón's *Ordinationes Generales: Incunable Filipino de 1604* (*Ordinationes Generales: Philippine incunabula of 1604*) (1954); and Fidel Villarroel's *Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen-Chúan Shih-lu, Testimony of the True Religion: First Book Printed in the Philippines?* (1986). All these studies are doubtless valuable for the information and insight they provide on Philippine incunabula, but the data or discussions they offer on the survival of the books are not comprehensive. Wolf, for instance, includes in his study just a brief albeit lively account of how the single extant copy of the 1593 *Doctrina Christiana* ended up in the collection of the United States Library of Congress in the 1940s.

The ground for the study of the survival of Philippine books, incunabula in particular, is not fallow. Along with the abovementioned works, which serve well as preliminary matter, the seminal bibliographies and printing histories of José Toribio Medina (1896; 1904), W. E. Retana (1897; 1906; 1911), Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera (1903), and Angél Perez and Cecilio Güemes (1904) also provide essential information on the early Philippine imprints: what titles were printed, how and where they were printed, and what their physical characteristics were. It was Retana who determined the period 1593–1640 as the incunabula age of Philippine printing, based on the appearance in 1593 of the first locally produced book, the *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala* (Christian doctrine in Spanish and Tagalog) (Plasencia *et al.* 1593), and the publication in 1640 of Diego Aduarte's *Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Philipinas, Iapon, y China* (History of the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Order of Preachers in the Philippines, Japan, and China), which Retana regarded as “[e]l volumen más considerable y mejos hecho, tipográficamente hablando, publicado en Filipinas en el siglo XVII” (the most considerable and best work, typographically speaking, published in the Philippines during the seventeenth century) (Retana 1911, 129). Retana also believed that the printer Tomas Pinpin, whom he dubbed “el principe de los tipográficos filipinas” (the prince of Filipino typographers), must have retired for good or died in 1640 (Retana 1911, 60).

A more recent work is especially important in the study of the survival of Philippine books: Regalado Trota Jose's *Impreso: Philippine Imprints 1593–1811* (1993). It comprises an exhaustive list of early books printed in the Philippines, with each entry displaying not only thorough bibliographical information but also the location of its extant or known copies. Although the data it offers on the surviving incunabula is in need of updating, Jose's *Impreso* remains an indispensable and indeed impressive resource for

the study of the survival of early Philippine imprints.

While now is as good a time as any to pay dedicated attention to the survival of Philippine books—given their ephemeral nature and the neglect in studying their destruction, preservation, or collection—it is a particularly opportune moment to do so because the history of the book is at a turning point. Rapid technological developments in the book industry (digital publishing) as well as in scholarship (digital humanities) are changing the way books are perceived and used, and altering the value original physical books are afforded in terms of not only their cultural and historical significance but also their monetary worth. In the case of rare old books, these issues are perhaps all the more pronounced. It seems imperative, thus, to take stock of such volumes at present to better serve their future survival, whether in physical or electronic form, and to foster further scholarship on the books themselves, on their texts and contexts. And it seems but natural to begin this task with the incunabula, the rarest and oldest books of the Philippines.

As far as can be ascertained, based on Jose's listing in *Impreso*, 101 books were published in the Philippines from 1593 to 1640: 89 in Manila, three in Pampanga, three in Bataan (one being probable), one in Laguna, one likely in Batangas, and four in unknown locations (possibly Manila or other cities in central or southern Luzon) (Jose 1993, 21–51). The printing of these books was done by Chinese and Filipino craftsmen, under the supervision of Spanish friars, using locally made and imported equipment and materials. The texts were written in Spanish, Tagalog, Visayan, Hiligaynon, Iloko, Kapampangan, Chinese, Japanese, and Latin. They were on Christian catechism, doctrine, rituals, and prayers; grammars and vocabularies of various languages; rules and regulations of the religious orders; lives of the saints; accounts of contemporary Catholic martyrs; homilies; letters; historical writings; and government edicts.

Of the 101 books, 54 titles have extant or known copies while 47 have none. Copies of the extant books are located in various libraries around Asia, Europe, and North America—with eight titles held only in the Philippines, 15 in the Philippines and elsewhere, and 31 elsewhere. “Elsewhere” includes Austria, England, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Japan, the United States, and Mexico. Among the surviving Philippine incunabula, the *Vocabulario de Iapon* is quite extraordinary for having a large number of extant copies, with 15 confirmed and possibly one or more held in libraries in the Philippines, Japan, England, Italy, France, Spain, and the United States.

It is impossible to say with any certainty what made the *Vocabulario de Iapon* one of the best survivors among Philippine incunabula, and what made those 47 titles with no extant copies the worst, for there are many forces and variables that come into play in the survival of books in general, not discounting sheer luck, and accounts and records on

the early Philippine imprints are few, scattered, incomplete, or inaccessible. What can be said with certainty about the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, however, is that the route it took to its survival is no different from that of the other extant books. And just as the latter did in the course of their survival through the centuries, the *Vocabulario de Iapon* underwent a transformation from being a material object to a cultural artifact, gaining in the process a great and varied worth beyond its original function and materiality.

The Creation of a Material Object: *Vocabulario de Iapon*, Manila, Seventeenth Century

In 1630 three books were published in the Philippines, all in Manila: two by the press of the Dominicans and one by that of the Jesuits. Interestingly, both religious orders issued the same text by the same author, although with variations in spelling and pagination: *Ritval para administrar los sanctos sacramentos sacado casi todo del ritual romano i lo demas del ritual indico* (Ritual for administering the holy sacraments drawn almost entirely from Roman ritual and the rest from Indian ritual) by the Augustinian priest Alonso de Mentrída (Mentrída 1630; Jose 1993, 40–41).³ In effect, while there were three books that appeared that year, they were of only two titles. The other title published by the Dominicans was the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, which was printed by Tomas Pinpin and Jacinto Magarilau (see Fig. 1). The book was produced in quarto (4^o) format, measuring around 28 × 22 cm, with 619 leaves or 1,238 pages. It was printed on what was then called “China paper,” due to where it was imported from, or “rice paper,” since it was thought to have been made from that grain though was actually made from paper mulberry (Pardo de Tavera 1893, 9).

The *Vocabulario de Iapon* was a translation of the Portuguese *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* (Vocabulary of the Japanese language) and its supplement, which were compiled by Jesuit missionaries and published by their press in Nagasaki—the *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* in 1603 and the supplement in 1604 (Cooper 1976, 418).⁴ Hefty as the *Vocabulario de Iapon* may seem, it was actually an abridged combination of the original Portuguese books and, according to the Jesuit bibliographer Johannes Laures, “omitted

3) The title cited, which is in short form, is from the Dominican version of the book (Esquivel 1630d).

4) A number of sources credit Fr. João Rodrigues with the editorship of the dictionary, but Michael Cooper maintains that the identity of the editor “still remains a matter of conjecture. The best bet at present is that Francisco Rodrigues supervised the joint work of compilation before he sailed from Nagasaki in 1603 and was drowned in a shipwreck later in the same year. But this hypothesis, plausible as it may be, rests on the testimony of only one author—Daniello Bartoli—and he was writing in Rome more than fifty years after the event” (Cooper 1976, 428).



Fig. 1 Title Page of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, Printed in Manila in 1630. From the copy in the Bernardo Mendel Collection of the Lilly Library, Indiana University (photograph by author)

a good many words” (Sophia University 2004). It was a remarkable effort nonetheless and stands as the first Japanese-Spanish dictionary ever produced. Although he is not identified in the book itself, the Dominican missionary Esquivel is credited with the translation of the work in Aduarte’s *Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario* (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 302). Aduarte was also a missionary of the same order and personally knew Esquivel.

Esquivel, who was born in Vitoria, Spain, in 1593, joined the Dominican order in 1611 and set out for Manila as a missionary in 1625, arriving in 1626 or 1627 (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 301–302; Borao 2001, 130).⁵⁾ In Manila, he studied theology at the Colegio de Santo Tomas while learning Japanese under the tutelage of Fr. Jacobo de Santa Maria

5) Some sources cite 1595 as the year of Esquivel’s birth. Laures, for instance, provides the date December 30, 1595 (Sophia University 2004).

(born Kyusei Gorobioye Tomonaga, now St. James of St. Mary), who helped him translate the Portuguese dictionary (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 302; Medina 1896, 29; Christian 2006, 67). Esquivel also produced two more works of Spanish translation from another language—the *Doctrina Christiana e la lengua de los indios Tanchui, en la Isla Hermosa* (Christian doctrine in the language of the natives of Tamsui on Hermosa Island) and the *Vocabulario de la lengua de los indios Tanchui, en la Isla Hermosa* (Vocabulary of the language of the natives of Tamsui on Hermosa Island)—both dated 1630 in manuscript form and neither of which saw print (Medina 1896, 29; Jose 1993, 40).⁶ He eventually left Manila for Isla Hermosa (Formosa, now Taiwan) and arrived there in 1631, settling in the province of Tamsui to preach the Catholic faith and pursue the missionary work of the Dominicans (Borao 2001, 122). But Esquivel's intended destination was actually Japan, thus his formidable effort in producing the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, and Isla Hermosa served only as a stopover for him, as it did for other missionaries seeking to preserve and propagate Christianity in Japan (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 300–302; Borao 2001, 122).⁷ Esquivel was finally able to embark on that journey in 1633, leaving Isla Hermosa on a Chinese boat along with a Franciscan friar. The priests never reached Japan, for they were murdered at sea a few days into the trip (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 311; Medina 1896, 29).

Esquivel lived during a time that was perhaps like no other for Spanish missionaries, amidst the Spanish Crown's expansion of its colonial empire and the Catholic Church's heightened endeavor in proselytization as part of the Counter-Reformation movement. Both these efforts were pursued with great zeal particularly in Asia. For Catholic missionaries, the ultimate destinations for conversion were Japan and China—due in no small measure to the possibility of being martyred, as the rulers of the kingdoms had become inhospitable or hostile to Christianity and eventually became intolerant of it.

Japan had its first contact with the Catholic faith in 1549 with the arrival of the Jesuit St. Francis Xavier and his party of two other Jesuit priests, three Japanese Christian converts, and two manservants (Boxer 1967, 36). Xavier was successful in his mission of sowing the seeds of Christianity in Japan, and by the time of his departure in 1551 he

6) José Eugenio Borao cites a slightly different title for the latter work, *Vocabulario muy copioso de la lengua de los indos de Tanchui en la Isla Hermosa* (An extensive vocabulary of the language of the natives of Tamsui on Isla Hermosa), which he says was finished in “1633 or earlier” (Borao 2001, 122).

7) As Borao notes, “The Dominicans certainly came [to Isla Hermosa] with long-sustained hopes and ambitions of entering China. They wanted a passage different from the route via Macao, because this had caused them many problems. Isla Hermosa was not only a better alternative, but it was a clandestine passage to Japan, whose doors were then absolutely shut to missionaries” (Borao 2001, 105).

had “left behind him a promising Christian community of a thousand souls” (Boxer 1967, 39). However, the gains in proselytization made by Xavier and the Jesuits who followed him were jeopardized when, in 1587, the ruler of the kingdom—Toyotomi Hideyoshi—issued an edict banishing missionaries from Japan for reasons seemingly more political than religious.⁸⁾ However, this did not deter the Catholic Church from its goal of spreading the faith, with Dominican priests entering the land in 1592, followed by Franciscans in 1593 (Osswald 2021, 929). The peril of this venture was perhaps made most evident by the crucifixion of six Franciscan missionaries and twenty Japanese Christians (now known as “The Twenty-Six Martyrs”) in Nagasaki on February 5, 1597. More persecutions and executions followed in the succeeding years. In 1614 the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu issued an edict banning Catholicism altogether, which forced missionaries and their followers to conduct their religious activities surreptitiously. It is estimated that up to five thousand or six thousand of them were martyred during the period 1614–40 (Boxer 1967, 360–361).

In China Christianity was introduced much earlier, possibly in the seventh century, although it would not be until the thirteenth century that missionary priests came to proselytize in the kingdom and only in the seventeenth century that a permanent mission was established in Peking (Beijing) by the Jesuit Matteo Ricci in 1602 (Cordier 1908). Throughout this early history of the Catholic Church in China, missionaries faced persecution in one form or another—from arrest to assassination, from proscription to expulsion. The Dominican St. Francis Fernández de Capillas, who was beheaded in the province of Fukien in 1648, is considered the “protomartyr of China” (Christian 2006, 141).

Many accounts of the persecution of European missionaries in Japan and China were produced during the seventeenth century, several of them printed in Manila, and these circulated in the European colonies as well as in Europe itself. In spite of the gruesome details they related—or perhaps precisely because of them—the stories served to quicken rather than quell the desire of other missionaries to be sent by their religious orders to these Asian kingdoms, as this offered opportunities for martyrdom. For missionaries, who were just as interested in their own salvation as that of others, “a martyr’s death was widely considered exemplary” (Clossey 2006, 49). The news of Fernández de Capillas’s martyrdom, for instance, “proved an incentive and more men than ever offered for service in China” (Latourette 1929, 110). Many others had been aspiring to go to Japan specifically to seek martyrdom ever since the Christian persecutions began in 1597.⁹⁾ With a colonial government well in place and a large portion of the

8) See Boxer (1967), particularly Chapter 4, “Jesuits and Friars.”

9) On the fervent interest in missionary assignments in Japan as part of the revival of the cult of martyrs in Western Christendom during the early modern period, see Brockey (2017).

local population Christianized, the Philippines served as an ideal “base for missionary activity in China and Japan” (Latourette 1929, 89). Missionaries who came from Spain and Mexico did not go directly to these destinations “but first went to the Philippines to acclimatize themselves and to gather experience,” as in the case of Esquivel, who stayed in Manila for four years (Borao 2001, 109).

In light of the missionary zeal in Asia during the early seventeenth century, it is plain to see how vital were the works on local languages, from dictionaries and grammars to translations of Christian doctrines and rituals. Esquivel’s *Vocabulario de Iapon*, which Aduarte describes as a grand book produced with immense determination and effort (“libro grande, con inmenso teson, y trabajo”), was one among many such works created to aid the missionaries in their proselytization (Aduarte 1640, vol. 2, 302). It was also produced, as were the others, in accordance with the law issued by the Spanish monarch Philip III in 1619 ordering all missionaries to “know the language of the Indians” (quoted in Wasserman-Soler 2016, 690).¹⁰ Prior to the issuance of this law, however, missionaries in the Philippines had already been learning the local languages and producing works in them, which were meant primarily for their fellow priests and not their native converts, such as the *Doctrina Christiana* of 1593, which is one of the two earliest books printed in the Philippines. It featured the Tagalog syllabary and the basic Catholic doctrines translated into Tagalog and printed in the Roman alphabet as well as in the indigenous script Baybayin. Among the other works on local languages issued before 1619 were *Arte y reglas de la lengua tagala* (Art and rules of the Tagalog language) by Francisco Blancas de San José, printed in 1610; *Arte de lengua Pampanga* (Art of the Pampanga language) by Francisco Coronel, 1617; and *Arte de lengua bisaya hiligayna de la isla de Panay . . .* (Art of the Visayan Hiligaynon language of Panay Island . . .) by Alonso de Mentrída, 1618.

Missionaries in the Philippines did not limit their linguistic undertakings to the local vernaculars. The other earliest book, also printed in 1593, was in Chinese: *Hsin-k’o seng-shih Kao-mu Hsien chaun Wu-chi t’ien-chu cheng-chiao chen-chuan shih-lu* (A printed edition of the veritable record of the authentic tradition of the true faith in the infinite God, by the religious master Kao-mu Hsien), written by the Dominican Juan Cobo (Kao-mu Hsien). The *Shih-lu*, as the book is referred to by scholars, contained discus-

10) In 1634 a contradictory law was issued by Philip IV ordering “churchmen to ensure that the native peoples learn Castilian Spanish” (Wasserman-Soler 2016, 690). On the observance of these contrasting laws in Mexico, Daniel Wasserman-Soler contends that “the Spanish monarchs permitted a kind of linguistic coexistence between indigenous languages and Castilian” (Wasserman-Soler 2016, 693). This clearly differs from the situation in the Philippines and other lands in Asia that Spanish missionaries sought to Christianize, where the 1619 law seems to have taken effect or was more enforced, or was observed instead of the 1634 law.

sions on theology and Western concepts of cosmography and natural history (Van der Loon 1966, 2). Cobo expressly intended the book for Chinese converts to Christianity, but its high language and expensive price did not align with this aim, as noted by Lucille Chia (2011). The *Shih-lu* was written in classical Chinese, which few Chinese in the Philippines would have understood—"not only because they lacked the necessary education, but also because nearly all of them spoke exclusively Minnanese [Hokkien]" (Chia 2011, 262). As for Cobo's fellow missionaries who could have read and learned from the book, Chia supposes that "they would also have been primarily concerned with mastering spoken Minnanese to minister to their parishioners" (Chia 2011, 262). While not discounting Cobo's purpose in publishing the work, she suggests that the *Shih-lu* could have been written also "to show what the Dominicans were capable of in their task of converting the Chinese" (Chia 2011, 262).

Other books in Chinese came in the wake of the publication of the *Shih-lu*, appearing even before works in the vernacular languages: the *Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua china* (Christian doctrine in Chinese letters and language) by Miguel de Benavides *et al.*, printed c. 1605; *Memorial de la vida christiana en lengua china* (Memoir of the Christian life in Chinese) by Domingo de Nieva, 1606; and *Simbolo de la fe, en lengua y letra china* (Symbol of the faith, in the Chinese language and letters) by Tomas Mayor, 1607. Unlike the *Shih-lu*, these publications seemed to have been more suited to local Chinese communities. The text of the Chinese *Doctrina Christiana*, for example, "was clearly composed for Minnanese readers and listeners," according to Chia (2011, 265). The likely audience of these books, then, were missionaries in Manila and elsewhere in the Philippines as well as their Chinese converts. It is not unlikely, though, that the books were also put to use by missionaries headed for or already in China.

Missionaries in the Philippines also produced books in Japanese, with five titles issued during the incunabula period.¹¹⁾ All the volumes were printed in roman letters (Romaji), which may have had to do with the capacity of the local presses—or their limitations, being unequipped with types in Japanese script (kanji) or with no craftsmen

11) Other than the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, the following Japanese books were printed in the Philippines during the incunabula period: *Virgen S. Mariano tattoqi rosario no xuguioto, vonajiqu Iesusno minano cofradiani ataru riacuno qirocu* (A short list pertaining to the followers of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the confraternities of the Holy Name of Jesus) by Juan de los Angeles, printed in 1622; *Virgen S. Mariano tattoq I Rosariono iardin tote fanazoni tatoyuru qio. Vanaiiqu Iesusno Cofradiano regimientono riaco* (Garden of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary or book similar to flowers. And a brief rule for the confraternity of Jesus), also by Juan de los Angeles, 1623; *Lozonni voite aru fito svaxono tevo voi yagate xixezu xite canauazarixi teitarito iyedomo, tattoqi Rosariono goqidocunite inochiuo nobetamo coto* by an unidentified author, 1623; and *Vareraga voaruji Iesv Christo S. Brigida, S. Isabel, S. Mitildesni tçuguetamo vonmino go Passiõno voncuruximino iroxinano coto . . .*, also by an unidentified author, 1623 (Jose 1993, 33–34).

to create woodblocks for xylographic printing. Esquivel's *Vocabulario de Iapon* was the last among the books in Japanese to see print. It was the only book on language, the others being on religious matters, and its text was the longest among them. Given that it was produced entirely in roman letters and that the Japanese community in the Philippines at the time was not as large or widespread as that of the Chinese, it seems evident that the *Vocabulario de Iapon* was published primarily for missionaries who were going or aspired to go to Japan, as Esquivel himself did. Since the production of the book was quite a massive undertaking, it could have also served as a showpiece for the Dominicans, as the *Shih-lu* might have done. This seems plausible in light of the rivalry between the mendicant orders—the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians—and the Jesuits over “the right to evangelise Japan” (Tronu 2015, 25).

Outside of the remarks by Aduarte on the authorship of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, there appear to be no other records on the book, no available data on its print run, distribution, and reception in its time. What is known, though, is that its publisher, the Colegio de Santo Thomas, did not issue any edition other than the first. After its initial circulation, Esquivel's book lay dormant for centuries.

Transformation into a Cultural Artifact: *Vocabulario de Iapon*, Nineteenth to Twenty-first Century

There are three stages in the survival of a book, according to Adams and Barker: its creation and initial reception, when “it is used to perform the function for which it was brought into existence”; its resting period, when “it comes to rest without any use or at least intensive use”; and its entrance into the world of collecting and scholarly research, “when it is discovered that it is . . . desirable as an object, either in its own right or because of the text it contains” (Adams and Barker 2001, 32). It is in the third stage of its survival that the book transforms from a material object to a cultural artifact.

Susan M. Pearce describes “artifact,” which means “made by art or skill,” as a term that

takes a narrow view of what constitutes material objects, concentrating upon that part of their nature which involves the application of human technology to the natural world, a process which plays a part in the creation of many, but by no means all, material pieces. (Pearce 1994, 10–11)

Artifacts, as Henry Pratt Fairchild asserts, “embody and concretize various cultural values and achievements” (Berger 2009, 17). It might be said of the surviving book, then, that in transcending its original function and its materiality, or in its transformation from

material object to cultural artifact, it gains a worth founded not only on its craftsmanship, which is a manifestation of the artistry and technology of its time, but also on its symbolic meaning to its owners or users during the periods when it is found to be desirable. This significance bears intellectual influences; political, legal, and religious influences; commercial pressures; and social behavior and taste—or, in Adams and Barker’s model, “the whole socio-economic conjuncture” (Adams and Barker 2001, 14). Thus, it is not static: it adapts to and changes with the times.

Esquivel’s *Vocabulario de Iapon* entered the third stage of its survival in the nineteenth century, becoming a collectible in the antiquarian market for its age, rarity, and possibly exoticism or “orientalism,” and a scholarly source or historical text in the academe for its prototypical nature. In 1835, a copy bound in vellum was put up for sale by the bookseller Ch. Citerne in Ghent as part of the library of the famed English book collector Richard Heber, listed as item number 705 in the *Catalogue d’une belle collection de livres et manuscrits ayant fait partie de la bibliothèque de feu M.R.H. . . .* (Catalog of a fine collection of books and manuscripts that were part of the library of the late M.R.H. . . .) (Ch. Citerne 1835, 49).¹² In 1868, the *Dictionnaire japonais-français . . . traduit du dictionnaire japonais-portugais composé par les missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus et imprimé en 1603, à Nagasaki . . . et revu sur la traduction espagnole du même ouvrage rédigée par un père dominicain et imprimée en 1630, à Manille . . . publié par Léon Pagès [Texte imprimé]* (Japanese-French dictionary . . . translated from the Japanese-Portuguese dictionary composed by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus and printed in 1603, in Nagasaki . . . and reviewed from the Spanish translation of the same work written by a Dominican father and printed in 1630, in Manila . . . published by Léon Pagès [printed text]) by the French diplomat Léon Pagès was published in Paris. Laures notes that this translation was based on the Bibliothèque nationale de France’s incomplete copy of the *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* supplemented by its complete copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* (Sophia University 2004). In 1887 a copy of Esquivel’s dictionary was offered for sale at £30 by the London bookseller Bernard Quaritch, listed as item number 35211 in his *Catalogue of Works in the Oriental Languages Together with Polynesian and African* and described as a “4to. printed on native paper, a few letters wanting on the first two leaves, and the last two leaves slightly defective, otherwise good copy in vellum, from

12) Heber (1773–1833), the son of a wealthy rector, was recognized in his day as “the most indefatigable collector” of books (Clarke 2014, 288). He “is remembered today as the man who left eight houses, four in England, and one each at Ghent, Paris, Brussels, and Antwerp, all filled with books” (Basbanes 1995, 110). His entire collection was estimated to have comprised more than 200,000 volumes, covering “a full range of literary and historic interests,” and “his collections of foreign-language books, particularly works in French, Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, and Latin were superior” (Basbanes 1995, 110–111).

Table 1 Extant or Known Copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, 1993

Holding Library	ID No.	Country
1. British Museum, London		England
2. Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental, Madrid	F 1/18 (10211)	Spain
3. Archivo de la Provincia del Santissimo Rosario, Avila		Spain
4. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid	R/21021	Spain
5. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid	R/33285	Spain
6. Biblioteca del Real Colegio de los Padres Agustinos Filipinos, Valladolid		Spain
7. Biblioteca de la Tabacalera, Barcelona		Spain
8. Archivo/Biblioteca de la Universidad de Santo Tomas, Manila		Philippines
9. National Library of the Philippines, Manila		Philippines

Source: Jose (1993, 41).

the Sunderland library” (Quaritch 1887, 3410). Its list price converts to around £2,400 today (National Archives n.d.). According to Laures, “Upon inquiry from Quaritch to whom it had been sold we were told that this was not known” (Sophia University 2004).

The trail of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* went cold again for several years until some traces of its copies emerged during World War II. As Laures states, “The copy of Professor C. R. Boxer was stolen from his valuable collection [in London] during the war, that of the Franciscan Convent and probably also that of the Philippines Library, Manila, perished as a result of the war” (Sophia University 2004). In 1972 the book saw a resurrection in the form of a facsimile reproduction published by the Tenri Central Library under its *Classica Japonica Facsimile Series* (Esquivel 1972). This reproduction was itself reissued in 1978 as part of the Tenri Central Library Reprint Series.

In 1993, according to Jose in *Impreso*, there were nine known copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*. Although Jose does not specify which of these were actually extant, he identifies the libraries where the copies “may, or used to, be found” (Jose 1993, 13), as outlined in Table 1.

Since Jose’s listing, more copies of the book have surfaced in institutional libraries. The digitization of the catalogs of these libraries and their accessibility online have made it possible to create a more accurate and fuller sketch of the survival of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* into the twenty-first century, nearly four hundred years after it was first printed. Today, there are 15 verified extant copies of the book and one unverified due to accessibility issues with the catalog of the holding institution¹³⁾ (see Table 2). There is also a

13) It has not been confirmed whether or not the copy of the Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental currently remains in its collection or if elsewhere is still extant, as there is no record of it online, the author was unable to personally check the archive due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and queries made to the institution via email went unanswered.

Table 2 Known Extant Copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapón*, 2022

A. Verified

Holding Library	ID No.	Country
1. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford	014322948	England
2. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford	014705866	England
3. British Library, London	001853658	England
4. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris	3123111	France
5. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale de Roma	69.1.F37	Italy
6. Kirishitan Bunko Library, Sophia University, Tokyo	KB211:31	Japan
7. Biblioteca Estudio Teológico Agustiniiano de Valladolid	I-125	Spain
8. Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, Universidad Complutense de Madrid	BH FG 2997	Spain
9. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid	R/14687	Spain
10. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid	R/21021	Spain
11. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid	R/33285	Spain
12. Real Biblioteca, Madrid	38401	Spain
13. National Library of the Philippines, Manila	R0007 I4	Philippines
14. Lilly Library, Indiana University	PL681.E82	USA
15. Copy sold at auction in 2016, PBA Galleries, San Francisco		USA

B. Unverified

Holding Library	ID No.	Country
Cited in <i>Impreso</i> (Jose 1993, 41):		
16. Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental, Madrid	F 1/18 (10211)	Spain

Sources: Author's research; Jose (1993, 41).

microform copy of the book held in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid. The copies of the Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Bibliothèque nationale de France have been digitally photographed and are accessible online.

Of the 15 verified copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapón* on the 2022 list, only five appeared in the account by Jose (1993): those of the British Museum (now the British Library), Biblioteca de Real Colegio de los Padres Agustinos (now Biblioteca Estudio Teológico Agustiniiano de Valladolid), Biblioteca Nacional de España (two copies), and National Library of the Philippines. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the ten copies that have since emerged were all acquired by their institutions during the 1993–2022 period, for there were copies that, understandably, Jose missed in his listing. As far as can be determined, these copies are those of the Bibliothèque nationale de

France, which was already in its collection in the 1860s; the Kirishitan Bunko Library of Sophia University in Tokyo, which was in its ownership in the 1940s; the Lilly Library of Indiana University, which was acquired in the 1960s; and, as noted in Laures's bibliography produced in the 1940s, the Bodleian Library (one copy) and the Real Biblioteca (known previously as the Biblioteca del Palacio del Rey).¹⁴ It may well be assumed that the copies of the remaining institutions on the 2022 list were indeed acquired within the last 29 years. This is certain, for instance, in the case of the copy of the Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, which was obtained in 2006 from the physician-bibliophile Francisco Guerra, who donated his library to the university (Universidad Complutense de Madrid n.d.).

That copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* are held in national and university libraries in seven nations and three continents attests to the cultural and historical value that the book has gained through the years, a worth that has been recognized outside of the countries it was originally relevant to—the Philippines, Japan, and Spain. A recent development serves as further testimony of the book's value, both symbolic and monetary: in 2016 PBA Galleries in San Francisco put up for auction a copy that it described as “exceedingly rare” and, based on a note on the front endpaper, “purchased in Manila in 1933 from the Librarian of the Philippine National Library, initialed C.R.B.” (PBA Galleries 2016).¹⁵ No doubt this was Boxer's copy that was stolen during the war, for the copy's title page bears his Chinese seal. PBA Galleries did not provide information on the owner of the copy (perhaps the person who stole it from Boxer) nor the buyer at the auction. The market value of the book was estimated at \$4,000–\$6,000; it sold for \$15,600.

Each of the extant copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* bears its own character and value due to its provenance and condition, making it distinct from the others. The copy in the Lilly Library is especially interesting because of its appearance, from which can be drawn distinct insights on the artifactual nature of rare old books and on the survival of Philippine incunabula.

14) The *Vocabulario de Iapon* was listed in *Kirishitan Bunko: A Manual of Books and Documents on the Early Christian Mission in Japan*, edited by Laures, published by Sophia University in 1940 (first edition), 1941 (second edition), 1951 (revised edition), and 1956 (third edition). This catalog of rare books held in Sophia University was revised, updated, and made available online in an electronic database in 2004. The copies in the Bodleian Library and the Biblioteca Real are listed in the bibliographical notation for the entry on the *Vocabulario de Iapon*.

15) It may be presumed that the “Librarian” referred to is Teodoro M. Kalaw, who served as director of the National Library of the Philippines from 1929 to 1938. It is not known who owned the copy he sold to Boxer, whether it was his own or the library's, and how and why he came to sell it.

The Bernardo Mendel Collection Copy in the Lilly Library

The copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* in the Lilly Library at Indiana University was part of the private library of Bernardo Mendel. Born in Vienna in 1895, Mendel studied law, became a decorated soldier in World War I, and then went into business, exporting “elegant Austrian goods” mostly to South America (Byrd 1973, 6). In 1928 he moved to Colombia, where he pursued his business and other interests—the promotion of music and the collection of books, initially those related to Latin American history and then to the discovery of the New World, the Spanish conquests, and independence movements in South America (Byrd 1973, 7–8). In 1952, having retired from his business in Bogotá, he bought the antiquarian book firm of Lathrop C. Harper in New York and moved to that city shortly after (Byrd 1973, 9). He “continued to add to his private library of Latin Americana, which he kept completely apart from the Harper business” (Lilly Library 1970, 4). Mendel sold his entire library to Indiana University in 1961 and “dedicated the remainder of his life to augmenting and increasing the scope of his original collection” at the university (Byrd 1973, 10). By the time of Mendel’s death in 1967, his library of 2,200 titles had come to be supplemented by “more than 20,000 titles, approximately 70,000 manuscripts, and 15,000 broadsides” from other private collections that the university acquired through his efforts (Byrd 1973, 14).

The *Vocabulario de Iapon* is one of the six titles of Philippine incunabula in the Bernardo Mendel Collection and the earliest book printed among them.¹⁶⁾ It is in remarkably good condition. It bears no markings or stamps of previous owners and appears to have been hardly used or lightly so at most. Barring the foxing and the small tears on some of its pages, which are not unusual for a book of its age—especially given the material it was made out of—it is a clean, complete, and intact copy. This is in stark contrast with the conditions of other surviving copies, such as all three volumes in the

16) The other Philippine incunabula in the collection are: *Relacion de varias cosas y casos, que han sucedido en los reynos de Iapon, que se han sabido en estas islas Philipinas por cartas de los padres de S. Domingo q esta alla . . .* (Account of various things and cases, which have occurred in the kingdoms of Japan, which have been known in these Philippine Islands through letters from the fathers of S. Domingo who are there . . .) by Aduarte, printed in 1631; *Copia de una carta que embió el señor obispo de Zebú, gouernador del archobispado de Manila de las islas Filipinas, al Rey nuestro señor* (Copy of a letter sent by the bishop of Cebu, governor of the Archbishopric of Manila of the Philippine Islands, to the King Our Lord), presumably written by Pedro de Arce and printed in 1632; *Sucesos felices, que por mar, y tierra ha dado N. S. a las armas españolas . . .* (Happy successes, at sea and land, that were granted by Our Lady to the Spanish army . . .), printed anonymously in 1637; *Relacion de lo que asta agora se a sabido de la vida y martyrio del milagroso padre Marcelo Francisco Mastrili de la Compañia de Iesus . . .* by Perez, 1639; and *Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Philipinas, Iapon, y China* by Aduarte, 1640.

Biblioteca Nacional de España, which are deteriorated, with two (R/14687 and R/21021) withdrawn from room use (Biblioteca Nacional de España n.d.); that in the National Library of the Philippines, which is disfigured by insect holes, tears on many pages, several ownership stamps on its title page, and its amateur repair; or the copy auctioned by PBA Galleries, which is described as “Extensively repaired with 8 leaves provided in facsimile and numerous other leaves silked on both sides or with other repairs to tears, chips, and worming, [with] some loss to text” (PBA Galleries 2016).

What is particularly striking about the condition of the Mendel copy, however, is its binding, even if—or perhaps precisely because—it is not the original one (see Fig. 2). The binding of the book is made of red morocco leather with false bands, with the short title and the place and date of publication in gold tooling on the spine. The inside covers are also tooled, with gold dentelles, and the endpapers marbled (see Fig. 3). The binding is complemented by a slipcase covered in marbled paper. It is, altogether, an exemplar of fine design and quality craftsmanship. The person behind such work, as indicated by his mark on the inside front cover, is the Spanish bookbinder Antolín Palomino (1909–95). Renowned for his absolute technical perfection (“absoluta perfección técnica”), Palomino ran a bindery in Madrid that was active from 1942 to 1982 (Lafuente 1995). He counted Mendel among his many clients and also as his friend (Palomino 1987, 41).

It is important to note that the Mendel copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* was not just preserved but was actually restored: its repair involved the replacement of some of its original elements, its binding in particular. Restoration usually diminishes the historical and monetary value of an item in the antiquarian market, which puts a premium on the object’s condition being as close as possible to its original state. However, it is more likely than not for very old books, such as those from the seventeenth century, to have undergone some form of repair in the course of their survival. As far as restored items are concerned, rare book dealers and collectors generally hold to the principle that the



Fig. 2 Binding of Mendel Copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, with Slipcase (photograph by author)

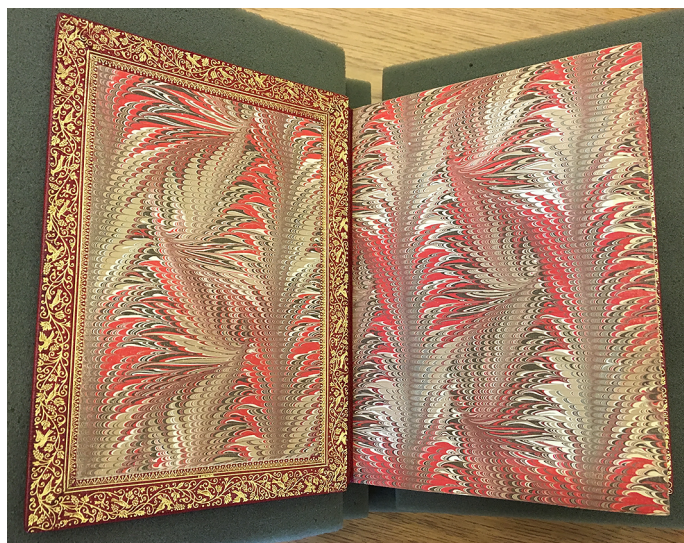


Fig. 3 Inside Front Cover of the Mendel Copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*
(photograph by author)

older the repair of the book, the better it is for its value. In the case of the Mendel copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, then, its twentieth-century rebinding might be considered a negative in terms of the volume's historical authenticity and monetary worth. But on the other hand, it may well be regarded as an element that adds to the book's aesthetic value and physical soundness, which may offset some of the devaluation from restoration.

The Mendel copy's original binding probably would have been in plain vellum, which was the common material for book coverings in the seventeenth century. This would not have made the copy visually striking. Furthermore, despite the minimal usage of the book, as suggested by the condition of its pages, this binding would have displayed signs of the inevitable wear and tear for a book of its age: discoloration from oxidation, stains from dust and other elements, cracking, rubbing, loose joints and hinges, or all of the above. The work done on the book by Palomino involved removing the original binding, and with it all the marks of use and aging, then replacing it with a covering that was by no means ordinary or merely functional. Handsomely designed and created, the rebinding of the Mendel copy enhances the visual art element of the book. That it was produced by an esteemed craftsman gives this aspect a brand-name value, which consequently provides the book itself with a unique worth.

The binding of the Mendel copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* is elegant indeed, so much so that it seems ill matched with the pages it holds together and protects, pages whose printing was not of the highest caliber. Immediately telling of this is the typo-

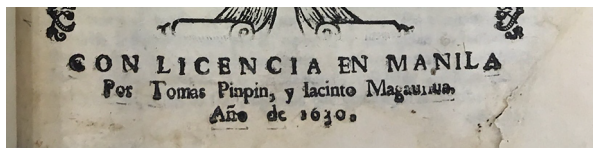


Fig. 4 Detail of the Title Page of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*, Mendel Copy (photograph by author)

graphical error in the last name of the printer Jacinto Magarula, which appears to have been spelled as “Magaurlua” using some worn types and displaying uneven pressing (see Fig. 4). One might even describe the printing of the entire book as downright shoddy given the paper used, the kind that the historian-bibliographer Trinidad Pardo de Tavera described as detestable, brittle, without consistency or resistance (“detestable, quebradizo, sin resistencia ni consistencia”) (Pardo de Tavera 1893, 9). The paper of the book has varying textures and gradations. More significantly, it is so thin that the text on the leaves with printed matter on both sides looks like it has bled onto the reverse side. The text appears nearly illegible (see Fig. 5).

Due to the unavailability or inaccessibility of records, it is not known when, from whom, and for how much Mendel acquired his copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*. It is also undetermined whether he bought the copy already rebound or had it rebound himself, although the latter is more likely given his connection to Palomino. It is certain, however, that the book in its present condition was part of the lot sold to the Lilly Library in 1961. The copy is stored in the vault of the library, where it is available for room use upon request. The Lilly Library would not say why the book is in special storage. Two other books of the six Philippine incunabula in the Bernardo Mendel Collection are also kept in the vault: *Sucesos felices, que por mar, y tierra ha dado N. S. a las armas españolas . . .* (Happy successes, at sea and land, that were granted by Our Lady to the Spanish army . . .), which was printed anonymously in 1637; and *Relacion de lo que asta agora se a sabido de la vida y martyrio del milagroso padre Marcelo Francisco Mastrili de la Compañia de Iesus . . .* (Account of what until now has been known about the life and martyrdom of the miraculous Father Marcelo Francisco Mastrili of the Society of Jesus . . .) by Geronimo Perez, printed in 1639. What these books seem to have in common with the *Vocabulario de Iapon*—unlike the remaining three incunabula, which are kept in the stacks—is that their rebinding includes extra features: a folding case for the *Sucesos* and a book box for the *Relacion*. More significant, perhaps, is that all three books were printed by the “prince of Filipino typographers,” Tomas Pinpin.

The Mendel copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* tells no great stories about its ownership through the ages or its journey from seventeenth-century Manila to twentieth-

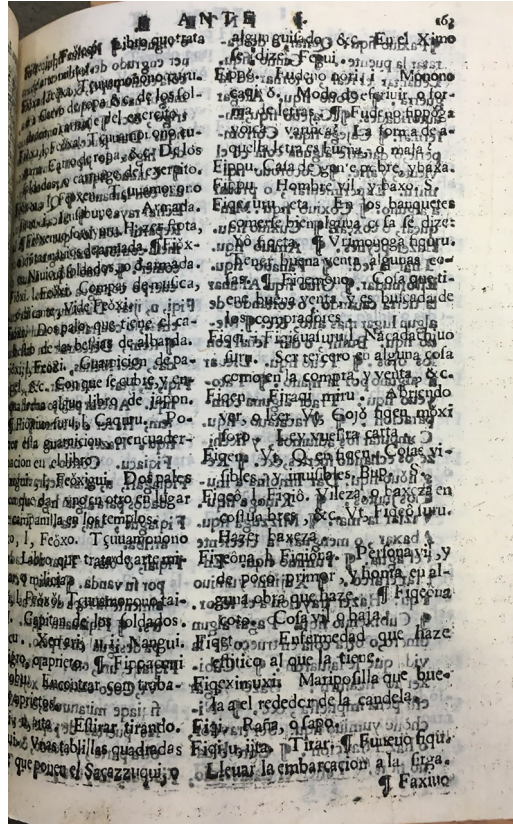


Fig. 5 A Page from the *Vocabulario de Iapon* Displaying the Quality of the Paper and the Printing of the Book (photograph by author)

century Bloomington, Indiana, where the Lilly Library is, for the book bears hardly any physical evidence of its provenance and the records on it are scant. But it does say something significant about its survival as a book as well as that of the other extant copies of the *Vocabulario de Iapon*. With its pages in good condition, notwithstanding its poor printing, and its binding so fine, the Mendel copy inevitably calls attention to its materiality and aesthetic as a book and to the circumstances and technology involved in its preservation and restoration, which in turn highlight the process of its becoming an artifact.

The Survival of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* and Other Philippine Incunabula

The *Vocabulario de Iapon* was a pioneering work in the history and study of the Japanese and Spanish languages, and even in the history of the Catholic Church and the Spanish colonial empire. In the course of its survival, however, it became less a dictionary produced by Christian missionaries than a very expensive, old, rare book; a prestige item for antiquarian book collectors; an object of colonial or orientalist interest; a resource on the history of the Japanese language; an example of seventeenth-century printing in Asia; or one of the 18 known books produced by the most famous printer in Philippine history. Besides being any or all of these now, the Mendel copy distinctly serves also as a manifestation of the craftsmanship of a renowned bookbinder of the twentieth century.

Not every extant Philippine incunabulum can evoke special interest in its physicality, but being among the earliest outputs of Philippine presses and having endured for centuries, each is like the Mendel copy of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* in undergoing a transformation from material object to artifact. Each has gained a cultural, historical, and monetary worth beyond its original function and materiality, although in different ways and in varying degrees. Furthermore, each can reveal something about other aspects of the survival of early Philippine imprints—be it on their reception, republication, or provenance.

Adams and Barker note, “The function of the book as text, as a vehicle carrying information within it, is obvious, but the information that it provides by virtue of its mere survival and the existence is not less important because less obvious” (Adams and Barker 2001, 37). The survival of the incunabula of the Philippines can offer much information not only on the publication, manufacture, distribution, and reception of early Philippine imprints—on which not enough is known—but also on Spanish colonial rule, particularly during the seventeenth century, which itself is an understudied period; Christian missions in Asia during the Counter-Reformation; global trade and travel since the early modern period; and Philippine historiography in general. As the survival of the book is “not merely a physical fact, but the degree to which that fact is known” (Adams and Barker 2001, 38), it is important to study how early Philippine imprints have withstood the circumstances and effects of time (or how some titles have not), where the extant copies are, and how and why they got there, for this would ensure their continued survival.

Acknowledgments

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Citizens at the End of Empire: Navigating Loyalty and Citizenship in Late Colonial Singapore

John Solomon*

The disintegration of the British Empire in Asia and the emergence of new nation-states marked a period of significant upheaval for communities whose identities and mobilities were fundamentally reconstituted by a new system of borders, citizenships, and nationalities. In this article, I seek to explore a social history of early citizenship in Singapore by examining how citizenship was understood and conceived by varied segments of society during its final years as a colony. Focusing on ethnic groups considered non-indigenous, I examine the decisions made by communities and individuals with regard to Singapore citizenship, studying the period between 1957 and 1963. During this time the meaning and significance of Singapore citizenship underwent dramatic shifts, and various forms of dual citizenship were phased out in the context of political plans for Singapore's future. I argue that individuals' decisions about citizenship reveal how they understood their own futures after colonialism, within the region, commonwealth, and nation. The citizen-subjectivities of individuals and communities often did not align with what emerged as an official discourse of exclusive loyalty and belonging. Early experiences of citizenship were instead shaped by intersections of race, class, and complex trans-national identities, as well as pragmatic assessments and emotional decision making. These did not simply mirror state-driven processes but instead represented important aspects of the complex social history of decolonization in Singapore and the early transition of its inhabitants from a colonial society to a national citizenry.

Keywords: Singapore, dual citizenship, decolonization, social history, empire and mobilities

Introduction

The twenty years following the conclusion of World War II was a period of tremendous social change as British colonial territories in Southeast Asia underwent political reconstitution and decolonization.¹ A new regime of borders, and travel and residency

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1) Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa have referred to the breaking up of empires as “the most profound geopolitical phenomenon of the twentieth century” (Cribb and Li 2004, 164).

restrictions, emerged alongside new nationality and citizenship laws that became increasingly based on the principle of exclusivity, meaning that individuals were for the most part eventually unable to exercise nationality and citizenship rights in more than one sovereign territory. During this period, individuals and communities often had to make decisions that would have significant ramifications for their future. Although Singapore would eventually become a sovereign nation-state in 1965, after Singapore citizenship was introduced in 1957 and made available to a broad range of residents, this was far from an obvious outcome. Singapore's citizenship was at this time not associated with a sovereign Singaporean state, nor was it accompanied by a corresponding internationally recognized Singaporean nationality status, or even an accompanying passport. Instead, Singapore "citizenship" as a legal status developed in the context of its implications for other overlapping forms of nationality and citizenship and Singapore's potential future. It therefore has to be understood in terms of Singapore's evolving relationships with Britain, Malaya/Malaysia, the Commonwealth, and the wider region. Reactions to citizenship drives during Singapore's final days as a British dependency therefore provide a useful lens to understand how people made sense of and adapted to the new system of borders and legal regimes accompanying decolonization, and how they envisioned their futures, and the nature of states, at a time of significant change.

Despite the complicated relationship of citizenship with other statuses, and the fact that political leaders and policy makers understood that nation building would be a lengthy process, leaders and policy makers largely couched the acquisition of Singapore citizenship in the language and performativity of existing loyalty and allegiance. For many individuals, however, the decision to adopt Singapore citizenship was based not on any significant sense of loyalty but instead on a wide range of factors that demonstrated how different individuals, ethnic communities, and class groups experienced decolonization in Singapore, and the effects of postcolonial state construction in the wider region.

This article seeks to uncover how ordinary individuals understood citizenship by examining their diverse responses to citizenship proposals and legislation. I first outline why Singapore citizenship came to be framed within a discourse of exclusive loyalty and allegiance by British authorities, local political actors, and community leaders amid the progressive tightening of exclusivity requirements. I then utilize oral history interviews and other archival sources to trace a range of perspectives "from below" that shed light on individual citizenship decisions that arose as a response to the political and legal changes that were occurring. I argue that the choice to become a citizen, or conversely to reject Singapore citizenship, was influenced by one's access to information, class, existing "national" loyalties and transnational ties, grassroots leadership and intercommunal dynamics, as well as pragmatic considerations regarding access to rights and

resources. More broadly, I argue that the responses of ordinary individuals and groups to Singapore's early mass citizenship drives offer new perspectives on its early postcolonial history of citizenship. This article focuses on non-Malay communities in Singapore, in particular the Chinese and Indian communities, whose loyalties were questioned in the context of their ethnic affiliation to overseas nation-states.²⁾

The issue of citizenship in Singapore's national history has been studied by scholars largely as a constitutional and political issue rather than a sociohistorical one. Albert Lau's work on Malayan Union citizenship has analyzed in detail the debates and considerations behind citizenship proposals, taking into account the role played by both the British authorities and various local political leaders (Lau 1989, 216–243). In his expansive study on postwar Malaya, Tim Harper has examined the broad social, cultural, and political context against which citizenship legislation was enacted. Harper's chapter on citizenship utilizes a top-down approach surveying political negotiations between various segments of Malayan society (Harper 1999, 308–356). More recently, Sunil Amrith's (2011) historical study of migrations and diasporas has examined the issue of citizenship in Asia from the perspective of the large-scale movements and mobilities of ethnic communities. It considers not only international migration but also the massive internal migration that occurred in Asian states in the latter half of the twentieth century (Amrith 2011, 120–150).

These studies have done much to advance our understanding of citizenship as a phenomenon of the politics of decolonization, diasporas, international relations, and modern statecraft. However, there has been far less scholarly attention on how ordinary individuals historically understood and responded to citizenship and nationality legislation, and borders and restrictions on mobility. One historian who has examined the emergence of a citizen-subjectivity in late colonial and early postcolonial Singapore is Loh Kah Seng. Loh's *Squatters into Citizens* (2013) has examined, among other things,

2) Recent Singapore history scholarship and commentaries have re-examined the important and often neglected implications of Malay perspectives in the historiography of the island as part of a broader postcolonial critique. For example, see Sadasivan (2020, 663–678). See also Barr (2021, 1–19). The issue of “Malay” indigeneity within the region and Singapore certainly played a complex role in the question of citizenship. Scholars have explored how this issue played out in the political realm. Albert Lau (1989, 216–243) has examined the responses of the Malay political elite to decolonization and citizenship in Malaya and Singapore. For a discussion on the activities of various anticolonial Malay radicals from different backgrounds from the 1930s leading up to decolonization in the postwar period, see Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (2015). More scholarly attention deserves to be paid to the reactions of ordinary members of the Malay community to multiethnic citizenship and notions of territorial belonging. This, however, goes beyond the focus and scope of this paper. The importance of these complex and diverse perspectives will be discussed further in the conclusion.

the housing and resettlement policies of the People's Action Party government and the fashioning of a social compact between citizens and the state, a process that was not devoid of resistance, bottom-up agency, dialogic interaction, and a considerable diversity of experience. Using extensive oral interviews and archival research to analyze histories and social memories of resettlement into public flats, Loh complicates the notion of a "shared history" propagated by developmentalist national narratives about Singapore's housing policies and their impact. Despite much recent scholarship that similarly challenges the singular narratives associated with the "Singapore Story," or Singapore's state-sanctioned national history, the emergence of the Singapore citizen as a historical subject in public history and state commemoration is still largely tied to the broader political periodization of the nation-state and top-down, state-led efforts at nation building. It is projected as a linear collective experience and is still understudied.

Michael Shapiro highlights that a state's aspirations to becoming a "nation-state" entail the "management of historical narratives as well as territorial space." States attempt to "impose coherence on what is actually a series of fragmentary and arbitrary conditions of historical assemblage" (Shapiro 2000, 80). Shapiro also highlights the multiple temporalities that exist within conceptions of citizenship. Citizen-subjects are "temporally-disjunctive" (Shapiro 2000, 79) despite attempts to code citizenship in terms of shared cultural backgrounds or—when applied to the case of Singapore—shared and coherent historical trajectories, events, experiences, and discourses. An examination of the diverse experiences with regard to citizenship discourse and legislation will help us to better understand the complex experiences of individuals during decolonization and nuance our understanding of nation-state formation.

The lack of scholarly attention on the social history of citizenship is not due to a dearth of sources. A number of archives across the region contain documents that discuss in great detail issues of immigration and citizenship. These diplomatic dispatches and parliamentary and Colonial Office records reveal the importance placed on such issues not only by Asian leaders but also by the British administration in Malaya and Singapore. This was despite the fact that it had to contend also with postwar reconstruction, housing, education, mass unemployment, and a Communist insurgency, among other urgent issues. The documents often discuss cases involving particular individuals and groups and tend to provide fragmentary glimpses into their lives. When read against the grain, they reveal information about how ordinary people from various strata of society were impacted by citizenship and how they exercised agency and responded to, circumvented, and often transgressed the intentions and goals of governments and state bureaucracies.

The Oral History Centre of the National Archives of Singapore contains a large number of recorded interviews about citizenship that also provide a rich and more direct

means of understanding how the lives of individuals and communities intersected with the formation of nation-states during decolonization in the region.³⁾ Within this series, Singapore citizenship emerges as a common topic for interview questions, and interviewers probe the personal reasons and emotions of individuals who adopted Singapore citizenship before and soon after independence in 1965. A significant number of these interviews, however, are framed with a predominant emphasis on the political history of Singapore. A more recent series, *New Citizens*, was started in 2010 and currently features 111 interviews that “capture the motivations and experiences of different groups of immigrants who have chosen to make Singapore home since 1965” alongside those of “policy makers and civil servants involved in national integration programmes,” demonstrating the center’s attempts to capture the experiences of “newer” migrants amid a rapidly diversifying population. This suggests an official recognition that creating such archival resources is important and necessary for broadening sociohistorical migration narratives in the future.⁴⁾ The interviews not only offer access to immigrants’ perspectives but also raise interesting questions about the structuring of individual and social memory, and the relationship between particular forms of social memory and archival priorities in national institutions.

Unlike the interviews in the newer series, the older interviews do not primarily focus on citizenship but instead feature recollections that are part of an effort to piece together a larger biographical narrative of individuals. These recollections vary in detail and length, demonstrating the different levels of importance that various individuals ascribed to citizenship acquisition in their own life narratives. The ways that citizenship is remembered and recounted, sometimes inaccurately, also suggest how these memories have been molded and shaped within life narratives. They often speak to the importance of individual subjectivity and the “awkward individual lives” which form the basis of the “grand patterns of history” (Thomson 2000, 12).

During the postwar period, Britain—after initial intentions to retain its empire (White 2017, 217)—soon found itself undertaking the long and protracted process of imperial retreat. It began to dismantle its global empire in selective phases and attempted to execute plans to advance its economic and security interests, preserve its prewar influence and prestige, and secure goodwill from its former imperial constituents within

3) These interviews appear predominantly in a select number of special series among the center’s 61 projects. These include the three-part *Communities of Singapore* series, featuring 356 interviews conducted by the center during the 1980s and 1990s that capture the experiences of minority communities in Singapore, focusing on the experiences of “the early life, customs, traditions, religion, institutions and social relations of early immigrants and inhabitants of Singapore” (*Communities of Singapore* [Part 2], National Archives of Singapore).

4) *New Citizens*, National Archives of Singapore.

a newly emerging international order of sovereign nation-states. These efforts would also soon be colored by the politics of the Cold War.⁵⁾ Against this backdrop of strategic concerns and the rising tide of independence movements, Britain began actively supporting and even fostering efforts at specific forms of nation-building within many of its former colonies (Stockwell 2005, 196). State construction was seen as the most viable model for achieving strategic and ideological objectives by the British Labour government after the war. It was also the end-goal of major nationalist and anticolonial forces in Singapore and largely seen as the logical outcome and aim of decolonization.

In many other parts of Asia, global war, decolonization, and their aftermaths not only resulted in ruptures to pre-established patterns of movement and settlement under empire but also signaled new forms of voluntary and involuntary migration of forced labor, refugees, and other displaced populations.⁶⁾ In the case of India, Pakistan, and China, massive displacement occurred after the war, in the horrendous violence of partition and the conflict between the Chinese Communists and nationalists. For many overseas diasporic communities, including those in Singapore, external “homelands” were now radically reshaped into vastly different political entities from the lands that they or their forebears had initially left. Many were confronted with decisions about whether to return home, or to attempt long-term settlement in their places of residence overseas.

During this period, nationalist leaders in both Singapore and Malaya attempted to create social, political, and economic frameworks for their newly emerging independent nation-states. One pressing issue of nation-building was citizenship. The issuing of citizenship signified “the institutionalisation of the nation state” itself (Torpey 2009, 4–20).⁷⁾ The establishment of the legal, political, and social basis for citizenship would effectively create national polities and communities and secure national boundaries by differentiating citizens from non-citizens.

However, in the immediate postwar world the nature of the nation-state was subject to competing visions. Southeast Asia’s emerging polities were largely plural and multi-ethnic with complex configurations and settlement histories. In Malaya and Singapore, this societal complexity gave rise to tensions between civic and subscription notions of citizenship on the one hand, and ethno-nationalist and nativist ones on the other. This tension shaped the politics of citizenship questions in both Malaya and Singapore. Given

5) For a concise and informative account of the geopolitical pressures that led to Britain’s rapid post-war decolonization, see Levine (2013, 206–264).

6) Amrith’s (2011, 90) work shows that these changes first occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

7) This was a process that began in Europe in the nineteenth century and later extended throughout a modern global system prefigured by European dominance in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

the diversity of settled populations across the decolonizing world, questions remained about exactly who would qualify for citizenship. Would new citizens in emerging sovereign states be allowed to enjoy rights and privileges in more than one territory? Were states to be smaller units or large federal associations, and if the latter, how were political rights and mobilities to be distributed? What would multinational associations like the Commonwealth of Nations mean in a post-imperial world? What would supra-national citizenship within such a grouping actually entail for individuals?

Although many nationalists in Asia viewed anticolonial struggle as the process of actualizing delineated national communities, there remained a diversity of views about the ideal governmental architecture of future states, how the movement of individuals across boundaries was to be regulated, and the precise definitions of citizenship.⁸⁾ Frederick Cooper (2014) has highlighted, using the case of African support for a supra-national French Union, that we need to reconsider understanding the global history of decolonization as being characterized by an unproblematic transition from empire to nation-state in the form that we know today.

When Singapore first introduced citizenship in 1957, it was not yet a state, nor was its future path to independent statehood clear. As a colonial dependency at the time, it faced a number of possible futures: as a sovereign independent state, as a British self-governing territory for a longer period of time, or as an incorporated part of a federal Malayan state of various potential political and geographic permutations. Because the principle of dual citizenship was progressively rejected by many emerging state leaders, this period brought to the fore pressing questions and decisions about “citizenship” in Singapore. For many individuals who had enjoyed varying degrees of free movement along transnational migratory networks across Asia, the establishment in the region of frameworks of citizenship had the potential to enact a marked shift in the way they led their lives, their transnational cultural and political connections with countries like China and India, and their sense of identity and belonging.⁹⁾

8) Zaib un Nisa Aziz highlights how nationalists in India and Egypt conceived of their anticolonial movements as being driven by distinct and particular nationalisms rather than as part of a cohesive supranational struggle. Their beliefs, he argues, mirrored a European teleological view of the nation-state as a higher stage in the evolution of human society (Aziz 2017, 409).

9) Adam McKeown (2011, 52) has discussed how the diversity of imperial regimes had different effects on migration and how, for example, the French Empire was much less conducive to intra-imperial mobility than was the British Empire.

Singapore Citizenship and Singapore's Political Future

In 1957, after significant lobbying by a wide range of interest groups and community representatives in Singapore, and the efforts of David Marshall, Singapore's first chief minister, Singapore's legislative assembly passed the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance. Previously only a relatively small number of Singapore's residents—those who were British subjects, could meet the language requirements, and could afford to pay the exorbitant registration fees—were granted citizenship rights in Singapore as Citizens of the United Kingdom and the Colonies (CUKCs).¹⁰⁾ The introduction of a Singapore citizenship marked a significant milestone in the island's history because it opened the doors to mass citizenship registration, paving the way for a significant proportion of Singapore's residents to acquire a legal status that would grant them political and residency rights, new social responsibilities, and access to the future public resources of the state in terms of housing, jobs, social welfare benefits, and schools.¹¹⁾

The new liberal provisions that comprised the ordinance significantly widened the latitude of eligibility for citizenship from what had been previously proposed and practiced.¹²⁾ With the ordinance of 1957, those who had been born in Singapore received citizenship immediately upon application. Those born or naturalized in the Federation of Malaya or in other British territories were allowed to register after two years' residence. Citizens of Commonwealth countries like India initially had an eight-year qualifying period.¹³⁾ Crucially, those born in China—comprising a significant proportion of

10) These rights included the right to vote in local legislative assembly elections and to hold political office.

11) Although these benefits of citizenship were widely spoken about in political and public discourse, in the 1950s there was no clear delineation between the rights of citizens and non-citizens. In 1961 Lee Kuan Yew, then Singapore's chief minister, spoke of the urgent need to sharpen distinctions and enforce immigration rules so as to "protect the rights of citizens" from being lost to "new people" who came from other countries (Text of Broadcast by the Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, over Radio Singapore in the *National Day Celebrations* Series on Friday, June 2, 1961, at 7.10pm, National Archives of Singapore). In the lead-up to political union with Malaysia in 1963, Lee listed the special rights of Singapore citizens as: priority in public housing flats, entry into schools, social welfare relief, unemployment and sickness benefits, and jobs in the Singapore state civil service. In making a case for the retention of a Singapore state citizenship after union with Malaysia, he argued that these rights as well as new industrial jobs needed to be protected against the entry of large numbers of Malaysian Federal citizens into Singapore after the merger (Radio Singapore Press Release, DO 169/250, National Archives of Singapore).

12) Not only were the requirements for citizenship significantly lowered, other barriers such as an expensive \$100 fee for United Kingdom and the Colonies citizenship, a source of much public criticism, was also scrapped (As I Was Saying, *Straits Times*, October 14, 1950, p. 6).

13) The eight-year residency requirement was a cause of much concern to members of the Indian community who did not meet the threshold (FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, National Archives UK, p. 170).

Singapore's residents—were allowed to apply if they had been in Singapore prior to the Japanese occupation or if they could prove ten years' residence. This opened the pathway for hundreds of thousands of China-born Chinese who had previously been ineligible for registration and naturalization in older citizenship proposals and legislation.¹⁴⁾ Previous restrictive language requirements centering on Malay or English competency were also dropped. This new law paved the way for the expansion of suffrage and the creation of a democratic polity and a representative state, crucial steps toward political decolonization and autonomy.¹⁵⁾

The 1957 ordinance was accompanied by a massive public campaign, dubbed Operation Franchise, organized by the Lim Yew Hock government and the British authorities in order to promote citizenship registration.¹⁶⁾ Within the first three months of the start of the campaign, hundreds of thousands of residents had applied at registration points across the island. Colonial Office records reveal that during the registration period, on account of overwhelming public demand, the chief registrar of citizens made provisions for an initial round of three hundred thousand registrations, over three times the initial planning estimate.¹⁷⁾

In 2017 the *Straits Times*, Singapore's main national English newspaper, carried a commemorative feature celebrating sixty years of Singapore citizenship. The article celebrated the ordinance and the subsequent mass registrations as the birth of a national citizenry. Framing the exercise as a demonstration of latent loyalty and nationalism, the article described how the long queues "did little to quell . . . [the] eagerness" of applicants, some of whom had "waited decades" and were now ready, in the words of an assemblyman at the time, to "shape the destiny of the country."¹⁸⁾

However, a recurring theme in oral history interviews about this period is the ambivalence of a large segment of applicants regarding citizenship, often remembered

14) In comparison with the requirements for citizenship in the Malayan Federation, the threshold for citizenship in Singapore in 1957 was very low. This complicated the possibility of Singapore's potential merger with Malaya, as Singapore was seen as a back door for large numbers of individuals who would become Federal citizens through the merger but would not have ordinarily qualified. This led to the proposal of special conditions for Singapore's inclusion that aimed at keeping Federal political players out of Singapore politics, and for keeping Singaporean political participation out of the Federal government in any merger (Low 2017, 12–14).

15) Residents in Singapore had to ascertain whether they qualified. Those who did had to decide whether they wanted to register; they had to ascertain what the benefits of citizenship were and what their prospects would be like as non-citizens. They also had to determine what accepting citizenship would mean for their other nationality statuses.

16) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666.

17) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, pp. 169–170.

18) 60 Years of the Singapore Citizenship: From Hawkers to Millionaires, They All Queued Up, *Straits Times*, October 8, 2017.

together with the lack of fanfare that accompanied registrations. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, the registration process was vastly simplified and streamlined, so much so that John Leslie Michael Gorrie, the private secretary to the colonial secretary, who facilitated the process, remembered being “appalled” at having to simply hand over citizenship certificates across a table without solemnity or ceremony.¹⁹⁾ Christabelle Alvis, a young British trainee teacher, remembers the process she underwent when registering for Singapore citizenship with her colleagues:

We went there and we raised our hands and followed exactly what they told us to say and the next minute, we got the certificate. We became citizens. . . . We thought it was a huge joke. . . . There was no seriousness at all about it.²⁰⁾

Despite recollections of the speed, unceremonious nature, or even levity of the proceedings, one formal aspect of the proceedings was the requirement for all applicants to swear their allegiance to Singapore and the British crown by performatively raising their hands, a consequence of Singapore’s continued status at the time as a British dependency. This status, along with conflicting ideas about Singapore’s anticipated political future, meant that the notion of territorial loyalty was a contested concept in the 1950s.

In 1957 there were some sixty thousand individuals in Singapore who had previously registered as CUKCs after naturalization laws were introduced in 1946. Many of them were unhappy with Marshall’s calls to introduce a separate Singapore citizenship and to lower the threshold for acquiring the status. According to A. R. Lazarous, the MP for Farrer Park who represented these individuals in Singapore’s legislative assembly, there was a widespread feeling of frustration because many felt that they had already demonstrated their loyalty to Singapore by choosing British naturalization as CUKCs.²¹⁾ Since Singapore was still a British dependency, Singapore citizens became British subjects by virtue of provisions in the British Nationality Act. This effectively gave Singapore citizens similar rights to CUKCs. To many CUKCs in Singapore, loyalty to Singapore was based upon its connection to Britain and its place within the empire or the Commonwealth. The value of Singapore citizenship lay also in its link to British legal status and protection. Even if it was obvious that Singapore’s political system was headed on a path to decolonization and political autonomy in some form, unhappiness at calls for a separate Singapore citizenship in 1957 suggest that not everyone viewed decolonization

19) Gorrie, John Leslie Michael, Accession No. 001309, Reel/Disc 1/8, National Archives of Singapore.

20) Alvis, Christabelle, Accession No. 002828, Reel/Disc 8/80, National Archives of Singapore.

21) *Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly*, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2641 (1957).

in absolute terms. Many expected and even desired the transjurisdictional status of individuals to continue with parts of the former empire and in terms of their legal relationship with Britain. A city councillor and leader of the Straits Chinese community in Singapore, Yap Pheng Geck, for example, argued that Malayan independence or Singapore citizenship would not affect Straits Chinese loyalty to the British queen, because of membership in the Commonwealth.²²⁾

On the other hand, Marshall's colleagues in the Labour Front party, who would later push for *merdeka* or full independence, saw Singapore citizenship as a means to carve a new political community in a future decolonized state. They appealed to a sense of Singaporean community and society. They argued that it was dangerous to assume that those who were loyal to Britain and the empire were also loyal to Singapore. They highlighted this distinction by stating that many had demonstrated their loyalty to Singapore through their civic participation but were not necessarily loyal to Britain.

Beyond the issue of Singapore's existing connections to Britain, it was also not clear what Singapore citizenship and the demands of loyalty meant in the context of the Federation of Malaya, which had been granted independence in August 1957 and which many in Singapore expected to eventually join in a political union. Reflecting on these sorts of questions, Marshall's successor as chief minister, Lim Yew Hock, articulated what loyalty to Singapore and a "Malayan identity" meant to him, reconciling the distinctions between the two in an appeal to federalism:

I am a Malayan, but I am as Singaporean as were my parents before me, and my loyalty to Malaya, of which we are a part in heart and of which we hope to be a part in political reality, is through my loyalty to Singapore.²³⁾

Lau (2003, 196) has argued that a specifically Singaporean orientation, as opposed to the Malayan one that had been the focus of postwar nationalists, began to emerge in 1955

22) Leaders Turn on Heah, *Straits Times*, February 18, 1956, p. 8.

23) Speech by the Chief Minister, Mr. Lim Yew Hock, at the British European Association Dinner at the Sea View Hotel, at 9.30pm, on Friday, July 26, 1957, National Archives of Singapore. The simplicity of Lim's statement belied the complexity that was involved in working out what Singapore citizenship would mean after Singapore joined the Malaysian Federation; Singapore citizens would also simultaneously become Malaysian Federal citizens in 1963 by the operation of law. Some political leaders, such as Marshall, advocated doing away entirely with a unique Singapore citizenship, in order to avoid the possibility of Singaporeans becoming second-class citizens with political disabilities within the Federation. Lee, on the other hand, argued for the retention of Singapore citizenship for, among many reasons, the fact that doing away with Singapore citizenship after a protracted public campaign of promoting its importance would have been deeply confusing for the public. These political debates are outside the scope of this article (Radio Singapore Press Release, DO 169/250, National Archives of Singapore).

after Malayan ambivalence about a potential merger.²⁴⁾ Although citizenship came to be largely framed within territorialized concepts of political statehood that were complicated by questions about Singapore's political future and possible inclusion in a federal state, citizenship was also understood in reference to deterritorialized understandings of loyalty to empire and post-imperial links to Britain.

Apart from the fact that Singapore citizenship was linked to different potential political configurations, the notion of citizenship itself was contested. In the subsequent sections of this article I will trace how citizenship came to be framed within a discourse of loyalty and allegiance by political and community leaders. Using oral history, I will then look beneath the official discourse to shed light on the reasons and considerations that informed citizenship decisions made by individuals.

Singapore Citizenship: Allegiance and Loyalty

The idea of citizenship articulated and promoted by both the late colonial British authorities and the local political establishment in Singapore was that of a status conferring rights to individuals but also duties and social responsibilities that required allegiance and loyalty from citizen-subjects. This civic concept of citizenship was certainly not a new one, but the heightened administrative emphasis on declaring, performing, and ascertaining loyalty in Malaya and Singapore was a direct consequence of the particular racial dynamics and diasporic politics in these territories. The issue of citizenship in Singapore was closely linked to that of citizenship in Malaya, where racial considerations figured prominently, particularly in questions about the suitability of the large Indian and Chinese communities for citizenship.

The British government attempted to impose a liberal and expansive citizenship regime after World War II in 1946, under the briefly constituted Malayan Union. This proposal would have granted birthright citizenship (*jus soli*) to a large number of non-Malay residents of Malaya, in an effort to foster a multiracial Malayan national consciousness in recognition of the plural society that Malaya had become (Sopiee 1974, 18; Cheah 1978, 99; Harper 1999).²⁵⁾ These plans were scrapped after vociferous opposition from Malay nationalists and the traditional Malay aristocracy, who were unwilling to relinquish

24) Quah Sy Ren (2015, 96–112) has discussed the Malayan consciousness that emerged among Chinese intellectuals in Singapore.

25) According to M. R. Stenson, the creation of the Malayan Union thus signifies a final acknowledgment on the part of the colonial authorities that Malaya was no longer constituted of separate ethnic communities but had become a fundamentally multiracial society (M. R. Stenson, cited in Lau 1989, 216).

political power and felt that indigenous Malays would become politically and economically marginalized in a multiracial Malayan state economically dominated by non-Malays.²⁶⁾

Including the population of Singapore, in Malaya the Chinese and Indian communities together outnumbered the Malay community. As Lau points out, while Malays comprised 53.8 percent of the population of Malaya in 1911, by 1941 they comprised only 41 percent, with Chinese migrants comprising 43 percent and Indian migrants 14 percent (Lau 1989, 217).²⁷⁾ In the eyes of Malay political elites, Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, as well as the Chinese Communist Party's consolidation of power in mainland China in 1949 and the Communist Party of Malaya's political ambitions, strengthened the view that large populations of Indians and Chinese in Malaya constituted a potential fifth column for large foreign powers that would potentially exercise influence over their "nationals" and threaten the sovereignty of the future Malayan state.

Adding to this perception was that the Qing government in China had introduced legislation in 1909 holding that every individual with Chinese parentage was a Chinese citizen regardless of their place of birth, on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or hereditary rights.²⁸⁾ This fundamental principle stayed in place even as the nation-state moved through the republican era, and through the separate ROC and PRC governments.²⁹⁾

After Indian independence, Malay elites in Malaya were wary of what they feared would be the active influence of India over Indians in Malaya, a fear shared by British

26) The "Malay" community in Singapore was at this time highly heterogeneous and included many recent arrivals from the Dutch East Indies.

27) The non-Malay population also comprised various layers of communities who had lived in Malaya for varied lengths of time and had differing orientations toward Malaya. Some syncretic communities, such as the Chinese and Indian Peranakans, had centuries-long precolonial links to Malaya. Straits Chinese and Indians similarly had emerged as distinct communities with strong ties to Malaya. Other communities were made up of a mixture of migrants who had been in Malaya and Singapore for varied lengths of time: some long domiciled, others much more recent. In the case of the Indian community, these layered migrations produced tensions over questions of leadership, representation, and the appropriate level of cultural and political connection with India. And these tensions manifested themselves in the associational life of places like Singapore as early as the late 1930s. By the end of the war many children of migrants had been born in Singapore in Malaya, when population increases were for the first time weighted toward births rather than migration.

28) Shao Dan (2009, 4–28) has written about the origins and implications of the principle of *jus sanguinis* and its implications in China across different periods of modern history. Carine Pina-Guerassimoff and Eric Guerassimoff (2007, 245–264) have also discussed in detail the Chinese state's evolving policies on overseas Chinese during the twentieth century.

29) Lau, discussing the Chinese Nationality Law of 1929, which claimed all persons of Chinese race as Chinese subjects, argued that it was in principle possible for a Chinese person to "denationalise" and renounce their status. However, in practice this was made almost impossible due to obstacles put in place by the Chinese government (Lau 1989, 217). British Colonial Office officials also raised this issue when discussing the problems involved in creating a Malayan Union citizenship (Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, CO 537/1542, 25, National Archives UK).

officials. In 1946 a working committee established to examine the question of citizenship in Malaya had concluded that while there were many Indians who identified with and expressed loyalty toward Malaya, there were nonetheless “a great number who, as is also the case with other communities, have not identified themselves with the country to the extent of substantiating a claim for equal political rights with the people of the country.”³⁰⁾

It was in this context that the notion of civic citizenship became important as communities had to demonstrate and perform loyalty in order to acquire various forms of social and political capital and justify claims to citizenship. For certain communities in Singapore, loyalty and the civic responsibility associated with political citizenship were not unfamiliar concepts. As Chua Ai Lin has argued, the concept of “imperial citizenship” as a status conferring specific rights and signaling civic and democratic participation had already emerged as early as the interwar period in anglophone communities in the Straits Settlements (Chua 2008, 22).³¹⁾ Public expressions and performative displays of loyalty became a means by which communities demonstrated and performed their imperial citizenship as a means of laying claim to political and representative rights and social capital. During the interwar period, beyond vocal expressions of imperial loyalty, various communities—such as the Ceylon Tamils and Straits Chinese—also contributed money, participated in imperial celebrations, and volunteered for military service in order to demonstrate and perform their claims to citizenship (Chua 2008, 26).

The Straits Chinese community, comprising multigenerational families born in British colonies, enjoyed the legal status of British subjects and had long ties with the region. Also known informally as the “King’s Chinese,” the Straits Chinese had long held strong emotional ties to the British Empire. Although the community’s attitudes and strategies would change, during early discussions pertaining to Singapore citizenship the Straits Chinese attempted to distinguish themselves from other Chinese communities by positioning themselves as more deserving of the privilege of citizenship through their civic-mindedness and proper understanding of responsible citizenship. In the early 1950s a section of the Singapore Straits Chinese British Association criticized the foreign-born Chinese push for citizenship as being an opportunistic move for security rather than being demonstrative of a commitment to Malaya or Singapore: “We are sick to death of

30) Constitutional Proposals for Malaya, p. 112, COL 108/21/J, British Library.

31) Unlike postcolonial state citizenship, imperial citizenship was a fundamentally transnational concept. It conveyed the relationship of an individual to the British sovereign rather than to a territory, colony, state, or nation. In practice, however, imperial citizenship was, according to Sai Siew-Min (2013, 53), a “vague and unsatisfactory notion” because white dominions failed to regard non-Europeans in dependent territories as fellow citizens. Nonetheless, it was utilized in dependent territories as a basis for civil liberties and political rights.

those alien Chinese who cause all the trouble in this land and who will, if left unchecked, wreck the future of all Straits Chinese.”³²⁾

Such sentiments are illustrative of the kinds of tensions and complex relationships that played out over the issue of citizenship rights and belonging, between various kinds of settled and immigrant communities that found themselves situated together within larger “racial” collectives in political calculations about the ethnic configuration of the future state.³³⁾ Paying respects to the 57-year-old Singapore Straits Chinese British Association in 1957, Singapore Governor Sir Robert Black emphasized the civic concept of citizenship when he praised the Straits Chinese for their sacrifices during the war and for “their ready acceptance of the burdens which a community must impose upon its citizens.” He predicted that they would bring a “continuity and a tradition of loyalty and of responsibility” that would help to ensure that citizenship became a meaningful basis for the establishment of the franchise and a national community.³⁴⁾

Just as expressions of loyalty had produced various forms of social and political capital for communities in an imperial context, as far as Singapore citizenship was concerned they were also utilized by Chinese and Indian communities in particular to deflect criticism about the basis of their claims to citizenship. Many of these fears were not unwarranted. Strong undercurrents of Indian and Chinese nationalism, first becoming significant during the interwar period, remained among the Indians and Chinese in both Singapore and Malaya; and emotional attachment to the overseas homelands became a consideration that made many reluctant to adopt not only Singapore citizenship but, earlier, Malayan citizenship and CUKC.

British Chinese Affairs officers who tried to account for the initial lack of enthusiasm for CUKC proposals among the broader Chinese community in Singapore in 1948 were of the opinion that this was due to the feeling among many Chinese that adopting a new citizenship entailed the adoption of a new “nationality” and hence meant the renunciation

32) A Straits Chinese, *Straits Times*, October 12, 1950, p. 6. A segment of the Indian community was also of the opinion that Marshall had made a mistake by expanding Singapore citizenship and granting rights that were previously enjoyed disproportionately by the Indian community more widely, thus diluting their political influence in society (Singh, Mohinder, Accession No. 00546/65, Reel 60, National Archives of Singapore).

33) Another example of this was the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, generally made up of longer-settled Chinese residents in Singapore, lobbying for restrictive citizenship criteria in the early 1950s in an attempt to limit the political rights of Chinese union leaders who were gaining social prominence among postwar Chinese labor (Duncanson, Dennis J. [Dr.], Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3, National Archives of Singapore).

34) Speech by H.E. the Governor, Sir Robert Black, at the Straits Chinese British Association Dinner, at the Victoria Memorial Hall, at 8.15pm, on Friday, November 8, 1957, National Archives of Singapore.

of their “Chineseness” or ethnic identity.³⁵⁾ Many preferred the creation of a localized and very limited municipal citizenship in Singapore modeled on municipal citizenship of Chinese treaty ports, particularly one that would not have a perceived impact on their Chinese nationality. According to Dennis Duncanson, a Chinese Affairs officer:

The Chinese-speaking people had very little English. Some of them who had none at all, who were faced with the prospect of taking out British papers, said, Well I will be divesting myself of my Chineseness if I do this, and I don’t want to do it. And I don’t see how it is relevant to Singapore. After all Singapore is really a Chinese city. And if I am going to exercise the citizenship rights the whole thing should be focused locally.³⁶⁾

Rajabali Jumabhoy, a prominent Indian community leader in Singapore and the first president of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce, similarly remembered the great difficulty he had in initially persuading Indian community members to take up British nationality through CUKC status in order to gain political rights and the franchise in the colony.³⁷⁾ He attributed this to the strength of feeling that they had for India.³⁸⁾ Many in the Indian community in Singapore had during the interwar period rallied to the cause of Indian nationalism. During the Japanese occupation, only a few years prior to CUKC status being offered, the wider Indian community in Singapore and Malaya had been mobilized in a sweeping anticolonial Indian nationalist effort under Subhas Chandra Bose (Rai 2014, 239–279).

Interviews conducted with Indians employed in the Port of Singapore Authority as part of an academic exercise in 1966, only nine years after the ordinance, provide additional interesting insights into how some segments of the Indian community deliberated over the issue of Singapore citizenship in the late 1950s and early 1960s. According to the interviewer, the decision to register for citizenship was taken by most after careful deliberation, and “the men weighed the pros and cons quite seriously, because, to an Indian, the motherland was not to be so easily cast aside for the mere sake of amassing a fortune in an alien country” (Dharan 1966, 73).

One interviewee recalled that his parents were branded “traitors” by their community in India for failing to buy land in India, thus signaling their intention to remain in Singapore (Dharan 1966, 76). Such considerations cited by the respondents shed light on the role of national identity in translocal families and communities, and notions of guilt and shame in migration and citizenship decisions, or what Selvaraj Velayutham and Amanda Wise, in a different and more contemporary context, termed the “moral econ-

35) Duncanson, Dennis J. (Dr.), Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3.

36) Duncanson, Dennis J. (Dr.), Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3.

37) Jumabhoy, Rajabali, Accession No. 000074, Reel/Disc 21/37, National Archives of Singapore.

38) According to Jumabhoy, the majority eventually applied for CUKC status.

omy” governing life decisions, choices, and practices among translocal communities and families (Velayutham and Wise 2005, 27–47).

Given the strong emotional attachment of large sections of the community to overseas homelands and their perceived “unworthiness” or unsuitability for citizenship, prospective citizens from these sizable minority communities in Malaya had to demonstrate that they were adequately loyal and culturally assimilable or “Malayanized.” The British high commissioner in Malaya, Donald MacGillivray, wrote to the secretary of state for the colonies describing Malayan Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman’s opinion of the Chinese in Singapore and their claims to citizenship in 1956, explaining why he did not want to accept Singapore into Malaya in the future:

The Chief Minister’s feelings about the Chinese in Singapore are the same. He considers them to be insincere. He does not think that an extension of citizenship will help to build up a loyalty to Malaya among the Chinese; they will remain China-minded. He thinks it wrong to grant citizenship to such people.³⁹⁾

Given the political pressure facing non-Malay communities in Malaya and Singapore, the language of loyalty became the political currency by which communities demonstrated that they were worthy of inclusion into the national body. A year earlier, in 1955, at a dinner event hosted in honor of the Tunku, Indian Commissioner R. K. Tandon declared:

Your Indian subjects . . . Mr Chief Minister . . . will forever give their toil and tears, their esteem and affection to Malaya. For them there is no other land but Malaya; the soil of this country is sacred to them; their Ganges and Jumna, Krishna and Cauvery lie in this land; their places of pilgrimage are no more Amarnath or Kailashnath, Rameswaram or Tirupathi but the holy places of Malaya. These descendants of the Indian pilgrim fathers are at one with Malaya and will forever give you their true and unstinted allegiance.⁴⁰⁾

Tandon’s declaration as a representative of India reflected what came to be the official position of the Indian government. This was to encourage Indians settled overseas to identify with and acquire the citizenship of their adopted homes in order to secure their rights as minorities.⁴¹⁾ This position was adopted also by other foreign governments,

39) Chinese Attitude to Citizenship Policy in Malaya, CO1020/258, National Archives of Singapore.

40) This Is Your Land—Tandon Tells Malayan Indians, *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955.

41) India’s Attitude to Her Overseas Nationals: Indians Abroad Must Make Their Choice, *Straits Times*, April 20, 1956, p. 8. British government officers continued to be wary of Indian influence. The British high commissioner in New Delhi commented on the wide divergence between official statements and practice on the ground. He noted in particular the tendency of Indian government representatives to exercise influence in local Indian associational life in British territories, going beyond their official remit, which was limited to cultural affairs and the interests of potential Indian citizens (Policy of the Government of India towards Indians Resident Overseas, p. 1a, FCO141/14404, National Archives UK).

including those of Ceylon and Indonesia.⁴²⁾ Although Tandon was a representative of the Indian government, his speech was typical of the kind of highly effusive and hyperbolic language used by community leaders in Malaya in public events and newspaper editorials to demonstrate loyalty.

In the case of leaders of non-Malay communities in Singapore that saw a permanent future on the island, they too had to demonstrate and perform loyalty and a localized identity orientation as a means of signaling their worthiness for citizenship in the lead-up to the implementation of Singapore citizenship. Community leaders who had gained a sense of where the political winds were blowing were quick to channel their efforts into persuading as many of their constituents as possible to register for citizenship, in order to shore up the ethnic representation of their communities in a future democratic society.⁴³⁾ Subramaniam Manickar Vasagar, a city councillor and a member of the Progressive Party, remembered the efforts of political party members and councillors to encourage community registrations in order to increase the size of their electoral bases. Although most of the prominent parties of the time in Singapore were multiracial, grassroots efforts at canvassing were still conducted along ethnic lines. Vasagar recalled his efforts within the Indian community and how, despite resistance from certain quarters, he “managed to convince quite a lot of people.”⁴⁴⁾

Such local political and community leaders who were eager to strengthen the political and social position of their communities were the first to adopt the language of loyalty, allegiance, and belonging in their efforts to convince as many members of their communities as possible to take up citizenship. In many cases, grassroots organizations were among the first to attempt to trigger a shift in the identity orientations of their constituents as well. From the early 1950s until the ordinance in 1957, a range of civil societies and ethnic organizations and associations began using the language of loyalty and belonging to mobilize communities toward future citizenship in both the Federation and in Singapore. For example, the Tamils Reform Association (TRA), formed in Singapore in the 1930s, and the Singapore Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (SDMK; Dravidian Progress Association), another Tamil social reform organization that set up a branch in Singapore in the postwar period, both embarked on spirited campaigns to encourage Tamil residents

42) Ceylonese Told: Be Citizens, *Straits Times*, November 18, 1957, p. 5; Citizens: Indonesia Doesn't Object, *Straits Times*, November 19, 1957, p. 4.

43) The Malay press also highlighted Malay concerns about *bangsa asing* (non-Malay communities) winning electoral representation as a result of new citizenships (Kera'ayatan Singapura jadi soal: Fikiran Orang Ramai, *Berita Harian*, November 19, 1957, p. 4).

44) Vasagar mentioned that he found it much more difficult to convince the laboring classes to adopt citizenship (Vasagar, Subramaniam Manickar, Accession No. 001301, Reel/Disc 7/18, National Archives of Singapore).

to register for citizenship. Like many ethnic organizations of the time that promoted citizenship for their communities at the community level, TRA and SDMK members ran an oath-taking and registration booth on their premises as well as engaging in a door-to-door registration drive.⁴⁵⁾ During this period, members of both the TRA and SDMK, organizations which were heavily influenced by Dravidian social movements and politics in Tamil Nadu, consciously framed citizenship in the idiom of loyalty and belonging.⁴⁶⁾ Palanivelu Natesan, an employee of Radio Singapore, registered for Singapore citizenship at the headquarters of the TRA upon the encouragement of its leader G. Sarangapany.⁴⁷⁾ Palanivelu recalls that after his registration he began referring to himself as a “Singapore Indian” and began publishing poems and broadcasting songs in the 1950s to promote Singapore citizenship.⁴⁸⁾ Others in the SDMK began to use their outreach efforts to encourage Indians in Singapore to begin to adopt a Singaporeanized or Malayanized outlook.

Exploring Reasons for Citizenship Decisions: Dual Citizenship and Mobilities

When the subject of citizenship was first floated in Malaya and Singapore, many non-Malay communities requested dual citizenship provisions, rejecting an association between citizenship and territorial exclusivity, envisioning a much more fluid and trans-boundary future for their communities. Consultations held with representatives and leaders from the Indian community in Malaya in 1946 revealed that Indians had a limited understanding of the somewhat ambiguous concept of citizenship of the Malayan Union and what it entailed. Representatives of various Indian associations, including the Central Indian Association of Malaya, were anxious to know whether dual citizenship would be allowed and requested that this provision be granted to non-Malays.⁴⁹⁾

R. Somasundram, a community representative who attended the consultations, expressed his frustration and confusion at the rapidly changing regional circumstances that Malayan Union citizenship proposals seemed to suggest, and their impact on mobilities:

45) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13, National Archives of Singapore; Kannusamy s/o Pakirisamy, Accession No. 000081, Reel/Disc 27/28, National Archives of Singapore. There was a substantial demand for Singapore citizenship registration forms from a range of voluntary organizations before the ordinance (*Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly*, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2808, 1957).

46) Malayan Tamils Pledge Loyalty to Malaya, *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955.

47) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13.

48) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13.

49) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542.

The Tamils should be given all facilities to settle down in Malaya. They should not be asked to renounce their rights as British subjects. They should not be asked to renounce their rights in Ceylon or India. Why should there be any restriction of movement within the Empire?⁵⁰⁾

Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, many communities made known their preference for forms of dual citizenship in Malaya and Singapore and jurisdictional overlaps that would increase their freedom of movement and maximize their opportunities in multiple territories. They were not alone in lobbying for dual citizenship; the British authorities pushed national governments-in-waiting for dual citizenship provisions in order to strengthen the prestige and influence of the Commonwealth of Nations among former colonial subjects. Local political leadership in Singapore and Malaya, however, regarded dual citizenship as being politically untenable and joined the “strenuous opposition” to it that emerged among Commonwealth governments.⁵¹⁾

In May 1960, a speech given by Singapore Minister for Home Affairs Ong Pang Boon at the second reading of a bill to amend the requirements for Singapore citizenship spelled out the government’s plan to tighten citizenship restrictions. It reflected the new thinking within the PAP government, which had won the reins of full internal self-government the year prior. Previously supportive of a liberal approach to citizenship, the government now embarked on a policy to restrict access to citizenship, rescind citizenships awarded erroneously, and clamp down significantly on what it viewed as conflicting allegiances arising from overlapping statuses that impeded assimilation. Dual citizenship became a key target of this approach in policy:⁵²⁾

The introduction of the citizenship law in 1957 has undoubtedly given many of the immigrant population a stake in the country, and to date more than 400,000 people have obtained Singapore citizenship. Nevertheless, it would be foolish for us if we think that all these 400,000 new citizens have identified themselves completely with the political aspirations of the people of this country. A large number of new citizens have taken advantage of the very liberal citizenship law to obtain citizenship for the sake of convenience in order to enjoy rights and privileges of citizenship, such as employment, public assistance and other social services, with little obligation on their part. However, this position cannot be maintained for an indefinite period of time, particularly at this critical stage of nation building. The continued increase in the number of unassimilated new citizens, whose loyalty lies elsewhere or who have not shown by words or actions to be likely to identify themselves with the destiny of the country, cannot be tolerated. **The possession of dual citizenship, the ease with which a citizen of the U.K. and Colonies and those born in the Federation**

50) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542.

51) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542; Citizenship Riddles, *Straits Times*, May 3, 1957, p. 6.

52) One characteristic of the period between 1945 and 1965 was the legislative progression in Malaya and Singapore toward the creation and enforcement of a single exclusive nationality as a marker of undivided loyalty and political integrity and sovereignty (Low 2017).

can obtain citizenship must cease, particularly at this time when the Government is also facing the terrible problem of finding employment for its large number of unemployed citizens. The purpose of this Bill, therefore, is to confine citizenship rights to those who have demonstrated their undivided loyalty to the State and intention to reside here permanently, and to debar those who seek to obtain citizenship for reasons of convenience or expediency thereby hoping to enjoy the best of two worlds.⁵³⁾

However, when Singapore citizenship was first introduced a few years prior, certain kinds of dual status were initially allowed. Nationals of Commonwealth countries could also for a continued period of time hold Singapore citizenship along with an external citizenship, depending on nationality laws in their countries. On the basis of reciprocity, for example, Indian citizens were allowed to hold dual citizenship with Singapore until 1960, when that provision was ended as part of state efforts to end forms of dual citizenship. Certain classes of citizens were also previously granted special status in Singapore. In 1957, while Federal Malayan citizens and CUKCs could take an “oath of Allegiance and Loyalty,” all other foreign nationals had to undertake the additional step involved in an oath of “Renunciation, Allegiance and Loyalty.” The proposed amendments to the 1960 bill were aimed at ending the special status of Federal citizens and CUKCs who previously had access to rights in these overlapping but delineated jurisdictions. In practical terms, however, individuals were still allowed to maintain their British nationality alongside Singapore citizenship, and the British government actively encouraged its nationals in Singapore to apply for Singapore citizenship in order to secure their position on the island and strengthen British influence in Singaporean society.

In 1963, dual nationality effectively came to an end in Singapore when Singapore joined Malaysia. All Singapore citizens automatically became also citizens and nationals of the newly created Federation of Malaysia. Fearing a wave of applications for entry into the UK from non-European British CUKCs, the British authorities issued diplomatic instructions to discourage public discussion of these implications in Singapore. As a result, many CUKCs who had taken up Singapore citizenship with the intention of retaining British nationality suddenly found themselves stripped of this status. This varied group included a small number of continental European refugees from World War II as well as Eurasians of British ancestry.⁵⁴⁾

53) Singapore Citizenship Amendment Bill, 16-05-1960, 844.

54) Minister's Case: Nationality, HO213/1612, National Archives UK. When it came to the entry of CUKCs and Commonwealth citizens into the UK, British officials were caught between contradictory policy priorities: on the one hand, the UK promoting freedom of movement, dual citizenship, and Commonwealth citizenship to strengthen its influence over the Commonwealth for economic and other reasons; and on the other, British policy makers trying their best to limit and discourage non-European immigration into the UK on racial grounds. These issues lie beyond the scope of this article but have been discussed in some detail in Bivins (2007, 263–289).

This episode is illustrative not only of the ways in which people attempted to use citizenship to secure favorable opportunities but also of the anxieties that accompanied a rapidly changing legislative framework, and how individuals who had difficulties keeping abreast of legislative implications found themselves deprived of citizenship. Newspapers at the time made frequent mention of large groups of individuals who found themselves facing difficulties acquiring or retaining citizenship owing to frequently changing legislative requirements.⁵⁵⁾

For many, particularly those with transnational family networks, apprehension about citizenship stemmed from considerable confusion about what the adoption of Singapore citizenship would mean for their ability to travel back to their countries of origin. This diverse group included Malay Federal Malayan citizens who were unclear of the implications of Singapore citizenship on their rights in Federal Malaya.⁵⁶⁾

Indians, too, were unsure about the implications of their citizenship on travel to India. For example, K. P. Murthi, who was a volunteer with a Tamil cultural reformist society and took part in door-to-door campaigns to encourage Indians to become Singapore citizens, recalls that some “were afraid that if they take the citizenship, they cannot go back [to India].”⁵⁷⁾ This fear features as a recurring theme in several oral history interviews, indicating that the implications of citizenship on travel rights were not clearly understood. Individuals had to keep abreast not only of complex policy developments in Singapore but of corresponding discussions in places like India. Sarah Ansari (2013, 285–312) highlights that during this period, independence in the shrinking British Empire could sometimes occur over a short period of time, but the wrapping up of the legal legacies of empire took years because new legal statuses and citizenship rights had to be harmonized with other states to avoid overlapping or conflicting jurisdictions.

The general implications of Singapore citizenship on travel and residency rights in multiple territories were poorly understood in the lead-up to the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance. In 1957, a few months prior to Malayan independence, a newspaper editorial commented about the lack of awareness of these issues even among ethnic community leaders in Singapore and the Federation:

It is questionable how closely the leaders of the domiciled communities have followed, or even understood, these aspects of the citizenship problem . . . The danger is that in both territories the

55) These included, for example, thirty thousand CUKCs resident in Singapore who did not meet the two-year requirement for Singapore citizenship, as well as five thousand stateless individuals who could produce birth certificates to prove their birth in Singapore for citizenship (Rang keraayatan: Sungutan baharu bagi 30,000, *Berita Harian*, September 16, 1957, p. 5).

56) Kera'ayan: Penjelasan lanjut, *Berita Harian*, October 17, 1959, p. 5.

57) Murthi, K.P., Accession No. 000849, Reel/Disc 2/2, National Archives of Singapore.

more intricate part of the citizenship puzzle will have been settled before those most affected by the changes have learned what it is all about.⁵⁸⁾

Basic information about the qualifications for citizenship was conveyed to individuals through the printing and dissemination of thousands of leaflets in English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil.⁵⁹⁾ However, for the average individual more complex information was harder to come by. Some newspapers, such as the *Nanyang Siang Pau* (Nanyang Business Daily), contained editorials that sought to answer more detailed questions about the particular benefits of citizenship, and the status of the spouses of citizens, or whether multiple wives of a single citizen husband were eligible for citizenship. The paper also featured question-and-answer-style columns that answered specific questions from readers about the implications of Singapore citizenship on their ability to travel and live in Federal Malaya, for example.⁶⁰⁾

Despite such public information efforts on the part of the government and press, public confusion persisted and continued after the PAP government came to power and proceeded to tighten and phase out dual citizenship. As a result, many communities relied on rumor and often inaccurate information from community members to ascertain the implications of citizenship. Further compounding the confusion was that the specifics of the options for non-citizen residents, in terms of long-term visas, work permits, and employment passes (issued in 1959), took a number of years to be determined in legislation amid a politically unstable period. In this climate many came to view the acquisition of Singapore citizenship as a form of temporary security.

For many Europeans, the 1950s and 1960s were an unsettling time in Singapore, which was caught up in the anticolonial fervor that gripped most of the region. Vernon Bartlett, a veteran *Straits Times* journalist, noted, in the words of another foreign correspondent in 1960, “the anti-white racialism that is so unpleasant is a feature of Singapore.”⁶¹⁾ Another journalist writing for a London publication compared anti-European sentiment in Singapore with anti-Chinese sentiment in the Federation, going so far as to also compare it with the racism of South African apartheid.⁶²⁾ On account of the Europeans’ association with the colonial regime, their future in Singapore was precarious and uncertain. In public discourse in the 1950s, once again the loyalty of Europeans was linked to

58) Murthi, K.P., Accession No. 000849, Reel/Disc 2/2.

59) Operation Franchise to Begin, *Straits Times*, August 12, 1957, p. 2.

60) *Nanyang Siang Pau*, November 7, 1957, p. 6.

61) Colour Bar in Reverse, *Eastern World Asian Monthly* 14(6) (June 1960), A1838 ITEM 3024/1/4: Singapore-Migration and Citizenship, National Archives of Singapore.

62) Colour Bar in Reverse, *Eastern World Asian Monthly* 14(6) (June 1960), A1838 ITEM 3024/1/4: Singapore-Migration and Citizenship.

expressions of loyalty to Malaya and the adoption of local citizenship. John Laycock, a Singapore legislative councillor and Lee Kuan Yew's onetime employer, argued that domiciled Europeans had a place in local politics as long as they identified with the local-born, avoided politically organizing as Europeans, and adopted local citizenship to demonstrate their commitment.⁶³⁾

A lawyer and later president of the Law Society in independent Singapore, Graham Starforth Hill, was sent to the island in 1953 by the Colonial Office to take up a position in the Attorney General's Chambers. There, he was told by the attorney general to forget any ambitions of career progression in the civil service that he might have had because the British were to be "kicked out" in a couple of years.⁶⁴⁾ He later received an offer of employment from Dentons Rodyk, Singapore's oldest legal firm. This was a time when, he later recalled, there existed a climate of anti-Western sentiment among local political leaders. For example, the PAP's Labour and Law Minister Kenneth Byrne spoke of "sweeping all the Europeans into the sea" as part of the policy of "Malayanisation" to replace Europeans with Asians within public and private sector leadership and appointments (Cheong 2011, 114). Like many other Europeans and Indian civil servants, Hill viewed his British citizenship as an "insurance policy." He adopted Singapore citizenship because he was afraid that he would lose his employment.⁶⁵⁾

Many interviewees recalled that the decision to adopt citizenship was shaped by pragmatic concerns, including not only employment but also access to education and housing and welfare benefits. Lu Tian Lee, a rickshaw puller who arrived in Singapore in 1935, when he was in his twenties, recalled the rumors about state welfare provisions which influenced his decision to become a citizen, and his continued emotional connection to China after his decision:

I heard people say this—the government also mentioned it—that if you couldn't work anymore, you could get some financial help from the state. If you weren't a citizen, you couldn't do this. Everyone said this at the time, that you have to get citizenship rights or when you die you couldn't have a funeral and a place to be buried [*laughs*] . . . I live here, so I did it. But I still had China in my heart [*laughs*]. Whatever special events happened in China, whether it was Buddha's birthday, or any other date, I remembered it in my heart.⁶⁶⁾

Decisions about citizenship were also in some cases shaped by social class and economic circumstance, the ability to access and navigate administrative processes, and strategic

63) Europeans in Local Politics? Yes, but . . . , *Straits Times*, January 22, 1955, p. 7.

64) Hill, Graham Starforth, Accession No. E000054, Reel/Disc 04/09, National Archives of Singapore.

65) Hill, Graham Starforth, Accession No. E000054, Reel/Disc 04/09. Hill adopted citizenship in 1955.

66) Lu Tian Lee, Accession No. 000669, Reel/Disc 15/16, National Archives of Singapore (translated from Hokkien).

considerations for transnational family members. Citizenship acquisition was seen as a means of expanding opportunities for a new citizen's overseas family members, but not all were willing or able to bring their families over. Lu also recalled the pressure at various times to bring his family over to Singapore and his decision against doing so:

I didn't have the ability/know-how to think too much about this; I was also just tired/weary. My son did suggest I apply for him to come over, but I said "you think it's so easy to do these applications?" You have to know people; you have to have money. You have to spend a huge amount of money back home, and whether you will earn anything over here, I don't know. I thought, that I've lived to this age is my own life's burden. I've had to slog like a cow or a horse. Whether my kids are good or bad, let them stay in the village to farm. That would give me more peace of mind . . . As a rickshaw puller, I couldn't even look after myself. If my family came, what would I do? You need to have a sum of money to even start, and then to add on what it would take to raise a family—I could faint. But my relatives and friends kept saying, everyone is going over. You won't help us to do this? . . . In 1954 or 1955, my son was only 5 or 6 years old. In the end, I needed my relatives to help raise him. I was away and couldn't even look after myself.⁶⁷⁾

Another individual, an Indian male interviewed in the 1960s, made his way to Singapore to recover after his experiences as a forced laborer on the Thai-Burma railway during the Japanese occupation. This individual decided to remain in Singapore because to have returned to India without wealth would have brought him shame. This highlights how the option to return to overseas homelands was not only complicated by conflict but for many also shaped by societal and familial expectations about the economic status of overseas returnees (Dharan 1966, 75).

In her review of the development of approaches to citizenship, Catherine Cottrell Studemeyer attests to the continued usefulness of the concept of "flexible citizenship" in understanding transnational movements and identities, governmentality, and citizenship (Studemeyer 2015, 565–576).⁶⁸⁾ Yet, she argues that in order to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals negotiate and navigate citizenship, it is important to expand beyond the early focus of studies of "flexible citizenship" on the accumulation of capital and power, to take into account the individual pursuit of "less tangible, less quantifiable life goals relating to lifestyle, identity, and everyday practices" (Studemeyer 2015, 565).

For some in the Chinese community, citizenship decisions were made also in the context of their fear of deportation during the ongoing anti-Communist Emergency. This was certainly the opinion of some sections of the colonial authorities. British security officers in the Special Branch, for example, suggested that the wholesale embrace of

67) Lu Tian Lee, Accession No. 000669, Reel/Disc 15/16.

68) Ong Aihwa, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

citizenship by certain sections of the Chinese community had little to do with loyalty and patriotism. They believed, rather, that “large numbers of alien Chinese” “who would otherwise have had little interest in becoming Singapore citizens” were now feeling “impelled” to accept citizenship as a “form of insurance” against the colonial authority’s practice of detaining and banishing suspected “subversives” and Communists from the Chinese community.⁶⁹⁾ The vast majority of banishments during the final days of decolonization occurred with “alien Chinese” who had not acquired citizenship of Singapore and were not otherwise British subjects.⁷⁰⁾ With Singapore being a British dependency, the Singapore authorities had unique sweeping powers to banish non-citizens whose presence was not conducive to a vaguely defined “public good” under the Undesirable Persons Ordinance. The Singapore authorities used these powers liberally in the late 1950s and early 1960s, being limited in their efforts only by the reluctance of the People’s Republic of China to receive large numbers of political exiles and deported criminals.⁷¹⁾

The issue caught the attention of Britain’s Colonial Office, which sounded caution over Britain’s legal obligation to admit into the United Kingdom non-citizen banishees from Singapore who held British subjecthood.⁷²⁾ Diplomatic cables from London to high commission staff in Singapore exchanged the details of individual cases to discuss the implications of novel situations that had arisen as a result of banishments from the island. One such document that was shared with the UK high commissioners in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur was a letter from a 71-year-old Singapore citizen, Sim Swee Keng, who pleaded with the superintendent of Seramban Prison for the release of his son. His son was scheduled for banishment to China in March 1963. Sim, who suggested that he and his elderly wife needed their son to take care of them in their old age, highlighted that his son, who had been born in Singapore in 1940, had no relatives or connection to China. Sim used his own Singapore citizenship as a basis for appeal, highlighting his citizenship certificate number: 220499.⁷³⁾

Citizenship, however, did not afford complete protection to individuals during this

69) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, pp. 169–170.

70) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020), National Archives of Singapore.

71) The total numbers of banished people were limited by fear of negative reaction from the Communist Chinese government, which had no diplomatic relations with Singapore or the Federation at this time. The Singapore and Federation governments at various times sought British assistance to facilitate banishments to China via Hong Kong and held negotiations in 1958 to coordinate their banishments through unofficial negotiations with a Canton-based shipping company. Both governments also sought to block Chinese refugees fleeing Communist China and Indonesia (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

72) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

73) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

period because it was not conceived as an inalienable status for certain classes of citizens, but rather as a status that could be withdrawn as a form of punitive sanction, and also as a means of weeding out politically and socially undesirable elements during the early formation of Singapore's citizenry.⁷⁴⁾ Those who had acquired citizenship through naturalization rather than automatically or through registration, by virtue of being born in Singapore or to citizens of Singapore, were therefore liable to having their citizenships revoked for criminal or subversive activity.⁷⁵⁾ All Singapore citizens prior to 1963 also enjoyed British subjecthood under provisions in the British Nationality Act, as well as Commonwealth citizenship with certain rights within member states. For many, losing Singapore citizenship meant potentially losing all statuses and their attendant protections simultaneously, significantly raising the personal costs for individuals engaging in political activity deemed subversive.⁷⁶⁾ Despite criticisms of the policy, the legal denial or reversal of acquired citizenship provided a means by which the Singaporean and Malaysian governments sought to impose political control over the population and justify policies like banishment by placing individuals outside the new regime of rights.

Conclusion

The political construction and promotion of citizenship was tied to a discourse of "loyalty" to bounded nation-states in the postwar period by Britain and the governments of newly emerging states. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, individuals had a range of complex reasons for their own personal choices about citizenship acquisition. Singapore presents a unique case study given its large immigrant and settler populations with a spectrum of external orientations, and the complex politics of indigeneity that shaped relations between communities. In this regard Singapore also presents an interesting point of comparison with other works of scholarship exploring the history of citizenship and decolonization in Southeast Asia that deal with themes like minorities, assimilation, nation-building, and indigeneity.⁷⁷⁾

74) Individuals like Lord Selkirk questioned the right of the Singapore authorities to deprive individuals of Singapore citizenship. The Colonial Office concluded that Singapore was following the normal practice of sovereign states by exercising the right to revoke "acquired statuses" (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

75) An individual could also lose their Singapore citizenship for utilizing the rights of citizenship of a foreign state, or for residing overseas for a long, continuous stretch of time (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

76) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

77) For a recently published study that explores the experiences of Indonesia's Chinese population in the 1960s in the context of Sino-Indonesian relations, see Zhou (2019).

Archival sources reveal that individuals responded to the reshaping of the post-imperial world with varied strategies to mitigate uncertainties, maximize opportunities, maintain familial connections, or express and perform their identities and loyalties. When examined closely, these overlooked quotidian responses and reactions reveal an initial preference within many communities for forms of dual citizenship or overlapping rights in multiple jurisdictions, a preference for continued post-imperial connections with Britain among former anglophone communities, or conversely an aversion to vestiges of British nationality among anticolonialists and those influenced by Chinese and Indian nationalist sentiment. This suggests that attitudes to Britain, and emotional connections with external ancestral countries, were complicating factors during decolonization that led to a diversity of experiences. The ways in which individuals navigated the legal development of citizenship requirements were shaped also by social class and community networks. Individuals had to navigate the system while Singapore moved from a liberal citizenship regime aimed at enfranchising the population and granting democratic legitimacy to the Singapore government, to an increasingly restrictive and selective regime designed to weed out “undesirables” and those with divided loyalties.

Since its emergence in the 1990s, the field of citizenship studies has expanded its scope exponentially in response to shifts in conceptions of the citizenship-subject enacted by globalization and social movements dedicated to minority rights (Isin and Turner 2002, 1–10). Recent decades have seen a marked increase in scholarly investigations of citizenship within the contemporary global order, particularly in the areas of geography, anthropology, and sociology.⁷⁸⁾ Influenced by the changes wrought to migration practices by the global ascendance of neoliberal capitalist regimes, much recent scholarship has also adopted approaches that facilitate a better understanding of citizenships negotiated within dynamic transnational spaces.⁷⁹⁾

This turn in citizenship scholarship has been pivotal in challenging the traditional conceptualization of citizenship as a linear and static, largely juridical relationship between the individual and the state. Within the previous model of understanding, citizenship was understood as a “thing-like” object granted to an abstract, by and large passive subject whose actions were circumscribed by notions of loyalty and patriotism (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997, 113). Recent scholarship on citizenship, however, understands citizenship as a dynamic, albeit uneven, relationship of power between individuals and communities on the one hand, and nation-states or colonial powers on the other. This marks an important shift in paradigm insofar as this approach insists upon viewing the individual

78) For geographical approaches to citizenship, see Barnett and Low (2004). For a sociological approach to citizenship, see Soysal (2012, 383–393), also Ho (2009, 788–804).

79) See, for example, Faist (2000, 189–222).

as an active and agentic subject whose relationship to the nation-state is mediated by their lived experience. Individuals are therefore understood as subjects capable of deploying a range of strategies to respond to attempts by the state to substantiate, surveil, and regulate the identities of its citizens (Torpey 1999). Koh Sin Yee has highlighted how scholars dealing with contemporary migration have become interested in understanding the way in which citizenship is “experienced, understood, enacted and contested” as a bottom-up experience among individuals (Koh 2015, 3–27). Similarly, this paper has sought to combine an examination of the context behind the development of a legal architecture of citizenship and its accompanying discursive vernacular, with a study of how ordinary people understood these changes.

The indigeneity of the various sub-ethnic groups in Singapore considered “Malay” was accepted across a broad political spectrum during the 1950s and 1960s, and the implications of indigeneity on the citizenship claims of other communities have been explored to some degree in this paper. Given the focus of this paper on nonindigenous communities, the perspectives of non-elite Malays on the issues of citizenship during decolonization have not been examined in detail. Yet these perspectives remain crucial to a full understanding of the social history of the period, and such a study should perhaps be taken up by scholars of Malay identity more competent in Malay vernacular sources both oral and written.

By no means did the positionality of the Malays in Singapore as an indigenous community translate to a simplified or homogeneous community response to concepts like citizenship and nationality and their corresponding legal manifestations. Several scholars have already detailed the rich, complex, and varied responses of Malay political parties and groups to questions of identity, citizenship, nationality, and relations with other racial groups in Singapore. From the Malay Nationalist Party’s articulation of an expansive *Melayu Raya* encompassing Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia as a single political unit, to Malay participation in an anti-*merdeka* movement favoring continued British rule in Singapore, Malay politics were shaped not just by differences in political ideology and social class but by differences in notions of territory, history, religion, and ethnicity.⁸⁰⁾

Beyond examining newspaper circulation figures, crowds at rallies and political events, and voting patterns, it is sometimes difficult to determine how ideological differences were received, understood, and perhaps influenced by non-elite Malay communities, particularly those not directly involved in unions or political organizations in their day-to-day lives. Although this paper has tried to briefly touch on some of these

80) For a survey of the evolution of Malay politics in Singapore, see Abdullah (2006, 316, 340).

perspectives using oral history, a dedicated study using more extensive oral history research, newspaper analysis, and further archival records can shed more light on this issue. Humairah Zainal and Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir (2021, 2–6) have highlighted how scholarship on Malays in the last ten years continues to be delineated along national lines with no concerted attempts at comparative or transnational approaches. Given the historically porous and complex nature of Malay identities and the territorial ambiguities that accompanied the political articulation of Malay indigeneity, it may be worth adopting such an approach in order to understand the social history of Malay attitudes to the emergence of citizenship regimes in the region.

Additionally, despite the importance of existing oral history records to understanding the sentiments of the other communities featured in this study, these tend to privilege the perspectives of those who held prominent civil appointments, and other educated elites. In this regard, further oral history interviews with individuals will help complement archival and newspaper sources in facilitating further insights into experiences “from below” and improving our understanding of the period.

Despite this scope for further work, this paper has suggested that reevaluating archival records and examining oral history to understand the choices and circumstances of ordinary individuals has the potential to shed light on an under-explored aspect of individuals’ lived experiences during decolonization in Malaya. It has argued that the emergence of citizenship at the end of empire should not be understood only as a legal framework or as an institutional feature of state-building, but as a complex negotiation between communities, individuals, and states and represents an important part of the social history of decolonization in Singapore and the region.

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Entangled Island: Filipino Colonial Technocrats, the Philippine Legislature, and Mindanao Settlement Plans from the 1920s through the Late 1930s

Suzuki Nobutaka*

Mindanao, a large tract of fertile, unexplored land with abundant natural resources in the southern Philippines, attracted much attention from American capitalists and entrepreneurs as well as Filipino policymakers and settlers beginning in 1898. However, little is known about how it attracted Christian Filipino settlers in the early twentieth century. It remains unclear how the government-led national settlement project of 1939 evolved and was implemented following the Cotabato agricultural colony project. This paper, focusing on the vital role of Filipino technocrats, aims to explore their contribution to the planning of Mindanao's settlement and the motives behind their drafting of related bills in the Philippine legislature. The technocrats, taking their inspiration from California's State Settlement Land Act of 1917, drafted bills to promote a similar project—yet their plans had little chance of being enacted, as they were enormously expensive. The settlement plan materialized as the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, in response to American concerns that the growing Japanese community in Mindanao threatened the Philippines' national security. Depicted as a national security issue, the plan became increasingly divorced from its original aims of increasing food production and promoting population redistribution. Further, American intervention both altered Mindanao's development plans and overlooked indigenous people's rights.

Keywords: Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, State Land Settlement Act, colonial state-building, Filipino colonial technocrat, Mindanao settlement, pensionado, Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, Jose Sanvictores

I Introduction

The US colonization of the Philippines is often characterized as benevolent assimilation (Owen 1971; May 1980; Paredes 1989; Golay 1997; Go and Foster 2003; Nagano 2003; Kramer 2006; Go 2008; Anastacio 2016; Moore 2017). However, US rule yielded some-

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what exceptional trajectories from the outset (Thomas 1971; Tan 1973; Thompson 1975; Gowing 1983; McKenna 1998; Abinales 2000; Hawkins 2013; Charbonneau 2020). Unlike Christian-dominated regions of the Philippines, where democratic political institutions were quickly introduced, non-Christian areas such as Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago—which were populated by Muslims and other non-Christian highlanders¹⁾—were not given the chance to establish local autonomous provincial and municipal governments and were given only limited local autonomy. Further, in Mindanao military rule by force was tolerated, and American military officers were appointed as provincial and district governors (in Cotabato, Davao, Lanao, Sulu, and Zamboanga). This shows the bifurcated colonial system of civil and military governments under US colonization from 1903 to 1913 (Harrison 1922). Established in 1903 by the US military, Moro Province had the same political institutions and procedures as Christian-dominated regions but was administered solely by the US military. The Americans' firm belief that Muslims were a menace to national security justified military rule over Mindanao. Though the military administration used force to quash rebellions against the US colonial order, it also sought to co-opt Muslim leaders as new Filipino collaborators in order to stabilize the tribal ward system. Some influential Muslim leaders were specially appointed as headmen representing the tribal wards under the Moro provincial district. This divide-and-rule policy also allowed exploration of the possibility of industrial development via public schools and vocational training.

After the 1912 presidential election, American colonial policy in the Philippines changed greatly. There was an acceleration of "Filipinization" at the administrative and legislative levels, aimed at the smooth national integration of Christians and non-Christians (Harrison 1922). Mindanao was no exception. Following a shift in the Mindanao administration from US military rule to civil administration, many Muslims and other non-Christian leaders amenable to US rule were appointed to head newly organized local government units. They were particularly active at the provincial, municipal, and municipal district levels, stabilizing and entrenching US control. With the Jones Act of 1916, the Philippine legislature became unicameral, and all elected legislators were to be Filipino. This implicitly shows that Muslims were offered more chances to

1) In this paper, the term "non-Christian" refers to Muslim and indigenous non-Muslim people living in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago from at least before the start of the national government-led Christian settlers' program. The latter were generally regarded as pagans under US rule and called *lumad* in the Visayan language in modern times. When the United States colonized the Philippines in 1898, Filipinos were divided into two racial categories: civilized and wild. The former were Christian and the latter non-Christian. In the early twentieth century, the northern part of Mindanao—Misamis and Surigao—due to its high concentration of Christian residents was considered the same type of Christian area as such areas in Luzon and the Visayas region (Rodil 2022).

represent non-Christian Filipinos nationally. In contrast, the administration of Mindanao affairs was downgraded from the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914–20) to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, a division within the Department of the Interior. The first appointed bureau chief was the American civilian Frank Carpenter, but the bureau's management was delegated to his Christian Filipino subordinate Teofisto Guingona, as a form of political tutelage.

The formation of the bureau to supervise non-Christians in Luzon, Mindanao, and Sulu not only announced the reorganized administrative system to facilitate Muslims' integration into the Philippines as a nation, but also the end of American involvement in Mindanao affairs. Undoubtedly, this shift delighted Christian Filipino leaders in Manila. Meanwhile, some Muslim leaders, faced with the negative effects of Filipinization, condemned it as a new form of Christianization and publicly demanded the US return to Mindanao. In this way, both the shift in US colonial policy in the Philippines and the corresponding introduction of Filipinization with an eye to the Philippines' future independence heightened Mindanao's political fluidity, dynamics, and socioreligious complexities more than ever. The year 1913 marked a turning point in Mindanao history under US rule. The earliest Mindanao settlement plan addressed was envisioned with the formation of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes and when Filipino Christian technocrats who had studied in the US as government-sponsored pensionados to learn advanced knowledge and state-of-the-art technology began overseeing Mindanao's affairs. Amidst this shift in power—from a US monopoly to Christian Filipino elites—how was the Philippine government-led Mindanao settlement, which was modeled on California's State Land Settlement Act, evolved, shaped and implemented? In contrast to the rich literature on US colonial state-building in the Philippines, these questions remain unanswered. The significance of this problem cannot be reduced to a conventional inquiry into the Mindanao master settlement plan imported from the US and realized by Filipino technocrats. Instead, it is closely related to conjectures about colonial empowerment and disempowerment and how we make sense of the historical and political complexities behind Christian Filipinos' attempts to establish a new Christian colony within Mindanao as a home for non-Christians, despite Christian, Muslim, and other non-Christian highlanders' colonization under the US.

The key to addressing this overlooked issue lies in examining the role of bureaucrats and technocrats involved in Mindanao affairs, particularly those from the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, which was established under the Department of the Interior to develop an area densely populated by non-Christians.²⁾ After the bureau's first director,

2) The establishment of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under the Department of the Interior was approved by Act No. 2674 on February 20, 1917. This was made possible by the Jones Act, ↗

the American Carpenter, the four succeeding directors (including one acting director) were Filipinos (Teofisto Guingona, Antonio de las Alas, Jose Sanvictores, and Ludovico Hidrosollo) and three were former pensionados.³⁾ In short, Mindanao's administration was consistently directed by Filipino Christians who were familiar with its affairs and had professional knowledge and hands-on experience. Jose Sanvictores' and Ludovico Hidrosollo's subsequent legislative careers as representative and senator from the non-Christian district, respectively, demonstrated how technocrats were viable resources for ensuring efficient colonial governance. Interestingly, Sanvictores authored 1928's House Bill (HB) 1022, aimed at Mindanao's settlement (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). He borrowed almost all his ideas from the California State Land Settlement Act of 1917 (Mead 1915; 1920; State of California 1931). As director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, in 1924 he authored the memorandum "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines," in which he argued for introducing a more comprehensive plan like California's (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).

The pensionados' colonial state-building has been, to some extent, explained by Takagi Y., A. Francisco, and others (Posadas and Guyotte 1992; Francisco 2015; Takagi 2016). Takagi (2016, 46–53) analyzed the vital role of technocrats' participation in the Philippine Economic Association during the 1930s. N. Teodoro (1999) regarded the role of pensionados as key to the "transmission of US culture." However, the only pensionados recognized as new bearers of professional knowledge and skills were Camilo Osias and Francisco Benitez (Francisco 2015, 90–95). Instead, much attention was focused on Filipino politicians as local landed elites, called *cacique* (LeRoy 1968, 97–113; Anderson 1988). We cannot deny that, due to an overemphasis on the legislature, Philippine historiography tended to overlook colonial Filipino technocrats and their roles by foregrounding political elites on the front line of colonial politics. As demonstrated below, the technocrats' influence cannot be reduced simply to devising practical master plans for a certain colonial project; the technocrats also authored bills on Mindanao's settlement and development and served as a think tank to ensure enlightened and progressive

↘ enacted on August 18, 1916, which facilitated the Philippines' reorganization of governmental departments and bureau offices (Act No. 2674, Box 281, Quezon Papers). For more details on the Jones Law, see Chu (1982).

3) The system of sending Filipino students to the United States at the Philippine government's expense was enacted by Philippine Commission Act No. 854 on August 26, 1903, "An Act Providing for the Education of Filipino Students in the United States and Appropriating for Such Purposes the Sum of Seventy-two Thousand Dollars, in Money of the United States" (Philippine Commission Act No. 854). These scholars were popularly known as pensionados. Though such a word is not found in the Act, this paper adopts the term to refer to them, due to its familiarity.

administrative and legislative management.

Of particular importance in examining Sanvictores' proposed plan is the vital role of technocrats and former pensionados in colonial, modern, and transnational knowledge transmission, production, and application to the Philippine context.⁴⁾ When embarking on a new colonial project, the Filipinos needed new knowledge and ideologies. Before Filipinization, American colonial bureaucrats provided this knowledge transmission and production; but as the American bureaucrats were steered toward early retirement, US-trained Filipinos filled their roles. For the Philippines, the US offered an ideal role model for achieving material, moral, and social development. Michael Adas dubbed US colonial rule as "engineers' imperialism," arguing that the Americans saw themselves as "the most scientific of modern colonizers" with "engineering skills and industrial technologies" (Adas 2006, 136). Since the US had no prior experience of colonialism and was ignorant of the Philippines' social and political affairs, it needed absolute trust and confidence in the superiority of its technical knowledge and skills. The unyielding view that the development of highly technical knowledge would bring material progress and civic development was embraced enthusiastically, even by Filipino technocrats, who saw it as a true resource and indispensable for colonial state-building following the American progressive model (Posadas and Guyotte 1992; Teodoro 1999; Francisco 2015; Takagi 2016).

Even if advanced knowledge and skills were within reach of the colony, it was a different story whether they inspired the planned colonial project. Between 1913 and 1941, there were three major state-sponsored Mindanao land settlement projects: the Cotabato agricultural colony program (1913–17), the homeseeker program (1918–39), and the National Land Settlement Administration program (1939–41) (Pelzer 1945; Hartley 1983; Umehara 2009; Suzuki 2013; 2023). The technocrats' first comprehensive Mindanao settlement project, as a bridge between the US mainland and Manila, was the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) project, begun in 1939 (Pelzer 1945; Umehara 2009). It had been almost 23 years since the Jones Act had given Christian Filipino elites legislative power over Mindanao. When reviewing the trajectories of

4) The pensionado system was based on the experiences of the British government sending people from India to England, and of the Japanese government sending students overseas to learn advanced knowledge and technology (Racelis and Ick 2001, 232–233). In other words, it was not only knowledge and skills but also institutionalized frameworks, such as studying abroad, that the US employed to educate Filipino students transnationally and trans-imperially, facilitating the exchange and transmittal of intellectual assets. Briefly, the motive and mission behind colonial state-building in the Philippines, by both American bureaucrats and Filipino colonial technocrats from 1898, were already embedded in the transnational and trans-imperial influences of colonial, modern, and practical knowledge before their inception.

Mindanao settlement plans from the 1920s to the 1930s, we must note that the related bills that were ultimately introduced had been rejected many times by uncooperative legislators, particularly in the senate. Further, the senators' incoherent and unintelligible attitude, and their haphazardness and nonchalance, were major obstacles to the plans' realization. Considering the twisted and tangled settlement plans, this paper—which focuses on the distinctive role of technocrats/pensionados in Mindanao's affairs—examines how the settlement master plans were originally conceived through the exchange of transnational knowledge, and how they offered a solid legal and institutional basis for shaping numerous succeeding bills related to settlement from the 1920s through the 1930s.

This paper contributes to a better understanding of Filipino technocrats' colonial state-building, navigating Mindanao affairs through transnational connections between the US and colonial Manila. Further, it highlights valuable implications to make sense of the historical complexities of pre- and postwar Mindanao history. The primary sources of data and materials used here include annual reports by the US governor-general's office; public documents from the Philippine colonial government (the Philippine Commission and Moro Province); Philippine English-language magazines and daily newspapers; archives from the manuscript reports of the governor-general's office (National Archives, Washington, DC); Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers (University of Michigan); President Manuel Quezon Papers (National Library of the Philippines), Bureau of Insular Affairs; the Department of War (National Archives, Washington, DC); and secondary materials, when necessary.

II Filipino Technocrats/Pensionados Navigating Mindanao's Affairs

Julian Go's (2003) comparative study of colonial state-building in the Philippines and other Asian colonies noted two major details. Unlike other colonial states, US efforts in the Philippines relied greatly on experts with specialized knowledge for administrative management. Since the US was a latecomer to colonialism (Fujiwara 2011), this offered more incentives for efficient management by mimicking the experiences of the UK, the Netherlands, and France, which had long been colonial powers. Further, the knowledge and technologies that US specialists benefited from did not originate in the United States; they were appropriated through trans-imperial and transnational networks and linkages. As such, colonial knowledge was highly flexible and fluid. Unsurprisingly, Filipino technocrats tried to personalize their ideas, experiences, skills, and insights from the US and faithfully apply them to overcome the Philippines' backwardness. As explained

below, the State Land Settlement Act did not originate in California; it was borrowed from Australia's Victoria state (Mead 1920, 31). The Californians found Australia's plan attractive because of its well-organized agricultural development system, even though its application in the US remained at the trial-and-error stage. Sanvictores, personalizing some ideas from the California program, tried to devise an ideal Mindanao plan. Undoubtedly, he belonged to the "Christian Filipino professional-managerial class with deep transnational ties to scientific communities pursuing similar aims" (Miller 2019, 61).

After the late 1910s, Filipino administrators played a vital role in the country's colonial state-building. In 1914 US Governor-General Francis Harrison issued an executive order stating, "when there are names on the proper eligible register of the bureau of Civil Service[,] no appointment shall be made to a position in the classified civil service of a person residing outside of the Philippine Islands" (Casambre 1968, 8). Consequently, all but nine director posts were filled by Filipinos until 1921, when Harrison left office (Casambre 1968, 7; Torres 2010, 43–45). Pensionados, regarded as possessing technical knowledge and a modern, rational way of thinking, became intellectual assets for realizing the colony's political, social, and economic development and represented the genesis of its colonial bureaucracy. Mindanao's affairs were no exception. Mindanao's administration, run by the United States Army until 1913, had been exempt from the laws applied to Luzon and the Visayas. Yet, when the power to govern Mindanao was transferred from the US Army to the Department of Mindanao and Sulu under civilian Governor Carpenter, the number of Filipino employees grew rapidly (Harrison 1922; Gowing 1983). Considering Mindanao's integration into colonial state-building, this shift indicated that power and authority to rule the non-Christian provinces was yielded by Filipino technocrats to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes.

The first Filipino to oversee Mindanao was Guingona, deputy governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. A lawyer and politician, Guingona had also been Agusan's provincial governor. After terms as a representative and senator, he was named director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under the commonwealth. He was also the first commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu after the bureau's abolishment. Except for Guingona, the other four bureau directors and commissioners through 1939 were pensionados. They had earned bachelor's degrees in law, agriculture, and civil engineering. Their career histories revealed where the greatest concerns for Mindanao's administration lay (see Table 1). When Guingona resigned from the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to serve as senator from the 12th district representing Mindanao and Sulu, Antonio de las Alas was named acting director. He was among the first group of pensionados, having graduated from Indiana and Yale Universities. From 1922, after

Table 1 Brief Career Histories of Filipino Politicians and Technocrats Involved in Mindanao's Affairs, 1907–41

Name	Birthplace and Date	Academic Qualifications (Degree Obtained or Degree Course)	Public Service Career History
Teofisto Guingona	Iloilo, September 20, 1883	Bachelor of Law, Escuela de Derecho, 1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second District of Negros Oriental, House of Representatives (1909–12, 1912–14) • Governor of Agusan (1914–17) • Acting governor, Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1918–20) • Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1920–21, 1931–36) • Senator, 12th district (1922–24) • Acting commissioner (1936–37) and commissioner (1939–41), Mindanao and Sulu
Antonio de las Alas	Batangas, October 14, 1898	Bachelor of Laws, Indiana University; Master of Laws, Yale University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1920–21) • Acting secretary, Department of the Interior (1922) • 1st district of Batangas, House of Representatives (1922–24, 1925–27, 1928–30, 1931–33) • Secretary, Department of Public Works and Communications (1933–35) • Member, 1934 Constitutional Convention (1934) • Secretary, Department of Finance (1936–38)
Jose Sanvictores	Rizal, December 9, 1887	Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, University of Illinois, 1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Agriculture (1908–20) • Secretary to the president of the senate (1920–21) • Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1921–24) • House of Representatives member from Mindanao and Sulu (1928–30) and Agusan and Bukidnon (1931–33) • Member, 1934 Constitutional Convention (1934) • Acting assistant secretary to the president of the Philippines
Ludovico Hidrosollo	Capiz, September 2, 1885	Studied agriculture, University of Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Agriculture • Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1925–31) • Senator, 12th district (1931–33)
Marcial Kasilag	Batangas, October 13, 1881	Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Purdue University, 1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior assistant engineer, Rizal Province (1908–9) • Assistant director and director, Bureau of Public Works (1919–36) • First commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu (1936–39)

Sources: Cornejo (1939); Goodman (1962, 29).

being elected to represent his hometown district of Batangas, he authored bills related to Mindanao's settlement. Following Alas was Sanvictores, also from the first group of pensionados, who had studied agriculture at the University of Illinois. Though he also served in the legislature, he was originally a technocrat. At the Bureau of Agriculture, he was private secretary to Senate President Manuel Quezon and then promoted to direct the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes from 1921 to 1925 (Quezon to Sanvictores, June 1, 1920, Box 241, Quezon Papers; Sanvictores to Quezon, November 26, 1921, Box 281, Quezon Papers).

The fourth technocrat was Ludovico Hidrosollo, who had studied agriculture at the University of Michigan. After returning home, he worked for the Bureau of Agriculture as a special agent. He served as deputy director under Sanvictores and was named director upon Sanvictores' resignation in 1925. Later, he was a senator for a non-Christian district. Having worked in non-Christian regions, he was known in the local media as "Datu Hidrosollo" (*Tribune*, July 19, 1931).⁵⁾ The fact that both Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, who learned advanced and technical knowledge in agricultural experiments and methods in the US, served as the director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes explicitly indicates the importance of Mindanao's administrators being skilled in agricultural development. Lastly, Marcial Kasilag, the engineer appointed as the first commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu in 1936, was also from the first group of pensionados. He studied civil engineering at Purdue University and worked for many years at the Bureau of Public Works before being appointed to the commission (Kasilag 1938). During this time the Mindanao settlement plan, authorized by Act No. 4197 in 1934, was suddenly suspended, and the plan to construct inter-provincial highways connecting Cotabato, Davao, and Lanao began. Kasilag's appointment to the commission signaled that public works was the new agenda for Mindanao. The four above-mentioned Filipino colonial technocrats/pensionados from the first half of the twentieth century consistently managed Mindanao's affairs and administration.

III Sanvictores' Settlement Plan: Making Mindanao Another California

Sanvictores accepted the nomination to serve as director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes on November 25, 1921. On June 10, 1924 he drafted a four-page memorandum titled "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines," in which he briefly summarized five fundamental facts: (1) in spite of the importance of agriculture as a mainstay of Philippine

5) "Datu" is an honorary title and/or prefix given to Muslim leaders. It means "ruler" in the Malay language.

industry, it had remained backward; (2) while the population grew rapidly in certain areas, a large section of Luzon and all of Mindanao remained uncultivated; (3) since only a few individuals owned large tracts of land, peasants with great potential to improve the land's productivity remained tenants, hampering agricultural progress; (4) intensifying conflicts between landlords and tenants could be resolved by economic reforms; and (5) due to a lack of government coordination, young agricultural school graduates failed to find proper workplaces and were thereby driven from the agricultural sector (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). Beyond that, recalling the 1918 homeseekers program, Sanvictores criticized the inadequacy of state-sponsored land settlement. He argued that for Mindanao's settlement to succeed, sending homeseekers alone was inadequate. The government needed to take full responsibility to uphold settlers' welfare related to public order, public health, transportation, and education. Sanvictores concluded that the failed Mindanao settlement projects were the result of ill management of these duties, which had been left up to the settlers. In contrast, he praised the State Land Settlement Act's agricultural development:

The Land Settlement Board of California which is an organization created and financed by the State of California buys large tracts of uncultivated land; subdivides them into convenient sized farms; constructs irrigation systems; puts up fences; builds homes, complete to the last detail, and the necessary farm buildings; helps the new communities in providing themselves with social attractions and in establishing commercial and rapid means of communication with the neighboring communities; and then sells the subdivisions to enterprising farmers who desire to establish themselves in California under these conditions; 5% of the total cost of the improved farms in cash and from 36-1/2 years in which to pay the balance at a reasonable rate of interest (5%). (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers)

Sanvictores added that Minnesota and other US states were following California's example, and that Australia and England had preceded California in this settlement work. Judging from this, the primary reason why he criticized the Philippine government's ongoing homeseeker program as "do-nothing" was attributed to his belief that California's system of land settlement was a perfect example to follow. The motives behind his reference to California's settlement were also related to US Governor-General Leonard Wood's tight budget policy, which reduced appropriations to the homeseeker program. Wood strongly opposed government-sponsored land settlement as unnecessary, arguing it should be led by the private sector. Sanvictores maintained the need for a more comprehensive government-backed settlement program, saying the Philippines could not afford to wait until private funds were diverted to Mindanao and land cultivation was achieved (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). For Sanvictores, the California case was the best example for challenging Wood's assumptions.

In the US, the California land settlement program garnered much public attention, and people from all over the country were visiting and studying its success. Even US President Warren Harding, addressing Congress in December 1921, praised it:

California now has the distinction of creating the first and the most efficiently organized rural communities in America. . . . The state settlements at Durham and Delhi in California owe their wide and favorable reputation and their business success to careful planning and efficient management. (Harding, December 1921, Box 163, Wood Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress)

The settlement program became popular largely due to its energetic propagation by Elwood Mead, chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board and a professor of agriculture at the University of California. He not only demonstrated his strong leadership by implementing and managing the project, he also enthusiastically publicized its advantages through his books *State Aid in Land Settlement* (Mead 1915) and *Helping Men Own Farms: A Practical Discussion of Government Aid in Land Settlement* (Mead 1920). Sanvictores learned from Mead's example, realized the limitations of the homeseeker program, and began to explore how best to overcome the backwardness of Philippine agriculture.

At the end of his "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines" memorandum, Sanvictores stated that the "Alas Bill," patterned after the California State Land Settlement Act, was already in good shape (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). "Alas" refers to Antonio de las Alas, the Filipino legislator. A pensionado like Sanvictores, he was the acting director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes before Sanvictores took the position in 1921. The Alas Bill was proposed as HB 257 on November 15, 1922 (see Table 2). Though we do not know the bill's details, its title resembles California's State Land Settlement Act, (officially "An Act Creating a State Land Settlement Board and Defining Its Power and Duties and Making an Appropriation in Aid of Its Operations"). The Alas Bill was "An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers, and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonization Work." This similarity is important because while the homeseeker program, aimed at replacing the unsuccessful Cotabato agricultural colony of 1913–17 (Bryant 1915; Hartley 1983; Suzuki 2018b), was initiated to send settlers to homestead on public lands, some legislative actions had already begun exploring a more comprehensive, state-sponsored Mindanao settlement plan as early as the 1920s.⁶⁾ This is a good point of departure for

6) In 1914, the Report of the Philippine Commission (United States of America 1915, 373–381) did not clearly mention that the Cotabato project was a failure in the lengthy description by Carpenter, the governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, who was a principal designer of the colony project. Further, the Report by the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources within the Annual Report of the Governor General of the Philippines (United States of America 1918, ↗

Table 2 Introduced Bills and Acts Related to Mindanao's Settlement

Bill Number, Legislative/ Assembly Session	Bill Title	Date of Introduction/Approval	Author(s)
House Bill 257, 6th session	An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers, and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonization Work	Introduced November 15, 1922	Antonio de las Alas
House Bill 1612, 7th session	An Act Providing for the Establishment of Public Land Settlements, for the Creation of a Reimbursable Fund for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits upon the Said Settlements, and for Other Purposes	1926, exact date unknown	Manuel Briones, Jose Altavas, Leoncio Dacanay, and 22 other representatives
House Bill 1022, 8th session	An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonies	Introduced September 26, 1928; passed by the House October 24, 1928	Manuel Briones and Ishidoro Vamenta
Act No. 4197, 9th session	An Act to Facilitate and Promote the Occupation and Cultivation of Public Land at Present Unoccupied by the Establishment of Settlement Districts, and to appropriate the Sum of One Million Pesos for Said Purpose and for Other Purposes	Introduced November 7, 1934 as Senate Bill No. 105; passed by the House and the senate November 8, 1934; approved by the president of the United States February 12, 1935	Elpidio Quirino and Claro Recto
Commonwealth Act No. 441, Second National Assembly	An Act Creating the National Land Settlement Administration	Approved June 3, 1939	Unknown

Sources: Sanvictores (June 10, 1924, Quezon Papers); HB 1612 (1926, Quezon Papers); Senate Bill No. 105 (1934, BIA); Act No. 4197 (1934, Hayden Papers); Commonwealth Act No. 441.

exploring the motives behind the planning of Mindanao's settlement in the 1920s and the backdrop of the ongoing but unpopular homeseeker program (Suzuki 2023).

How did Sanvictores and Alas gather information? At least two key people, Guingona and Hidrosollo, made fact-finding trips to San Francisco. On August 14, 1919, Guingona—deputy governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu—traveled there to inspect advanced agriculture industrial models, such as rice and other plantations, logging operations, and commercial fisheries, all of which would be directly valuable to future Philippine governments (Carpenter to Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1919, BIA subject file Frank Carpenter, RG350). Hidrosollo had gone to Michigan to study agricultural extension work in 1920, and before heading back to the Philippines he received a message from Governor-General Harrison asking him to study “thoroughly the operation [of] land settlement board of California” (Carmack to Hidrosollo, May 24, 1920, BIA subject file Ludovico Hidrosollo, RG350). After being appointed senator, he visited the Bureau of Indian Tribes in Washington, DC, and Middle Eastern countries with high concentrations of Muslims (*Philippines Herald*, September 2, 1931). Undoubtedly, Filipino technocrats like Hidrosollo served as intermediaries between California and Manila, disseminating trans-imperial and transnational knowledge. Their overseas experience and knowledge were also of great value for implementing colonial projects, but what particularly deserves special mention is Sanvictores' enterprising disposition and strong will to overcome long-standing agricultural problems by customizing the California experiment to Mindanao's context.

↘ 193) carried the optimistic view that “in general, it may be stated so far that the colonies in the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, excepting Momungan, have been a success . . . the colonists were self-supporting, and they do not require any assistance save in few instances, such as transportation to and from the hospital in case of sickness and the purchase of carabaos for those who need them, they being unable to pay its high cost on cash.” The author's judgment, however, is that the Cotabato agricultural colony program was considered a failure, based on the following grounds. First, additional appropriations from the Philippine legislature were discontinued from 1917, due to the lack of tangible outcomes in agricultural production. Thus, all settlers were forced to be self-supporting. This hampered the further expansion of the agricultural colony project in Cotabato. Second, agricultural production dropped between 1916 and 1920. With the total cultivated land area almost unchanged, the ratio of destroyed crop areas, such as of rice and corn, was extremely high, reaching almost 99 percent in 1916 and 50 percent in 1920; this meant that in 1916, almost all crops were lost. Third, the Annual Report of the Director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes for 1921 (Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, NARA), by the acting director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, concluded that “as to the economic objective, it may be stated that the agricultural colonies are a failure.” Considering these reasons, it would be safe to say that the Cotabato agricultural colony project failed.

IV The Mindanao Settlement Bills and US Governor-General Wood's Criticism

The Mindanao settlement plan, modeled by Sanvictores on California's State Land Settlement Act, did not quickly materialize into legislation. This was partly because following the failure of the Cotabato agricultural colony, legislators were too intimidated to make appropriations for similar projects. Thus, Mindanao remained uncultivated. In addition, except for a few lawmakers, most were generally indifferent to the island's development; this hindered generous appropriations. However, interest in Mindanao suddenly grew among lawmakers after US Senator Robert Bacon introduced a bill (the Bacon Bill) separating Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the archipelago in 1926 (Fry 1978). The Bacon Bill aimed to attract more foreign investment and capital by incorporating these areas as US territories. For Christian Filipino politicians, the bill—which would explicitly lead to the territorial loss of Mindanao's rich natural resources—hastened the seventh session of the Philippine legislature (1926) to introduce Mindanao settlement bills in protest.⁷⁾

During the seventh session, which began on July 16, 1926, several bills related to Mindanao's settlement were presented. HB 1612 was the only one passed by both the House and the senate (see Table 2) (House Bill No. 1612, 1926, Box 196, Quezon Papers). It called for land prior to settlement by colonists to be divided into subdivisions and offered loans for land improvement. The bill also included roads, public health facilities, and the sale of agricultural products. Some lawmakers were concerned that the mistakes made with the Cotabato agricultural colony project would be repeated, leading to financial failure (*Diario de Sesiones de la Legislatura Filipina*, 1926, Vol. 1, Num. 76: 1570–1575, Vol. 448, BIA, RG350). To them, “financial failure” meant that colonists who took out loans were unable to repay them. According to Sanvictores' investigation, the per capita amount of unpaid loans reached 352 pesos (Sanvictores, June 24, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).⁸⁾ In response to this criticism, more favorable opinions were expressed. Those

7) Several powerful Muslim leaders favored the introduction of the Bacon Bill, hoping it would bring US rule over Mindanao and Sulu. In this context, Senate President Manuel Quezon became skeptical of the loyalty of the powerful Cotabato Muslim leader Abdulla Piang to the Filipino-run colonial government. Piang was also the appointed representative of the House, since he was rumored to be pro-America and a supporter of Governor-General Wood. Quezon wrote to Piang and received the latter's pledge that “[w]e people of Mindanao and Sulu in general, does [*sic*] not fully want for independence.” Quezon replied, “I am happy over your assurance that the peoples of Mindanao and Sulu welcome the settlement of these regions by their Christian brothers” (Piang to Quezon, September 2, 1927, Box 344, Quezon Papers; Quezon to Piang, September 6, 1927, Box 344, Quezon Papers).

8) Sanvictores proposed a new scheme to resolve the long-held debt that had amassed between 1913 and 1917. For details, see Sanvictores (June 24, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).

anxious to approve the bill acknowledged the previous colony's failure but argued that Mindanao had great potential, as the land tax had continued to rise (*Diario de Sesiones de la Legislatura Filipina*, 1926, Vol. 1, Num. 76: 1570–1575, Vol. 448, BIA, RG350). However, remarks defending the bill were superficial, and there were growing fears of the possible loss of Mindanao. It is unlikely that their favorable support represented the general will of the lawmakers; rather, it was understood that, considering the imminent political situation over Mindanao, the chemistry between the House and the senate was perfect, allowing them to communicate wordlessly.⁹⁾

Governor-General Wood vetoed the bill, dismissing it as too paternal and concluding that “[t]he financing of new settlements is a matter which should largely be left to private initiative” (Wood to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, December 7, 1926, Box 196, Quezon Papers). He argued that, aside from the introduction of much more liberal land laws related to the homestead clause allowing 200 acres per person, private enterprise should handle the financial support of new settlements. He also emphasized the need for an influx of ambitious, industrious, and enterprising settlers qualified to develop the land in the best interest of the Philippines and the US (United States of America 1904, 20). Similar criticism had been leveled against state aid in land development. Mead (1915) refuted the criticism:

To the objection that such aid would be paternalism I would reply that it is no more paternalism than the Homestead Act, or River and Harbor improvements, or rural delivery in the Postal Service. Of all governments, democracies should be the ones most capable of performing and willing to perform any direct service for the people which the public welfare requires. Relief and protection for the settler is both a national duty and an opportunity. (Mead 1915, 12)

For Mead, the government was the best political institution to provide people with all necessary services in a direct and efficient manner. Wood favored small government without publicly funded land settlement projects. Wood's veto was an implicit lesson on the Mindanao settlement bill. While Wood was governor-general, similar bills on Mindanao would not be passed. For the legislature, since introducing a bill on Mindanao's settlement was only a political tool to protest the Bacon Bill, once it was killed in the US (in 1927), the Philippine legislature's concern about Mindanao correspondingly declined.

Though Wood vetoed HB 1612, Hidrosollo persisted. Once promoted to director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, he modified the bill, arguing the importance of Mindanao's settlement for agricultural development, and prepared his own bill as “An Act Providing for the Establishment of Land Settlements, for the Creation of a Reimbursable Fund for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits upon the Said Settlements, and for

9) For the reaction and response of the Philippine legislature to the Bacon Bill, see Suzuki (2018a).

Other Purposes” (Government of the Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education 1929, 69–71). It was based on his belief that raising agricultural productivity on public land was vital for ensuring the Philippines’ economic development and for solving the unemployment problem (*Philippines Herald*, August 7, 1929). Hidrosollo referred to the California example to enhance his ideas’ legitimacy:

[A] land settlement movement similar to that of California will greatly help toward making the country attractive . . . the bill herewith attached contains the essential requirements of a land settlement movement, and we therefore recommend that it be submitted to the Philippine Legislature for consideration. (Government of the Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education 1929, 69)

In 1928, after Wood’s death, Sanvictores authored his own Mindanao settlement bill. In September 1928 Representatives Manuel Briones and Ishidoro Vamenta introduced HB 1022 (see Table 2), “An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonies” (House Bill No. 1022, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). Sanvictores was the true force behind the bill. He proudly noted, “It is the result of years of study of colonization in other parts of the world and of actual experience in the handling of the Cotabato agricultural colonies” (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). Recalling the past state of Philippine agriculture and homesteading, he expressed regret over “the lack of scientific management as compared with the kind of management provided for all land settlement projects as tried in Australia, New Zealand and California.”

Let us examine the details of HB 1022 (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). It included, aside from the preparation of subdivided parcels of land for sale, the construction of irrigation systems, the establishment of a marketing division for agricultural products, a goods procurement division, and a loan of 100 pesos per hectare (up to 10 hectares) for each settler. Loan repayments were set for the fifth year of settlement and were due within twenty years. The bill created much public expectation for legislative approval. The day after the bill passed the House, on October 24, 1928, a local newspaper carried an article expressing an optimistic view of Mindanao’s settlement (*Philippines Herald*, October 25, 1928). Despite such high expectations, it was never discussed in the senate. Even though HB 1612 passed both the House and the senate under Wood, similar bills were never again passed by the senate, once its fear of threats against senators’ vested interests were minimized. In this setting, Sanvictores continued to author bills on Mindanao’s settlement, trusting that the island’s development would become a reality. Likewise, Hidrosollo continued to claim the need to approve bills based on public land settlement. In contrast, the legislature, especially the senate, maintained a disinterested attitude until 1934, never approving any Mindanao-related

bills. The stark contrast between technocrats like Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, who were committed to solving actual problems like agricultural development, and lawmakers who were focused on their own self-serving concerns showed the huge gulf between their ideas, visions, and methods regarding Mindanao's colonization (*Philippines Herald*, August 7, 1929).

V Concerns among US Governors-General about Mindanao and the Ambivalent Attitude of Filipino Legislators

During the post-Wood period, concerns began to surface about Mindanao (*Philippines Herald*, September 7, 1929). One major reason for this was Wood's replacement as US governor-general by Henry Stimson. Stimson had shown great interest in Mindanao's affairs, and during the opening of the eighth legislative session, in 1928, he called Mindanao the "promised land" (United States of America 1930, 39; Smith 1970, 109). He claimed that despite its abundant natural resources, its potential had not been fully realized, thereby leading to the malnutrition of the Filipino nation due to food shortages and outbreaks of tuberculosis and beriberi. Based on current tax revenues alone, infrastructure such as bridges, hospitals, public facilities, and schools could not be improved. Stimson maintained that foreign capital was urgently needed for efficient state management. His successor, Dwight Davis, warned that Mindanao was no longer a promised land but rather a place with multiple longstanding evils (United States of America 1932, 72–73). Davis noted that while Mindanao may have seemed a promised land, its promise remained unfulfilled. What Davis ardently requested was road construction. He suspected that poor roads had hampered homeseekers' settlement, eventually diminishing chances for provincial income generation.

Under these circumstances, Sanvictores appealed to Davis to solve the problem. In 1929 Sanvictores, as a representative in the House, submitted two important memoranda to Davis, "Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" and "Supplement to the Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" (Sanvictores, August 26, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers; October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers). In the former, Sanvictores pointed out six major items: (1) transportation systems, (2) government-supervised migration, (3) protection for the rights of native-born citizens, (4) universal education, (5) extension of voting rights, and (6) an advisory committee. Protecting the rights of native-born citizens was something that had never been included in previous bills on Mindanao's settlement. Davis assumed more settlers would soon arrive in Mindanao, so he argued the need to protect indigenous peoples' rights, to make a reservation for

them, and to provide an agent to help them obtain land titles. He also addressed extensive political and social issues ranging from providing transportation and creating healthy ways of living to expanding educational opportunities and non-Christian suffrage. Simply put, the major concerns of both plans were to achieve “the amalgamation of the different peoples of the Philippines” and “their assimilation into our body politics” (Sanvictores, August 26, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers).¹⁰ For Sanvictores, these were his own solutions to the long-term Moro and/or Mindanao problems.

In the supplementary document, Sanvictores proposed a more specific and detailed plan for a transportation system that carefully considered the geographical characteristics of the provinces. He maintained the need to construct roads and design towns to attract more settlers. Also of prime importance in the proposal was a focus on the role of ports and the need to improve them. This jibed with Stimson’s comments on the development of inter-island shipping transportation in his opening address to the eighth legislative session in 1928 (United States of America 1930, 42–44). Sanvictores’ use of the word “town” in his supplementary document concretely referred to “all the essentials of modern life,” such as social life, property protection, schools, and public health facilities in rural settings. He was also aware that indigenous peoples’ rights needed protection. He said, “Migration to our non-Christian territory should not be encouraged or even permitted until proper steps have been taken to safeguard the interest of our non-Christian natives.” He was apprehensive about the indigenous population because, to him, it was “a simple act of justice to these people that Government do everything” (Sanvictores, October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers). All of his plans for Mindanao’s settlement were predicated on the assumption that settlers were entitled to the benefits of modern life but the indigenous people had a right to justice.

Given Davis’s support for Sanvictores’ plan, a great step forward was expected. The Committee on Development of Mindanao, with the assistance of the Philippine legislature and administration, was formed on November 22, 1929.¹¹ The committee’s chairperson, Honorio Ventura, was the secretary of the Department of the Interior; its members were Senator Benigno Aquino; Representative Ishidoro Vamenta; A. D. Williams, director of the Bureau of Public Works; Serafin Hilado, director of the Bureau of Lands; and Hidrosollo, director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. The committee considered six major issues, all of which were noted in Sanvictores’ “Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu”:

10) When Sanvictores was the director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1925, he submitted a proposal on the Moro problem, “The Non-Christian Problem of the Philippines,” to Senate President Quezon. In it, he argued that modern education and “Mohammedanism” were compatible by referring to the case of Turkey (Sanvictores 1925, Box 281, Quezon Papers).

11) The committee’s establishment was approved by Act No. 3540 (Act No. 3540, November 22, 1929, Box 29/7, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

(1) recommendations for a comprehensive system of highways and/or railways; (2) advice on ways and means for establishing agricultural colonies in Mindanao; (3) recommendations for adequate reservations for non-Christians, homesteaders and small capitalists, and other government purposes; (4) recommendations on ways and means of providing elementary education; (5) recommendations of appropriate actions for local government organization; and (6) recommendations for proper coordination among offices to deal with non-Christian problems (Act No. 3540, November 22, 1929, Box 29/7, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). The committee submitted its final report to Governor-General Davis on July 15, 1930 (*Philippines Herald*, June 12, 1930; Ventura, Aquino, Vamenta, Williams, Hilado, and Hidrosollo to Davis, July 15, 1930, Box 29/6, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

Of the above six issues, the most remarkable progress was made on road construction, the matter of greatest interest to Davis. Director Williams proposed a ten-year plan to construct roughly 6,000 kilometers of roads and improve port facilities (*Tribune*, June 14, 1930; June 26, 1930; June 29, 1930b; July 16, 1930). The plan, which included sample bills to request needed appropriations, aimed to allocate 2 million pesos over ten years. Despite this, the legislature rejected the plan, saying “no money available” (*Tribune*, October 5, 1930). The following year the debate over the plan continued, but Acting Senate President Sergio Osmeña announced a two-year postponement of the project due to the economic problems triggered by the Great Depression (*Tribune*, August 2, 1931). No concrete action was taken to prepare appropriations bills on the remaining issues. Sanvictores requested the reservation of public land for non-Christians, for the sake of justice, but this was also rejected; the legislature declined to appropriate funds even for land surveying (Sanvictores, October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers; *New York Times*, December 27, 1930).

Though the legislature did not consent to the Mindanao settlement plan, that did not mean they disliked the idea of road construction. On the contrary, after some members made an investigatory visit to Mindanao and Sulu in October 1927, they unanimously supported road-building (*Report Sobre Mindanao y Sulu* 1927, BIA 5075/156, RG350). They especially recommended hastening the construction of inter-provincial highways connecting Misamis, Zamboanga, Cotabato, Lanao, and Davao. When another fact-finding trip was completed in 1929, Director Hidrosollo of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes made note of homeseekers who had “penetrated the hinterlands and turned vacant and unproductive areas.” He appealed to Senate President Quezon for an immediate budget appropriation of 1 million pesos to construct roads (Hidrosollo to Quezon, May 27, 1929, Box 281, Quezon Papers). In line with these Mindanao developments, a comprehensive Mindanao development plan aiming at road construction, popularly known as the “Sanvictores Plan,” was also introduced at the ninth legislative session in September

1931 (*Tribune*, September 6, 1931). Sanvictores and two other lawmakers co-authored it, and the media even carried a special feature article on it (*Tribune*, October 24, 1931). The plan, which emphasized road construction and port facility improvement, was identical to Sanvictores' "Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" memorandum submitted to Governor-General Davis, but the bill failed, once again, to gain legislative approval.

In addition to Sanvictores' attempt to enact his Mindanao bills between 1929 and 1931, as noted above, Rafael Alunan, the secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (1928–32)—also known as "the sugar planter"—deserves special mention as another planner of a unique Mindanao bill. Alunan aggressively promoted a hacienda-oriented Mindanao development plan (United States of America 1932, 23). Unlike Sanvictores, he intended to modernize Philippine agriculture by inducing homesteaders to settle around plantations and/or haciendas. Specifically, his bill aimed to reserve 20,000 hectares of public land, where capitalists were invited along with homesteaders to grow crops necessary for the plantation (*Philippines Herald*, November 24, 1928). Comparing the sugar plantation to the homeseeker program (1918–39), Alunan was proud of the modernity represented by the former type of agricultural development: "The employees of sugar centrals are furnished comfortable homes, running water and electric lights. They are, besides, given facilities for recreation and amusement, in addition to hospitals, schools and all the conveniences of modern life" (Alunan 1938, 8). The plan was well received by Senate President Quezon, who quietly observed the deliberations on the bills (*Philippines Herald*, October 20, 1928). Yet it did not work well once Senator Osmeña suggested more time was needed for careful investigation. Consequently, no progress was made.¹²⁾

Despite Davis's ardent support of Mindanao's development plans, the apathetic and uncooperative attitude of the Philippine legislature led to disappointment, as the media had raised hopes of legislative approval (*Philippines Herald*, October 11, 1929; July 3, 1930; July 4, 1930; October 23, 1930; *Tribune*, May 8, 1930; October 5, 1930; August 6, 1931). The frustration was attributed to the unchanged attitude of legislators who self-servingly maintained pork-barrel spending for public works in other regions (*Philippines*

12) Governor-General Davis invited Alunan on a 45-day goodwill and fact-finding mission to French Indochina, the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Netherlands East Indies between February 28 and April 14, 1931. Following the visit to these colonies, Alunan said, "in modern farming, we are years behind them." He attributed the rapid and spectacular agricultural development of his neighbors to liberal policies of extending government assistance to industry, the progress of scientific research, the support of experimental stations, the establishment of irrigation systems, and/or the cooperative financing of farmers. Based on his observations, he presented 17 recommendations for the Philippines' agricultural development. It remains unknown how many of these recommendations were put into practice (United States of America 1932, 21–65).

Herald, October 23, 1928; November 14, 1928; *Tribune*, April 27, 1930). One of the committee members, Senator Aquino, who favored road construction, even mentioned that he opposed the appropriation of 2 million pesos. Likewise, Acting Senate President Osmeña was critical of Davis's idea (*Tribune*, June 29, 1930a). Osmeña asserted that the ambitious plan was unnecessary for the current Philippines. He claimed there were three types of movements, with the most desirable a voluntary homeseeker program initiated by local residents (*Manila Bulletin*, September 7, 1931). This affirmed the status quo view that there was nothing special to do and that the current program, from 1918, was satisfactory. While negotiations over the Philippines' independence proceeded, the legislature had little or no interest in domestic affairs, especially in the south (Friend 1965, 156). George Malcolm (1936, 168–171), former senior justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands, noted the peculiar practice of postponing legislative work until the next day. By this practice, work remained unfinished until the last day of the session. The above-mentioned cases on Mindanao's settlement confirmed the intentional postponement to kill bills. Both Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, familiar with Mindanao affairs, played a vital role in preparing the drafts of several Mindanao settlement and development plans, all of which served as the foundational basis of the legislative process. But it was apparent that for a legislature increasingly preoccupied with Washington due to concern over the accelerating drive in US Congress toward Philippine independence, and the loss of free trade privilege, Mindanao's development was not a high priority (*Philippines Herald*, November 20, 1929; *Tribune*, November 1, 1931; Anastacio 2016, 244). Lawmakers pretended to be sympathetic toward Mindanao but followed the usual strategy to scrap the bills (*Tribune*, August 30, 1930).

VI The Quirino-Recto Colonization Act and Its Change

In examining the legislative process of bills related to Mindanao's settlement in the first half of the twentieth century, an unusual event may be noticed. On November 8, 1934, just before the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth government, Senate Bill (SB) 105, introduced by Senators Elpidio Quirino and Claro M. Recto, aimed to appropriate 1 million pesos for Mindanao's settlement (Senate Bill No. 105, BIA, RG350). Both the House and the senate passed it as Act No. 4197, popularly known as the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act.¹³⁾ Under its terms, the government, after reserving at least 300

13) Its formal title was "An Act to Facilitate and Promote the Occupation and Cultivation of Public Land at Present Unoccupied by the Establishment of Settlement Districts, Appropriate the Sum of One Million Pesos for Said Purpose, and for Other Purposes."

hectares of public land per settlement, and surveying the lands, prepared subdivided land for settlers. Upon settlement, homes for settlers would be established, along with one farm animal, farm implements, and seeds for the first year's cultivation. Loans of no more than 200 pesos would be provided only for the first year of settlement. In addition to the building of the town, roads, schools, and other public facilities would be constructed, with one supervisor and a staff assigned to run them. An organization to nurture the settlers' common spirit would also be formed. As for SB 105, Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources Eulogio Rodriguez expressed disapproval because it would lead to government assistance for the settlers, which he feared would fail like the Cotabato colony project starting in 1913 (*Tribune*, October 9, 1934b). Quirino defended the bill, saying that similar settlement plans had been successful in the US state of Utah along with England and Canada (*Tribune*, October 6, 1934). Even the Philippine media supported Quirino's plan by carrying a favorable editorial (*Tribune*, October 9, 1934a; November 30, 1934). The bill was approved on February 12, 1934, without any major opposition.¹⁴⁾

Behind this immediate approval lay two major changes surrounding the Philippines. First, unemployment had become a concern, and Mindanao's settlement seemed a likely remedy (*Philippines Herald*, September 1, 1929; September 2, 1930; *Tribune*, June 15, 1930; May 1, 1931; October 7, 1936). Quirino mentioned that even the unemployed, aside from agriculturists, were taken into consideration as possible beneficiaries. This suggested that the bill, instead of fostering agricultural development in Mindanao, intended to address social issues such as serious tenancy and unemployment problems in each Christian Filipino lawmaker's electoral district (*Tribune*, September 20, 1934). Second, Governor-General Frank Murphy claimed the urgency of Mindanao's New Deal Policy to promote social justice (*New York Times*, September 29, 1933; *Mindanao Herald*, February 22, 1934; March 3, 1934; March 24, 1934; *New York Herald Tribune*, February 22, 1934; *Tribune*, June 19, 1934; July 15, 1934).¹⁵⁾ Once the New Deal Policy was announced, Guingona, who had been reappointed director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, submitted his "Development Plan for Mindanao-Sulu" (dated February 23, 1934) and "Proposed Governmental Reorganization" (dated July 16, 1934) (Guingona, February 23, 1934, Box 29/8, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; July 16, 1934, Box 28/32, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In the former, Guingona viewed the coming ten years leading

14) The NLSA project was implemented based on Act No. 4197 (the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act), approved by the president of the United States. K. Pelzer (1945, 135), however, briefly mentioned this Act in the footnote of his book.

15) For this special mission, Governor-General Murphy appointed Professor Hayden from the University of Michigan (political science) to serve as US vice governor-general from 1933 to 1934 (*Tribune*, February 22, 1934).

to independence as a transition period to achieve the complete national integration of non-Christians into the Philippine body politic and emphasized the need to formulate a feasible Mindanao development plan. To this end, the sending of more Christian settlers, who were believed to have a more advanced civilization than their Muslim counterparts, was imperative for bringing about swift and prompt assimilation through intercultural and political mingling. In the latter proposal, Guingona requested a special measure to reorganize the Department of Mindanao and Sulu during the Commonwealth period (*Tribune*, April 11, 1934). The aim of his proposed revival of the department as a transitory government lay in setting up the complete coordination of different activities in Mindanao and Sulu, which were at the time dispersed and sometimes antagonistic toward each other. However, the legislature maintained the view that without a definite Mindanao development plan, no political reforms would follow. In this context, the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act was approved without a clear-cut development plan to accelerate Murphy's vision behind the New Deal Policy for non-Christians' national integration. The Act was the political consequence of prioritizing the unachieved national integration of non-Christians. For this reason, Mindanao's settlement had to become more changeable due to unexpected exogenous factors most likely during the Commonwealth era.

On February 12, 1935, when Act No. 4197 was finally approved by the US president, the responsible bureaus (Lands, Forestry, Public Health, and Plant Industry) decided which public lands would be reserved as settlement districts and began to recruit applicants (*Tribune*, February 7, 1935). However, in 1936 a new plan suddenly emerged connecting Lanao, Cotabato, Davao, and Surigao by inter-provincial highways (*Tribune*, April 7, 1936). Further, it was decided that the budget surplus from the 1 million pesos appropriated for the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act would be diverted to construct these highways and three possible settlement sites within Mindanao (*Manila Bulletin*, April 30, 1936). After this, Quirino and Rodriguez abruptly announced that the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act intended to "block the foreigner's penetration," a reference to Japanese immigrants to Davao (*Tribune*, March 23, 1938; October 15, 1938).

In this context, C. McWilliams, a scholar of the California land settlement project, stated that without the threat of a growing Japanese immigrant population attempting to occupy large tracts of land in California, the state would not have pushed through the settlement project (McWilliams 1999, 209–210). If his analysis is correct, it suggests that the settlement projects in California and Mindanao were manipulated almost simultaneously and for the same political purpose: to block the expansion of Japanese immigration. It remains uncertain to what extent Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, Quirino, Rodriguez, and Hayden were already aware of—and had absorbed—such a political motive and its importance. Still, Mead, the chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board, as

early as 1921 was aware of the growing danger posed by Japanese immigrants in his state. He cautioned, “the danger is that America will not understand what is taking place or realize the disaster which this migration is certain to bring if the movement is not stamped out at once.” He added, “to compete with the Japanese, the American farmer must change his ideas of what is desirable in life and surrender inherited habits” (Mead 1921, 54).

In this way, within five years after approval of the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, the aim behind it had drastically changed. This shift was largely influenced by the Americans’ view that an increase in the number of Japanese immigrants in Davao, Mindanao, would be detrimental to national security, particularly in an independent Philippines (*Tribune*, June 10, 1930).¹⁶ This concern was affirmed by a communication from Hayden, former vice governor-general in charge of Mindanao affairs, to Paulino Santos, an administrative manager of the NLSA (Santos to Hayden, May 15, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; Hayden to Santos, June 28, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In the letter, Hayden disclosed his intent to pressure Philippine legislators to design three Mindanao settlement districts to block Japanese immigration. He added in his 1942 book *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* that these were the Compostela-Monkayo region, the “Kidapawan” Valley, and the Lower Koronadal Valley (Hayden 1942, 720–721). He chose these strategically, from a national security viewpoint, rather than on the basis of scientific soil surveys. Upon receiving a letter in 1939 from Santos, in the midst of the NLSA project, Hayden reassured him: “if you can put a million Filipino settlers into Mindanao in the next 10 years, you will make that island forever yours” (Hayden to Santos, June 28, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

Filipino politicians, in contrast to Hayden’s view of Japanese immigrants as a threat to Philippine security, consistently assumed a careful and cautious attitude, which led to an underestimation of the Japanese threat in Davao (*Philippines Herald*, March 26, 1930; *Tribune*, June 20, 1930; June 26, 1930; July 27, 1930; August 28, 1930; June 21, 1931; March 1, 1935; December 22, 1935; *Manila Bulletin*, April 23, 1936; June 10, 1936). Behind the Filipino politicians’ attentive outlook lay the undeniable consideration that almost half of the tax revenues collected in Davao were from Japanese immigrants and their businesses, and the Philippine government, in preparation for its political independence in 1946, did not intend to further jeopardize relations with Japan (Hayden 1942,

16) This is similar to the American view that due to the Philippines’ vulnerability against Japanese aggression, the Philippines as a colony would be the United States’ Achilles’ heel. This was something President Theodore Roosevelt already felt as early as the 1905 Russo-Japanese War (Anastacio 2016, 245).

719–720). However, the claim that Japan was not a menace could hardly be accepted at face value. Filipino politicians, caught in a dilemma between the US and Japan, were obligated to take action following Hayden's recommendation. In June 1939, Commonwealth Act No. 441 allowed the NLSA to begin construction on a settlement in the Koronadal Valley with Santos as its administrative manager (Commonwealth Act No. 441). The budget allocated for this was diverted from coconut oil excise taxes returned from the US to the Philippines (*Tribune*, July 14, 1938; January 3, 1939; March 22, 1939; May 12, 1939; August 11, 1939; September 27, 1939; Hartendrop 1939; Pelzer 1945).

VII Entanglements among Technocrats, US Governors-General, the Philippine Legislature, and a Muslim Leader

Sanvictores and Hidrosollo both designed Mindanao settlement plans patterned after the California mode, aimed at upholding Philippine agriculture rather than focused on national security. Being familiar with science and technology, they had unwavering faith that their plans were sound and modern and would lead to systematic management. However, even the California plan was a financial failure by 1931 and eventually led to the abolition of the California State Land Settlement Board (State of California 1931, 6). As a result, the Mindanao plans lost logical ground. Instead, the NLSA project, begun in 1939, was forced to pursue national security as its top agenda, at the cost of agricultural development and socioeconomic issues related to deteriorating rural conditions, population growth, and unemployment. Sanvictores' and Hidrosollo's Mindanao plans and the legislative debates over the Mindanao bills materialized in unanticipated ways. Coincidentally, both the California and the Mindanao plans, though conceived at different times, served to eliminate a perceived alien menace (Mead 1920, 213).

Arguments over the Mindanao settlement bills from the 1920s to the late 1930s and their changes indicate that the legislature was aimless and haphazard (*Tribune*, December 18, 1938). The bills' unplanned management was attributed largely to a lack of vision for Mindanao's settlement and development. For instance, though HB 1612 was passed during Governor-General Wood's administration, the senate declined to pass similar bills after his death. This about-face had nothing to do with the bills' content. Importantly, senators' concerns were simply whether they might harm their personal vested interests. The Bacon Bill was a good example. It aimed to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the Philippine archipelago. To counteract it, the legislature introduced Mindanao bills, which were also used as political tools to establish an amicable relationship with the governor-general. When Stimson and Davis expressed

serious concerns about the desperate conditions in Mindanao, the legislature responded by cautiously addressing their demands, introducing bills, and highlighting the problems' severity (*Tribune*, August 30, 1930). Nevertheless, conditions remained unchanged until 1934. These developments represented the general attitude of legislators toward Mindanao's settlement until 1935, the beginning of the Commonwealth period. Under the Commonwealth, however, security-related concerns intensified, thereby affecting the settlement plan's fate.¹⁷ Though Mindanao was previously discussed in an agricultural development context, it was reexamined as an important element of national security after independence.

This shift enabled the Commonwealth government (1936–41) to manipulate Mindanao settlement plans under the cause of national defense. In 1938 Marcial Kasilag, the commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu and a former pensionado, mentioned in his annual report that—modeling the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act—he was proposing another colonization bill (Annual Report of the Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu 1937, Box 29/11, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). Unlike the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, Kasilag's proposal aimed to create a citizen army to strengthen national security by relocating twenty thousand twenty-year-old men annually to Mindanao for military training. Though the plan never materialized, it aimed to strengthen the country's self-defense capabilities and took a more nationalistic outlook to counteract alien aggression. Curiously, Mead, chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board, had proposed the same idea in 1919, when he planned the California scheme. He admitted that this was not an original thought but one borrowed from France, Belgium, and Australia (Mead 1919, 64–66). Still, it should be noted that Kasilag attempted to broaden the land settlement's scope beyond practical rural development by former soldiers to include nurturing a love of country and patriotism as new sources of national strength. There were many curious overlaps between Kasilag's and Mead's ideas. All Mindanao land settlement plans and bills advocated by Sanvictores, Hidrosollo, and Kasilag left important footprints on Mindanao's colonization by Christian Filipinos; yet viewed from a global perspective, their attempts can be understood within the realm of transnational and trans-imperial knowledge exchange.

Lastly, it is important to mention the response from a Muslim leader who attempted to defend indigenous people's land rights. This paper deals with the planning process and debate over Mindanao land settlement at the national level, but we know of no

17) Under the Commonwealth government, there was a growing awareness of national security in Mindanao that eventually led to Quezon's decision to accept Jewish refugees from Europe beginning in 1939. This also derived from humanitarian considerations. In addition, there was the political consideration of curbing the number of Japanese immigrants (Ephraim 2006, 410–436; 2008, 43–50; *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1939).

objections raised by Muslim legislators. Thus, it should be mentioned that, hearing about the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, the young Muslim Cotabato-born attorney Salipada Pendatun—a senator in the post-independence period—had already foreseen the worst results of a potential influx of Christian settlers to Mindanao. He wrote to Professor Hayden, vice governor-general in Manila, and Teofisto Guingona, chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, requesting immediate and appropriate action (Correspondence from Salipada Pendatun to Hayden, February 7, 1935, Box 27–30, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; Correspondence from Salipada Pendatun to Teopisto Guingona, 1935, Box 27–30, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In these letters, Pendatun cautioned that national government-sponsored Christian migration could eventually render non-Christians “strangers” in their homes. This was a reference not only to the negative effects triggered by growing numbers of Christian settlers, but also to the possible danger that due to a lack of support for the homesteading of non-Christians, their indigenous land rights could be lost and/or taken away. For this reason, Pendatun proposed setting aside a similar reserved area for non-Christians, like Native Americans received in the US, claiming it was the government’s responsibility to safeguard the rights and lives of indigenous people.

Pendatun’s reservation request was identical to Sanvictores’ idea in his 1929 memorandum “Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu,” where he argued for protecting the rights of native-born citizens and providing an agent to help them obtain land titles. In other words, Sanvictores, drawing the Mindanao land settlement plan, was fully aware of the importance of protecting indigenous people’s land rights, but such concerns over the reservation question disappeared with the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934. Considering the Act as the point of departure for the Philippine government’s initial settlement projects in the early twentieth century, it may be said that a fatal mistake—disregarding indigenous people’s land rights—was already embedded in the colonization program. In addition to Pendatun’s concerns, Christian Representative Ishidoro Vamenta claimed the need to secure a reservation for Muslims. Taken together, it was felt that due to American intervention, the acceleration of Mindanao’s land settlement projects during the Commonwealth had endangered non-Christians’ homelands without any legal protections.

VIII Conclusion

This paper highlights the role of colonial technocrats in Mindanao’s affairs, examines the development of Mindanao settlement plans from the 1920s through the late 1930s, and

examines the legislative processes of bills related to these plans. By capitalizing on their advanced professional knowledge, Filipino colonial technocrats hoped to solve the numerous problems the colonial Philippines faced during state-building. Sanvictores had insight and foresight; without him, the NLSA's 1939 settlement project would not have been realized. Resil Mojares, evaluating the role of modern knowledge production by the Filipino intellectuals Pedro Paterno and T. H. Pardo de Tavera, called them the "brains of the nation" (Mojares 2006). Likewise, the technocrats were both committed to colonial state-building under US rule and worked to address both imminent and long-held problems through transnational knowledge exchange. They were the "new brains" for knowledge transmission, production, and application.

The analysis in this paper offers new insights into the characteristics of colonial technocrats/pensionados. They were united in their unwavering faith that the US was a model for the Philippines, though aware that the Philippines and the US differed greatly in many respects. In this way, Filipino technocrats and American bureaucrats were alike. Yet the Americans were generally ignorant of the Philippines' political and social conditions because they idealized the superiority of US institutions and technologies as the pathways for making the Philippines into a modern and democratic nation despite being colonial latecomers (Fujiwara 2011, 3–5). To overcome their imperfections in running a colony, they counted on technical knowledge and its application to colonial realities (Adas 2006, 144). For them, the colonial Philippines was a laboratory for validating practical and engineering knowledge (Anderson 2007). By contrast, the gaze of the pensionados, which glamorized the US as a perfect model, was shaped and personalized by their overseas studies, associations with American officials, and fact-finding trips abroad.

Despite Mindanao settlement plans mimicking the California model, they never materialized as designed by Sanvictores, due to Filipino legislators' apathy toward appropriations. This paper explicitly demonstrates the stark contrast between the enthusiastic Filipino technocrats who planned settlement projects using colonial knowledge transmission and application to the Philippine context and Christian Filipino lawmakers unconcerned about Mindanao. What was striking was that despite the lawmakers being given free rein over Mindanao, they lacked a will and vision comparable to Sanvictores', which led them to toy with Mindanao's settlement only intermittently. We must also note the impact these colonial entanglements had on non-Christians in Mindanao. Since the scope of this paper is limited to the national planning and debate over Mindanao settlement plans, it is difficult to determine the overarching effect of the plans on Mindanao's history and experience without a thorough and careful consideration of the NLSA's implementation (1939–41) and the Japanese occupation (1941–45).

Still, it cannot be denied that the government-sponsored Mindanao migration project, starting in 1939, contributed to attracting greater Christian migration during the postwar period. Similarly, those who migrated to Mindanao before World War II served as a vital pull factor. Under such circumstances, the influx of migration endangered indigenous non-Christian people's status as traditional landholders, since the Christian settlers' challenge was predicated on American notions of public land laws and homesteading, irrespective of indigenous home and land rights. However, it would be unfair to attribute the causes for such injustice solely to Filipino technocrats and the Philippine legislature, because the Philippines as a US colony already had an entrenched and racially bifurcated colonial system long before the establishment of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1917. As a complicating factor in the Mindanao situation, the growing presence of Japanese in Mindanao and Japan's occupation of the Philippines (1941–45) should not be underestimated. It still remains to be understood why and how the twentieth-century Mindanao settlement plans and development triggered the dislocation of non-Christians and made Mindanao into a land of burning injustice.

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An Unknown Chapter in Southeast Asia's Regionalism: The Republic of Vietnam and ASEAN Relations (1967–1975)

Ha Trieu Huy*

This article aims to review the evolution of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN)'s involvement in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was founded in 1967 by Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. South Vietnamese leaders and diplomats designed a new foreign policy under the administration of Nguyen Van Thieu (1967–75) that shifted focus to Southeast Asia alongside the RVN's long-standing camaraderie with the United States. This demonstrated Thieu's keenness to engage with regional states for the purpose of nation-building and an anti-Communist future. The RVN's engagement with ASEAN reflected its efforts to foster a regionalization process along with peace, stability, and development in Southeast Asia, particularly after the withdrawal of the US and its allies. This study uses a qualitative approach, employing a wide range of archival collections housed at the National Archives Center II, Ho Chi Minh City and a handful of desk-research papers. The relationship is periodized into two phases. During the first phase (1967–72), the RVN embraced ASEAN's values and, despite its observer status, expected help in achieving its security and economic goals. After the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, ASEAN increasingly distanced itself from the RVN as members changed their stances, particularly as attacks by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam escalated in RVN territories. This paper aims to bridge a gap in scholarship by examining the positioning of the RVN in international and regional relations during the Cold War.

Keywords: Republic of Vietnam, ASEAN, regional cooperation, Southeast Asia, Vietnam War, Cold War

I Introduction

Southeast Asia became a theater of the Cold War in the mid-twentieth century, when both the United States and the USSR challenged each other's efforts to play a leading role in the world. Apprehensions related to the domino theory led the US to expand

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its strategic presence in several regions to thwart the expansionist goal of communism. In Vietnam, the French debacle in Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 sounded the death knell for the colonial administration, ruining the prospect of a reliable anti-Communist stronghold for the US in Southeast Asia. A general plebiscite of South Vietnamese civilians resulted in the establishment of a nascent government, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), on October 26, 1955, which was headed by Ngo Dinh Diem and fully supported by the US.¹⁾ After three years of quiet nation-building, Diem grappled with domestic fatigue of his anti-communism policy in rural areas, which led to the rise of the Southern Communists (Vietcong). In 1959, insurgencies by the Southern Communists pushed Diem's regime into a prolonged political and military crisis that lasted from 1960 to 1963 (Hannon 1967; Young 1968; Asselin 2011).

Although able to devise a coherent policy against the Communists thanks to his capable political adviser and brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem failed to crush dissident social movements by Buddhists, students, and his Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) (Miller 2013). He imposed strict curfews and persisted with his policy to eradicate communism. Diem's despotism resulted in the 1963 coup d'état by the ARVN, which led to rule by military junta from 1963 to 1964 (Đoàn Thêm 1989, 35–36; Lâm Vĩnh Thế 2008, 130–152). In light of the political chaos in South Vietnam, the US president Lyndon Johnson implemented the “More Flags Campaign,” which appealed to leaders of the Free World to deploy hundreds of troops to defend the RVN (Clarke 1988; Karnow 1997). The outbreak of the Vietnam War in 1965 brought Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand into the conflict. It is not an exaggeration to state that the rampant development of communism in Southeast Asia had unintended consequences for several countries in the region and coerced those states to forge a collective effort to eradicate communism under the umbrella of the US. After two years of political precariousness, Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu²⁾ commanded the people's support. They democratized the country through the Committee of National Leadership in 1965, prior to the second election of the RVN in late 1967, when Thieu was elected president (Veith 2021).

1) Ngo Dinh Diem (1901–63) was a Vietnamese Catholic intellectual and the first president of the Republic of Vietnam. Diem was elected as president after the 1955 referendum in Saigon to establish an anti-Communist government in the south of Vietnam. Diem was overthrown and assassinated by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the 1963 coup d'état.

2) Nguyen Van Thieu (1924–2001) was elected president of the Second Republic of Vietnam. Thieu served in the ARVN and participated in the 1963 coup d'état. In 1965, as Thieu's position was rising in South Vietnam's political climate, he joined with Nguyen Cao Ky to form Uy Ban Lanh Dao Quoc Gia (the National Leadership Council) to democratize the regime after the political turmoil (1963–65). He was officially appointed as the president of the RVN after the 1967 universal election and reelected in 1971. He held this position until April 21, 1975, nine days before the fall of Saigon.

However, the long-drawn-out war in Indochina also embroiled Southeast Asian countries in the regional conflict. Public outcry in the US and antiwar movements in Vietnam undermined the reputation of the US in building a solid bulwark for the Free World and US allies were sucked into the quagmire (Nixon 1985; Karnow 1997; Kissinger 2003; Lê Cung 2015). The conflict necessarily affected the regional security of Southeast Asia. Both Thailand and the Philippines were embroiled in the Vietnam War with boots on the ground, and other countries in Southeast Asia were eager to restore peace in the region (Rahman 2007; Jayakumar 2011; Boi 2021). The 1957 formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) illustrated the importance of regionalism, which prioritized economic and political linkages in the interest of sustainable regional development. The formation of the EEC gave birth to the idea that Southeast Asian countries create their own regional organization to pursue peace and development. The establishment of the EEC was an example of stepping out of the shadow of the US to engage in joint efforts to build a community of Europeans with the ultimate goal of economic independence and a European identity (Mikesell 1958; Shenfield 1963). While Vietnam was coping with the burgeoning Communist uprisings, decolonized countries in Southeast Asia—including Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—shifted their focus to financial and economic development as well as the restoration of peace in the region. Hence, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was born on August 8, 1967, marking a breakthrough in regional cooperation among Southeast Asian countries with the hope of minimizing war while attaining political and economic prosperity.

Historians and researchers generally agree that the establishment of ASEAN was a product of regionalism rather than a political and military organization. In their 1967 proclamation, ASEAN's founding members agreed to implement joint action for regional cooperation in the spirit of equality and partnership and to contribute to peace, progress, and prosperity in the region (ASEAN 1967, 1–3). Economic and social success lay at the heart of ASEAN's policy and vision (ASEAN 1967, 2). These objectives led to concerted efforts by ASEAN members to strengthen cohesion and to devise a self-made policy to preserve both national independence and inter-nation dependence and elevate the position of Southeast Asia on the world stage. While it was assumed to be an outcome of the Cold War (Takano 1994, 94), ASEAN aimed to build a zone of peace, stability, and prosperity in Southeast Asia to set the ground for potential joint engagement in external warfare down the road.

This paper focuses on the RVN's diplomacy and reasons for participating in ASEAN as soon as it was established in 1967. Inspection of source materials at the National Archives Center II reveals that the RVN paid special attention to ASEAN and expressed hope of gaining full membership in the organization. I argue that South Vietnamese

leaders and diplomats designed a new foreign policy under the administration of Nguyen Van Thieu and shifted their focus to Southeast Asia after a long-standing camaraderie with the United States. This shift demonstrated Nguyen Van Thieu's eagerness to engage with regional states for the purpose of nation-building and an anti-Communist future for the RVN. The RVN's engagement with ASEAN illustrates the importance that South Vietnamese leaders placed on the regionalization process; it also highlights their efforts to accomplish the ultimate goal of peace, stability, and development in Southeast Asia in tune with their new foreign policy as the United States and its allies withdrew from Vietnam. ASEAN offered a means for the RVN to engage regionally. It would provide a stage for the RVN to demonstrate its mutual interests raise its strategic presence in the region, and help improve its international relations in Southeast Asia.

In examining the RVN's foreign policy toward ASEAN, I argue that the road to becoming an official member of ASEAN was uneven and can be periodized into two phases. During the first phase, from the establishment of ASEAN to the Paris Peace Accords (1967–72), South Vietnamese diplomats lobbied ASEAN members to recognize the RVN in regional forums. In contrast to the initial goodwill it received during this phase, the RVN faced numerous hurdles after the Paris Peace Accords were universally validated. Engagement became increasingly difficult for the RVN as the withdrawal of the US and allied troops drew a political veil over communism, allowing ASEAN members to resume connections with Communist states for reasons of economic expediency. Indeed, Singapore and Malaysia had forged a relationship and Indonesia had cemented its ties with the Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) (i.e., North Vietnam). The détente between the US and the People's Republic of China (PRC) was enormously beneficial to the new vision of ASEAN, as the organization depended on both powers to enhance economic capacity. As a result, RVN's membership in ASEAN was abandoned and research on RVN-ASEAN relations was relegated to the back burner.

I-1 Existing Scholarship, Gaps, and New Evidence from Vietnam

Studies on the RVN's diplomacy are needed to fill gaps in the historiography. Current literature on the Vietnam War outlines the role of US foreign policy and accentuates the close-knit relationship between the US and the RVN. This paper intentionally neglects to review US foreign policy and concentrates exclusively on the RVN-ASEAN relationship and diplomacy, on which scholarship is scarce. There are some studies on Diem's diplomacy in general, as well as studies of regional relations and bilateral relationships between the RVN and specific Southeast Asian states, some of which are outlined below.

William Henderson and Wesley Fishel (1966) examine Diem's diplomatic process, from his selection of diplomats to his viewpoints on international relations. They

stress that Diem's major shortcomings were his limited capacity for talent evaluation and his short-staffed group of diplomats; thus, his regime barely achieved effective diplomatic results. The dearth of outstanding diplomats partially triggered a political crisis in his regime, which was notorious for nepotism in the eyes of international partners (Henderson and Fishel 1966, 3). Their critical argument accentuates Diem's disadvantages when coping with domestic fatigue to reinforce the supremacy of his power. Even though Diem strove to strengthen his relationship with contiguous and capitalist countries, he was unable to set up a healthy environment of diplomacy as he was amenable to the US administration.

Besides, numerous studies debate the role of the RVN in American historiography, focusing on military aspects or historical judgments of South Vietnamese administrations. Trần Nam Tiến (2020) employs a wide selection of English and Vietnamese archival documents and online sources to argue that Diem widely fraternized with countries in the region as well as from the Free World, noting that Diem developed diplomatic ties with neighboring countries, including Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines. Tiến (2020) paints a rich picture of the RVN's early diplomacy and its linkage with regional states. He makes some accurate assessments of the efficiency of the RVN's diplomacy under Diem's reign but upholds the opinion that Diem was a close client of the US, which limited his policies.

With a narrower scope of research, Ha Trieu Huy (2022) attempts a close analysis of a specific partner of the RVN: Thailand. Huy (2022) utilizes source materials housed at the Archives Center II in Ho Chi Minh City to dispel the notion that Thailand was the only significant party in the relationship, demonstrating that Thailand was a comrade of the RVN and that the latter received generous economic and military support from the former in their joint anti-Communist pursuits. Huy (2022) also scrupulously analyzes the role of overseas Vietnamese in Thailand, noting that the RVN benefited from overseas citizens' support of its foreign policy and their help in countering Communist propaganda. Nevertheless, the withdrawal of the US and its allies frustrated RVN ambitions, and changes in international relations reduced support from Thailand toward the end of the Vietnam War (Ha Trieu Huy 2022, 694–709).

Meanwhile, Leo Suryadinata (1991) pays scholarly attention to the triangular relationship between Jakarta, Hanoi, and Saigon during the Vietnam War. The central power of Sukarno was committed to a cozy relationship between Jakarta and Hanoi from the liberation of Jakarta in 1945 to 1965. In 1955, Indonesia set up a consulate in Hanoi after three years of having one in Saigon. Suryadinata confirms that while Indonesia sustained a two-Vietnam policy, Sukarno favored Hanoi as an illustration of the "nationalism" that Indonesia fully supported (Suryadinata 1991, 335). The Suharto

administration faced a dilemma as it endeavored to implement a policy of neutrality while supporting both Hanoi and Saigon. However, the Indonesian consulate in Saigon closed temporarily in 1965. Suryadinata also points out that at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in 1973, Indonesia partially recognized the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (PRG), which was supported by North Vietnam, although Indonesia and Malaysia were ultimately unable to offer the PRG full membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. Thus, Indonesia offered only a lukewarm welcome to the RVN's involvement in ASEAN because it viewed Hanoi as the sole legitimate government in Vietnam and had maintained cordial links with Hanoi since the end of World War II. Suryadinata indicates that the RVN's path to ASEAN membership was made more arduous by the close friendship between Hanoi and Jakarta.

The Philippines and the RVN shared a common national interest in containing communism in Southeast Asia. Being the closest ally of the US in the region, the Philippines housed US military bases and diligently worked with the US to prevent the spread of communism in the context of the Cold War. Matthew Jagel (2013) notes that although the Philippine government proposed assistance to South Vietnam under Diem during the Vietnam War, Diem refused the offer, deeming it unnecessary. The birth of the Philippine Civic Action Group, or PHILCAG,³⁾ marked a deeper involvement of the Philippines in the conflict: the organization provided military and economic assistance to the RVN. It was not until 1965 that the participation of the Philippines in the Vietnam War gave rise to a grave controversy among Filipino politicians. While the US gave broad support to the government of Diosdado Macapagal, Ferdinand Marcos took a balanced approach to the war, advocating for the provision of medical aid packages instead of military forces. Marcos promoted helping Vietnamese people to restore peace and self-determination in the absence of "beliefs and persuasions" (Jagel 2013). He hoped the National Liberal Front⁴⁾ might consider this a form of neutral support outside the war (Jagel 2013, 37). As was the case with Thailand's support, the participation of the Philippines in the war not only yielded economic benefits for the RVN, but also continued to strengthen its thriving relationship with the US and helped Thieu's government to thwart the southward advance of communism. This strategy allowed the Philippines to

3) The Philippine Civic Action Group supplied civic aid to the ARVN and its allies during the Vietnam War. Its base was in Tay Ninh Province, northwest of Saigon. The first aid group arrived in the RVN in 1966.

4) The National Liberal Front of Vietnam, which was set up in 1960, gathered Southern Vietnamese Communists to struggle against the RVN and US intervention. The group was active in rural areas and tried to persuade the local authorities to abandon the RVN. It was not until 1969 that Southern Vietnamese Communists de-established this association to form the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG).

achieve its anti-Communist objectives and assuage its fears about security in Southeast Asia. Jagel (2013) also sheds light on the changes in Philippine foreign policy regarding the Vietnam War under different presidents. Under the rule of Marcos, the Philippines forged mutually beneficial cooperation with the RVN to help the South Vietnamese government suppress attacks by Communists and provide humanitarian and other civic aid. Through the Philippines, the RVN appealed to ASEAN to deepen engagement with it in the realm of civic cooperation.

Singapore also paid close heed to the war in Vietnam and devised policies to adapt to the regional conflict. Ang Cheng Guan (2009) notes that Singapore ultimately pursued a policy of non-alignment to safeguard its nascent government, established in 1965. Even though Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew initially showed firm support for US involvement in the Vietnam War, he revised his foreign policy in 1967, when he realized that bombing North Vietnam would not result in US-backed forces gaining power. Lee also stressed that it was critical to arrive at a final settlement that would benefit Southeast Asia's future. He made the assumption that the war in Vietnam was merely a test of will, and that triumph would be achieved by the side that demonstrated greater patience (Ang 2009, 369–370). Ang (2009) claims there was an about-turn in Singapore's foreign policy with the onset of Soviet-Singapore diplomatic ties after the 1968 Tet Offensive, and notes that Lee sought to clear the air with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the interest of Sino-Singapore diplomatic relations and to gain China's official recognition. Though there is a deficiency of source materials, Diego Musitelli's thesis contains a collection of press releases and memoirs about Lee Kuan Yew to sharpen his argument that Singapore adopted the domino theory and supported the US and RVN in crushing communism in Vietnam. Lee assumed that the fall of Saigon would trigger political trauma in Malaysia and negatively impact the organic political growth of Singapore (Musitelli 2007). However, with increasing apathy toward communism, Lee began focusing on the Sino-American détente and how it could benefit Singapore. To elevate Singapore's position on the international stage, Lee sought (and earned) diplomatic recognition from the PRC and abandoned its heretofore Vietnam policy.

Malaysian authorities ratified a strategy to stifle the development of communism, as the domino theory portended a bleak outcome for Malaysia's security. Pamela Sodhy (1987) focuses on the salient factors for Malaysia regarding the Vietnam War, particularly Anglo-American cooperation in preventing the domino theory from becoming a reality. As the US increased its influence in Vietnam through massive financial aid for France's war in Indochina, it also consolidated its power in Malaysia through allocations to the British counterinsurgency campaign. The increased Communist presence in Southeast Asia was a weighty problem in Malaysian politics. The Malaysian government showed

an unswerving commitment to anti-communism despite domestic movements by Malaysian students, which caused some political turmoil (Sodhy 1987, 46). However, Malaysia suggested civic support in place of military aid for the RVN and the US faced opposition from Malaysia when it escalated the war in Vietnam. Some groups of Malaysian politicians, in collaboration with like-minded politicians from Thailand and the Philippines, appealed for the end of the Vietnam War through the three-nation Association of Southeast Asia Conference and called for an All-Asia Peace Conference. Sodhy (1987) also notes a continued effort by ASEAN to convene a handful of conferences to de-escalate the conflict in Indochina. Danny Wong Tze-Ken (1995) provides detail of the cozy relationship between the RVN and Malaysia: Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman visited the RVN twice in response to invitations from Diem, in 1958 and 1961. Major aid packages from Malaysia came in the form of its armed forces providing training to RVN forces in jungle warfare and Malaysia's police personnel training their counterparts in the RVN. Thereafter, Malaysia and the RVN were united in their common aim of eradicating communism. Wong (1995) presumes that the anti-Communist sentiment in Malaysia sprang from the specter of the Chinese threat along with great sympathy for the anti-Communist efforts in Vietnam. After the fall of Diem and the ensuing political upheaval, Malaysia remained closely connected to the RVN through the military training program. Indonesia, on the other hand, was opposed to the RVN after the deployment of US troops in 1965. Wong (1995) also reports on a 1966 visit by the South Vietnamese leader Nguyen Cao Ky to Malaysia to develop the long-standing relationship between the two countries as well as to float the idea of forming the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) (Wong 1995, 68–99). This visit was a key precursor of the the RVN-ASEAN relationship.

These and other studies on the relationship between the RVN and ASEAN members before the establishment of ASEAN have investigated the progress of diplomatic relations between the RVN and Southeast Asian states. The scholars above conclude that the foreign policies of Southeast Asian states were heavily influenced by Sino-American rapprochement and the changing landscape of international relations. All the research implies that Southeast Asian countries had contradictory viewpoints on the Vietnam War. While some states conformed to the US foreign policy of supporting the RVN under the aegis of anti-communism, they were flexible in revising their foreign policy to be more pragmatic and acclimatize to the thaw in Sino-American relations. As a result, the role of the RVN in Southeast Asia was compulsorily acquiescent to neighboring states' new strategies. Those strategies and policies were the fundamental context within which the RVN navigated its ASEAN foreign policy. The shortcoming of existing literature is that it does not examine RVN's perspectives on ASEAN and its activity in the organization.

The third section of this paper aims to fill this gap by reviewing RVN attempts to establish high-level bilateral relationships, its participation in ASEAN meetings and associated advocacy, and its civic cooperation with the organization. It then summarizes the key hurdles that the RVN faced vis-à-vis ASEAN following the Paris Peace Accords. First, a brief background history is provided in section two.

I-2 *Methodology*

This paper employs collections of primary historical source materials on the RVN-ASEAN relationship. These materials are currently housed at the Vietnam National Archives Center II, where several collections of the former RVN regime are preserved and were only recently made available to the public. There are two primary archival folders, including those of the president of the Second Republic of Vietnam (DIICH) and the prime minister of the RVN (PTTgII). The folders include internal and external documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on ASEAN membership and the RVN's participation in ASEAN and other international organizational meetings. From these archives, I selected relevant documents on the RVN's involvement in ASEAN and evaluated their authenticity. I then arranged the materials, from the initial RVN documents about ASEAN to the final contacts between the RVN and ASEAN prior to the fall of Saigon in 1975, to chronologically map the progress of the relationship. The relationship is periodized into two phases, incorporating the history of ASEAN and the changing nature of international relations in the context of the Cold War.

Additional desk-research papers also provide significant insight for critically analyzing the RVN-ASEAN relationship. Recent studies on ASEAN members' viewpoints regarding the Vietnam War offer particularly salient information, allowing me to compare and contrast these viewpoints. I also investigated previous research on specific ASEAN countries and US foreign relations to situate the RVN in the changing landscape of international relations in Southeast Asia. Thanks to the availability of previous research, I provide a brief background history in the following section to outline the major factors that shaped the relationship between the RVN and ASEAN. Those sources were also beneficial to support the assertions made in this paper. However, as there remains a dearth of empirical studies on this topic, I have attempted to provide a roadmap for upcoming research to reexamine the role of RVN in ASEAN and Southeast Asia's international relations.

II Brief Background of the Republic(s) of Vietnam in the Context of Southeast Asia and US-PRC Relations

Southeast Asia was a pivotal territory and caught the attention of the US and Western countries as communism-driven national movements, which posed a serious threat to the leading role of the US and the power of capitalism in this region, surged after WWII (Mills 1950). Communist insurgencies raised nagging concerns about the appropriate strategy that the US should take in the region. Vietnamese Communists led efforts to thwart France's attempts to reclaim its colonial interests, fully aware of French intentions after the capitulation of Japan in Indochina. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh established the DRV. As soon as the proclamation was published, the French attacked several areas of Cochinchina and the Communists resorted to making concessions in the 1946 Ho–Sainteny agreement and the 1946 *modus vivendi* (Tønnesson 2010). This First Indochina War in late 1946 was a stark example of the prolonged conflict between Communists and Nationalists to seize political power in Vietnam.

In contrast, the French authorities created an anti-Communist regime as a political counterweight, calling on former Emperor Bao Dai to be the representative of the new government. The *Accords de l'Elysée* (Elysée Accords), signed by Bao Dai and the French on March 8, 1949 and ratified by the French National Assembly on January 29, 1950, formed the State of Vietnam as an independent member of the French Union. This regime was formally recognized as sovereign by states around the world. However, the overwhelming victory of Vietnamese Communists in Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954 marked the end of France's ability to maintain its grip on Indochina's political climate. The triumph of Communists blighted France's vision for the country and marked the onset of the Vietnam War, which churned Vietnam into a battlefield of ideologically opposing systems. With the exit of France in Indochina, the ability to uphold an anti-Communist stronghold in Southeast Asia was slipping away. The 1954 Geneva Accords were insignificant in furthering US foreign policy in Southeast Asia. These realities prompted a deeper engagement by the US to buttress the weakened strategic buffer zone in Vietnam and bolster the anti-Communist government. Truman's administration soon built a thriving relationship with Bao Dai's through economic and military aid packages to defend the State of Vietnam from impetuous Communist attacks. Under the aegis of the US, Ngo Dinh Diem, who was expected to cooperate with the US to contain communism in Vietnam, was "coronated." As soon as he was appointed prime minister by Bao Dai, Diem publicized his intention to de-establish the State of Vietnam and conduct a general referendum in Saigon on October 23, 1955 on the establishment of a new Republic of Vietnam (RVN) (Keesing's Research 1970, 17; Karnow 1997, 239; Miller 2013). Consequently, Diem

deposed Bao Dai and marked the birth of the First Republic of Vietnam on October 26, 1956 with a legislative election.

Although Diem demonstrated his commitment to US foreign policy at the dawn of the RVN, several of his internal policies resulted in bleak outcomes, triggering domestic fatigue from 1959 to 1963. In addition to Communist uprisings in rural areas aimed at unseating local RVN authorities, Diem's government also suffered from an unsavory reputation owing to nepotism and religious discrimination. The 1963 Buddhist crisis was a glaring illustration of the RVN's political turmoil as Diem failed to remedy the situation through negotiations while simultaneously being unable to control the Communists. Hence, the US greenlighted a coup d'état by the ARVN, which resulted in the assassination of Diem and his younger brother Ngo Dinh Nhu on November 1, 1963, toppling the First Republic (Miller 2013; Shaw 2015; Tan 2019; Hammer 1987). The ensuing ruling ARVN military junta failed to devise a firm policy to democratize the political landscape. While coping with its political shortcomings, the ARVN also grappled with continued and harsh attacks from Southern Vietnamese Communists.⁵⁾ Replacing one totalitarian regime with another did nothing to help the US effectively implement an anti-communism policy in Vietnam. Thereby, US President Johnson focused on the "More Flags" Campaign, which invited alliance troops to escalate the war and achieve a decisive victory over the Communists in Vietnam. Simultaneously, Johnson placed his confidence in Nguyen Van Thieu, a lieutenant general of the ARVN, amplifying his voice in the political arena. With US support, Thieu became the President of the Second Republic of Vietnam in 1967 through a general election (Veith 2021), concluding the military junta's reign.

Thieu immediately recognized the need to seek new friends to avoid an overwhelming dependence on aid from the US and its allies. Hence, the RVN modified its foreign policies to stress the importance of Southeast Asian countries and the region as a whole, particularly in light of the decision of the US and its allies to withdraw in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive. With the establishment of ASEAN, it was a propitious time for RVN to shape a notion of regionalism and regional power.

The rampant development of communism, together with the involvement of Allied troops in Vietnam, put Southeast Asia on alert. Dynamics in the region became more complex owing to an unforeseeable change in the relations between two great powers. The ferocious war between partners of the US and the Communists peaked during 1965–67. Allied troops conducted large-scale marches to stop Communist expansion; simultaneously, bombing campaigns were applied to break the Ho Chi Minh trail, which was

5) By then, also known as the Vietcong.

instrumental in breeding Southern Communists to resist the power of the US and its allies. Shortly after the Tet Offensive, the US deliberated over a new strategy to extricate its troops from Vietnam. Concurrently, the Sino-America détente became a mainstream of politics in the Asia-Pacific as the Nixon administration pivoted to isolating large-scale military attacks of North Vietnamese Communists following US withdrawal. Thanks to the ongoing attempts of Zhou En Lai, the PRC de-escalated tension with the US and the two powers signed a joint communique in Shanghai in 1972 (Garver 2015; Kissinger 1994). The normalization of US-PRC relations also featured a major revision of Southeast Asia's foreign policy. While a few states consistently supported the US presence in Southeast Asia to defeat communism, others placed their faith in the PRC. Ngoei Wen-Qing (2019) argues that the PRC was a critical factor in shaping the new foreign policy of ASEAN. While making a lingering case for US involvement as a means to squelch a simmering movement of Malaysian Communists (Newsinger 2013), ASEAN states firmly rejected PRC hegemony in Southeast Asia owing to ill-will toward conflict and China's ambition to monopolize the region and the South China Sea (Ngoei 2019, 301). This stance was further revised following the withdrawal of the US. The government of Indonesia fully accepted the PRC in Southeast Asia in line with the pro-Communist policy of Sukarno, which triggered the 1965–66 Indonesian genocide (Mehr 2009). The rising power of the PRC and the decreasing role of the US in Southeast Asia challenged ASEAN's efforts to gain diplomatic recognition from and cultivate a cordial bilateral relationship with the PRC.

III The Location of ASEAN in the RVN's Foreign Policy

The importance of regional cooperation was an influential feature of RVN foreign policy from the start. South Vietnamese politicians of both the First and the Second Republic made efforts to engage with regional actors on security objectives to contain communism and achieve prosperous development in Southeast Asia (Trần Nam Tiến 2015, 19–29). As soon as he became president, Ngo Dinh Diem highlighted the role of Southeast Asia and neighboring countries in his foreign policy (HDQNCM, Folder 150, Box 23 1965, 2), but he was not able to foster organic relationships with Thailand and the Philippines through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO (DICH, Folder 1446 1956).⁶⁾

6) The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was established in 1955 for the collective defense of Southeast Asia. The members were Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were non-members protected by SEATO. The organization was disbanded in 1977.

Henderson and Fishel (1966) argue that the RVN's foreign relations during Diem's tenure failed to expand diplomatic ties or earn international support. In Indochina, Diem's relations with Laos and Cambodia remained cool due to the unclear anti-communism policy of those two states (Trần Nam Tiến 2015, 23; 2020, 120–123). From 1963 to 1965, the growing US and allied troop involvement in South Vietnam included Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, which significantly influenced the RVN's foreign policy. This not only included tightening anti-Communist military cooperation, but also promoting civic cooperation to win the war and achieve a prosperous Vietnam. The role of SEATO was paramount to guarantee the interests of the RVN and to address its nagging concerns about higher level political and military upheavals in South Vietnam. Despite the partnership with SEATO, South Vietnamese diplomats continued to stress the role of a non-military regional cooperation mechanism to de-escalate the conflict. Thanks to the SEATO and a shared vision of anti-communism, the RVN forged ties with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand (BCC, Folder 446 1967, 2).

The foreign relations of the Second RVN became more dynamic owing to a concrete foreign policy that encompassed several categories of diplomacy. Prior to the establishment of ASEAN, South Vietnamese diplomats had already advocated for regional cooperation, as the RVN benefitted both from the support of overseas Vietnamese communities and platforms from which to advocate for and gain international backing. In 1966, Thieu and Ky appealed to other countries for support at the Manila Conference and attempted to join international organizations as full members (PTTg, Folder 20347, Box 23 1966, 6).⁷⁾ On October 25, 1966, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was specially tasked to galvanize the RVN's international relations and gain support of partners, demonstrating a deepening desire to engage with international and regional organizations. South Vietnamese diplomats affirmed the primacy of expanding a tactical presence in international environments to increase the RVN's prestige (BCC, Folder 446 1967, 2). When summarizing their strategy, South Vietnamese diplomats consistently focused on foreign relation development with the motto “more friends, fewer enemies,” and reinforced alliances to earn international diplomatic support. Amid this strategy, Southeast Asian states caught the attention of South Vietnamese diplomats as a means to boost the RVN's profile in the region and beyond (BCC, Folder 446 1968, 7).

The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 was undoubtedly significant to the RVN as the newly elected president ruminated over a policy to bolster the republic's strategic presence and development in Southeast Asia. While tackling domestic fatigue caused by

7) As of 1966, the RVN had become a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Bank (IB), and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), among other organizations.

North Vietnamese Communists and domestic dissidents, South Vietnamese diplomats recognized the potential of Southeast Asian countries to weaken the position of the DRV in the North. In 1968, Tran Chanh Thanh⁸⁾ concretized the RVN's foreign policy to elevate its position internationally. The RVN attempted to join additional international entities, non-governmental organizations, and social groups to enlist support and multilateral cooperation. Simultaneously, the RVN established bilateral relations with Cambodia, Indonesia, and African countries, and gained a strategic presence in Middle Asia, Central Arica, Eastern Africa, Northern Europe, South America, France, Cambodia, and Indonesia (DIICH, Folder 7436 1968, 2). This was a far-reaching approach of the government to cope with Communist advances and the results reflect the significance of the RVN's foreign relations tactics.

South Vietnamese diplomats saw the establishment of ASEAN as a fertile ground for helping to build a peaceful, economically and politically stable South Vietnam upon the RVN gaining membership, as the regional organization pledged to cooperate in economic, cultural, and social affairs (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969a, 14). Acutely aware that the densely populated region would necessarily drive market demand and thus economic growth, the South Vietnamese deemed ASEAN as a new source of regional support in place of long-term aid from the US (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969a, 17). South Vietnamese diplomats sought economic cooperation and humanitarian aid from ASEAN members through deeper engagement with former allied countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines, and benefited from these ties. These attempts by RVN have been neglected by conventional historiography, as the tremendous volume of research on early phases of the Vietnam War and post-Vietnam War in the US and Vietnam cast the RVN as a client of US foreign policy. These RVN attempts also run counter to the narrative of some historians that the RVN held a subordinate diplomatic position as they demonstrate that the RVN raised its own profile amid the flaming conflict, asserting its eagerness to join ASEAN (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969a, 17).

Regional cooperation loomed larged, as the regional dialogue mechanism of ASEAN not only presented a new norm, but also helped shape the RVN's nation building plans. Through the prism of ASEAN, the RVN could liken its anti-Communist national development goals to contributions to the region and thus seek foreign aid in that vein. Prior to the formation of ASEAN, peace restoration and regional prosperity were central to RVN's home and foreign policy, thus the timing was ripe for the RVN when the association was established on August 8, 1967.

8) Tran Chanh Thanh (1917–75) was a South Vietnamese diplomat and politician who served as the Minister of Information in Diem's administration and as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Thieu's administration.

III-1 *Phase 1: RVN-ASEAN Engagement for Mutual Benefit (1967–1972)*

As soon as ASEAN was established in August 1967, South Vietnamese diplomats devised a comprehensive policy to earn the organization's support, creating an information campaign to deepen understanding of the RVN's anti-communism efforts in the regional security sphere. Under the cloud of the Cold War, the birth of the ASEAN illustrated a concerted effort of members to stem the rapidly expanding war in Vietnam and the Indochina peninsula. Demonstrating insight, ASEAN members invited the engagement of external countries to elevate the Association's position in international relations (ASEAN 1967). Initially, ASEAN prioritized far-reaching economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the inclusion of cultural and social aspects emerged as a new concept to bind a multifaceted Southeast Asia based on cohesion and equality (DIICH, Folder 1613 1968, 2). South Vietnamese diplomats argued that ASEAN members yearned for Southeast Asia's economic well-being and prosperity, not a military ally, thus distinguishing ASEAN from SEATO. The RVN expected ASEAN to help facilitate its expanded presence in Southeast Asia, thus counterbalancing the DRV in the realm of international relations. It was also hoped that ASEAN, in recognizing the legitimacy of the RVN, would help foster further relationships with new partners in Southeast Asia. Owing to a "shared culture" in Southeast Asia, people-to-people contact was floated as a new idea for South Vietnamese diplomats to tighten the RVN's relationship with ASEAN and implement the RVN's overseas Vietnamese community policy (BCC, Folder 446 1968, 1).

The RVN's new foreign policy aimed to restore peace and aligned with the major aims of ASEAN. After one year of Allied troop involvement, Nguyen Van Thieu proposed lessening tensions in his country by removing external forces in 1966. He also diversified diplomacy efforts to amplify civic cooperation, information campaigns, and peace efforts while concentrating on the Southeast Asian milieu to address domestic fatigue (BCC, Folder 446 1967, 2). Thieu's vision was of a peaceful Southeast Asia absent of communism.

III-1-1 RVN Participation in ASEAN Events

Within a year of his inauguration (in January 1969), US President Nixon restored a clear presence of the ARVN and announced a conclusion to US intervention in the Vietnam War. This did not spark a revision in the RVN's foreign policy, which had already emphasized regional cooperation and support. Hence, the withdrawal of allied troops offered an opportunity to further engage with ASEAN to end the war and conflicts in the region. In December 1969, ASEAN was eager to acknowledge the RVN at its Annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia. Tran Van Lam, the RVN's Minister of Foreign Affairs, led the RVN delegation together with Ta Thai

Buu, the RVN's Minister of Asia Pacific Affairs and Ngo Khac Thieu, Pham Kim Ngoc, the RVN's Minister of Economics. At the meeting, South Vietnamese diplomats supported collaboration among ASEAN members, agreeing with the proclamation of Carlos P. Romulo, the head of the Philippines delegation, that a coherent ASEAN policy was needed to strengthen solidarity for regional economic well-being and to establish a common ASEAN market. Thanat Khoman, the Thai foreign minister, sought genuine peace in Southeast Asia by normalizing diplomatic relations and coalescing economic well-being in lieu of withstanding a norm of anti-communism. The Indonesian representative proposed membership for the RVN and Laos to the ASEAN Chairman (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969c, 12). Malaysia also vigorously supported a larger role for the RVN in ASEAN (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969c, 19). South Vietnamese diplomats organized a series of amicable conversations on the sidelines of the conference, lobbying ASEAN politicians to recognize the RVN government and its intentions as legitimate for deescalating the war and restoring the region to a sustainable level of development after the war.

Through these exchanges at the 1969 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969a, 19), a perception of peacebuilding and regionalization was created. ASEAN members reaffirmed their objectives and took a balanced approach to investigate the post-war policy of both the DRV and the RVN as US troops pulled out across the south of Vietnam. When the Nixon Doctrine⁹⁾ was announced in 1969, Thieu was focused on the objectives of national reconstruction and irredentism. It was believed that the participation of the RVN in ASEAN would stimulate multilateralism and present a wide range of regional projects to develop relations among ASEAN members. The 1969 AMM heralded South Vietnam as a budding diplomatic actor in ASEAN regardless of its status as an observer. At the closing ceremony, Lam declared that if the RVN was offered full membership, it would conform to the aims and objectives of the Association (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969b, 1). Despite an about-face in the foreign policies of the allies, integration into Southeast Asia was an insightful of RVN policies.

At the AMM, South Vietnamese diplomats promoted the idea of peacebuilding in Southeast Asia. They provided a greater flow of information regarding the future of the RVN after the withdrawal of external forces, promoting further development of Southeast Asia in the future. They demonstrated a commitment to the incremental progress of peace in Southeast Asia via the multilateral and bilateral mechanisms of ASEAN. Owing

9) In 1969 Nixon declared that "the United States would assist in the defense and developments of allies and friends," but would not "undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world." This meant that each ally nation was in charge of its own security. The Doctrine argued for the pursuit of peace through a partnership with American allies. For the RVN, this marked an all-out withdrawal of the US and allied troops and left the ARVN to fight against the DRV, the PRG in an atmosphere of domestic social fatigue.

to the appeal of ASEAN, South Vietnamese diplomats decided to engage with ASEAN members to benefit the RVN political clout. It marked a breakthrough in the RVN's diplomacy, firmly planting the idea that regional cooperation could be useful for economic and political leverage.

The RVN would take on greater responsibility in defusing the hostility of Communists and creating a healthy political climate in Southeast Asia. According to the assessment of South Vietnamese diplomats, the 1969 AMM and other ASEAN meetings in that year were immensely useful in helping the RVN adapt to changing US foreign policy and position itself in Southeast Asia. The AMM meeting also marked the RVN's alignment with ASEAN's approach to peace and development (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969b, 14) and the RVN became a front-running candidate for ASEAN membership. The 1969 AMM was a litmus test of the RVN's ability to survive the Nixon Doctrine and preempt the Communists' own strategic angling in Southeast Asia. South Vietnamese diplomats firmly believed in their tactical alliance with Thailand and the Philippines in their showdown with the Communists. The new foreign policy of the RVN was proving successful in response to the reduction of US and alliance troops in Southeast Asia.

While ASEAN focused on creating a multilateral platform, the prospect of the war ending and peace restoration in Southeast Asia accelerated the regionalization process, opening avenues for possible civic and economic cooperation, humanitarian aid, and the mutual development of ASEAN members.

III-1-2 RVN Relationships with Specific ASEAN Members

Two founding members of ASEAN, namely Thailand and the Philippines, were particularly important to RVN's engagement with ASEAN, often advocating for more RVN involvement in the Association. Although Hanoi had established bilateral ties with Indonesia in 1965, this did not deter Saigon's efforts to be a part of ASEAN and Southeast Asia's developmental trajectory. Based on the archived documents, I found that South Vietnamese diplomats eagerly designed a scheme to elevate diplomatic relations with Indonesia and successfully established Saigon-Jakarta contact. To strengthen relations, South Vietnamese diplomats formed a Department of Commerce and Information in Jakarta and increased the number of bilateral visits and ambassadorial level diplomacy in 1969 (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969a, 19). Indonesia was critical for the RVN's ASEAN membership bid, and the diplomatic efforts of the RVN closed the door of ill-will with a promise of a Saigon-Jakarta amity.

Conversely, an official relationship with Singapore proved unsuccessful owing to the island nation's half-hearted acknowledgement of the RVN's desire to become an official member of ASEAN. While complimenting the RVN for development gains under the

reign of Diem, Singapore's leader Lee Kuan Yew at first reversed Singapore's nonchalant stance to expressing goodwill for a proposal from Lam that Singapore would establish a commercial relationship with South Vietnam in 1969. Although there is a modicum of scholarly research regarding Singapore's position on the RVN, Ang Cheng Guan (2009) insists that, with the overwhelming support of the PRC, Singapore backtracked its diplomatic relations with the US and revised its policy toward South Vietnam when the Nixon administration began "concluding" the conflict in Indochina. In the context of the Sino-America détente, the Singaporean authorities maintained a cautious stance toward the war in Vietnam, reserving itself to muted comments.

Despite the challenges presented by bilateral relations, Lam optimistically expected that through solidarity among the nations of Southeast Asia, concerted efforts would be made to reduce hunger and other social ills in the region. These expectations were fueled by a joint communique with ASEAN members to boost RVN's reputation in a developing future of Southeast Asia (DIICH, Folder 1681 1969d, 2). This put the RVN one step closer to cooperation in economic and cultural fields. The ability of ASEAN to sustain commercial activity and economic growth was viewed as critical for the reconstruction of the country after the 1968 Tet Offensive, not to mention its pragmatic benefits vis-à-vis the increasing Vietnamization of the war. Therefore the RVN's approach had the potential to fulfill two objectives: winning the war and building up the country.

Thanks to the RVN's new foreign policy and the Nixon Doctrine, South Vietnamese diplomats continued to gain a voice in ASEAN. Though being cast as a client of the US and lampooned as a lackey government by Hanoi, the foreign policy of Thieu proved veracious in its attempts to integrate into ASEAN instead of simply relying on the US and its allies. Facing political turmoil at home and diminished international support due to the Sino-American rapprochement, Thieu was sensible to pivot to Southeast Asia, which held promise for the future of the RVN. However, Thieu's policy and the diplomatic history of the RVN was yoked by the changing international political landscape, which also influenced the development of ASEAN and the history of Southeast Asia.

III-1-3 RVN Advocacy Efforts

While significantly increasing engagement with ASEAN and ASEAN member states, South Vietnamese diplomats sustained a steady campaign of information dissemination and people-to-people contact. In late 1966, efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrated the scale of the "information campaign" in a flurry of diplomacy. The RVN benefited from diplomatic attacks to counter its enemies' propaganda and sought to consolidate control over spreading its own message across the globe at speed (BCC, Folder 446 1967, 3). Hence, South Vietnamese diplomats coveted participation in ASEAN

information and cultural activity when ASEAN members reached a consensus in the mass communications and culture field at the Ministerial meeting of ASEAN members in Kuala Lumpur in November 1969. Witt Siwasariyanond, the head of the Thai delegation at the meeting, designed an ASEAN policy of cultural diplomacy, which focused on the role of newspapers, films, and theater in ASEAN cultural activity (PTTg, Folder 291 1969a, 1). The Malaysia delegation proposed annual seminars on the mass media and public diplomacy to alleviate the wounds of conflicts and to enhance mutual understanding among ASEAN members. Underscoring the significance of people-to-people contact, South Vietnamese diplomats broached a discussion of cultural exchanges among ASEAN and other peoples to strengthen cultural links and to facilitate a deepening engagement between ASEAN and other countries. With the advantage of developed domestic visual arts, the South Vietnamese occupied the role of film broadcast and exchanges. They argued that cultural events were a rewarding opportunity to promote the national culture through art and musical performances, which would link Vietnam's identities to Southeast Asian culture and ASEAN (PTTg, Folder 291 1969b, 2). Truong Quang Gia, the head of the Culture and Information Division of the RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acknowledged that the RVN involvement in ASEAN would create a formidable opportunity for his country to reinforce the notion of regionalism and enhance multilateral relationships.

III-1-4 Continued Engagement in 1970–71

Although facing harsher attacks from Communists across South Vietnam in the following years, diplomatic activity between the RVN and ASEAN continued at pace. On January 22, 1970, Carlos P. Romolo, the Philippines Minister of Foreign Affairs, submitted a proposal to the ASEAN Chairman that the Association grant honorary membership to the RVN.¹⁰ Romolo thought that the RVN was critical to ASEAN's peace-building efforts in Southeast Asia. This advocacy from the Philippines boosted South Vietnam's ability to rally for a collective effort with ASEAN in the juggernaut of the war and for regional economic reconstruction. Lam and his colleagues sought to be on good terms with ASEAN members, consistently staying focused on stymying the Communists and their expansionist goals in Cambodia and Laos. South Vietnamese diplomats saw ASEAN as critical to counter information from the DRV and the PRG. South Vietnamese diplomats implied that the RVN could use ASEAN for its own goals and fully subscribed to the idea and objectives of regional cooperation for a better life for South Vietnamese people and for ASEAN's prosperity and freedom (DIICH, Folder 1759 1970, 1–2).

Confronted with a series of impetuous Communist attacks on the border as well as

10) Lam carried out some correspondence with Romolo to encourage and express gratitude for his efforts.

the Sino-American détente, South Vietnamese diplomats continued to believe that regional cooperation could curb communism and achieve a peaceful Southeast Asia. At the 6th ASPAC Ministerial Meeting on July 14, 1971, in Manila, the Philippines, Lam voiced his concerns over DRV incursions in Laos and Cambodia (DIICH, Folder 1849 1971, 2). In March 1971, the ARVN had clashed with Communists along the border with the Lao Kingdom in the Lam Son 719 Campaign. The involvement of RVN in Lao's battlefields in this offensive aimed to subdue the Pathet Lao, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), and denunciations from Hanoi. Lam asserted the ARVN could keep communism at bay in Southeast Asia (DIICH, Folder 1849 1971, 2). At the Manila meeting, South Vietnamese diplomats urged ASEAN to operate as a stronger mechanism for economic cooperation and reiterated their fervent belief in peaceful coexistence and regional collaboration. Invited parties showed overwhelming support for RVN's foreign policies and encouraged it to maintain its strategic anti-Communist role in Southeast Asia.

The RVN's proposals for peace continued to receive ample attention from ASEAN from 1971 to 1972 as the retraction of US and alliance troops in the Vietnam War placated domestic and international grievances. An approach of neutrality lies at the heart of ASEAN conversations during this time. A debate on the disarmament of the Indochinese peninsula was central to the ASEAN Ambassadorial Summit of ASEAN during November 25–27, 1971, where its Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) was adopted a Joint Implementation Committee (PTTg, Folder 20734 1971, 8) established. South Vietnamese diplomats disagreed with the zone, despite a consensus from the US and former allies of South Vietnam. Thailand lobbied South Vietnamese diplomats to accept the idea, but they instead publicly rejected it, as it would force the RVN to pause its (military) anti-Communist efforts. The ZOPFAN Declaration did not portend well for anti-communism campaigns in Southeast Asian countries. In response, the RVN implemented a hardline policy to expand efforts against the DRV and Communists in Southeast Asia.

As the international order reshaped in the wake of the Sino-American rapprochement, anti-communism lost its position in ASEAN's foreign policy. In response to the neutral posture of ASEAN, Lam stated that Thieu appreciated the organization's suggestion, particularly in Southeast Asia, but the RVN would scrutinize it in advance. They viewed the DRV and PRG's ability to hold political sway over Southeast Asia as an urgent problem (PTTg, Folder 20734 1972). The RVN saw that the neutralization policy sought peace for Southeast Asia, but also recognized that it would invalidate anti-communism policy in Southeast Asia.

The declaration of a neutrality zone and other ASEAN actions during 1971–72

prioritized political stability over concerns about the spread of communism. This seemed to mark a transition to abandoning anti-communism in Southeast Asia completely. In a letter delivered to Lam on July 21, 1972, Adam Malik urged ASEAN members to accept the viewpoints of both sides and displayed a longing to broker peace and conclude the war with a ceasefire signed by both the DRV and the RVN. Accordingly, ASEAN members acknowledged the legitimacy of the DRV and the RVN rather than US involvement and the PRG: they did not politically acknowledge the PRG as a legitimate government at the Paris Peace Negotiations in 1972 and proposed hastening the end of the war through negotiations with both the RVN and the DRV (PTTg, Folder 20734 1972). The content of the negotiations was on par with the provisions of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and the ten principles of the Bandung Conference of 1955 (Ampiah, 2007; Finnane and McDougall 2010).¹¹⁾ ASEAN enthusiastically safeguard a healthy political climate in Southeast Asia. The withdrawal of the US and alliance troops opened a door for negotiation to end the war. ASEAN could play a vital role as a mediator to balance great powers and achieve an ultimate goal of regional development. Politically, ASEAN was unanimously perceived as a constellation of capitalist countries for economic and social links, which could present an obstacle to Communist advances. In essence, ASEAN still validated the RVN's foreign policies and collectively enhanced the solidarity of Southeast Asian countries in anti-communism campaigns.

By and large, 1967–72 marked a period of RVN involvement in ASEAN as Thieu's administration acclimatized to a new political landscape and pivoted to regionalism. In the wake of the success of the EEC, Southeast Asian nations established ASEAN to deal with regional affairs and intentionally build economic well-being based on a shared foundation of culture, history, and level of development instead of falling prey to political showdowns amid a simmering Cold War. As for the RVN, ASEAN represented a newly emergent entity that could help minimize its heavy dependence on US aid and offer it a legitimate position in Southeast Asia. However, becoming an official member of ASEAN proved challenging for the RVN as it grappled with more intensive Communist attacks and the changing foreign policies of the great powers, both of which ultimately determined its future.

III-2 *Phase II: Suspicion and Failure (1973–75)*

Throughout the evolution of the Paris peace negotiations, Thieu and his colleagues were unable to control covert talks between the DRV and the US. Thus, with the PAVN in

11) The 1955 Bandung Conference respected the self-determination rights of South Vietnamese people, which was consistent with the RVN delegation's opinions on the legitimacy of RVN as well as peace restoration at the Paris Peace Negotiations.

South Vietnam's territories, the RVN was forced to sign a premature agreement. The Paris Peace Accords left it to the Thieu administration to safeguard South Vietnamese territories from Communists, but provisions in the agreement were disadvantageous to the RVN future. Despite dealing with subsequent territorial and diplomatic challenges, the RVN persevered long enough to fulfill national reconstruction and a ceasefire in Indochina through its talks in the Paris Negotiations and at ASEAN meetings. As such, assistance from ASEAN members was critical to bolster the RVN, not least by helping it attain membership in the Association, which would provide it with economic and civic boosts. Nonetheless, South Vietnamese politicians also recognized that ASEAN was an embryonic organization and foreign aid still ranked as a top priority for ASEAN's developmental future. South Vietnamese politicians passionately believed that the dynamic market of South Vietnam would create a surge of economic recovery and growth. ASEAN investment was a key component of the RVN's economic strategy to integrate into the global market. But, due to PAVN attacks across the country, ASEAN members were hesitant to invest in this potential market. South Vietnamese economists recognized that ASEAN members were still developing countries, but noted that ASEAN prioritized internal development over outside help, as the trauma of the Cold War had made the future of ASEAN member states uncertain. While the ASEAN Fund offered some promise for the Southeast Asian economy, in an ASEAN meeting during April 2–3, 1973, Malaysia's representative Encil Yusoff Ariff disavowed the financial ability of ASEAN to provide economic aid for the RVN's reconstruction in the post-war period (PTTg, Folder 20857 1973, 1), arguing that South Vietnam's market was inaccessible and thus had a dim future within the regional economy (PTTg, Folder 20857 1973, 1). Thereby, the gap between ASEAN and the RVN widened and civic cooperation to help the RVN overcome its challenges and realize organic economic growth within the region became unachievable.

Although sympathetic to the RVN, ASEAN members engaged with and even secretly supported the DRV. ASEAN's foreign policy in the wake of the Paris Peace Accords was typical of the Sino-American détente, which frustrated RVN attempts to repel the spread of communism. Stepping out of the shadow of the US, the RVN attempted to craft its own international relationships. ASEAN had held promise as a staging ground to test the RVN's foreign policy. Yet, its actions after the Peace Accords crushed RVN's effort to cultivate a mutual understanding.

Although fully aware of ASEAN's stance, the RVN did not change its approach to ASEAN. In 1974, South Vietnamese diplomats projected the RVN as nation builders and rekindled relationships with former allies in order to minimize communism's impacts and deter violent escalation in the Indochina peninsula from PAVN offensives. Hence,

South Vietnamese diplomats expected to receive renewed attention from the US and new partners to block the DRV and PRG infringements into RVN territories (PTTg, Folder 20834 1974). While Thieu's foreign policy remained a worthy anti-Communist strategy and safeguarded a right of self-determination, Thieu and his colleagues failed to further pursue its ASEAN-centered foreign policy due to its shifting focus to the military fight against the DRV. Thieu and his colleagues begrudged how Communist influences colored Southeast Asia's political landscape and denigrated the RVN. The RVN had previously hoped for ASEAN membership; this hope was rapidly disappearing amid increasingly tokenistic words and frigid welcomes of ASEAN members. In May 1974, Adam Malik, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, neglected to invite the RVN to ASEAN's 7th Ministerial Summit, while extending a warm welcome to the DRV (PTTg, Folder 20357 1974, 2). While Malik argued that this would not ruin ASEAN's bilateral ties with the RVN, he acknowledged that the invitation gave the DRV an opportunity to deepen its involvement in ASEAN. Archival documents indicate that South Vietnamese diplomats lambasted Indonesia's neutral stance at this time, questioning their tacit recognition of the Paracel Islands as belonging to the PRC. They also decried the official appearance of the PRG at the 1974 Diplomatic Conference on Humanitarian Law. Even if ASEAN continued to nominally include the RVN in association activity, ultimately ASEAN's ostracization prevented the RVN from integrating into the regional milieu.

Although the political context in Vietnam seriously hindered the RVN's full ASEAN membership, South Vietnamese politicians took a piecemeal approach to ASEAN. Upon closer analysis, the RVN took its presence at the 7th Ministerial Summit in Jakarta in May 1974 seriously (PTTg, Folder 20357 1974, 5). Archived documents from 1974 reveal that Thailand and the Philippines continued to promote neighborly relations between the RVN and ASEAN and these two allies aimed to establish renewed partnerships to satisfy regional and RVN objectives. The two ASEAN members inflated the significance that the RVN would have to ASEAN's economic potential and post-war of Southeast Asia scenario. In a dispatch of a Malaysian delegate to the ASEAN Standing Committee meeting of 1974, ASEAN members stated that restoration of peace in Vietnam would spur Southeast Asia revival (PTTg, Folder 20357 1974, 5). The role of Vietnam in the ASEAN market was paramount to ASEAN members, who yearned for economic growth and tariff-free regional trade. Given the 1973 Energy Crisis, ASEAN questioned inviting outside support, fearing it may lead to exploitation of natural resources. In this context, the market economy of the RVN offered potential as part of a commercial web in Southeast Asia.

Despite this, and for the reasons mentioned above, from late 1974 to early 1975, the relationship between the RVN and ASEAN worsened. The RVN continued large-scale

attacks on Communists from the North and those in the South. This stymied the prospect of the RVN succeeding in its Southeast Asia integration policy. No information could be found in the archives regarding efforts to cooperate with ASEAN after 1974, as South Vietnamese leaders were forced to focus on survival on the battlefield. The prospect of membership in ASEAN rapidly disappeared as PAVN and PRG forces sparked political convulsions (Veith 2013). A foreseeable defeat from all-out attacks of the DRV, along with the dearth of aid and rising suspicion among former allies, forced South Vietnamese politicians to relinquish the idea of ASEAN membership. The decision to engage in the regional security sphere was shelved and dreams of rebuilding a vigorous South Vietnam were shattered by Communist advances and the reticence of ASEAN members to grant RVN official membership following the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. While consorting with Hanoi from 1973 to 1975, ASEAN members further revealed their stance toward Communist blocs by establishing bilateral relationships with the PRC in 1974 (Malaysia) and 1975 (Thailand and the Philippines) (Ang and Liow 2015). Although they advocated for ASEAN membership at every opportunity, South Vietnamese diplomats were unable to turn the sympathy of ASEAN members for anti-communism into an actionable result.

During the post-Paris Accords and implementation period, bilateral ties between the RVN and ASEAN dropped off. The rift originated from both internal and external factors. The Paris Accords marked a major revision in ASEAN states' policy toward the war, and some attempted to establish a relationship with the PRC. ASEAN appeased the vexation of the RVN only with tokenistic words and support, maintaining an observer role in the conflict between the DRV and the RVN from 1973 to 1975. The abandonment of aid from former RVN allies, including Thailand, the Philippines, and the US, led to political suspicion and cast doubt on the anti-communism strategy in Southeast Asia. ASEAN's new position plunged RVN's prospects into despair. In addition, PAVN and PRG attacks across South Vietnam and propaganda campaigns demanded RVN's focus away from ASEAN diplomacy. While the RVN had navigated its policy to achieve a special role in ASEAN, the changing international political landscape and PAVN assaults destroyed any hope of a dynamic development, or indeed a post-war future, for the RVN.

IV Conclusions

This paper investigated South Vietnamese diplomats' perceptions of ASEAN and its potential for an RVN-built road to peace and development following the withdrawal of US and allied troops in Vietnam. I argue that ASEAN was key to RVN foreign policy during 1967–72 and remained significant to the regime despite the 1973 Paris Peace Accords.

A scarcity of source materials has made this is an unknown stretch of Southeast Asian and RVN history. Examination of archival documents housed at the Vietnam National Archives Center II has provided new insights.

The ASEAN-RVN bilateral relationship proved mutually effective from the establishment of ASEAN until the Paris Peace Accords. South Vietnamese diplomats promoted the supremacy of regional dialogue to elevate the role and prestige of the RVN in Southeast Asia. They distinguished the Association from a military or political counterpart to create a peaceful space in Southeast Asia in which to pursue economic development plans, thus demonstrating its goodwill toward fostering a robust version of the ASEAN community. The RVN raised its status in Southeast Asia and proposed initiatives to build a solid ASEAN with its full membership. In spite of being an official observer at ASEAN summits, South Vietnamese diplomats took advantage of these forums to convey their viewpoints to ASEAN members. The actions of the RVN contributed to a political dynamism in Southeast Asia during an emerging period of peace and development in the region.

The Paris Accords of 1973 dissolved a bipolar world order with a Sino-American détente, causing an about-face in the positions of Southeast Asian nations. The rapprochement, in conjunction with a new inaccessibility of ASEAN, made the RVN question whether anti-communism was still a top priority of ASEAN members. While the US retracted aid and coerced the RVN into sanctioning the Paris Accords, the expansionist goal of the PRC in the Paracel Islands and impetuous attacks of the PAVN and the PRG locked all doors to the RVN's membership in ASEAN. Subsequent changes in foreign policies of ASEAN members and great powers ruined all chance of the RVN becoming a critical part of ASEAN, thus ending a chapter in Southeast Asia's regionalism.

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Comparative Queer Southeast Asian Studies

Ward Keeler*

Outsiders have long remarked on a relative tolerance of nonnormative gender and sexuality in lowland Southeast Asian societies. Appreciating the way hierarchical assumptions inflect all social relations in the region helps make sense both of Southeast Asia's long-standing gender binarism and of the ability of people of nonnormative gender and sexuality to find, at least at times, specialized roles for themselves. Those roles are based on enjoying not equal rights with their fellow citizens but rather distinctive obligations and privileges. Outside observers must be willing to suspend their egalitarian commitments long enough to recognize the significance of hierarchical assumptions for queer as well as other Southeast Asians if they are to understand common patterns in the behavior of, and responses to, the nonnormatively gendered in the region. Reports from several Southeast Asian societies are adduced to support this claim, complementing the author's own research in Burma and Indonesia.

Keywords: homosexuality, hierarchy, gender binarism, cultural comparison, Southeast Asia

In the village where I did fieldwork in Java in the late 1970s, one person stood out. During the day, dressed in quite fancy women's attire, they¹⁾ went to a nearby market and bought and sold diamonds. In the evening, at home with their family, they dressed like any other male villager. Village residents found this person's behavior somewhat amusing, but not scandalous. That was simply something they did. Although doubt was expressed as to whether they had actually sired their four children (doubt encouraged by recollections, laughingly recounted, of the individual feeling up their male peers in the boys' sleep when they were all adolescents decades earlier), they were still, of course, their sons' father. A woman told me that when neighborhood women gathered to cook for a big ritual event, such as a wedding, no one minded being crowded in close with them, now dressed as a woman—whereas it would be very much out of line for a man to enter

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1) Javanese pronouns do not indicate gender.

a crowded kitchen area like that.

The flexibility with which this individual negotiated their gender identity would arouse quite hostile reactions in several societies in the world. Yet it would not be surprising in many communities in Southeast Asia, where there has long appeared to be greater tolerance of nonnormative gender and sexuality than elsewhere. Nevertheless, data from the region can hardly be said to fulfill progressive hopes for real acceptance and equality for those people whose gender and sexuality depart from the norm. My aim is to show that the apparent contradiction lies not within the data so much as in the incommensurate nature of Southeast Asian versus internationally validated understandings of how to respond to people of nonconforming gender and sexuality.

I have written about Southeast Asian²⁾ responses to queer³⁾ people in earlier publications drawing upon my own fieldwork in Java and Burma (Keeler 2016; 2017).⁴⁾ In this article I venture further afield, drawing upon ethnographic material from Thailand, Laos, and the Philippines as well as from Indonesia and Burma. This comparative move obliges me to rely on the reports of others. My purpose is not simply to review these accounts, however, but rather to show how they fit into and illustrate my overall argument, which is to claim that incorporating reported evidence about gender and sexuality within the larger frame of hierarchical understandings provides real analytic benefits.

As I will note toward the end of this essay, most of the material I cite dates from the 1990s. Much has changed for queer people in Southeast Asia in the intervening years. Nevertheless, I believe that hierarchical understandings continue to pervade approaches to social relations in the region, and those understandings illuminate long-standing patterns in attitudes and behavior toward and among queer people.

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- 2) I should specify that my examples are drawn from lowland Southeast Asian societies, not from “highland” (or perhaps less conventionally but more appropriately labeled, peripheral) Southeast Asian ones, with which I am less familiar.
 - 3) I use the word “queer” to encompass all individuals whose gender presentation and/or sexual preference(s) diverge from the normative expectations linked to their biological sex. In line with increasingly widespread practice, I use this formerly pejorative term without pejorative intent, much as civil rights activists in the US took on the once-pejorative term “black.” I should note, however, that, for reasons that should become clear in what follows, none of the four Southeast Asian languages I know (Indonesian, Javanese, Balinese, and Burmese) has such an all-encompassing term. I use it as a relatively empty—nonspecific, and therefore multipurpose—label.
 - 4) Burmese is the language of the ethnic Burmans but is used as the national language of all Burmese citizens. It is a diglossic language, with a spoken register and a formal one. The military regime decreed, starting in the 1990s, that people speaking Burmese or English stop using the colloquial name, “Burma,” for the country and instead use the name from the formal register, “Myanmar.” Claims made by the authorities that the latter term is more inclusive of ethnic minorities are without linguistic justification.

Consistencies in Regional Patterns

A few common features of Southeast Asian attitudes toward nonnormative gender and sexuality can be summarized as follows. First, there has long been a certain visibility in the region of people who take on a gender presentation at odds with their biological sex, and such people have been subjected to relatively little physical violence. Indeed, in some regions they have enjoyed special and prestigious roles.

Second, most Southeast Asians assume a link between gender presentation and sexual role such that a masculine gender presentation is assumed to imply taking an active, penetrative role in sex, and a feminine gender presentation to imply a passive, penetrated one.

Finally, there is a widespread impression that long-term affective relationships between similarly gendered individuals are either counterintuitive or simply unthinkable. Bonds across gender difference are the only sort believed to be likely to endure through time, although anatomical similarity among partners poses no necessary obstacle nor even provokes much scandal.

Visibility of the Gender Nonconforming

Several anthropologists as well as historians have remarked on the relatively little opprobrium cross-dressing individuals appear to have aroused in many Southeast Asian societies in the past, a situation that continues at least in some cases to this day. This fact has often been taken as a sign of tolerance for non-heteronormative gender presentation, and perhaps sexuality. The historical material is considerable, and some of it indicates that individuals who contravene the obvious in their gender presentation might for that very reason win for themselves special prestige. The most famous cases are probably those of Ponorogo in Java and in Sulawesi (both in Indonesia), and of Thailand's *kathoey* (trans women) and Burma's *natgadaw* (spirit mediums) (see Peletz 2009; Andaya 2018; see also Reid 1988; Brac de la Perrière 1989; Jackson and Sullivan 1999; Wilson 1999; Blackwood 2005; Davies 2001). At present, some of those ritual roles have been largely or at least partially effaced, as Michael Peletz (2002) has noted.⁵⁾ Several scholars, furthermore, reject any such claim for the acceptance or tolerance of queer individuals in Southeast Asia (Jackson 1999; Boellstorff 2005; Garcia 2008). Still,

5) To what degree cross-dressing spirit mediums enjoy public commendation or the opposite in contemporary Southeast Asian societies varies by region. Contributors to Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière and Peter Jackson's *Spirit Possession in Buddhist Southeast Asia* (2022) and Peter Jackson and Benjamin Baumann's *Deities and Divas* (2022) provide rich material about such people and their patrons. See also my review of the first of these two volumes (Keeler 2022).

trans women and trans men⁶⁾ appear and act publicly in many Southeast Asian societies more easily than would be the case in most Western societies, as well as in others elsewhere in the world.

To take a case from my own experience: in Mandalay, Burma, I was surprised at how easily trans women (*meinmasha*) and trans men (*yau'cashu*) could socialize without constraint in many contexts—at the market, for example, or at public events such as weddings. Such public toleration applies to long-term relationships as well. In a village I visited a few hours' drive outside of Mandalay, two women lived, and had long lived, without disturbance as a couple, one of them taking on masculine presentation and duties, the other feminine ones. One of Mandalay's most prominent trans women, whom I will call Miss Ruby—not wealthy but by Mandalay's standards comfortable—told me that she had lived for many years as the mistress of a man who was already married when they first got together. The man's wife was at first deeply hostile, but the two eventually became friends, and this fact became widely enough known in the middle-class circles they frequented that when wedding invitations arrived all three of their names were listed—that of the man, his wife, and his trans mistress, Miss Ruby—just as they themselves would list their three names as sponsors on invitations they sent out when they sponsored important social events. Only when the man took up with a much younger woman did Miss Ruby decide that it was time to break off the relationship. No, she told me, this sort of arrangement, in which a man had both a wife and a trans mistress, was no longer likely in today's Mandalay. But she attributed the change not to attitudes toward trans people but rather to greater assertiveness on the part of women: wives would no longer stand for their husbands taking up with a mistress, no matter what the latter's biological sex.

Normatively gendered people in Mandalay usually spoke to me of trans women with a degree of amusement, and representations of them on stage or in Burmese films are invariably derisive. This response—a perhaps hurtful but hardly annihilating condescension—seems widespread in many Southeast Asian societies. Fanella Cannell (1995, 240) refers to the “peculiar mixture of acceptance and potential lack of respect or even contempt” that *bakla* (trans women) experience in Bicol society in the Philippines (cf. Garcia 2008, 137–143). And the Thai historian and commentator Nithi Aeusrivongse describes one segment of Thai public opinion as having attitudes toward *kathoey* similar to those “prevalent in ancient Thai societies,” that is, “approach[ing them] not with

6) Terms for the nonnormatively gendered in Southeast Asian languages do not correspond precisely to the words I use here. I press these currently (perhaps only temporarily) accepted English terms into service here in order to make general statements, even though details vary for each ethnographic context.

hatred but with comic gentleness" (Nithi 2004, 76).

I do not wish to suggest that nonnormatively gendered people face no prejudice or discriminatory treatment in Southeast Asia. Some scholars greatly resent this characterization on the grounds that prejudice against queer people in the region is both real and often vehement. Thailand, especially, having come to attain a celebrated status among gay Westerners (especially males but also to some extent females) as a place where homosexuality seems surprisingly well accepted, has generated a considerable amount of writing intended to demonstrate, if not the opposite, at least the need to qualify any assertions as to how good queer Thais have it. Peter Jackson (1999) summarizes this point in the title of his essay "Tolerant but Unaccepting: The Myth of a Thai 'Gay Paradise.'" Similarly, Tom Boellstorff (2005; 2007) demonstrates at many points that queer Indonesians feel discriminated against and disadvantaged in society: he quotes many informants' words, often very affecting ones, attesting to their feeling beleaguered and alone.

Among the *meinmasha* I spoke with in Mandalay, some told of being beaten by their fathers as soon as they started showing signs, when they were still boys, of behaving like girls. Some were thrown out of their parents' home, and many were treated as objects of contempt and derision. A schoolteacher who identified himself as a "hider" (*apoùn*)—that is, a man who would like to take on a feminine gender presentation but fears the social consequences of doing so—said that he had to watch himself: he worried that the school principal would fire him if he comported himself in too effeminate a manner. Every several months or so, police in Mandalay harass queer people who gather in the evening near the city's fanciest hotel. All of this sounds familiar, since such persecution is reported all around the world, and it should explode any myth that being queer in Southeast Asia is easy or unproblematic.

Nevertheless, the stories of mistreatment, threat, and ridicule cannot undermine the fact that to this day queer people, particularly trans women, can find a place for themselves in many Southeast Asian societies rather more easily than they can in other parts of the world. That place is not unconstrained: trans people cannot choose a profession or lifestyle as freely as the normatively gendered can. Yet within clear limits, they can attain respect and occasionally even wealth. J. Neil C. Garcia's (2008, 198ff.) fond recollections of exploits and achievements he enjoyed along with other *bakla* as one among a group of high school students in the Philippines in the 1980s somewhat complicate his rejection of the notion of tolerance for *bakla* in that society. It is hard to imagine a group of effeminate males in a high school in other regions of the world being able to strut their stuff in the way he nostalgically recounts.

What seems particularly surprising is that cross-dressing individuals are better

tolerated in Southeast Asia than those people whose gender presentation is heteronormative (who are cisgendered) but whose preference in sexual relationships is for similarly gendered individuals. Such a preference is simply inconceivable to many, probably most, people in Southeast Asia—at least outside cosmopolitan circles. When known, such a preference is likely to arouse greater shock than the existence—altogether familiar—of individuals whose gender presentation diverges from what their biological sex would normally imply.

Boellstorff cites work in Thailand and elsewhere to qualify impressions “that most Southeast Asian countries [are] tolerant of nonnormative sexualities and genders, since such tolerance is not absolute and is often a tolerance of effeminate men or masculine women rather than of homosexuality” (Boellstorff 2007, 213). That a “tolerance of effeminate men” is, on the contrary, less likely in the contemporary US than of “homosexuality” per se is a point Boellstorff does not note. Yet the contrast with Southeast Asia deserves consideration, all the more so in light of current virulent attacks on everything concerning transgender in the US today.

Gender Presentation and Sexual Role

Distinguishing between gender presentation and sexual role has proved very useful in social scientific literature. Yet as Jackson (1999) has pointed out for Thailand, and this probably applies in most of Southeast Asia, gender presentation is taken to imply sexual role, and breaking that link is not conceptually obvious to many people in the region. As mentioned above, masculine presentation is taken to imply that an individual takes the active, penetrating role in sexual relations, and a feminine presentation a passive, penetrated one.⁷⁾

Cisgendered males who have sex with feminine-gendered, male-bodied individuals are therefore not distinguished from males who have sex with female-bodied ones: they are all deemed “real men” in both Burma and Indonesia, and this probably holds true elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Individuals are sorted and labeled not according to the sex of their sexual partners but according to their own gender presentation and the sexual role that gender presentation is taken to imply. This helps explain why the biological sex of a sexual partner actually matters rather little. Furthermore, since penetrating another person sexually can be taken as an act of dominance, the virility of a man who penetrates another man’s body is in no way impugned. In the English-language Thai

7) The contrast between penetrator and penetrated matters centrally to most men’s understandings of sexual activity, and it informs their commentary on sexual roles. It may not figure centrally in women’s understandings, in light of the importance of clitoral stimulation for their obtaining sexual pleasure. As a cisgendered male, I was not in a position to discuss such matters with women.

novel *Monsoon Country* (Pira Sudham 1988), a local tough can force a younger, weaker boy to perform fellatio on him as a means for enhancing, not diminishing, impressions of his virile power.

In Burma, tellingly, if a man who presents himself gendered male lives with a *meinmasha*, the masculine partner will be subject to some pejorative comments. However, the disapproval will stem not from the fact that he has sex with a biological male but rather from the fact that he is assumed to live off the income of his trans partner, who is thought capable of earning easy money as a spirit medium or beautician. No doubts are cast upon the masculine-presenting male's virility because he is assumed to be the penetrating party in sex. By living with a trans woman, however, he is assumed to be failing to live up to his role as a money earner, and in that respect—by appearing to be self-indulgent and indulged—he compromises impressions of his agency, and with it his social standing. He is still a “real man.” But a lazy one.⁸⁾

The example of cisgendered males who live with *meinmasha* shows that such men in Burma are not obliged to have sex only with females; they are simply expected to wish to have sex only (or mostly) with individuals who are gendered female. In both Java and Burma, people explained to me that if a man had sex with a transgender prostitute, it was because the latter's services were cheaper than those of a female sex worker. Whether or not this really explains their behavior matters less than that a supposed price difference suffices to explain, in the view of many, why some men opt to have sex with a trans, rather than a biological, female. One might pity or disdain such men for their poverty. But one would not judge them adversely because of the genitalia of the partner their poverty forces them to have sex with.

Gender Difference and Relationships

Long-term relationships are thought to be possible only among individuals who differ from each other as to gender presentation (and so as to sexual role as well). No one I spoke with in Mandalay thought it likely that two men who both presented themselves as male could form a long-lasting relationship. A few people had heard that such things happened in the West, but they found the idea puzzling. Nor would two men in whom “a woman's mind has popped out” (*mèinmázei' pau'te*, which is the standard Burmese gloss on why a male should start acting in an effeminate manner) be thought inclined to become a couple. “Hiders” (*apoìn*, from the verb *poìn te*, “to hide”), like *meinmasha*, are expected to look for relationships with masculine presenting males (“real men”), not

8) Javanese men have told me that Javanese hold the same impression of gender normative males who live with trans women: that they are not homosexual, but lazy.

other hidens like themselves. When I told a cisgendered jade trader from northern Burma that I had misunderstood the nature of his relations with one of his assistants, thinking the latter was his romantic partner, he said, “How could that be? We’re both hidens!”⁹⁾

In sum, it is hard for anyone in Mandalay to conceive of romantic relationships among similarly gendered individuals lasting very long, or at all. Granted, males, especially young males, are thought of as highly sexual and likely to jump at any chance to engage in sexual play, whether with women or with men. It surprises no one that such play, or random groping, should take place on a crowded bus. But such one-off occasions, should they occur among cisgendered males, are not thought of as in any way meaningful.

Jackson (1999, 233) reports much the same difficulty among Thais in conceiving of long-term bonds among cisgendered males. He writes about the multiple masculinities that explain how “a toleration of and fascination with male gender ambiguity” is sustained in Thailand. Yet in analyzing Thai academic discourse about queer people, Jackson (1997) finds that the impulse to pathologize homosexual object choice is particularly vehement when it is discovered to obtain among similarly masculine presenting males, whereas the same academic researchers urge acceptance of effeminate, cross-dressing *kathoeys*.

Megan Sinnott (2004) reported a parallel emphasis on gender binarism among Thai lesbians (at least until recently: see below) in her fascinating study, *Toms and Dees*. Remarkably, since the masculine role among Thais is considered to imply activity, and the feminine role passivity, she reports that many *tom* refuse to let their *dee* partners stimulate them sexually, with the result that only the *dee* can attain orgasm (Sinnott 2004, 147–153).¹⁰⁾ In this instance, it seems as though gender ideology has been taken to such an extreme as to lead to its logical opposite: the masculine partner insisting so much on retaining the active role as to renounce all chance of attaining sexual climax, a kind of self-denial little probable among most males of my acquaintance.

Gender, Difference, and Hierarchy

The above three commonalities about nonnormative gender and sexuality in Southeast Asia—some degree of tolerance for nonnormative gender presentation, an assumed link between gender presentation and sexual role, and the expectation that long-term

9) Garcia (2008) reports the same aversion to romantic relationships among trans women in the Philippines, as does ethnographical material from elsewhere, such as Kulick (1998).

10) A young female researcher tells me the same pattern is to be found among queer women in Rangoon as well (Tenberg, personal communication). I am told that a similar pattern obtains in some lesbian relationships in the United States.

relationships are sustainable only among individuals of contrasting gender presentation—make sense in light of how hierarchical thinking, a pervasive characteristic of people's views on social relations, takes difference as the *sine qua non* for all ongoing relationships.¹¹⁾

Individuals, according to such understandings, have an interest in entering into long-term relations with each other precisely because they differ. As the most noteworthy recent analyst of hierarchical arrangements, Louis Dumont (1980), observed, it is because people differ in their bodies, in their skills, in their capacities—whether physical or affective or anything else—that they are inclined to link up with one another.¹²⁾ His analysis may be summarized by stating that hierarchy posits mutual interdependence across difference. As Dumont also observed, every such link based upon difference implies, in addition to the difference along some specific axis—sex, status, complexion, or whatever else—a difference in value as well.¹³⁾ Benefits flow in both directions from the exchange relations people enter into by virtue of their differences, even though one party will necessarily be taken to occupy a position of lesser prestige.¹⁴⁾ Similarities promise no such advantages. Indeed, similarities are more likely to generate competition and strife.

A considerable literature underlines the importance of gender binarism in many Southeast Asian societies (cf. Atkinson and Errington 1990; Ong and Peletz 1995).¹⁵⁾

11) Although hierarchical understandings inform attitudes and practices in lowland Southeast Asian societies, a few smaller-scale societies in the region exhibit more egalitarian inclinations, in some cases quite radically. See Gibson and Sillander (2011).

12) Dumont's analysis of Indian society has been much contested (e.g., Appadurai 1986; 1988; Khare 2006). I draw upon his work here not for any relevance of his ideas about caste to Southeast Asia but rather because he took a close look at how hierarchical assumptions and egalitarian ones differ. It is gratifying that a number of anthropologists in recent years have found it worthwhile to look back upon his work as they develop an analysis of hierarchy, even while reworking or rejecting one or another element of his (cf. Robbins 2004; Iteanu 2009; Kapferer 2010; Piliavsky 2014; 2020; Robbins and Siikala 2014; Haynes and Hickel 2016; Haynes 2017). I have discussed my use of Dumont's understanding of hierarchy at greater length—with respect not just to gender but more broadly—in my ethnography of Burman Buddhist monasteries (Keeler 2017).

13) He did, however, express confidence, but I believe it was more a hope, that difference and equality could be reconciled "in our day" (Dumont 1980, 265).

14) In a foundational essay on gender in Southeast Asia, Shelly Errington (1990) suggests that societies such as those I consider here structure gender relations hierarchically, whereas others in the region do so invoking complementarity, and so equality. The overall distinction she draws is useful. Yet complementarity need not implicate egalitarian relations: complementary parties may still differ in degrees of prestige.

15) Peter Jackson (personal communication) assures me that insistence on gender binarism as I describe here did indeed characterize Thai attitudes as late as the 1990s but no longer does nearly so pervasively. Patrick McCormick (personal communication) suggests that the increasing size and self-confidence of a middle class, particularly in Thailand but also in other parts of Southeast ↗

Peletz (2009) has shown it to be fundamental to Southeast Asian understandings of gender and sexuality over the long term, comparable to the sort of ongoing continuity in social relations Judith Scheele and Andrew Shryock (2019) have identified in the Middle East. Yet this gender binarism, applied to relationships whether heteronormative or queer, is encompassed within a larger hierarchical emphasis upon difference. That fact explains the relative ease with which Southeast Asians can make room for people whose gender and sexuality run against the norm, since those individuals still conform to the principle of difference. That is, Southeast Asians can accommodate non-heteronormative individuals because such people may contravene biology but usually still respect the importance of gender difference, and in that respect their take on gender is altogether normative.

Gender ambiguity is rare. Even if the effort apparent in someone's presentation to cross over to the other gender proves unconvincing, the fact that they usually pursue that goal consistently and sincerely means that the basic logic of mutual interdependence across difference has been maintained. This explains, furthermore, the greater tolerance demonstrated toward cross-dressing individuals than toward individuals whose gender presentation is normative but whose sexual object choice is not. The latter individuals arouse dismay or condemnation—their behavior is found threatening—because they put hierarchy's basis, in difference, into doubt.¹⁶⁾

What opting to go against the expected grain cannot be expected to do is to make no difference. Gender and sexuality are evaluated, as everything is in lowland Southeast Asian societies, for how they articulate with, affect, or confound hierarchical expectations, and those expectations invariably implicate an ongoing and often intense concern with relative standing. Since in hierarchical arrangements difference necessarily and properly

↘ Asia, has made class disparities less determining in relations among same-sex partners, and with that change there is a diminishing emphasis on gender difference. I plan on addressing recent shifts in attitudes toward gender and sexuality in the region in a future essay, drawing once again on my own fieldwork in Indonesia and Burma as well as on recent publications by other researchers.

16) Anna Tsing (personal communication) has reminded me that Ben Anderson cited, with his characteristic delight in scandalous sexual matters, the reversal of roles in anal intercourse the classical Javanese *Serat Centhini*, an eighteenth-century text, recounts occurring among males, two of them low-status wanderers and the third a high-status official. That the latter, having enjoyed penetrating the first two in turn, then asks to play the passive partner in a third encounter contradicts my assertion that such versatility was, until recently, inconceivable in the region. However, Anderson makes it clear that the *Serat Centhini* deliberately undermines aristocrats' claims to superior status but does so only as a fantasy, not as a call to action. It never gets beyond what Anderson calls "embryo radicalism" (Anderson 1990, 288): "[W]hen the adipati's [aristocrat's] rectum heals, life reverts to what it was before. . . . Nothing changes" (Anderson 1990, 288). The power implications of reversing roles in sexual intercourse were clear, then, but that point promoted no rethinking of either sexuality or politics.

makes a difference,¹⁷⁾ a lack of fit between a person's gender presentation and anatomy will necessarily have consequences in precisely this regard: differences, in this case a divergence between the expected (what someone's gender presentation implies) and the actual (their biological sex), necessarily matter. But the consequences follow not from what conforms or goes against nature, as much Western discourse, particularly since the later nineteenth century (Foucault 1990a), but even as far back as the fourteenth century (Boswell 1980), would have it. Rather, such a lack of fit will have consequences for the kinds of relationships that are deemed possible, with what kinds of other individuals, based on what sorts of differences.

When an individual contravenes the gender presentation and sexual role that their anatomy suggests, such a person blocks the elaboration of social relations in ways that anatomical difference usually implies. The question then becomes what other sorts of differences can be pressed into service to determine that individual's role in social relations, with what entailments, in light of that first, counterintuitive but not unprecedented move.

Most crucially, what sorts of differences will determine that individual's position vis-à-vis others? What sorts of exchange relations will he or she enter into and with whom, and what will determine his or her relative standing?

For males in Southeast Asia, deciding to give up masculine gender has very real, and in the view of most people lamentable, consequences. The "comic gentleness" Nithi alludes to is the best response a male-bodied individual can hope to encounter. As I have mentioned, derision, contempt, and occasional (if unpredictable) violence are also possible. But those responses follow from the status implications of choosing to forswear the prestige which males are due. Since hierarchical considerations incline everyone, and especially males, to compete for prestige quite fulsomely, giving up masculine privilege is a laughable or even contemptible step in any person's social career. (In Buddhist societies, giving up masculine gender has the further consequence of ruling out the possibility of becoming a monk, traditionally a greatly status-enhancing option, so it is a particularly disadvantaging move.) If fathers are inclined to go further and subject an effeminate son to violent reprisal, they do so because the son's behavior puts the prestige of the family as a whole (and of the father particularly) at risk. Significantly, should a *meinmasha* in Burma turn out to make a name for herself, her father, even if he vehemently or even violently opposed her initial show of effeminate behavior, is liable

17) My phrasing, here and elsewhere, invokes Gregory Bateson's famous definition of information as "a difference that makes a difference" (Bateson 1972, 465). Although my focus falls far afield from cybernetics, the importance in my analysis of how distinctive traits differentiate and link people reflects a clear debt to Bateson.

eventually to come to terms with her nonnormative gender presentation. And if a young woman evinces a masculine gender presentation, she may well suffer less fulsome condemnation, at least in some Southeast Asian societies, Burma certainly among them. She does not gain masculine prestige by doing so, but she is not giving up privileges which she is otherwise due.¹⁸⁾

In some cases, furthermore, contravening the expected by giving up masculine privilege can afford other, compensating forms of prestige. The *bissu*, cross-dressing ritual priests in eastern Indonesia, are a paradigmatic example: Sharyn Graham Davies (2010) writes that they sit at the “apex of the Bugis gender system.”¹⁹⁾

The importance of difference as the basis for all long-term social relations explains why long-term relations among similarly gendered individuals make no sense to most Southeast Asians. Alluding to the importance of hierarchy in Thai social relations, Nerida M. Cook and Peter A. Jackson (1999) note in passing a point about Thai personal ads that provides a fascinating illustration of the way that gay relationships (that is, ones among cisgendered males) put Thai hierarchical arrangements under stress. Some gay Thai men describe themselves in such ads as looking for a man who

“loves democracy.” While in some cases this may reflect the advertiser’s public politics, more commonly it signals the desire for a relationship based on masculine equality rather than the enactment of masculine-feminine hierarchies of dominance and subordination that have historically structured male homosexual relations, just as they have heterosexual relations. (Cook and Jackson 1999, 9)

Egalitarian relations may strike some people as ideal: certainly progressive Westerners embrace such a view as an ideological stance, virtually without thinking. (Westerners’ own practice is, of course, spotty, contradictory, and often bewildering to those very actors themselves.) But that simply explains why gay personal ads in the West are more likely to mention a love of skiing, say, or cooking, with the understanding that similar interests would strengthen two parties’ bonds, rather than democracy. The fact that Thai males must borrow from the idiom of politics to describe an egalitarian romantic relationship demonstrates how much a relationship among two similar individuals— anatomically similar, similarly gendered, and of similar social position—remained conceptually strange at least through the 1990s to many Thais.

18) I discuss both of these points about Burmans’ parental reactions to nonnormative gender presentation in their children in Keeler (2017).

19) Harriet Whitehead (1981) noted the same option of raising one’s status by means of nonnormative gender presentation among Native Americans.

Hierarchy in the Absence of Gender Difference

The fact that difference is crucial to understanding queer issues in Southeast Asia more than any specific features of anatomy or even gender becomes all the clearer in those instances in which gender contrast is absent. In these cases, some other sort of difference is called upon to establish one (superordinate) party as of higher standing relative to the other (subordinate) one. I cite data from Thailand, the Philippines, and Laos to support this claim.

Materials reported by an anthropologist about men who have sex with men in Chiang Mai provide evidence of how a hierarchical understanding of mutual interdependence across difference can shape relationships men enter into with each other, even if they are similarly masculine presenting. In writing about his research among male sex workers in Chiang Mai, Jan De Lind van Wijngaarden notes the following: "The cultural expectations associated with the pervasive character of social hierarchy in Thai social life mean that young male Thai sex workers may not necessarily experience a threat to their masculine gender identity from engaging in sex work" (De Lind van Wijngaarden 1999, 200).

This is true even if they are obliged, despite their masculine presentation, to take a passive role in anal sex:

[T]he Thai system of social hierarchy, in which a less powerful person is supposed to submit to the wishes of a superior . . . means that even if male sex workers are anally penetrated by clients, they may not perceive this as resulting from an ascribed female gender identity, but rather as resulting from their (temporary or permanent) lower position in the power rankings with regard to their clients. (De Lind van Wijngaarden 1999, 215)

De Lind van Wijngaarden reports further that males who have engaged in sex work can, and usually do, leave the profession before long, reintegrating into their natal villages or other milieu without evidence of psychological trauma. They have, in other words, taken a subordinate role in a particular context, a commercialized sexual one, that can be assimilated to other contexts in which they would expect to take a subordinate role. As their standing improves (with increasing age and earning capacity), they can leave the role behind and suffer no apparent long-term effects.

So sex work, even including taking a passive role in anal sex, can constitute a passing phase in a young Thai male's professional development without unduly damaging him (provided, of course, he avoids HIV infection or other risks to his physical health). We see, therefore, that gender and sexuality can enter into a person's experience without constituting a defining or preeminent feature of it. Being penetrated in sex, De Lind van

Wijngaarden suggests, implies a subordinate standing in a specific encounter. Matters of gender presentation and sexual roles, then, have been drawn into the overarching matter of hierarchical relations: they do not constitute a free-standing analytic category, as an outsider might be inclined to treat them.²⁰⁾

Are Queer Southeast Asians Coming Around to Alternative Understandings?

Although I have alluded above to Southeast Asians' assumption that long-term relationships are possible only among individuals of contrasting gender presentation, recent publications suggest that categories have grown more fluid and pairings more diverse in Bangkok, at least, and perhaps elsewhere in Southeast Asia, since the beginning of the current millennium (Jackson 2011; Blackwood and Johnson 2012). Dredge Byung'chu Käng (2012), for example, writes:

[T]he disgust associated with similar-gender coupling is diminishing. New [Thai] terms such as *sao-siap* (penetrating girl, referring to *kathoeys* who are active in anal intercourse) and *tom-gay* (a *tom*, masculine female, in a relationship with another *tom*) describe variations that incorporate putatively discordant gender expression and sexual practice. These changes point to the breakdown of the heterogender sexual matrix, in which only sex between individuals of opposite genders is socially acceptable. (Dredge Byung'chu Käng 2012, 478)

To a degree, David Gilbert's research (2013) suggests a similar expansion in people's understandings in Rangoon as well, although I have seen little such increased flexibility in relationships in Mandalay.

Yet even in the face of explicit claims to the effect that an older insistence on gender contrast has lost its hold on people's thinking, some researchers report a tendency to revert to long-standing patterns. So, for example, Megan Sinnott (2012), whose earlier work on *toms* and *dees*—that is, masculine- and feminine-presenting Thai lesbians, as mentioned above—showed how important gender differentiation was to couple-formation

20) A similar concern with relative status, rather than with anatomy, appears to explain a point Michel Foucault (1990b) overlooked in his discussion of homosexual relationships in ancient Athens. Foucault's attention focused on the ambiguities surrounding a young free male citizen taking on a subordinate role, as a passive partner in homosexual intercourse. Yet Greek authors, who wrote copiously on the subject of such relationships, must also have worried about an older male citizen becoming so smitten with his younger beloved as to grant the latter a good deal of power over himself—upsetting the proper distribution of power between them, one in which an older, higher-status male should never be in thrall to a subordinate. By the same token, in many societies—and this appears to include ancient Greece—when sexual activity does not risk throwing hierarchy off, it does not arouse much comment.

among them, writes that all the familiar oppositions, and the pairings they entailed, were said by her informants to have gone by the boards by the time of her later research in the 2000s. Yet in the end she noticed subtle reassertions of precisely those kinds of differences, if in attenuated form, among the couples she interviewed.

An apparent exception to my general statement that difference enables rather than prevents individuals from pairing up over the long term actually proves the rule. Ronald Baytan (2000) reports that the upper-middle-class Chinese Filipino gay men he interviewed in Metro Manila were wary of choosing Filipino partners because they, Baytan's informants, would be expected to foot every bill. Nevertheless, they invariably did end up with Filipino partners, and most of them said that having a Sino-Filipino partner would feel "incestuous." Even if they were, exceptionally, not averse in principle to having a Chinese partner, this never happened. Baytan writes, "[T]hose [gay Sino-Filipino men in his sample] who wished to have one [a Sino-Filipino lover] as an ideal always ended up with a Filipino or a non-Chinese foreigner" (Baytan 2000, 398). Even in the face of stated preferences, difference—in this case ethnic, racial, and/or of class—turns out still to obtain in the relationships these men actually enter into.

In cases in which contrasting gender no longer distinguishes partners, furthermore, that fact does not necessarily imply an egalitarian rather than hierarchical tenor to relationships. I have cited De Lind van Wijngaarden's work on cisgendered male sex workers in Chiang Mai above to suggest that differences in class and standing can substitute for gender difference. I would also contest some reports in which claims are made to the effect that egalitarian notions are gaining ground.

A research team writing about men who have sex with men²¹ in Laos (Lyttleton 2008) provides evidence of how a hierarchical understanding of mutual interdependence across difference can shape relationships men enter into with each other even if they are similarly masculine presenting. Chris Lyttleton reads his research team's findings about men who have sex with men in Laos to imply that not only is a difference in gender presentation coming to mean less than was previously the case, but that in the process more egalitarian relationships are coming to the fore. Yet what Lyttleton and his research team report raises other possibilities, particularly if we take into account broader features about the individuals entering into these relationships.

Lyttleton notes that in the past Laotian men did not consider it possible for two males to have long-term sexual and affective relationships, for reasons consistent with what I have set out above:

21) This term, often abbreviated to MSM, serves much the same purpose as my use of the term "queer," as a neutral descriptor of individuals (in this case only males) who engage at least at times in same-sex sexual activity. I use it here out of deference to Lyttleton's (2008) usage in his work.

[T]he lack of clear role distinction [in relations among cisgendered males] is seen as a prohibitive obstacle. Rather than complementary roles, two men were regarded by many of our informants as not being able to share domesticity together precisely because they would always be in competition. One partner would always have to be the “leader,” financially and, perhaps, emotionally. The other partner would end up feeling subordinated, which would prove an untenable situation in the long run. (Lyttleton 2008, 54)

Sameness breeds competition, not closeness; subordination, in a context of sameness, is galling. But Lyttleton adds that the increasing number of gay Western (and some non-Laotian Asian) males who enter into relationships with Laotian men is expanding understandings of what is possible. In contrast to previous patterns, wherein male-male relations were marked first and foremost by difference,

the emotional possibilities within male-male relations and the potential for long-term love relationships are gradually becoming refigured through both Western and westernized Asian visitors to Laos. Gay identity is emerging, in part, for the hope it represents for potentially long-term and more equalised relationships. (Lyttleton 2008, 55)

The point suggests an important shift: “The evidence that growing numbers of Laotian men are now imagining longer-term relations as possible, premised on more even-handed emotional and sexual interaction and based on visible examples, is profound” (Lyttleton 2008, 55).

Yet I would urge analytic caution. Lyttleton goes on to observe that long-term relations among Laotian men remain rare. I think he underestimates the way that status differences between Laotian and Western or other Asian men substitute for other kinds of difference in relationships, and that to see more “equalised” relations in such bonds may constitute as much outsiders’ fond hopes and preconceptions as any real changes in Laotian attitudes.

Even if gender presentation need not differ greatly between a foreign and a Laotian male, making the relationship between them look like a gay bond that Westerners and other outside observers would assume to be marked by little in the way of hierarchical distinctions, such an inference may be unwarranted. Instead, differences in assumed wealth and social standing appear sufficiently radical to reinstate the sorts of difference upon which Laotian men presume all long-term relationships must be based. As a result, in these relationships, status differences make up for the absence of contrast in gender presentation.

Changes Taking Place

In as dynamic and fast-changing an environment as Southeast Asia, we may well see new ways of thinking about sex and gender, difference, and relationships developing, and I do not wish to argue that nothing is changing for queer folk in Burma, Thailand, or elsewhere in the region. Still, it would be precipitous to assume that in the long run people will come to share what progressive outsiders, such as I assume Lyttleton to be, may think of as the ideal of egalitarian relationships among romantic partners.

In a fascinating account of Thais' shifting erotic desires but ongoing preoccupation with social standing, Dredge Byung'chu Käng (2017) points to the way that the unwanted inference that any Thai male with a Western male companion must be a sex worker, or at least the subordinate member of a gay pair, leads many middle-class Thai men to prefer what he calls "white Asians," that is, Asians of East Asian extraction. These are men (such as Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese) whose economic capital and social status are assumed to be considerable: these features are admired along with their putatively fair complexions. Yet such men do not stand out physically as obviously foreign among Southeast Asians, and a Thai man accompanying them in public is not assumed to be their (necessarily lower-status) companion. Thus, Dredge Byung'chu Käng's white Asians are different in ways (with respect to class and complexion) that account for Thai men's attraction to them, while being subtly different enough that the status difference between them can go unremarked and does not compromise the Thai partner's own status when they are out and about. Here, difference still enables a relationship, yet the difference is mitigated enough to dissemble the fact of the very relationship it enables.

Sameness, Difference, Rights Campaigns, and Drag Shows

A number of organizations have sought in recent years to counter widespread discrimination against individuals displaying nonnormative gender and sexuality in Southeast Asia.²²⁾ Sometimes enjoying foreign funding, but often not, such organizations have focused attention on legal codes that reflect long-standing prejudices, ones in large part introduced by colonial Western authorities. For example, in Burma, colonial-era legislation giving legal sanction to the persecution of homosexuals, laws first promulgated by the

22) Erick Laurent (2005) discusses the contrast between Western rights-focused efforts and Asian attitudes toward LGBT concerns, emphasizing how an Asian insistence on obligations to kin encourages people to keep queer inclinations secret while allowing them a certain latitude in sexual behavior provided they marry and have children.

British but long since abolished in the United Kingdom, remains on the books. The organization Colors Rainbow has mounted a concerted campaign to have these laws dismissed (Colors Rainbow n.d.).²³⁾ Similar organizations mounting campaigns against official persecution are to be found in many countries in Southeast Asia.

Outside observers have nevertheless noted that much more activity in queer circles in Southeast Asia focuses on other sorts of matters: not campaigns for legal rights but rather dance events, fashion shows, and beauty contests. Boellstorff (2007) remarks, for example:

Gay organizing has rarely been oriented [in Southeast Asia] around political goals like changing antisodomy laws or establishing laws protecting gay men and other individuals with nonnormative sexual and gendered subjectivities from discrimination. Instead, gay organizing has historically focused on community-building events like drag shows. (Boellstorff 2007, 201)

Garcia (2008, 406), too, remarks on the absence of a gay liberation movement in the Philippines, and even when he recounts the many advances LGBT advocates have made there since the turn of the millennium, not all but most of those accomplishments are in media and the arts (Garcia 2008, 420–430).

I do not wish to minimize the importance or value of campaigns for LGBT rights in Southeast Asia. I support such efforts' goals wholeheartedly. Yet I suggest it worth considering the reason why other kinds of activities, those that imply performance, competition, and attention seeking, often prove more appealing to queer Southeast Asians than does political work. I would attribute the appeal of the former to an ongoing preoccupation with social prestige, a preoccupation queer Southeast Asians share with a great many other members of the societies in which they live.²⁴⁾

The contrast between political activism and drag shows turns once again on the matter of sameness and difference. Human rights campaigns suggest that everyone should, no matter how they differ, enjoy the same legal status. Their nonnormative gender and sexuality should make no difference. Competitive events in which individuals show off their abilities—at how effectively they perform their unexpected gender presentation—play up difference, the differences that order people by degrees of skill and so prominence. The competition that takes place in such events as the Muslim transwomen's beauty pageants Mark Johnson (1997) reports upon in the southern Philippines may well be pursued in a convivial (Boellstorff's "community-building") atmosphere. Yet the point is not, obviously, to point up similarities but rather to establish differences, in degrees of prestige, among the participants as they compete for prizes.

23) Lynette J. Chua (2019) provides a nuanced account of queer rights activists in Burma.

24) The article by Dredge Byung'chu Käng (2017) discussed above makes vividly clear how much status concerns preoccupy his Thai informants.

Hierarchical assumptions always encourage people to compare themselves in a spirit of competition to others who are similar, and so in fact comparable, to themselves: to find ways to distinguish themselves, and so raise their standing in one or more domains. In emphasizing the desire of his Indonesian informants, whether *gay* (masculine presenting) or *waria* (trans women), for acceptance in Indonesian society, Boellstorff downplays how much such a desire for social prominence informs their thinking. His focus on their desires for belonging deflects attention from their desire to stand out. Yet an editorial in a gay zine Boellstorff (2007, 68) quotes makes the latter desire vividly clear: “Is it right that we [*gay* people] be ‘goat-class’ citizens, that only have sex? Of course not! There are many *gay* people who have reached the heights of status.” “Goat-class” (*kelas kambing*) in Indonesian refers to the *hoi polloi*, people of no social status worth noticing. They belong to Indonesian society as much as anyone else, yet they lack any claim to social dignity. What provokes the editorial writer’s ire is not that they are denied the sorts of jural rights that motivate activists to wage public campaigns. What he resents is that queer Indonesians are denied the prominence they deserve, or may have earned.

Boellstorff suggests that such large indoor events as drag shows exclude the public and so maintain queer people’s privacy. But political organizing is just as likely to promote community building as drag shows, and many queer fashion events are promoted very publicly. The two types of activities differ, rather, in that political activism is predicated on individuals uniting in pursuit of common goals, whereas drag shows and beauty contests are predicated on individuals competing with each other in pursuit of first prize. Indeed, what the latter performances suggest is the return of circumstances wherein the nonnormatively gendered can take advantage of that fact to distinguish themselves. Not only would they then be allowed to make public show of their inclinations without fear of scorn, they would also be able to make use of their nonnormative inclinations to try to win exceptional, if unconventional, prestige, much as their cross-dressing forebears did in earlier Southeast Asian history.

Because seeking social prestige (“social climbing”) is ideologically suspect in the view of people committed to egalitarian principles, my pointing to the importance it has among queer Southeast Asians, and its place in more general hierarchical understandings, will disturb some readers, who will see in it an outsider’s put-down. Or worse. The late David Graeber (2018) denounced the work of those of us anthropologists investigating hierarchy as reflecting a conservative move to protect the privileges of the powerful. Yet his wrong-headed critique illustrates the important point that although the label “egalitarian” has positive connotations in most contemporary academic as well as popular circles, and “hierarchical” has negative ones, such value judgments must be put aside if we are to gain a better understanding of what we observe in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

A recent backlash against queer people in Indonesia, precipitated in part by queer rights campaigns,²⁵⁾ raises a more general question: whether international scholars and activists are imposing their own visions of what is right or just on other societies, in what would then be only the latest version of Orientalism. Joseph Massad (2007), arguing along precisely these lines, finds nothing liberatory or positive in efforts to promote gay rights in the Arab world (cf. Gopinath 2005; Garcia 2008). To him, such efforts reflect yet another violent imposition upon Arabs of Western understandings of sexuality, ones that, like all the rest of the colonial and neocolonial ideas and practices he finds objectionable, serve the interests only of foreigners and a local elite that fraternizes with them. His critique has aroused vehement reactions, not least among activists who see in his argument an Orientalist snubbing of indigenous queer Arab activists' efforts (Amer 2010; Atshan 2020, 183–212).

I would try to clear a path through the firestorm Massad's writing ignited by suggesting that the current model of sexual identity promoted by gay rights activists reflects a more generalized take on difference, an egalitarian one. Under a hierarchical dispensation, difference is the building block upon which all social relations are constructed. So difference will always make a difference. What a great deal of progressive thinking, both inside and outside the West, holds to be true is, on the contrary, that difference should make no difference. Whether it concerns physical appearance, religious commitments, ancestral origin, degree of able-bodiedness, or anything else—including, of course, gender and sexuality—every individual's dignity and rights should be deemed of equal value. Which is why a general label for such convictions is egalitarian.

It is true that an egalitarian perspective on social relations has gained enormous persuasiveness among some segments of Southeast Asian as well as many other societies in recent decades. It is nevertheless not one that can be championed as correct or as a standard against which all other understandings should be measured. To do so would be to take it as a universally valid understanding, rather than as the logical (and historical) outcome of a set of assumptions that many people find convincing but still represents only one possible approach toward social relations. An egalitarian ideology is a cultural artifact like any other: it consists of a set of assumptions or understandings with a particular history, an ongoing one for that matter, just as notions of hierarchy vary and

25) In recent years, an increasingly virulent homophobia has come to the fore in Indonesia, and the topic of recent measures directed against queer people there deserves attention in its own right. I cannot address it here but plan to do so in future (cf. Boellstorff 2007; Liang 2010; Thajib 2015; Davies 2016; Human Rights Watch 2016).

undergo revision and change through time. So an egalitarian perspective deserves respectful yet still critical attention, just as much as any other, including a hierarchical ideology, does.²⁶⁾

Ultimately, egalitarian as much as hierarchical assumptions entail trade-offs, advantages in some respects and disadvantages in others. We (those of us committed to egalitarian values) must be ready to acknowledge that simple fact. To insist that only an egalitarian approach, whether to gender and sexuality or anything else, is valid is to rest assured, just like our forebears did, that we are in possession of the truth, one which we are sure the rest of the world will eventually come around to sharing. Or one that it is our responsibility to teach them to share. To insist, alternatively, that our others already share the convictions we hold dear and to say otherwise is to disrespect them means that our others do not enjoy the freedom to think or act differently from us, a time-honored but untenable position.

Although I myself share progressive academics' and LGBT activists' support for egalitarian principles, it is essential that we stand ready to grant other people the possibility of thinking differently from ourselves. Anything short of such readiness simply reproduces long-discredited habits of insisting that our others measure up to standards we have set for them.

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26) People particularly well positioned to appreciate the contrast I have described between hierarchical and egalitarian commitments, and whose work confirms or counters Massad's to varying degrees, are the primarily diasporic Asian scholars in queer studies whose work has grown very influential over the past couple of decades (Manalansan 2003; 2018; Gopinath 2005; Dredge Buyung'chu Käng 2012; 2017; Diaz *et al.* 2018, to name only a few). Their advantage stems from the fact that they are familiar with views propounded in conservative Asian societies, which are based on hierarchical assumptions, and yet they are also familiar with recent political and theoretical moves intended to promote egalitarian goals. Many of them living in the West, they tend, much like Garcia (although he has chosen to remain in the Philippines), to find traditional attitudes unacceptable, because condescending and demeaning, and yet contemporary ones also highly questionable, because "homonormative." They often take recent thinkers and activists to task for continuing to cling to a Western binary, since this fails to acknowledge the flexibility that traditional arrangements often allowed, even if only on the condition that non-heteronormative practices be engaged in very discreetly. But these scholars themselves display a deep-seated ambivalence toward difference: they often wish to lay claim to a privileged analytic acuity by virtue of their own eccentric positionality, that is, their difference from Western commentators, even as they decry all ideologies, such as nationalism, racism, sexism, etc., that use difference, rigidified in binary oppositions, to deny people equal rights.

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I have also had occasion to present elements of it to a considerable number of audiences, including at Aarhus University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Università l'Oriente, the University of Bonn, the University of Bremen, the University of Hamburg, the University of Texas, and Yale University.

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Everyday Modernism: Architecture & Society in Singapore

JIAI-HWEE CHANG, JUSTIN ZHUANG, and DARREN SOH

Singapore: NUS Press, 2023.

Social housing is central to the history of modernism in architecture. It was in the *Siedlungen* of industrialized Central Europe that architects first began to deploy idioms that are now universal standards for urban development: coherently planned, flat-roofed blocks of identical housing grouped along common leisure areas and conveniences, well integrated with urban transportation infrastructures. Early efforts on the part of architects like Ernst May, Adolf Meyer, Walter Gropius, and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky were fueled by concerns over working-class living conditions; but when their ideas about architecture were appropriated in the United States, they were largely stripped of their socialist political agency and reduced to a stylistic innovation. With few exceptions, the history of architectural modernism in other parts of the world has largely remained on the periphery of this narrative of European invention and imitative global diffusion. This is due in part to a historiographical bias toward a canon of exceptional building projects designed by a largely European, largely male avant-garde in the twentieth century. The history of the modern global built environment, a landscape made up of unexceptional, everyday buildings, remains largely untold. *Everyday Modernism: Architecture & Society in Singapore* makes a notable contribution to this elision in historical knowledge about modernist architecture and urban planning. By underscoring the importance of quotidian encounters with modernist architecture, *Everyday Modernism* not only illuminates a history of modernism in Southeast Asian architecture, it also poses an important challenge to conventional architectural historiography in underscoring the importance of state institutions in the production of modernist architecture. At the same time, the book poses a challenge to scholars of Southeast Asian cities in that it demands a re-evaluation of modernity's aesthetics that is not separate from the region's political economy.

The book's authors—architectural historian Jiat-Hwee Chang, design journalist Justin Zhuang, and photographer Darren Soh—have organized the book's 32 illustrated essays into six sections, each named after a verb (Live, Play, Work, Travel, Connect, and Pray). This structure is intended to connect the buildings' forms with their uses and gives an impression, if not a definition, of what

the authors mean by the “everyday.” Folios of color photographs by Soh introduce and conclude the volume, offering readers a tantalizing view of the beauty of Singapore’s modernist landscape. These are buildings that the general public interact with on a daily basis as they go about their lives in Singapore. While the book’s content is not preoccupied solely with housing, the first chapter on public housing really grounds the rest of the book. The cinemas, shopping centers, playgrounds, commercial centers, car parks, public schools, libraries, community centers, churches, mosques, columbaria, and (importantly) hawker centers that constitute the fabric of everyday life in Singapore all seem to orbit around social housing. Although the buildings treated in the book are drawn from Singapore’s colonial and post-independence periods, the majority focus on the buildings and landscapes that were planned and built during the era of rapid socioeconomic modernization and nation-building following Singapore’s independence in 1965. The scope of this history accounts for the diversity that one sees in Singapore’s housing stock today: from the low-rise artisans’ quarters and walk-up apartments in Tiong Bahru to the slab block podium-tower People’s Park development (pp. 86–92).

Although the colonial period saw the establishment of the Public Works Department and the Singapore Improvement Trust tasked with the early urban development of Singapore, the authors note that it was only with decolonization that modernism transformed the Singaporean environment (p. 69). In short, Singapore went from being the southernmost entrepôt of a peninsular colony to a state in a federated nation to being an island nation-state, necessitating new strategies on the part of the ruling People’s Action Party to maintain its sovereignty: orienting industrialization toward export, stabilizing industrial relations, disciplining the labor force, and efficiently using space. The government pursued a strategy of decentralization—of moving the population out of the city center and into self-contained communities served by commercial, educational, recreational, religious, and even industrial facilities that were autonomous from the city center (p. 70). Key to this transformation was the Housing and Development Board (HDB), which took over from the Singapore Improvement Trust as the state agency that is perhaps the most responsible for the look of Singapore’s housing today. Along with the Jurong Town Corporation, which took over from the post-independence-era Economic Development Board, these agencies figure prominently in the history of Singapore’s built environment. Integrating them into a history of design, as the authors have done, is an important historiographical intervention. It foregrounds important relationships between bureaucratic institutions and individual designers in the production of modernism and points to the ways both aesthetic and political concerns guided the developmental state. It also suggests that, counter to canonical histories of modernist architecture, good design does not spring from the minds of genius architects fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus, but is produced through critical negotiations between different stakeholders.

An excellent example of the kind of architecture that was developed through the HDB is People’s Park or the Park Road Redevelopment (1968), the agency’s first podium-tower develop-

ment. It was one of the earliest projects in the country's massive urban renewal program and replaced an informal settlement with a multi-use building that integrated housing with shops. Designed by HDB architects Tan Wee Lee and Peter B. K. Soo, the building consisted of a three-story podium with shops and eating stalls, a five-story residential slab block with 130 apartments above it, and a "void deck" between the two. The void deck would become a signature feature of HDB design: a common area that could be filled with community facilities like childcare centers and senior citizen clubs, and even be rented out for weddings (p. 88). As part of a larger resettlement scheme, People's Park was highly successful. Its commercial podium could accommodate all of the local shops and stalls that had been displaced by the redevelopment, giving them what the HDB called "essentially the same area but in much better and more hygienic surroundings" (p. 93).

As the People's Park case indicates, hygiene and public health figured prominently in motivating the modernist renovation of Singapore as they did in other parts of the world. However, particularly in Singapore, rehousing eating stalls and shops was an important part of the development of "everyday modernism" in the new republic. In the 1970s the government embarked on a program of rehousing street hawkers, citing poor hygiene standards that threatened public health. It seems no surprise, then, that the authors have devoted a section to the purpose-built centers that the government built to accommodate these businesses as part of a five-year plan initiated in 1970. The plan aimed to resettle some twenty-five thousand street hawkers. However, the plan proved too ambitious, and it was not until 1986 that the government finally rehoused the city's last street hawkers. The purpose-built developments that the government built were sited in the many emerging public housing estates as well as near workspaces and even in public recreational facilities. The various government agencies that undertook the construction of hawker centers had different formal approaches. Those built by the HDB were part of its new towns and often came in the form of a double-volume, single-story building that combined cooked-food vendors and a wet market. Those built in the city center by the Urban Redevelopment Department (after 1974, the Urban Redevelopment Authority) were sometimes integrated into their car parks, public housing, and even commercial centers. The Public Works Department built hawker centers in private suburbs or as part of parks and gardens that served recreational crowds rather than residents or workers. These centers offered the population affordable meals and emancipated women from the kitchen so they could join the workforce (at least in theory), suggesting the ways that architectural design was an integral part of the PAP's social engineering of Singapore (p. 239). Today, the hawker center has become not just a part of everyday life but a symbol of national culture, as indicated by the controversial nomination of Singapore's "hawker culture" to UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status in 2020.¹⁾

1) It is, in fact, a cultural heritage Singapore shares with Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries.

While *Everyday Modernism* offers scholars of the built environment an excellent overview of the complex intertwined histories of Singapore's developmental state and its modernist urban landscape, the story that it seeks to tell is sometimes encumbered by an excessive invocation of comparative theoretical paradigms. These comparisons often obfuscate what the authors mean by "everyday modernism" in the first place. In particular, the attempt at accommodating contemporary theories of architecture and its social uses in the introduction seems an unnecessary exercise in theoretical acrobatics. For example, the fact that buildings are used after they are built seems a universally understood truth that does not require further explication by contemporary scholars working on European and African architecture (p. 55). Furthermore, given Chang's own pioneering research in techno-scientific histories of tropical architecture, it seems odd that there is little treatment in the book of the thermal values and energy usage implicit in modernist building projects in Southeast Asia, where air conditioning has been an integral part of building design. However, what will become clear to readers who stick with the book's fascinating case studies, archival images, and contemporary photographs is that "everyday modernism" moves away from high-profile, single-authored design precedents to illuminate those buildings that have been neglected by the historical record, whether because they were deemed too quotidian or because they lacked "conventional design authorship."

While not exhaustive, the study is comprehensive and inspiring. Many briefly mentioned sites—like the Kwong Wai Siew Peck San Theng columbarium, which looks like a "condo for the dead" (pp. 268, 271)—are worthy of further study in their own right. *Everyday Modernism* is a welcome addition to studies of housing and should be required reading in any course on the history of post-World War II modernist architecture and urban planning. It brings to conventional histories of modernism a deeper understanding of the relationships between citizen-formation and design and rewards patient readers with a history of modernist architecture's continued and contradictory legacies in Southeast Asia.

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Malaysian Crossings: Place and Language in the Worlding of Modern Chinese Literature

CHEOW THIA CHAN

New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.

Perspectives from Mahua Literature's Counterintuitively Privileged Position of Intermarginality

Chan Cheow Thia's incisively written *Malaysian Crossings* presents a literary historiography of understudied Malayan-Malaysian realities and identities from the 1930s to the 2000s at crucial nation-building, colonial to postcolonial, and world-Chinese literary thresholds. Navigating between the depiction of on-page worlds and off-page realities, the literary careers of and "relay of ideas" (p. 152) between the writers highlighted in this book invite a revised and more attentive understanding of the globalization and cosmopolitanism of modern Chinese literature from the counterintuitive vantage point of "nested marginality" (p. 78) or intermarginality. Drawing salient connections between sociohistorical and political circumstances, authorial and literary careers, as well as inter- and intra-national, ethnic, and racial (inter- and intra-Sinitic) tensions, Chan demonstrates the inventive ways that Mahua literature negotiates a uniquely advantageous position for itself within the modern Chinese literary sphere through acts of "worlding Chinese-language literature from the margins" (p. 149). These strategic negotiations or crossings across multiple spatiotemporal scales enable Mahua literature to not only take root but to thrive in the modern Chinese literary sphere despite its persistent minoritization in relation to China and other more prominent Sinophone literary spheres and Sinitic communities around the world.

Chan masterfully wields what he describes as Sinophone's "valuable function of conceptual and locational disambiguation by advocating for place-differences" (p. 18), clarifying Malaysia-Malaya's unique positionality and relationality as a part of and apart from the wider domains of Chinese literary and cultural studies. Emphasizing the hybrid sociocultural and linguistic realities of Malaya/Malaysia/Nanyang, Chan writes against the dominant currents of essentialist, exoticist, and overly deterministic generalizations about the region's Sinitic literature. Chan blurs the distinctions between author and character, as well as between fiction and reality, generatively blending the two to show how representation and authenticity cannot be presumed to go together. Each chapter attests to the fluidity and adaptive dynamism of Mahua literature and reflects the local and regional cultural ecologies that motivated but also, in some cases, hindered the development of Mahua literature. Chan deftly layers geographical, historical, linguistic, rhetorical, sociocultural, translational, and literary scales in his profiling of Mahua literary developments, and the literary actors that he spotlights in each chapter share a common flexibility and commitment to experimentation in their creative employment and deployment of Mahua literature's congru-

ences and divergences with the rest of the Sinitic literary sphere.

The first chapter of the book addresses the role and contributions of Lin Cantian (林參天) as a *waijiangren* (外江人; a member of a minoritized Sinitic group in Malaya that hails neither from Fujian nor from Guangdong) writing from the margins of an already marginalized raciolinguistic community. Lin's portrayal of "local Chinese societies' fragmentation into 'dialect groups' as representation of 'the heterogeneity of overseas Chinese communities'" (p. 27) in his 1936 semi-autobiographical novel *Thick Smoke* (濃煙 *Nongyan*) highlights the intra-ethnic diversity, topolectal tensions, and faction consciousness among Sinitic communities. Although social legibility and coherence may translate to cultural capital, the institutional and literary dissolving of heterogeneous Chinese societies into monolithic, homogeneous Mandarin-speaking communities to achieve legibility and coherence might also impoverish and stunt the potential of an otherwise eclectically plurivocal Sinophone South. Triangulating the concepts of "textualization," "translational mimesis," and "linguistic empathy" (p. 35), Chan encourages an appreciation of the linguistic hybridity in Lin's writing. Chan also elaborates on the possibilities and challenges faced by Lin when crafting a place-appropriate literary language for the masses that resonates with the locals while also appealing to more regionally and globally established Sinophone cultural centers.

Chan's second chapter, on Han Suyin (韓素音)—a Eurasian female author who wrote in English but served as an influential and key literary actor in Mahua literature—presents the Sinophone and Anglophone literary spheres of Malaya and Nanyang as mutually conversant and "abutting local literary ecologies" (p. 113). Drawing attention to Han's bifocal writing practice, Chan sheds light on Han's attempts to work across the Chinese–English divide and her preference for simultaneously developing national literature on the local and global scales. In so doing, Chan productively unmoors Han from the rigid parochialisms of language-based, locale-based affiliations and categorizations, instead repurposing them to further complicate and nuance Mahua's literary developments and complex positionalities. The historical and popular misrecognition of Han as a Chinese-language writer¹⁾ (p. 78) also invites the possibility of misrecognition as a valid globalizing strategy as opposed to the conventional pursuit of global recognition and legibility. Focusing on Han's interests in vernacularizing English and developing a multilingual national literature and "truly grassroot sensibility for Malayan literature" (p. 104), Chan draws from Han's novel *And the Rain My Drink* (1956) and her speeches as a public intellectual. It would have been interesting to see some preliminary connections and comparisons between Han's use of Malayan English and other literary deployments of Malayan Chinese and Manglish (Malaysian colloquial English) and consider the implications of this sociocultural and linguistic trajectory in relation to modern Chinese literature.

The third chapter juxtaposes the lineage-tracking literary engagements with Malaysia and Mahua literature as exemplified in the 1993 novella *Sadness of the Pacific* (傷心太平洋) by mainland

1) Chan credits Ma (1984) as a common bibliographic source that lists Han as a Mahua writer.

Chinese writer Wang Anyi (王安憶) in relation to Ng Kim Chew's (黃錦樹) theorizations on Mahua literature. By examining how Wang's translocal narrative "draws from two connected sociohistorical worlds that sustain global Chinese literary productions" (p. 119), Chan makes the compelling argument of co-constituted Mahua and China literary spaces (p. 119). Wang, as Chan argues, "does not depict diaspora as a hierarchy of locational significance but rather features typologies of Chinese migration in confluence" (p. 119), an intervention that Chan interprets as an indication of "Wang's authorial consciousness of a multicentered world at large" (p. 119). Chan's reading of *Sadness of the Pacific* "as a cross-generational palimpsest of Nanyang memories" (p. 131) posits "human mobility as a world-making activity . . . not just [through] spatial relocation but also [through] the temporal recurrence of translocal connections" (p. 122). Mobility and diaspora are capaciously reconfigured as ongoing constellational or archipelagic relations rather than restricted to the binaries of homeland vs. diaspora, center vs. periphery, local vs. foreign, and national vs. global. As such, the chapter invigorates, implicates, and complicates existing concepts of indigeneity, migration studies, émigré literature, and the genres of *guiqiao xiaoshuo* (歸僑小說; novels about or by returned overseas Chinese) and *xungen wenxue* (尋根文學; root-seeking literature). While the previous chapter emphasizes the "missed temporal intersections" and "underutilized opportunities for translingual literary integration in late colonial Malaya" (p. 113) that Han faced, this third chapter demonstrates Wang's prescience and inventiveness in circumventing and theorizing through these constraints. By "formulat[ing] for her fiction a kind of metalanguage from which all particularizations evolve" (p. 138), Wang uses "Nanyang's significance in mediating Chinese mobilities to deexceptionalize China for mainland literary production and the world Chinese literary space" (p. 142).

Chapter 4 of *Malaysian Crossings* focuses on Bornean diasporic, naturalized Taiwanese author Li Yongping's (李永平) two-volume novel *Where the Great River Ends* (大河盡頭 2008; 2010). Chan proposes that "a mapping of transperipheral relations can demonstrate the critical dynamic that conditions literary world-making across social locations at multiple scales and drives the meaning-making processes in the archipelagic Sinophone South" (p. 156). Chan argues that Li's heterolingual "off-center articulations" (p. 158) enable a harnessing of liminality (p. 157) that re-presents Li and his work as the "constitutive outsider[s]" (p. 157) of Mahua, Taiwan, as well as the larger world-Chinese literary arenas. It is not simply proximity, similarity, or legibility to a cultural center that is aspirational, but a consciously calculated proximity and awareness of one's cosmopolitan positionality in the multiple literary spaces that one may participate in and engage with. Rejecting the prescriptive nativism of Malaysia and taking inspiration from the indigenous writings and studies in Taiwan, Li foregrounds a denationalized Bornean indigeneity that remains unquestionably native as it is nonnational or transnational.

Chan's comprehensive examination of these Mahua writing practices does not merely highlight "unconventional authorial identities that emerge from efforts to forge place-appropriate

literary languages for portraying multilingual Southeast Asia" (p. 5) but also reveals how language-appropriateness for portraying an emergent and nascent locale, regionality, and place may also produce unconventional authorial identities and literary approaches. Chan mines the generative tensions produced by the imbricated conditions and pressures of Chineseness, nativism, nationalism, and diaspora and highlights the "condition of compounded liminality and imposed provinciality" (p. 20) that has encouraged "intermarginal relations" (p. 21) to form. Invoking the concept of global marginality, *Malaysian Crossings* is a reminder that no condition of centrality or marginality should be treated as a given, encouraging readers to think about the local as not always national and the global as more than transnational.

I am intrigued by Chan's conceptualization of "Malaysian crossings" as the thematized phenomenon of the "Sinophone South [maintaining] imaginaries of being part of the world despite encountering general disregard by composing locally specific tales that manifest inventiveness rather than pursue approval by established cultural centers" (p. 22). What kind of inventiveness is manifest when approval from established cultural centers is disregarded? What can we make of the refusal to pursue approval, and is it synonymous with an inventive pursuit of disapproval? May a calculated distance, disassociation, difference from a cultural center also constitute a counterintuitive form of engagement?

Chan's recurring use of oceanic metaphors and conceptualizing vocabulary such as drift, flow, and mooring also aligns well with the current trends in developing and applying maritime-oriented and oceanic epistemologies to Sinophone literature.²⁾ Rather than the institutionalized insularity of a monolingual national literature or the tendency to "peddle exoticism" (p. 155) or play native informant for the sake of recognition from the prestige-granting cultural metropolises, *Malaysian Crossings* foregrounds a necessary and relational modularity in the production and circulation of so-called minor literatures in the world literary circle.

Chan's *Malaysian Crossings* responds to, references, extends, and expands on the works of Ng Kim Chew, Meir Sternberg, David Der-wei Wang, Chiu Kuei-fen, Carlos Rojas, Tee Kim Tong, and Tian Si, among others. The monograph will be of interest to Sinophone and modern Chinese literary scholars, as well as literary historians and linguists of Southeast Asia. The book is also relevant to those interested in the re-centering of literary translation's role in literature, especially in relation to Overseas Chinese communities. It remains to be seen whether Mahua literature's tenacity and resourcefulness in negotiating its own prestige, legibility, and recognition from a position of precarity not only defines but also comes to determine its place and role in both Sinophone and world literature. Chan's *Malaysian Crossings* will, however, surely usher in more interest in Mahua literature and is a foundational text for graduate students of Asian studies.

2) See Volland (2022).

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Returning Southeast Asia's Past: Objects, Museums, and Restitution

LOUISE TYTHACOTT and PANGGAH ARDIYANSYAH, eds.

Singapore: NUS Press with the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme, SOAS, University of London, 2021.

Illegal trafficking of antiquities and/or illicit trade in antiquities or cultural property, as well as human fossils, has been a global problem for centuries and a major source of concern and topic of debate among cultural heritage managers and scholars (see, for example, Manacorda 2009; and Campbell 2013). Large numbers of ethnographic objects, archeological artifacts, and artworks have been smuggled from their places of origin, creating a loss of cultural heritage and exacerbating international organizational conflicts. In responding to such problems during the era of decolonization that followed World War II, many countries demanded the repatriation or return of looted, illegally sold, stolen artifacts. The past decade also saw the establishment of committees to cope with the issue, such as UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to Its Countries of Origin or Its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation. In Southeast Asia, many countries have lost items of tangible or material cultural heritage, leading to campaigns and requests for the return of the property. Several Southeast Asian countries were successful in having their antiquities repatriated. However, a new issue emerged afterward—how the returned antiquities were managed, preserved, and reinstituted. *Returning Southeast Asia's Past* discusses the issue using case studies from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

This edited volume is divided into three main parts and consists of ten chapters (apart from the Introduction chapter) featuring case studies centering around the acquisition, protection, and restitution of looted and stolen artifacts. It should be noted that the majority of cases (seven chapters) presented in this volume are from mainland Southeast Asia, while there are three

chapters on cases in Indonesia. This might either show that mainland Southeast Asia is a prime region for looting, illicit trafficking, and trade in antiquities or reflect the biases of the editors. The volume focuses on material, physical, or tangible heritage and examines mainly historical artifacts in a temporal dimension (with the exception of a chapter on Ban Chiang's prehistoric objects). Books on such concerns in Southeast Asia are relatively rare. Paradoxically, looting, the return of antiquities, public engagement in heritage management, public education in archeology and heritage, and similar concerns have been reported on and widely publicized in Southeast Asia (see, for example, Tanongsak 2018; and Huang 2023). Therefore, although the volume is relatively selective in its focus, it is a very welcome and significant contribution *sensu lato*, especially for those involved in heritage preservation and management.

The Introduction provides background on the history of Western colonization and plundering of Southeast Asian tangible cultural heritage, mainly historical and religious objects. The chapter authors, also the editors of the volume, then move on to explain the organization of the volume into three main themes and briefly introduce each of the following chapters.

The first part consists of three chapters that focus on ownership of the past. A relatively short chapter by Gabrielle Abbe narrates an interesting but pitiful story of how cultural heritage in Cambodia was managed under French colonialism during the early to mid-twentieth century. Hundreds of artifacts that were called "left-overs" or "miscellaneous fragments" were sold by the colonizers in the name of protection. This practice would have been considered strongly unethical or improper in modern heritage preservation and management methods and would have been a cultural rights issue. The chapter indirectly helps to answer the question of "who owns the past" or reminds us about cultural rights to heritage. Chea Socheat, Muong Chanraksmeay, and Loiuse Tythacott present an insider or indigenous view on the significance of cultural heritage. Their chapter showcases the significant role of local people and authorities in the return and reinstitution of looted statues in Cambodia. Finally, the art historian Melody Rod-ari succinctly relates the history of discovery and smuggling of mainly bronze objects and painted ceramic vessels from the World Heritage site of Ban Chiang in Northeast Thailand to museums in the United States. The most thought-provoking point of this chapter is the final discussion on the lack of "public acknowledgement of holdings of Ban Chiang artifacts" within and outside Thailand. This part would have been more intriguing if it probed more intensively into the differences between cultural and legal ownership.

The theme of object biographies is explored in the four chapters of Part 2. John Clarke brings readers a lavish story of the Burmese royal regalia after their return from England to Myanmar in 1964. Clarke provides an interesting and detailed description of the life of the regalia and how the regalia were returned to their country of origin. When the regalia were put on display in museums in England, they were considered spectacular antiquities with high artistic value. However, after they were brought back to Myanmar they have held significant spiritual, historical, social, and

symbolic value for the people of Myanmar. Nguyen H. H. Duyen examines the display of stone Buddhist statues in a museum in Da Nang, Vietnam. The chapter makes a straightforward critique of why a group of Buddhist artifacts needs to be re-displayed so as to provide visitors with a more accessible and authentic interpretive display. This is a very important issue: it is important for museums and heritage sites in Southeast Asia to provide easy-to-understand, friendly, and impressive interpretations of objects, structures, as well as historic landscapes (see, for example, Tilden 1977) that use hypothetical models, reconstruction, graphics, and digital presentations. The third chapter, by one of the volume editors, Panggah Ardiyansyah, critiques the reinstitution of cultural property in Indonesia. The chapter focuses on a pair of nineteenth-century paintings made by a native Southeast Asian artist who was socially nurtured in Europe, rather than archeological artifacts or ancient religious objects. The paintings became an object of debate because they depict controversial historical scenes that created emotional conflicts between the Indonesian government and the general public. The chapter provides a thought-provoking discussion about the legal issues surrounding the reinstitution of repatriated objects. Jos van Beurden investigates the complicated nature of “colonial objects” that were transferred from the Netherlands to Indonesia and how local audiences and/or owners of these antiquities reacted to the return of their heritage.

The final part of the volume consists of three chapters dealing with the reinstitution of repatriated objects. Wieske Sapardan narrates the historical life of a stone Buddhist statue of Prajnaparamita in Indonesia and the multiple positive consequences of the return of the once-lost cultural property, which was more than a mere antique. Phacharaphorn Phanomvan focuses on the movement by a group of local villagers, activists, and scholars working for the return of a collection of bronze statues smuggled from a historic site in Northeast Thailand. The chapter emphasizes the successful use of social media in their reinstitution campaigns. The chapter goes on to discuss the use of antiquities in the promotion of nationalism by Thai government agencies, and centralized cultural heritage management. In contrast, the case under study represents a good example of bottom-up, community-based, public participation-oriented approaches for heritage protection and preservation. The final chapter, by Charlotte Galloway, highlights recent repatriation cases in Myanmar. Unlike other chapters in the volume, this one does not focus upon or present a specific case regarding the repatriation, reinstitution, and protection of Southeast Asia’s tangible past. Overall, this part of the book would have benefited from additional chapters dealing with the repatriation and return of antiquities within Southeast Asian countries themselves at the local and national levels. For example, there are a large number of artifacts in national museums in Bangkok and regional capital cities (e.g., Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand, Khon Kaen in Northeast Thailand, Songkhla in Southern Thailand) that have been removed or “transported” from their local places of birth or home. It would be interesting to know whether and how these items will be repatriated back to their place of origin.

Overall, the volume offers critical and fundamental food for thought and is spectacularly and

richly illustrated. However, there is some overlap in themes and issues in terms of the volume structure. It would have been helpful to highlight similarities with cases in other countries across Southeast Asia. The volume provides an interesting set of case studies that are crucial for the management of cultural heritage, authored by native scholars of Southeast Asia and experts in Southeast Asian archeology, history, and history of art and culture. It is a valuable addition to the study of cultural heritage management as well as archeology, architecture, history, museology, education, anthropology, and allied or related disciplines.

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Participatory Forest Management in a New Age: Integration of Climate Change Policy and Rural Development Policy

MAKOTO INOUE, KAZUHIRO HARADA, YASUHIRO YOKOTA, and ABRAR JUHAR MOHAMMED, eds.

Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2019.

Historically, local and indigenous populations have been stewards of tropical rainforests, including those in South and Southeast Asia. However, with European colonization, traditional forest management was supplanted by modern scientific forestry models. Post-colonization, the reins of tropical forest management were taken over by independent state governments that implemented centralized management, sidelining local participation.

From the 1970s onward, there has been a discernible shift toward integrating local communities into forest management. The centralized approach was found lacking when it came to conserving forests and addressing rural livelihood issues. Conversely, certain indigenous groups have demonstrated effective conservation of tropical forests. Engaging local communities appears to be a promising solution for enhanced tropical forest management. International development organizations have championed this by empowering locals and integrating their traditional knowledge into forest management.

Yet, the efficacy of participatory forest management remains debated, especially with respect to equity and benefit distribution, land rights, the balance between conservation and livelihoods, gender inclusion, and climate change strategies. M. H. McDermott and K. Schreckenberg (2009) posit that community forestry can address social inequity only when it specifically targets the impoverished and marginalized, with a clear focus on poverty alleviation. T. Clements and E. J. Milner-Gulland (2015) highlight the pivotal role of land tenure security in local livelihoods, emphasizing how it shapes economic well-being and strategies.

The success of community forest management hinges on various factors, including robust governance and fair benefit distribution. While it can harmonize community livelihood enhancement with forest conservation, success is not universal (Pagdee *et al.* 2006). Women play a crucial role in forest management, particularly as users (Agarwal 2001). Yet, they often find themselves sidelined in resource management decisions (Agrawal and Gupta 2005). Lastly, the role of participatory forest management in the REDD framework has been debated in the literature. While this holds promise for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation, it demands acknowledgment and rewards for community endeavors, ensuring grassroots benefit, and adopting community-centric strategies for lasting results (Skutsch and McCall 2012).

The editors of *Participatory Forest Management in a New Age* delve into the burgeoning debate by adopting Inoue Makoto's 2012 concept of "triple benefits." This concept emphasizes forest conservation, biodiversity preservation, climate change mitigation, and the enhancement of local community livelihoods (p. 9).

The book discusses the deforestation of tropical forests, changes in forest management over time, and the interaction of local people with the forest. Modern forest management, which often excludes local people, has not effectively addressed deforestation. Involving local people in forest management is crucial for conserving tropical forests. Participatory forest management, combined with initiatives such as REDD+, forest certification, and fair trade, offers a promising approach to reducing emissions, deforestation, and degradation.

The book has three main parts, focusing on participatory forest management primarily in South and Southeast Asia. The first part delves into "Participatory Forest Management for Climate Change and Rural Development in South and Southeast Asia." This section comprises four chapters that explore theoretical concepts along with case studies of participatory forest management

policies in the region, with a particular focus on their contributions to climate change mitigation and rural development. Tropical forests in South and Southeast Asia support the lives of about one-third of the population in the region. However, there has been rampant deforestation, especially after the nationalization of forestland. The growing timber industry contributes significant income for some countries in the region. Ecological disasters such as flooding have opened the eyes of policy makers and made them amenable to applying an alternative approach to forest management, from state-centered toward participatory forest management.

Several forest management models have been applied to address degradation. The book's contributors assess the viability of each participatory forest management model by considering three aspects: emission reduction, biodiversity conservation, and poverty alleviation using the three criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity (co-benefits). The discussion about participation would have provided a more comprehensive understanding if the authors of the various chapters had also described the level of people's involvement in each case, as outlined in the classic article by S. R. Arnstein (1969).

The book's second part, titled "Certification Systems for Rural Development," comprises chapters that delve into various certification schemes and critical issues pertaining to forest certification and fair trade. Enriched with case studies from Indonesia, particularly in Southeast Sulawesi, Yogyakarta, North Sumatra, and Aceh, this section provides insightful examples of forest certification and fair trade practices in rural development.

Market globalization has facilitated free worldwide trade, aiming to maximize profit through competitive principles. However, it has also increased the physical distance between producers in developing countries (south) and consumers in developed countries (north). Developing countries strive for efficient production in order to generate maximum revenue. Nevertheless, the distance between consumer and producer has created new social and environmental challenges. Although public governance has attempted to address such global issues, it has not always strengthened global-local relationships, increased civil society participation, or reinforced the market economy. In response to these challenges, certification of forest products and fair trade practices have emerged as strategies to tackle social and environmental concerns associated with market globalization.

Certification systems establish fixed social and environmental standards, encouraging consumers to purchase products that comply with these standards. These systems aim toward voluntarily rebuilding conventional market mechanisms within the relationship between local and global stakeholders. One pioneer in forest certification is the Germany-based Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), established in 1993. The international NGO aims to support forest management such that it provides economic value while improving environmental and societal impacts. The FSC label indicates certification of timber and non-timber forest products, and its adoption promotes community forestry. However, certification can be relatively expensive for small-scale producers.

FSC has also developed certification systems for community forestry, gaining international recognition and trust.

Fair trade is an approach to creating equitable and positive relationships between producers and consumers through international trade. It involves buying and selling products at reasonable prices, thereby supporting producers through consumer purchases. The concept of fair trade traces back to charitable initiatives by the Christian Church in the 1940s. By the 1980s, fair trade organizations had gained momentum, primarily in Europe. One such organization is Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO), which focuses mainly on agricultural products like coffee, tea, and fruit. FLO operates primarily in Latin America and the Caribbean, setting minimum product prices, with higher prices reflecting market rates. Additionally, a premium, usually 20 cents per pound, is allocated to developing local communities through fair trade importers.

The book's third part, titled "REDD+ as Climate Change Policies," comprises two chapters that delve into the concept of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) and its role in balancing climate policy and rural development. Additionally, this section provides insights into REDD+ national policy in Indonesia, along with a case study of a REDD+ project in the province of East Java.

REDD+ is a crucial policy instrument for Indonesia in combating climate change, deforestation, and forest degradation. The project aims to secure land use within national parks and promote local people's participation, which was previously strictly prohibited by national regulations. Local communities have shown enthusiasm for joining the project. While policies and strategies related to REDD+ have been developed at the national level, further efforts are required to successfully implement REDD+ activities.

The conclusion part of the book emphasizes that the success of participatory forest management in achieving triple benefits relies on certain factors, including the specific characteristics of the targeted forests and communities, as well as the level and type of participation integrated into the program. Programs targeting protected and conservation forests show strong results in emission reduction and biodiversity conservation but limited impact on poverty alleviation, with low feasibility. Programs conflicting with the livelihoods of the targeted population have weak effects on triple benefits and low feasibility. Production forest programs tend to have higher feasibility and poverty alleviation but a weaker impact on biodiversity. Government-implemented programs have more substantial effects on emission reduction and biodiversity impact compared to programs implemented by the private sector or local people. However, poverty alleviation is more significant in programs implemented by local communities with donor support than those implemented by the private sector or government. Overall, participatory forest management is considered to have high effectiveness in increasing carbon stock, high efficiency in terms of cost, and high equity in cost and benefits distribution.

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Wayward Distractions: Ornament, Emotion, Zombies and the Study of Buddhism in Thailand

JUSTIN THOMAS MCDANIEL

Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press, 2021.

The book *Wayward Distractions* by Justin McDaniel comprises nine articles on Thai Buddhism, along with an introduction. This work is the result of the life experience of a Buddhist scholar from the Western world who has been acquainted with Thai society and Thai people for thirty years. The author delves deeply and broadly into various phenomena, revealing the complex and diverse nature of Thai Buddhism, society, and culture, which includes literature, rituals, amulets, Hinduism, the status of nuns, mural painting, and contemporary art.

I have been a student, friend, and colleague of Justin's for over twenty years. Justin has shared with me many of the stories and topics discussed in this book. He has taken me to see things,

pointed out things for me to notice, challenged and encouraged me to think, asked me to grow my curiosity, and provided explanations to help me understand.

Twenty years ago, when I was a twenty-year-old student, I barely knew Bangkok. The only parts of the city I was familiar with were Siam Square, Sukhumvit, and Chidlom. Justin was the first person to give me a tour of Bangkok. He took me on a boat ride along Saen Saep Canal, walked me across the Memorial Bridge, had me try Indian food in Phahurat. We walked and ate noodles at Wang Lang Market, we went to the Kudi Chin and the Golden Mount, and he invited me to visit the Immaculate Conception Church and Sathira Dhammasathan Nunnery. Each of these places has its own history, culture, and unique stories that formulate what we call “Thai society” and “Thai Buddhism.” Many times I did not realize that while we were walking and talking with people, Justin was actually gathering field data for his research.

I still remember well the first time he took me on a boat ride through Khlong Saen Saep from Hua Chang Bridge to the Golden Mount Temple. On the way from Phan Fa Pier, he led me into a narrow alley and then into a small shop, whose owner was of Indian origin (evident from her face and attire). The shop sold pictures from Buddha’s biography and other prayer books that are usually seen in Thai temples. Right after leaving the shop, Justin asked me many questions, such as “What is the heart of Buddhism?” “What is the canon of Buddhism?” and “What is the Buddhism in Thailand like?”

Naturally, I gave the answers I had learned in school: The heart of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths. The Tipitaka is the canon of Buddhism. Buddhism in Thailand is Theravada Buddhism. When I gave those answers, Justin shook his head and said that was not it. He said we have to ask each person what teachings they hold. We have to see what books or images they use. Maybe they are like those from this shop. Thai Buddhism is Thai Buddhism. It has its own unique characteristics, which may not necessarily be “Theravada.”

This was the first time someone ever told me this. This new perspective challenged my previous understanding of Buddhism as a black-and-white, right-or-wrong set of principles learned solely from textbooks. It showed me that true Thai Buddhism is more than just words on a page or a rigid institution. Rather, it is a matter of society, culture, thought, ways of life. And to truly understand Thai Buddhism, we must engage in fieldwork, talk to people, and, most important, not blindly believe without asking questions.

Reading various articles with explanations in the introduction of *Wayward Distractions*, compiled from various sources, reminded me of my learning experience with Justin. It made clear that even though there were many incidents that raised doubts and caused continuous distractions, Justin’s perspective and learning methods were never distracted. He always took us away from what was considered the mainstream—with its traditional standards, regulations, and conventions—and instead focused on overlooked realities.

This book presents complex topics and methods of analysis, but it does so in a storytelling

style that makes it accessible to a broad range of readers—from the general reader who seeks knowledge and enjoyment and is prompted to observe or question familiar things around them, to scholars and students of Thai Buddhism, Thai literature, Thai culture, and ethnography and folklore. They will not only gain new perspectives and explanations on Thai literature and Buddhist culture but also observe the methods of study, questioning, analysis, and synthesis that come from literature review, field data collection, comparison with other cultures, leading to new interpretations and critical thinking skills.

Justin's method of analyzing and interpreting data encompasses both an "insider" and an "outsider" perspective. He has a good understanding of various cultural aspects, even better than many Thais. At the same time, his perspectives and critiques come from an "outsider" viewpoint, allowing him to see meaning in things that might seem mundane. What his critiques focus on is not only phenomena in Thai Buddhist society but, more important, explanations and discourses that derive from the far past, which are mainstream in Thai society and widely accepted as the only truth.

The author shows that the issues he explores need to be revisited and reinterpreted to reveal the true nature of Thai Buddhism. He reconsiders the concept of the mandala and the founding of Bangkok by questioning the significance of ethnic diversity and localization and the roles of people (article 3). He also reconsiders the significance of a local Jātaka like the Sujawanna Wua Luang (article 2) and of the love between husband and wife in the Vessantara Jātaka, which relates to the real world (article 4). His explanation of mural paintings and modern art points out the complexity and diversity of cultural influences that affect Buddhist art, both old and new (articles 5 and 7). His view on the importance of amulets and his explanation of the importance of zombies or corpses, from the perspective of material culture, also challenges the traditional view that these are not Buddhist teachings and that they are commercial (articles 6 and 9). In one article, he critiques the influence of Hinduism by examining the roles of Brahmins and hermits (*ṛṣi*) and by analyzing how Hindu teachings are present in contemporary Thai society (article 8). And one analysis poses questions about the status and ordination of bhikkhūṇīs by pointing out the prominent role and status of Thai nuns (*mae chi*) in the present day (article 10).

Although I may not entirely agree with the author on some topics, many issues and perspectives on data and various research studies that existed before are interesting and beneficial to the study of Thai Buddhism. The book's perspectives and thought-provoking questions offer the potential for new discoveries, explanations, and insights in the field of Thai Buddhism.

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At the Edge of Mangrove Forest: The Suku Asli and the Quest for Indigeneity, Ethnicity, and Development

OSAWA TAKAMASA

Kyoto: Kyoto University Press; Tokyo: Trans Pacific Press, 2022.

Discussion of indigenous groups in contemporary society is very interesting and relevant, especially in these times of rapid landscape transformation. Indonesia's 1,331 indigenous groups (Badan Pusat Statistik 2021), or tribes as they are sometimes referred to in the English-language literature, are distributed across several regions of the archipelago. These groups maintain and practice their customs, language, and culture as they navigate the current discourses and politics of indigeneity. Recent laws and government decrees use the term *Masyarakat adat* to refer to indigenous peoples. The National Organization of Indigenous Peoples, Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), estimates that the number of indigenous people in Indonesia is between 50 million and 70 million. The popular Indonesian saying *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) symbolizes unity among all the ethnic groups of Indonesia and has been codified as the official motto of the Indonesian government. The walls of government offices and ministries display this recognition of ethnic diversity, signifying the complexity of the Indonesian social fabric. Osawa Takamasa's *At the Edge of Mangrove Forest: The Suku Asli and the Quest for Indigeneity, Ethnicity, and Development* explores the articulation of identity of a local ethnic group and how the notion of indigeneity is enmeshed with state notions of development and social integration.

For most Indonesians, the ethnic groups inhabiting the country's various regions are considered "indigenous groups" as long as they practice and uphold their customary law (*hukum adat*). These include the indigenous groups of Badui (in Banten Province); Kesepuhan (Lebak, Banten); Marga Sarampas (Jangkat, Merangin, Jambi); Ammatoa Kajang (Bulukumba, South Sulawesi); Tengger (Lumajang, East Java Province); Sunda Wiwitan (West Java); and Rimba, Sakai, and Kubu (Riau-Sumatra) along with groups of Dayak (in Kalimantan) and many others. In this book, Osawa presents his work with the Suku Asli, Akit, and Rawa on Bengkalis Island, Riau Province. He argues that their indigeneity can be characterized by their fluid and extensive identity as *peranakan* (original birth). Among the Akit and Rawa, dependence on resources in mangrove forests is flexible and open. It is managed by *adat*, without fixed institutions, and supported by ritual practices including the worship of natural spirits (p. 210). In this context, the government recognizes "native tribes and indigenous groups" through "Regional Regulations" (Peraturan Daerah/Perda). The implementation of these regulations is very strict and can only be adopted and legalized by members of local parliament and heads of regencies and laws (Undang-Undang). The legality of Perda provides legitimacy, protection, and services to maintain the economic needs and social characteristics of these groups. However, for indigenous tribes that do not carry out their customary law but only practice their language and culture, the government's recognition is limited to an admin-

istrative level. These tribes do not receive the same protections and services economically and socially.

As a result of the many conflicts over resources between indigenous groups and private companies, the Suku Asli or indigenous groups experienced a drop in their economic, social, and ecological conditions during the Soeharto regime. They had no access to land for agriculture or to the forests for gathering resources (agarwood, rattan, fruit, honey, and medicinal plants) and hunting animals. Their economic plight and social marginalization highlighted the need for reforms to the existing policies. Osawa critically discusses the terrible conditions at the end of the Soeharto regime. During the subsequent era of decentralization, various local actors gained opportunities to access land and resources (p. 211). Within this larger political-economic trend, Osawa argues,

[It] seems to be the case in the sense that rural communities may have some room for choice in their identities. This happened after Reformation era in 1998 when the Indonesian policy changed and national or international activists began the indigenous movement in the scheme of struggling with the state. (p. 211)

In certain regional contexts, the presence of indigenous peoples and the rise of *adat* in politics are positive signs. The revival of *adat* is not the same as *adat* itself; however, that is not to say that the “customary rights” advocated by today’s indigenous peoples are necessarily “invented traditions”—especially when related to conflicts between the state or private companies and indigenous tribes or indigenous peoples over land rights, which became the most important issue during the Reformation period (1999–2010). Even in the context of contemporary customs, the term *adat* is used to refer to certain customary practices and institutions that must be respected because of their long traditions inherited by the community, rather than those encouraged or implemented by the state, and which are seen as having continuity and relevance to current political issues.

This book is the culmination of a collaboration between Kyoto University’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the University of Edinburgh, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (now referred to as BRIN [Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional]/National Research and Innovation Agency), and Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata (Cultural and Tourism Agency) of Bengkalis Regency. The research findings presented in the book are part of the author’s doctoral dissertation, based on long-term field work. Osawa has cultivated strong relations with Suku Asli, the process and challenges of which he introduces in the text. This constellation of research interactions is reflected in the comprehensive and multi-perspective analysis of Osawa’s ethnography.

Osawa’s analysis covers a wide terrain, including insightful discussion of indigeneity and language, expressions of identity of the Suku Asli, their relationship with ethnic Malays on Riau, as well as the spatial dynamics of foraging. He explores how the daily cultural practices of the Suku Asli work to create a sense of homogeneity in the face of the multitude of socioeconomic and

political forces that frame their livelihoods.

Picking up on the nuances of ethnic representation, Osawa explains in Chapter 2 that Suku Asli in the village are familiarly referred to as the Utan. In 2006, the Indonesian government recognized the change of their ethnic name from Utan to Suku Asli as a result of negotiations by their ethnic organization. Suku Asli is a familiar Indonesian name for “Indigenous People” or “Indigenous Tribe” (p. 71). When used with the implication of identity, it refers to three different categories of people. First, in terms of settlement area, there are the Suku Asli living around the estuary of the Siak River. Utan, Akit, and Rawa are included in this category, to distinguish them from Malaysians, Javanese, and other ethnic groups. Second, “Suku Asli” refers to the people who were previously called Utan, whom the government recognized as *Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (remote indigenous communities). These Suku Asli are geographically and politically isolated *adat* communities. Third, “Suku Asli” indicates the original Suku Asli whose endonym is Peranakan, which signals their origin as descendants of Chinese men and Utan women. According to oral history, the Suku Asli’s ancestors moved to Bengkalis Island and were recognized as Utan by the Siak kingdom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (p. 73).

The Siak kingdom was governed by Malays. According to Osawa’s findings, Malays were very progressive and had dynamic cultures spanning north coastal Sumatra (the kingdom of Deli, Johor kingdom/coast of Western Malaysia) and the Siak kingdom (Riau). In terms of social relations, Malays were the dominant cultural force and were in the powerful position of communicating between *hamba raja* (Malays) and *rakyat raja* (Suku Asli). According to *adat*, *rakyat raja* are not allowed to eat together with *hamba raja*, and the latter do not give their daughters in marriage to the former, nor do they obtain daughters-in-law from them. This therefore suggests that Malays avoided communication with Suku Asli in the hierarchical system of the Siak kingdom (p. 76). Currently, marriages between Malays and Suku Asli are very rare, and there remains a social boundary between the two, inherited from the former hierarchical system.

Osawa’s Suku Asli informant Odang offered important insights on why Malays generally reject marriage with Suku Asli. It is due to differences in religious beliefs (p. 76). Malays are Muslim, while Suku Asli are non-Muslim—they maintain their *adat* practices and non-Islamic doctrines. For this reason, there is a boundary between Malays, Javanese, and Suku Asli. Marriages do occur between Malays and Javanese as the dominant ethnic groups, because of their beliefs and traditions being similar to Islam in Bengkalis District. It is rarer for Malays and Javanese to marry Suku Asli, due to their different religious beliefs and practices. The former also perceive Suku Asli as having strong supernatural powers and knowledge of magic, and they believe that such qualities make them dangerous (p. 77).

Suku Asli’s relations with their ecological surrounds are key to understanding their discourses of ethnicity. Osawa explains how for indigenous people, land and forest resources are their main means of livelihood, and he further describes how Suku Asli want to protect their right to access

natural resources. This connection with the land is necessary for their economic survival (pp. 101–102). In this sense, for indigenous people land is essential for their very existence. Suku Asli operate according to the historical views of land utilization that are backed by the ancestral cultures of particular regions. Thus, local authorities and activists define land that has been utilized under local *adat* (*tanah adat*, *tanah ulayat*) as ancestral land and try to protect locals' rights to it (p. 101). Until recently, Suku Asli were able to maintain self-governance in land utilization; but in the near future the legality of government-recognized "land certification" may be upheld. The Suku Asli's land and natural forest ownership may lead to land-use conflict and cause them to lose the legality for utilizing their land.

In Chapter 6, Osawa explains that the government of Indonesia protects and provides a conducive space for people to practice their religious beliefs. In Indonesia, identifying one's *agama* (religion) is very significant in civil life. The Pancasila as a basic philosophy is to be applied vertically (with God/Allah) and horizontally (with human beings) (p. 183). Even though Suku Asli practice *adat* and not religion, their members are obliged by the government to register a religion—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism—and list it on their citizenship cards (*kartu tanda penduduk*). During the Soeharto regime, religious beliefs were enforced through various policies. For instance, when registering for national identity cards, people had to fill up a column for *agama*. In 1974 a statutory marriage law (Number 1/1974) was enacted decreeing that marriages should be conducted under the rules of a couple's *agama*, and that their religion should be stated on the marriage certificate. Thus, *agama* became the essential identifier in Indonesian citizenship (p. 187).

I have two criticisms of *At the Edge of Mangrove Forest*. The first relates to the title of the book and the main thrust of the ethnography. The role of mangrove forests is not central to the analysis, and a more representative title could have foregrounded the identity struggle of Suku Asli among Malays and Javanese. This would have underscored the relevant dynamics of their identity, assimilation, and development. Second, the discussion does not address the role of the local government (Bengkalis Regency) in the application of the Affirmative Policy Action to the development of Suku Asli. A chapter on that would nicely supplement Osawa's explanation of the model of the economic, social, and ecological aspects of empowering the Suku Asli, rounding out what is otherwise a valuable contribution to our understanding of ethnicity, identity, and development in Indonesia.

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Early Theravādin Cambodia: Perspectives from Art and Archaeology

ASHLEY THOMPSON, ed.

Singapore: NUS Press with the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme, SOAS, University of London, 2022.

Theravāda Buddhism is a branch of Buddhism that has been practiced in mainland Southeast Asia from as early as the thirteenth century. Scholars in Buddhist studies, however, have raised questions on the definition and usage of the term “Theravāda.” Two important publications in Buddhist studies, *The Ascendancy of Theravāda Buddhism in Southeast Asia* (Prapod 2010) and *How Theravāda Is Theravāda? Exploring Buddhist Identities* (Skilling *et al.* 2012), brought significant attention to this Buddhist lineage. These two books trace how and where the term was derived and how it spread from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. The former, written by the Thai scholar Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, raises questions on the usage of the term and its historical and conceptual contexts. The latter is an anthology edited by a group of Buddhist scholars (Peter Skilling, Jason A. Carbine, Claudio Cicuzza, and Santi Pakdeekham). It covers the transformation of texts, literature, and religious practices from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. In the introduction, Peter Skilling questions the use of the word “Theravāda”: “Might it have simply been that South and Southeast Asians did not choose to identify themselves as Theravadin—that the term was not part of their everyday vocabulary?” (Skilling *et al.* 2012, xix).

A new anthology, *Early Theravādin Cambodia: Perspectives from Art and Archaeology*, edited by the Khmer art specialist Ashley Thompson, focuses on Khmer Buddhist material culture between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. It consists of eight chapters written by art historians, archeologists, and cultural anthropologists in the field of Khmer and Southeast Asian art and architecture. Cognizant of the two books mentioned earlier, in the introduction Thompson carefully defines “Theravāda.” She compares and contrasts the practices of Mahayana, Vajrayana (Tantric), Tantric Theravāda, and Theravāda Buddhism in Cambodia. She also addresses the use of Sanskrit and Pali in inscriptions and in different canonical sources and liturgical verses. Thompson traces the development of Buddhist imagery and styles loosely into two periods: the early Middle Period (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) and post-Angkor period (fifteenth to eighteenth century). She also thoroughly reviews each chapter of the volume in her own “Chapters” section.

Six chapters of the book (1–4 and 7–8) are written by art historians and anthropologists in the

field of mainland Southeast Asian studies. These chapters focus on stylistic analysis and iconography of Buddhist images and religious architecture. They utilize written textual sources, including inscriptions, manuscripts, and chronicles, to help identify the specific types of Buddhist traditions (i.e., Mahayana, Tantra, and Theravāda) that the temples and images belonged to. These materials span the end of the Angkor period (ninth to fifteenth century) to the occupation of Angkor by the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya in the mid-fifteenth century. Each chapter links the development of prominent temple compounds (e.g., Angkor Wat and Bayon) and/or Buddhist images to other styles in places such as Ayutthaya (c. 1350–1767, Thailand), Pagan (849–1297, Burma), and Lan Xang (1354–1707, Laos).

In Chapter 2, “Angkor and Theravāda Buddhism: Some Considerations,” Hiram Woodward notes that the thirteenth century was a time of cultural shifts, reinvigoration, and reformation. The first part of the chapter focuses on the stylistic development and iconography of Buddha images dating to the seventh to twelfth century. The second part concentrates on temples in Lopburi (e.g., Prasat-hin Phimai and Mahathat). The author compares Khmer temples in Lopburi to those of King Jayavarman VII (r. 1182–1218) in Cambodia (e.g., Bayon). Woodward uses the term “Ariya,” which was inscribed in a fifteenth-century Kalyani inscription of King Dhammaceti (r. 1471–92) of Pegu (Burma), to identify a type of pre-reform Pali Singhalese Theravāda Buddhism in the northeastern region of present-day Thailand.

In his comprehensive chapter, “Reading and Interpreting *Jātaka* Tales during the Angkorian Period” (Chapter 3), Tuy Danel focuses on the representation of *jātaka* stories, particularly the Vessantara *jātaka*, during the Angkor period. He discusses whether *jātaka* were an expression of Theravāda Buddhist practices during the Angkor period. Danel first traces the representations of *jātaka* on terracotta reliefs and *śima* stones from the Dvāravati culture (sixth to eleventh century). He investigates the development and representations of *jātaka* on Khmer monuments and points out that *jātaka* first appeared on a relief on the north pediment of the eastern *gopura* at a Vishnu temple, Thammanon, dating to the reign of Suryavarman II (r. 1113–c. 1150). Two episodes of the Vessantara *jātaka*, which focus on the act of generosity, are adorned on two separate registers. In order to explain a Buddhist story being depicted in a Hindu temple, Danel suggests that the Dvāravati culture might have penetrated Khmer religious thought (p. 123). He compares and contrasts depictions of different *jātaka* in four other temples constructed in the Angkor Wat style. The latter part of the chapter examines the depictions of *jātaka* in temples in Burma, such as the Hpet-leik pagodas and the Ananda temple (134 terracotta plaques are dedicated to the Vessantara *jātaka*) in Pagan, and Borobudur (Indonesia). Danel utilizes both Sanskrit and Pali texts to support his analysis. He concludes that a focus on “extreme generosity and the renouncement of self” are the most celebrated virtues in Theravāda Buddhism, and “this may well have reflected the political-religious philosophy of the king who acts as the unifier of his nation” (p. 134).

In Chapter 4, “The Buddha Sculptures of Tham Phra (Buddha Cave): Implications for Under-

standing the Complex Religious Atmosphere of Western Thailand during the Early Second Millennium CE,” Samerchai Poolsuwan discusses the authenticity of these wooden Buddha images. He divides the images by stylistic appearance into four groups: Group I, Pala style (eighth to twelfth century); Group II, two standing crowned Buddha images (Angkor Wat style of the twelfth century); Group III, four standing Buddha images similar to Group II; and Group IV, four seated images of Buddha in *māravijaya*. He compares these images to other Theravāda sites and remarks that the wooden sculptures at Tham Phra provide a clue for understanding the religious and cultural atmosphere of western Thailand during the decades after the reign of King Jayavarman VII of Cambodia. They showcase the continuous existence of old Theravāda (Ariya Buddhism) beliefs in this region long before the new waves of Theravāda from Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century.

Chapters 5 and 6 are written by the archeologists Ea Darith and Sato Yuni. These two chapters cover recent archeological discoveries of temple structures, sculptures, reliefs, and ceramics in Cambodia. They broaden our understanding of ritual practices and the functions of Buddhist terraces in Angkor. While Darith studies thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sites near Angkor Thom, Sato focuses on Western Prasat Top in the southwest area of Angkor Thom. In his chapter, “A Brief Overview of Key Theravāda Buddhist Structures at Central Angkor from the 13th to 18th Centuries,” Darith categorizes terraces based on their functions into two main types: those with a Buddha image placed inside a congregational space (*vihara*), and Hindu and Mahayana structures reworked to serve the purposes of Theravāda Buddhism. Interestingly, Darith notes that only the important aspects of these structures were transformed, not entire monuments. One example is the modification of the eleventh-century Saivite temple galleries at Baphuon in Angkor Thom into a large reclining Buddha approximately 70 meters in length. Double *sima* can still be seen around the terrace (p. 197). Most terraces face east and are approximately one meter above the ground. The first type is commonly surrounded by eight *sima* stones at the cardinal and intercardinal points—a standard practice for Theravādin temples. Many objects were recovered in a terrace in Western Prasat Top, such as brown glazed roof tiles, Khmer and Chinese ceramics, Buddhist statues, and jewelry. Darith remarks that the structures are simple and unadorned with elements because they reflect “Theravāda ideology, economic and demographic factors” (p. 194).

Sato reports on important excavation and restoration done by the Nara National Institute for Cultural Properties, which was established in 2001. In her chapter, “New Evidence at Western Prasat Top, Angkor Thom,” she carefully examines the terrace of Western Prasat Top and dates it based on three main elements: the central sanctuary is built of laterite and sandstone, which dates to the early Angkor period; the decorative ornaments on the lintels and colonettes are stylistically related to tenth-century Bantaey Srei style; and the pediments are adorned with images of the Buddha and other motifs such as *kendi* and flowers, which date stylistically to no earlier than the fourteenth century (p. 210). While a white porcelain bowl was recovered in the central sanctuary, Chinese ceramics dating to around the twelfth century were found in the fifth layer of the terrace

structures. Various artifacts made of gold and bronze were found inside the bowl and were confirmed to be objects used in ritual ceremonies (p. 222). Stone post-Bayon-style Buddha heads, a relief representing the Buddhist triad (Buddha sheltered by naga hoods, flanked by Lokeshvara and Prajnaparamita), and *sima* stones were among the Buddhist artifacts recovered from the upper and lower bases of the temple. Sato divides the *sima* stones into five types based on their shape and decorative ornaments (p. 217).

Another interesting group of artifacts at this temple are the false doors on the western and southern sides that are decorated with standing and walking Buddhas, similar to the Sukhothai style in Thailand from around the fourteenth century. Even though brickwork was common during the pre-Angkor and early Angkor periods, bricks were not normally used for temple construction during the late Angkor and Bayon periods. Sato states that due to special circumstances, bricks were used at Western Prasat Top. Valuable artifacts (332 gold pieces [gold balls and non-decorated gold plates], lead glass beads, soda glass, quartz, bronze, and bones) as well as broken Chinese ceramics were recovered under the sanctuary at the site. This demonstrates that “after the ritual ceremonies had been accomplished after the 14th century, the brick structure was filled with sandy soil and then the northern sanctuary was built on top of it” (p. 222). Sato posits two hypotheses for the placement of the artifacts: a funeral ceremony such as cremation, or a Hindu or Buddhist ritual fire ceremony (p. 223). The last part of the chapter presents important inscriptions from a decorative sandstone block. On the basis of the artifacts and their artistic appearance, Sato concludes that Western Prasat Top had four usage phases. The Buddhist terraces can be dated to after the fourteenth century, and the southern and northern sanctuaries were reconstructed around or after the fourteenth century to the early fifteenth.

In Chapter 7, “Back to the Future: The Emergence of Past and Future Buddhas in Khmer Buddhism,” Nicolas Revire thoroughly examines the development of forms, art styles, epigraphy, texts, and premodern rituals of the future Buddha, Metteyya. He surveys the past and future Buddhas in both local Pali and vernacular literature. He compares and contrasts different types of Buddhas, namely, Esoteric Jina Buddhas from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, directional Buddhas (*dasadisabuddha*) from the Middle Period, the five Buddhas (*pancabuddha*), and the ten future Buddhas (*dasabodhisattva*) from the late Middle Period (c. seventeenth century onward). Revire remarks that artistic traces of the ten future *bodhisattvas* are extremely scarce in mainland Southeast Asia. These *bodhisattvas* were probably in vogue during the late Ayutthaya and early Ratanakosin periods (eighteenth century onward) in Siam. The *dasabodhisattva* texts were probably brought to Siam from Sri Lanka (p. 248). Revire concludes that “the emergence of the *pancabuddha* in ancient Cambodia was likely the local answer to the earlier esoteric *pancajina*” (p. 251). Revire remarks that although the cult of the past and future Buddhas is completely appropriated and integrated into local Southeast Asian religions and culture, further research will help point toward the sources of inspiration of premodern Khmer Buddhism.

In Chapter 8, “17th- and 18th-Century Images of the Buddha from Ayutthaya and Lan Xang at Angkor Wat,” Martin Polkinghorne catalogs more than three hundred Ayutthaya and Lan Xang Buddha images that were deposited in the south gallery of Preah Pean, at Angkor. Based on their style, the images can be dated to around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Polkinghorne proposes that the large number of Buddha images that were brought from Ayutthaya and Lan Xang indicate that Angkor Wat was probably a pilgrimage destination for Theravāda devotees. Polkinghorne suspects that the ten images of the Buddha in *māravijaya* may have been offerings from Ayutthaya after its occupation of Angkor in 1431–32. The colonization period lasted around 12–15 years. More than 15 dedicatory inscriptions record the donation, commissioning, and restoration of the temple as part of merit making in the Buddhist tradition. Polkinghorne focuses on three different types and styles of Buddha images as evidence of Theravāda communities in Angkor Wat. He concludes that the importation of Buddha images in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be clearly considered as evidence of international relations. The images characterize Cambodia as holding potential for further research on trans-border material culture and locate it firmly within the context of regional and global history at the beginning of the modern age (p. 289).

Early Theravādin Cambodia is a scholarly book that not only reflects new approaches and interesting interpretations of Khmer Buddhist objects and archeology but is also a comparative study of Khmer material culture and the material culture of neighboring countries in mainland Southeast Asia. The book also provides excellent bibliographical sources for Southeast Asian and Khmer art, archeology, and architecture and Buddhist literature, history, and epigraphy. I highly recommend this book for graduate reading on Cambodian Buddhist art.

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In Search of Justice in Thailand's Deep South: Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist Women's Narratives

JOHN CLIFFORD HOLT, ed.; SORAYA JAMJUREE, comp.; and HARA SHINTARO, trans.
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022.

In May of 2008, Saimah Che'nae was nursing a newborn at her home in Kuching Lepah village, Pattani Province, in the deep south of Thailand. She had returned from hospital a few weeks earlier and since then had remained at home: breastfeeding, caring for the child, and moving carefully around a painful Cesarean scar. But she could hear the hubbub from the noodle store next door. And on this night, she noticed, the sounds were more animated than usual. Calling out to her neighbors, she learned that a local schoolteacher, known to her as Chuling, had been seized and taken to the nursery school grounds. Later, Saimah would learn that two Thai teachers had been abducted in a bungled attempt by insurgents to bargain for the release of two Malay-Thais who had been detained earlier on suspicion of causing the deaths of two navy personnel. Not knowing any of these circumstances, Saimah murmured with concern, "May Allah protect her."

Saimah's husband had returned from prison only two days earlier: he had been detained for 28 days under the 2004 Emergency Decree, which gave extraordinary powers to officers to detain, arrest, and interrogate people in the South suspected of terrorism, even on slim evidence. Saimah herself was summoned just days after her husband's release. She was detained at the police station for two days, and then at Narathiwat Prison for 14 days, on suspicion of being responsible for Chuling's abduction and assault. Saimah described the painfulness of her Cesarean scar in the cold of the prison, the pain of not being able to breastfeed her newborn, and the difficulties of sharing a prison cell only six tiles wide with six other women. Unlike many of those other women, Saimah was released on bail. She fought the case until 2011, when it was finally dismissed. But even then, her name appeared on blacklists, preventing her travel beyond Thailand's borders.

In Search of Justice in Thailand's Deep South is a collection of stories written by victims of violence in Thailand's deep south. Victims here are understood as those who have lost a loved one to violence (in a shooting, beheading, or disappearance, for instance) or to unjust incarceration. Soraya Jamjuree, founder of the Civic Women's Network, solicited the narratives and compiled them, and she also provides a preface. The Civic Women's Network is composed of volunteers who work to amplify the voices of women caught up in the violence. Many members were also themselves victims. These narratives were published first in Thai, under the editorship of Thitinob Komalnimini. *In Search of Justice in Thailand's Deep South* makes these accounts available to Anglophone readers for the first time, in translation by Hara Shintaro (who also provides an introductory note). Seventeen of the narratives are written by women, three by men, 15 by Malay Muslims, and five by Thai Buddhists. John Clifford Holt appears to have sponsored the translation by way of a grant from the University of Chicago, and he provides an illuminating introduction that

puts the conflict into historical context.

The conflict is very old, with outbreaks of violence between the Malay enclave in Patani and surrounding Buddhists spanning centuries, even if most of the history between these groups has been peaceful. Through the twentieth century, tensions have focused on calls from the moderate Islamic leader Haji Sulong (martyred in the 1950s) for limited independence for the four southern provinces within Thailand. His suggestions included a Muslim governor, instruction in Malay in schools up to grade 7, recognition of both Thai and Malay as languages of government, and an independent Muslim judicial system separate from the government's courts (p. xxvii). These were perceived by some as disloyal to the Thai nation and a threat to Thai sovereignty, leading to conflicts between insurgents and the Thai state. Violence has accelerated considerably since 2004. Holt describes how the populist Shinawatra Thaksin government, elected by a landslide in 2001, was ill prepared to take on the complexities of the long-running tensions in the South. For instance, it abolished the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, which had long muted the violence through social measures such as poverty reduction, and instead handed management of the insurgency exclusively to the police. After the deaths of several police officers at the hands of insurgents, Thaksin declared martial law in 2004. Holt describes the overuse of force to quell the insurgency as "draconian" and "ham-fisted": insurgents with haphazard improvised explosive devices faced off against the extraordinary powers granted to the police and military under the special laws of the Thaksin government.

A common thread in this collection is that the violence seems to come out of nowhere. There is no voice in this collection that speaks from the perspective of a self-confessed insurgent or perpetrator. No one admits to a crime. There are no testimonies from military or police officers. The overwhelming voice presented here is one of bewilderment: violence intrudes on an otherwise happy and peaceful civilian life. Unexpected and uncalled for, violence leaves devastation in its wake. Many of the stories also express some kind of resolution, often concluding with hope for the future or words of praise for the Civic Women's Network, Allah, or even the Thai justice system. The structure of the stories is typically threefold: first the shock of violence, then the aftermath, then the resolution.

Another common theme is education. As Holt notes in his introduction, education is a much-valued end for many of the victims who speak in this volume. Men and women alike seemingly make incredible efforts to ensure the education of the children in their care. But another aspect emerged to me on reading this collection: the conflict in the South is itself a conflict about education. Education in Malay was one of Haji Sulong's demands. The narratives show that Islamic communities in Thailand's deep south go to extraordinary lengths to educate their children in *pondok* schools: often run by community groups and staffed by volunteers, these schools get by on a shoestring supported above all by the devotion of the community. But these are treated as hotbeds of extremism by law enforcement officers in some of the stories. In one story, we meet

an Islamic female school principal who was arrested on suspicion of harboring insurgents on her school grounds. In another, we meet the widow of a respected *pondok* teacher who was killed during the Kru Se Mosque incident.

These scenes contrast with those in another story: in Chuling's parents' home we see paintings and hand-drawn images of the king. Chuling evidently made these when she was herself a school student in Chiang Rai. The images give a hint of the triad of nation, Buddhism, and king that is typically taught at regular Thai schools. Chuling herself was, of course, a schoolteacher: the image of this northern daughter teaching with dedicated zeal in the deep south seems to have contributed to the outpouring of grief and anger at the events that led to her death. Furthermore, she was held captive in a school. The conflict as it appears in this collection is fundamentally about education: who has the right to educate, what they can teach to whom, and whose version of the truth they teach.

Even the Civic Women's Network is evidently involved in education, offering training to victims of the violence so that they can go on to moderate "seminars" focused on bringing peace to the deep south. Saimah Che'nae, for example, describes how the network reached out to her, overcoming the stigma and isolation Kuching Lepah village experienced after Chuling's assault and death. The network created a group of village women impacted by the incident, and together the group now produce "edible peace"—herbed fish crackers—as a signature product of the village. Saimah trained with the network to run seminars sharing views between victims and law enforcement officers, and in this way she was able to finally have her name removed from the blacklist: "It was as if I had entered a broader world, with new perceptions about surrounding society, and stood up again" (p. 50). She now volunteers to teach people how to recite the Qur'an four days and five evenings a week.

It must be noted that the narratives in this collection are not always highly readable. Hara acknowledges the difficulty presented in rendering these texts into English. It is hard to know how eloquent or compelling these stories were in their original Thai or Malay. It is safe to assume that these are amateur stories. The effort was, after all, to make ordinary people's stories heard. Not surprisingly, the results are mixed. In amongst the extraordinary, one finds the saccharine, the mundane, the confusing, and the clichéd. This led me to wonder about the role of authorship. If the aim is to let the voices of victims be heard, how is this best achieved? An admirable path is offered here: people in more privileged circumstances (Holt, Soraya Jamjuree, Thitinob, Hara) have dedicated their talents and resources to making the stories written by people in less privileged situations available to a wider audience. This is an ethical approach to a difficult situation. Furthermore, it can be read as a positive response to recent calls to decolonize scholarship, for those in already-privileged positions to act as megaphones for the less privileged, for research to engage with activism, and for research to proceed from collaboration and partnership. On all these counts, *In Search of Justice in Thailand's Deep South* is both a highly commendable and a

contemporary book.

The volume's approach also opens questions about authorship: are these stories really spoken in the victims' own voices? Or do they inevitably come to the reader already influenced, perhaps by the framing offered by the Civic Women's Network style? Hara puts these questions squarely on the table in the translator's note. Of course, thinking critically about authorship is not to discredit these stories, but instead to offer further nuance for a richer reading. At the same time, it reaffirms the importance of acknowledging and thus working with authorship: all stories are crafted, and the craft is an important one, because well-crafted stories are not only available to be read, but also highly readable.

Although (from a story-craft and readability point of view) these stories are far from perfect, the collection remains compelling because it stands as one of the very few available opportunities to hear from victims of the violence in Thailand's deep south. This book is recommended reading for anyone seeking to better understand religious violence and the Thailand "beyond the smiles" (as the original Thai collection was titled).

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Crip Colony: Mestizaje, US Imperialism, and the Queer Politics of Disability in the Philippines

SONY CORÁÑEZ BOLTON

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2023.

In this stunning theoretical and archival work, Sony Coráñez Bolton dives into the interstices of global colonial strategies and postcolonial projects by re-examining culturally significant Philippine images and narratives using the lenses of race, disability, and queerness. It is a monumental feat that begins with something small: a childhood memory of his mother using three languages—Spanish, English, and Tagalog—that lets him map out his own positionality as a mestizo Filipinx American professor of Spanish.

Throughout *Crip Colony*, Coráñez Bolton takes great pains to tease out the meanings and possibilities of the *mestizaje*, which is fundamental to his analysis of the ways that Philippine and Asian racial hierarchies were trafficked from the colonizers to the colonized, the primary difference between which, he argues consistently, is one of "imagined capacity" (p. 15). Referring to inter-racial mixing, *mestizaje* has been celebrated as an empowering space for the hybridity and plurality of Latin American cultures, but it has also been criticized for its erasure of indigeneity and its

participation in eugenics-based nationalism. In the Philippines, historical accounts have always foregrounded, often matter-of-factly, the supposed inability of native people to attain advancements in civilization as the basis for denying sovereignty; but Coráñez Bolton is the first scholar to identify this explicitly as colonial ableism, drastically reframing our knowledge of these histories by deploying a “crip colonial critique” (p. 34) that launches from economic, rehabilitative, and social models of disability in imperialist contexts.

The book’s structure takes us on a spatial and temporal journey as Coráñez Bolton first establishes the geographical and transnational milieu within and from which he writes, before transporting us, in the span of four compelling chapters, to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century Philippines. It is in this period of Philippine nationalist consciousness transitioning from one empire to another that he locates markers of colonial rehabilitation, where native subjects are reformed to comply with colonizer standards. In an epilogue the author returns us to the same milieu as the beginning, but with the contemporary limned more concretely in the somber light of the global pandemic and Asian hate in America.

The introductory chapter kicks off by referencing the tricky challenges of representation and assimilation in American society, as well as the apparent historical affinity between Mexicans and Filipinos. It must be pointed out that Coráñez Bolton parses his use of “Filipinx,” a gender-inclusive term inspired by Latin American communities’ use of “Latinx,” in a lengthy endnote. Engaging with intersectional theorists, the chapter establishes the framework of crip colonial critique as the use of the “queerness of disability” (p. 9) in managing the *indio*, carefully distinguishing between the tactics and attitudes of various imperialists toward their colonial subjects while identifying the Filipino *mestizaje* as the nexus of Spanish and Anglo-American ideologies. Crucially, the chapter argues that any disability reading must not ignore the extolment of a master race or the erasure, whether literal or symbolic, of any people, being that constructions of incapacity have served as the justification for the violence committed on them.

The first chapter reorients Filipinx American studies as disability studies using the key concepts of “benevolent rehabilitation” and “colonial bodymind” (p. 34). William McKinley’s Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation outlined the US policy toward its new acquisition, the Philippine Islands, utilizing hegemonic education to erase the violence of the Philippine–American war that saw, among other atrocities, the massacre that reduced Balangiga to a “howling wilderness” and the massacre of almost a thousand Tausug villagers in Bud Dajo. Coráñez Bolton coins “benevolent rehabilitation” to show the “false promise of assimilation” (p. 34) and the colonial logic of disability that creates racial hierarchies. By breaking down the discourse of racialized disability in four artifacts—McKinley’s proclamation, a political cartoon of the colonial classroom, Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden,” and Jose Rizal’s “Filipinas dentro de Cien Años” (The Philippines a century hence)—he sheds light on the “colonial bodymind” as the intersection of “the primitive, incapable, and dependent” body whose weakness invites violence, and

“the assumption of its cognitive deficiency” (p. 34), revealing, additionally, how this perceived deficiency was also depicted as feminine and/or infantile. Particularly interesting about Rizal’s essay that Coráñez Bolton highlights is his description of the friarocracy’s systematic oppression of natives evidently with the aim to reduce them into seemingly mindless bodies, a process that Rizal called *embrutecimiento* (literally, “the rendering of one into a brute”) (p. 57). But the writings of the mestizo Rizal were also filled with potentially fruitful contradictions, as the next chapter shows.

The second chapter offers a reading of the iconic Maria Clara in Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch me not) as a bastard mestiza whose insanity at the end of the novel opens up possibilities for queer and disability analyses. While Rizal wrote the ending ambiguously (was her final performative act of wailing, reported rumor-like, evidence of insanity or of sorrowful defiance?), Coráñez Bolton’s argument for madness heightens the protagonist Ibarra’s *ilustrado* rationality. In fact, he declares Maria Clara not simply as Ibarra’s love interest but as his foil: her feminized frailty and madness versus Ibarra’s masculinized virility and reason. As the direct progeny of Spanish colonial violence, Maria Clara not only betrays Ibarra and all that he represents, but she also ends up in confinement instead of marriage. There is no heteronormative nation-formation task in which she can participate. The novel confines her to the convent-asylum because, Coráñez Bolton argues, “[i]f the *ilustrado* is a figure of reason over superstitious faith, then the colonized’s incapacity and perceived deficiencies need to be displaced from the *mestizo* national bodymind” (p. 71). In other words, she is too disabled for the kind of nationalist discourse promoted by mestizo heroes. Reading further within the crip colonial framework, Coráñez Bolton uncovers an “imposed silence” where “Maria Clara’s agency in this moment exceeds the authorial intent of Rizal” (p. 82), asking the question of what centering the “mad mestiza” might yield for discussions of Filipino nationalism (p. 95). Readers might wonder, however, why Coráñez Bolton never alludes to the most famous madwoman in all of Philippine literature, Sisa. What kind of colonial archive might the comparison of the mad mestiza and the mad *india* create?

In the third chapter Coráñez Bolton fast-forwards to the early years of American imperialism to examine how the new *ilustrados* navigated the road to self-governance by negotiating with, and enforcing, the imperial gaze. Through the genre of colonial travel narratives, focusing on Teodoro Kalaw’s *Hacia la terra del czar* (Toward the land of the czar), the chapter not only problematizes the Philippines’ Asian-ness but also pushes for a better understanding of colonization as “mass disablement” and postcolonial thought as “an insistent corroboration of capacity under the duress of genocidal imperial violence” (p. 130). Coráñez Bolton shows where Kalaw constructs the educated Filipino as proof of successful American civilization in contrast to Russia’s failed imperialism, and reveals Kalaw’s positioning as an able-bodied, able-minded, civilized Filipino who finds in the image of the disabled Chinese woman a victim of her culture’s savagery, “an object of pity, rescue, and rehabilitation” (p. 105). In other words, the Filipino mestizo striving to prove himself worthy

of sovereignty becomes an agent of US imperialism by building the case of his capacity on the incapacitation of others.

The fourth chapter continues the interrogation of benevolent rehabilitation in the figure of the “frenzied Malay” (p. 136). The phenomenon of the *amok* (as in, “to run amok”) and the *Moro juramentado* (Moro warriors who wildly attacked Christian soldiers at the cost of their own lives) has been studied in the fields of medicine, religion, and racial history, but analyzing 1930s reports on cases of amok, the chapter stresses the colonial tactic of singling out the violence of the native so as to normalize, justify, and de-emphasize the violence of the empire. While narratives of revenge and ritualization may be found in these accounts, they gloss over the systemic sociocultural factors born through and from a long history of Moro resistance. The colonial framing of the native Moro as the “mad and savage Indian” degrades him into a “sign of disorder” that warrants rehabilitation (p. 153). Coráñez Bolton thus expounds on settler colonial logic and how it manifested in the Philippines through benevolent assimilation: “it split the Philippine people from their Indigenous population, and disability—namely, madness—manages this split . . . the reigns of control and management of the Indians fell to civilized and ‘rehabilitated’ Filipinos themselves” (p. 155). And so the colonial classroom continued its work of rehabilitation, and the “madness” of the unconquerable Moro became the “convenient scapegoat” for the failure of colonial government to comprehend or solve existing conflicts among the many different Filipino groups (pp. 160–161).

In the epilogue, Coráñez Bolton reflects on the ways that colonial violence pervades his own life, from his very existence as the product of US militarism through which his white father met his mother on the US naval base in Subic, to the ramifications of being Asian in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thinking about the “model minority, the good student,” he sums up the US colonial classroom as “an act of benevolence, a site of struggle in the Philippines, a site up (*sic*) uplift for the model minority, and a site of unthinkable cruelty and tragedy” (p. 166) and wraps up the book by reiterating “the political necessity of cross-racial alliance” (p. 166), how the intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches can enrich American studies, and the primal role of language, especially learning different languages, in forging solidarity with other cultures.

What is delightful about Coráñez Bolton’s writing is that it allows us to follow the rhizomatic paths that his scholarship takes across cultures and histories, and while at times readers might stumble on his academic syntax, his evident curiosity, humor, and painstaking interrogations make it difficult to put down the book. Additionally, while the images and texts he discusses have long been part of Philippine colonial archives, his translations from Spanish and his reading of both queerness and disability into the archipelago’s history of colonization unearth new, alternative framings to the long-standing political and sociocultural problems that plague the national imaginary.

This book is a must-read for any scholar interested in colonialism, postcolonialism, settler colonial studies, hybridity, comparative literature, translation work, queer theory, mad studies, and

intersectional disability studies. And while Coráñez Bolton is clearly invested in American studies thanks to the country's contemporary political and racial climate, his work is indispensable to Philippine studies, where the discourse of disability is still primarily religious and clinical or rehabilitative. No Philippine scholar theorizes on disability and nation to this extent. Where the book does not bridge the titular "queer politics of disability" to reach present-day Philippine society, emerging scholars seeking to articulate their realities can build on Coráñez Bolton's research to fill in the gap.

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Siting Postcoloniality: Critical Perspectives from the East Asian Sinosphere

PHENG CHEAH and CAROLINE S. HAU, eds.

Durham: Duke University Press, 2022.

Is it still meaningful to speak of the postcolonial today? Scholars of postcolonial studies may recall how Arif Dirlik once criticized the term's overt partiality toward culturalist discourses, which renders the concept vacuous as it becomes "the repository of a grab-bag of issues that anyone can choose from in accordance with his/her political and intellectual inclinations." In his critique, Dirlik also delineates the pitfalls resulting from "the spatial and temporal generalisation" of the term's applicability, and proposes the "testing of the method against the evidence of its new context[s]" (Dirlik 1999, 155).

Implicitly echoing Dirlik's call, while re-evaluating the seminal impact of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), *Siting Postcoloniality: Critical Perspectives from the East Asian Sinosphere*—edited by Pheng Cheah and Caroline S. Hau—reinstates the postcolonial as a useful prism of knowledge production. It does so persuasively by examining checkered histories from vantage points that intersect with the familiar loci of Western imperialism but have generally been neglected by postcolonial studies. Notably, the book explicates the postcolonial disposition of those disregarded "sites" against an unfolding global backdrop affected by three occurrences: the United States' disproportionate influence—politically, socially, and culturally—over international order after World War II; the Sino-Soviet split in the mid-twentieth century which undermined the notion of monolithic Communism and turned bipolarity into tripolarity during the Cold War; and lastly, the geopolitical and economic rise of China in the twenty-first century.

Indeed, *Siting Postcoloniality* aligns as well with the scholarship of Chua Beng Huat, Hamid Dabashi, and Walter Dignolo, who advocate reckoning with world regions whose historical and

contemporary circumstances exceed the customary frames of postcolonial theory (pp. 4–5). Collectively, the venues assembled for analyses by the editors are grouped under the rubric of “East Asian Sinosphere” reflected in the title. But the volume actually covers a wider geographical expanse of Asia. In his trenchant introduction, Cheah defines the “Sinosphere” more broadly as “the region of East and Southeast Asia that has been significantly shaped by relations with various dynasties of the Middle Kingdom and the republican and communist regimes of modern China” (p. 5). Across 12 chapters, the book dissects the colonially inflected conditions associated not just with the main spatial locations of Greater China—including the mainland Chinese state, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—but also with the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and the Philippines. Through highlighting inter-Asian entanglements, as well as nonconventional hierarchical ties with the West primarily from the twentieth century on, the anthology of erudite essays features postcoloniality as profoundly place-based problems, without ignoring how the Sinosphere has actively hosted the movement of people and ideas across borders throughout history.

Importantly, the Sinosphere is not presented as monolithic. Through multiscale comparisons, the volume weaves an enthralling picture of internal resemblances and differences. Across essays, Taiwan’s historical trajectory of successive colonialisms (Chapter 8) can be read alongside the Philippines’ long encounter with overlapping imperialisms (Chapter 11) to contemplate the enduring legacies of empires that ruled from afar. Within an essay, Lo Kwai-cheung expounds on the anomalous modes of coloniality in Manchukuo and Hong Kong (Chapter 5), while David Wang juxtaposes three literary ecologies outside mainland China to evince a distinctive politics of memory common to Sinophone literary production (Chapter 10). In addition, the comparative scale extends from place to language. The case studies on Hong Kong by Elaine Ho (Chapter 7) and on Taiwan by Lin Pei-yin (Chapter 8) enrich our understandings of the two places by theorizing the multiplicity of languages in one location and the interaction of different linguistic-literary communities among different ethnic groups or within the same ethnicity. In his essay, Cheah further pluralizes the Malaysian case through Hau’s notion of the “Anglo-Chinese,” contending that local-born English-educated Chinese who no longer maintain familial ties with their ancestors’ native land can have a non-postcolonial and “purely instrumentalist attachment” to mainland China and Chinese culture (Chapter 12, p. 269).

But the volume does more than localizing or regionalizing postcolonialism. Taken together, the polylocal analyses vividly manifest what Robert Young frames as “the divergent temporalities of the postcolonial” (Chapter 1, p. 36). Based on specific historical junctures in the Sinosphere, several chapters formulate astute readings of cultural texts that refute prior discourses about linear progress represented by discrete colonial and postcolonial stages. For instance, Dai Jinhua’s sobering essay points out how the end of formal colonialism meant the induction of former colonies and semi-colonized regions into yet another unequal structure of political economy shaped by Western-dominated globalization, which is unconcerned with land occupation (Chapter 2). Besides,

the Sinosphere registers remarkable modes of postcolonial agency. Through her reinterpretation of the PRC's effort in the 1950s and 1960s to fashion its leadership in the Third World caught between US and Soviet hegemonies, Pang Laikwan argues for postcolonialism's chief merit to be its critical reminder to "spatialize our temporality and temporalize our spatiality" (Chapter 4, p. 104). In a resonant manner, Wang develops a unique theory of "postloyalism" to complement postcolonialism that focuses on non-China sites. From Taiwan literature's contemporaneous blend of yearning for a lost republican China and for an anticipated island republic with a pre-colonized past to Hong Kong literature's paradoxical nostalgia for British colonial rule and Malaysian Chinese literature's bold depiction of a counterfactual socialist nation, Wang shows perceptively that what is diverse and can coexist in a single locale may not only be languages or place connections but also senses and feelings of time and history (Chapter 10).

The historical geographies of the Sinosphere thus unsettle Said's field-presiding thesis of Orientalism, which emphasizes the West's ideological power to fashion compliant subjects through colonial institutions that purport to serve a civilizing mission. The case studies in the volume jointly illustrate an alternative modality of postcolonialism that avoids recounting the mechanisms and effects of Said's hugely influential theory. Indeed, for the PRC in the 1950s and 1960s, its project of decoupling from the Soviet Union, which had intellectually guided (rather than governmentally directed) the newly established nation on political, economic, and cultural development, was dissimilar to the resistance against colonialist pedagogy that distorted the subjecthood of the colonized (Chapters 3–4). Viewed holistically with the essays on Taiwan and Hong Kong that reference the Japanese occupation and/or their contentious ties with China (Chapters 5–10), the book successfully demonstrates that it is not just the Anglo-French-American West and their colonies that sustain vertical relations between asymmetrical political territories, thereby troubling the reflexive divide of West and non-West in postcolonial theory.

Of particular interest to this reviewer is the volume's dialogue with Sinophone studies. Indebted to the spirit of postcolonialism, the most influential strand of Sinophone theory—which mainly analyzes forms of cultural autonomy in regions outside and in the margins of China—approaches the current mainland state as a colonial power that has wielded sociopolitical and cultural hegemony over its national peripheries and neighboring Sinitic-speaking regions since the late imperial period. In the volume, Wang urges greater attention toward "the historical implication of Sinophone discourse" (p. 217), for he observes how "colonialism" has been used sweepingly in Sinophone studies to "describe variegated forms of conquest, oppression, and hegemony in such a way as to lose its historical specificity and critical rigor" (p. 216). Likewise, discerning the non-state nature of Chinese trade and migration to Southeast Asia in the Ming Dynasty, Cheah contends that the prevailing model of the Sinophone has mischaracterized Chinese entrepreneurial presence in the region as settler colonialist (pp. 9, 12). In this regard, the book joins Melissa Macauley's *Distant Shores: Colonial Encounters on China's Maritime Frontier* (2021) in recognizing why the

boundary-expanding ethos and practices of the Chinese overseas from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century cannot be construed as colonialism. To be clear, Cheah acknowledges the PRC's colonialist treatment of its non-Han regions and its expansionist ambitions in the contemporary era via the Belt and Road Initiative (pp. 18–20), but he asserts that the diverse historical circumstances related to current-day Southeast Asia should be grasped more accurately. Because diasporic ventures of the Chinese do not entail formal governance, as Macauley notes, they are better described as “Chinese territorialism,” which engages in “resource extraction and commercial supremacy without the establishment of a colonial state” (Macauley 2021, 13). Given how the Chinese eschewed state-making in Southeast Asia, and that they both suffered under and benefited from colonial regimes, postcolonial theory will have to reweigh the efficacy of its set colonizer-colonized framework (pp. 12–13, 25, 221).

Beyond Sinophone studies, Dai similarly cautions against the ahistorical use of the concept of “colonization” in the post-Cold War era of capitalist globalization. Though the term—when used to describe transnational capital flows and the serious ramifications on human lives—can perform social critique against uneven development, its rhetoric may obscure histories of imperial violence that underlie the contemporary world order. The result of the term's referential fungibility could truly be an undesirable dovetailing with the class-blind discourses of nativist conservatives (Chapter 2, pp. 62–65). The accent on a more rigorous and vigilant adoption of analytical categories notwithstanding, the volume is not conceptually fundamentalist. Instead, it exemplifies the ways in which the ambiguity of “colonialism” and “colonization” in the Sinosphere allows for redefining the postcolonial. To cite two examples: whereas Lo uses the verbified “postcolonize” to describe unusual modes of imperial governance across different historical periods in Manchuria and Hong Kong, which result from and respond to consequential geopolitics (Chapter 5), Lin approaches the “postcolonial” condition of Taiwan less as a temporal phase than as a perpetual construction of literary-cultural subjectivity and agency (Chapter 8).

Overall, *Siting Postcoloniality* should be most appreciated for its vanguard effort to nuance and update postcolonial theory by unpacking the illuminating relevance of the Sinosphere experiences. Correcting the field's long-standing geographical bias against Sinitic-influenced regions, the volume brims with insights on fluid subjectivities rooted in the dialectics of coloniality and temporality. Well aware of postcolonial theory's potential indulgence in ungrounded literary and cultural analyses, the chapters never lose track of the geographico-historical specificity of every case, and the key macro transformations in the contemporary world system, in particular the global proliferation of capitalism. Laudably, the volume avoids projecting the simplistic causality between revitalizing postcolonial studies and social change. Rather, it emanates a palpable sense of the contributors' situated social motivations that undergird their cultural critiques deeply engaged with the contemporary world whose geopolitical and economic configuration harks back to the Cold War. Coherently structured and cogently argued, the book marks a timely contribution to postcolonial

studies, Sinophone studies, Cold War studies, and Asian studies. Future scholars of the various fields and other regions of the Sinosphere—such as those working on Singapore and Thailand, whose entangled historical relations with China and Western imperialism were also peculiarly complex—will do well to contend with the compelling ideas in this collection of tremendous significance.

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Economic Infrastructure in Southeast Asia, c. 1800–1930:
Currency Supply, Forest Control, and Rail Transport**

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