

CENTER FOR
SOUTHEAST
ASIAN
STUDIES

Fall 2021 Newsletter





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About the Center

CSEAS seeks to promote a broader and deeper understanding of Southeast Asia, its people, histories, practices, and languages. Founded in 1961, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) at the International Institute is one of the oldest centers in the U.S. devoted to the study of the region. Designated a National Resource Center by the U.S. Department of Education, CSEAS supports the teaching of several languages less commonly taught, critical to areas of national need, and increasingly important in today's workforce. From its inception, the Center has been committed to creating a supportive environment where scholars, educators, students, and community members engage in dialogue related to Southeast Asia and interact with peoples of the region.

We support students in the field with resources for study, research, service, and employment. We are especially pleased to support PhD students' field research related to dissertations. Some of our awards include the Judith Becker Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research on Southeast Asia, the Thai Studies Awards for Undergraduate and Graduate Research, SEA Language Scholarships, and Fulbright and FLAS Fellowships. We also support faculty research grants and bring scholars based in Southeast Asia to the University of Michigan.

Dear CSEAS Community,

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



If my first year as director was marked by COVID-19's disruption of our daily and normal lives, then the 2020-2021 year highlighted our community's ability to improvise, adapt, and come together to survive and thrive during this pandemic, regardless of geographic location, institutional rank, and disciplinary focus. Despite the continuing challenges presented by the pandemic, I remain impressed by how CSEAS faculty, students, and staff have figured out how to flourish in this unprecedented and singular age.

In the face of frequently-changing guidelines and restrictions, students have adjusted their thesis work and language training, and faculty and staff have sought ways to continue projects at the same time as supporting students' success. I am inspired by the ways in which the "new normal" modes of virtual gatherings have given us the opportunity to connect in innovative ways with our partners across Southeast Asia and at other institutions. Despite the turbulence of a fully-remote academic year, CSEAS was proud to offer the regional, national, and international programming that you have come to expect, taking advantage of our community's resilience and creative energies and of the unique benefits that new technologies and innovation have brought us. On the following pages, we proudly highlight our 2020-2021 faculty and student accomplishments and our academic and cultural programming, including the Friday Lecture Series, Virtual Culture Nights, the MENA-SEA Teacher Program, and AAPI Heritage Month events. While our times continue to be marked by loss of varying kinds, one thing remains certain: we are all in this together.

This past year has served as a reminder of the interconnectedness of our lives and our shared responsibilities to care for each other and our wellbeing. Throughout this coming academic year, we will keep you informed about how our students, faculty, and stakeholders are making sense of and responding dynamically to our rapidly-changing world. As vaccinations roll out globally, we hold onto a collective sense of hope for our communities to emerge from this pandemic with renewed strength and shared empathy for one another. Stay engaged with us, reach out, and keep supporting each other through these extraordinary times.

Sincerely,

LAURA ROZEK

*Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Associate Professor, Environmental Health Sciences,
Global Public Health and Nutrition*

People & Pandemics

Studying International Coping and Compliance in Southeast Asia and Beyond

An interdisciplinary team of researchers is leading the project *People and Pandemics: Studying International Coping and Compliance* to gather cross-national data about policies and responses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers aim to understand what factors affect the extent to which people are complying with social distancing policies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that these policies are having on individuals and communities around the world.

The project consisted of two main parts. In the first part of the study, researchers conducted two waves of online surveys to elicit attitudes and behavior in seventeen countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The questions centered on knowledge and assessment of government policies; types of social distancing behaviors people choose and reject and the difficulty of coping with the crisis for individual families; perceived risk and anxiety surrounding COVID-19; and who or what people hold responsible for the coronavirus crisis. The survey also included questions designed to gather socio-demographic information to account for alternative explanations, including generalized trust, religiosity, access to coronavirus information, and resource barriers.

The second component of the project collected systematic data on government policies to combat COVID-19 across countries and over time. This enabled researchers not only to evaluate government policies from a comparative perspective, but also to complement and contextualize the

cross-national survey. This dual approach allowed the team to better assess the social, cultural, and financial impact of COVID-19 policies on ordinary citizens, as well as offer recommendations based on these findings.

Conducted from May through August 2020, this project was one of the first studies that took a social and behavioral approach to studying the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was housed at the International Institute and was led by a highly collaborative team of investigators with deep international expertise and a diversity of disciplinary perspectives, including Allen Hicken and Pauline Jones (political science), Ann Chih Lin (public policy), Twila Tardif (psychology), and Elizabeth King and Laura Rozek (public health).

The results of the initial wave of surveys have been published across an array of platforms, both in the scientific community and for more public-facing audiences. In the article “Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy in the Context of COVID-19: The Role of Trust and Confidence in a Seventeen-Country Survey,” published in the *International Journal of Public Health*, Rozek et al. explore the correlations between vaccine hesitancy, trust

in local, national, and global public health organizations, and intersecting sociocultural identities. Their findings demonstrate a need for possible country-specific solutions, in part depending on what different types of leaders influence vaccine hesitancy in different countries: “For example, in countries with a significant proportion of individuals who identify as Buddhists, including Thailand, Taiwan and Singapore, lack of trust in religious leaders was associated with responding “maybe” to taking a COVID-19 vaccine, but not with answering “no”. This is compared to Muslim-majority countries in our sample, where higher trust in religious leaders was associated with responding “maybe” in Indonesia and Malaysia but not in Turkey. Collecting country-specific data is especially important when attempting to design vaccination rollout strategies in low- and middle-income countries as there currently exists limited statistics on vaccine hesitancy within these countries.” (Rozek et al. 2021)

In their *Washington Post* article, published June 24, 2021, Pauline Jones and Laura Rozek reflect on the results of their study one year later, as access to COVID-19 vaccines increases across the globe. In “How do you persuade skeptics to get vaccinated? Trust matters more than information,” Jones and Rozek analyze the ways in which survey respondents assess risk and establish trust: “people may not understand how vaccines work, whether emergency authorization and production left enough time to test thoroughly for safety, or how herd immunity works. Meanwhile, social media and often partisan news sources deliver conflicting information.” They conclude that trust in scientists and health care professionals and feeling confident



Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo receives his first dose of the Sinovac vaccine. Photo from Nikkei Asia.

in the World Health Organization (WHO) are the two main factors that stood out among people willing to be vaccinated. The findings of the initial study still hold firm one year later: the hesitation Rozek and her collaborators found among participants during the June 2020 survey have been consistent with an actual willingness to be inoculated once vaccines were available.

This project is successful in providing a unique insight into the key factors that promote adherence to and belief in social distancing in heterogeneous settings worldwide, as well as into the factors that promote compliance. While research on vaccine development and mitigation practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has been integral to implementing life-saving protocols such as mask-wearing and social distancing, the research team's interdisciplinary approach digs deeper into the social, cultural, and political differences that influence the success or failure of such protocols. It examines the importance of trust as an intangible yet crucial component, both in terms of established trust and trust yet to be gained from the public. In addition to general vaccination campaigns, the results of the study shed light on the potential for localized recommendations that speak to the multifaceted social, cultural, and religious identities of different people and places.

While the research team's long-term aim is to provide guidance to governments in planning for future pandemics that require similar measures, the immediate impacts of the study are also tangible. With new virus variants emerging and only 15% of the global population fully vaccinated (at the time of this article), trust remains a key factor during a global health crisis.

For more details regarding the study, please visit ii.umich.edu/ii/covid-study.html. Funding for this research project comes from the International Institute, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Department of Psychology, Ford School of Public Policy, Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, School of Public Health, Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, and Weiser Center for Europe & Eurasia.

COVID-19 Research on Southeast Asia

In addition to the interdisciplinary *People and Pandemics* project, several CSEAS students and faculty have designed their own innovative studies to better understand the effects of the pandemic in relation to Southeast Asian regions and populations. Below are some of the highlights from these new research trajectories.

Rebecca Wai, PhD Student in Political Science, and **Emma Willoughby**, PhD student in Public Health, both published chapters in *The Comparative Politics and Policy of COVID-19* (eds. S.L. Greer, E.J. King, E. Massard da Fonseca, and A. Peralta Santos). Rebecca's chapter is titled "Singapore's response to COVID-19: An explosion of cases despite being a 'Gold Standard,'" and Emma's writing examines the "Unified, Preventive, Low-cost Government Response to COVID-19 in Vietnam."

Marlon James Sales, postdoctoral fellow in Critical Translation Studies, presented his paper "A Lockdown By Any Other Name...: Populist Rhetoric as a Translation Strategy in Duterte's Philippines" at the *Languages of COVID-19: Implications for Global Healthcare* conference in June, funded by The British Academy and organized by T&I colleagues at Queen's University Belfast.

Allen Hicken and **Laura Rozek** published their co-authored collaborative article "Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy in the Context of COVID-19: The Role of Trust and Confidence in a Seventeen-Country Survey" in the *International Journal of Public Health*.

MIRS student **Syamsul Bahri** was featured in "Voices of International Graduate Students," a video project highlighting international



graduate students' experiences with research and pursuing area studies at a U.S. institution amid challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. "Voices of International Graduate Students" is a collaboration between the International Institute's area studies centers with support from the International Center Grant Fund. (See image above.)

Htet Thiha Zaw, PhD candidate in Political Science, co-authored the article "COVID-19: A Reason to Double Down on Investments in Pre-primary Education" in the UNICEF Office of Research 2020 Innocenti Working Papers.

Laura Rozek and **Pauline Jones** co-authored the article "How do you persuade skeptics to get vaccinated? Trust matters more than information," published in the "Monkey Cage" section of the Washington Post on June 14, 2021

Laura Rozek co-hosted a webinar entitled "COVID-19 Across the Globe" on June 29, 2021. Her presentation is part of a larger collaborative project and shares findings about how people feel about the disease and prevention efforts and how these attitudes differ among countries, regions, and identities.

Connecting Across the Digital World

By Fe Susan Go*

*Librarian for Southeast Asia, Australia,
New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands*

**This article has been edited for length and clarity.*



"Mindanao, Moro country," from the Philippine Photographs Digital Archive, University of Michigan.

The public may think of universities as somewhat isolated from society, but the COVID outbreak proved to be a profound shock for virtually one and all; it certainly applied to the Library staff and its Southeast Asianists. As lockdown loomed, we had to evacuate our offices pronto. We hurriedly grabbed what we needed to work from home, without realizing just how many months ahead would be in situ. New realities set in as we bore witness to varying levels of loathing and loving Zoom and the productive power of homework.

Thanks to the good offices of Zoom and the negative effects of COVID, I have expanded my customary academic horizons by “attending” Southeast Asian mini-conferences or de facto sessions of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) annual conference. One conference session that stood out to me was a roundtable discussion entitled “Unpacking Myanmar’s Failed Coup,” sponsored by Duncan McCargo, Director of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen. I knew Duncan McCargo, but was unaware of the work and dedication of the four other participants (Ardeth Maung Thawngmung, Myar The Thitsar, Helene Maria Kyed and Liv Stoltz Gaborit) to Burma. I am now particularly interested in following their work, especially to support five graduate students and young scholars devoted to Burmese studies and Myanmar as a nation. Most importantly, I selected and catalogued new materials (70% U.S. and 30% foreign) and responded to reference queries (2:1 of foreign origin). I also sat down with the Center for Research Libraries to make tough decisions about which of our area’s newspapers to digitize.

My staff was equally occupied. Except for Noi (editor’s note: Sujira Meesanga Prayoonhong), they have yet to start training on the new ProQuest-owned, cloud-based, unified library services platform Ex Libris Alma, which will replace the Aleph® integrated library system for the Fall 2021 term. Both patrons—yes, patrons!—and librarians will need to adapt themselves to Alma and its new features. We are fully dedicated to doing our part to enable the rollout of Alma to be smooth and uneventful. Until then, my staff has been replacing old subject headings, updating catalog records, and cataloging the new materials. Like all of our fellow units of the library, we are implementing necessary changes that must be made to university life to make Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) a complete success.



"First Home," from the Samodal Family Collection, The Pakinggan Archive.

As a complement to the consistent support the Library provides to CSEAS, in the last few years we have benefited from the immense generosity of four individuals beyond the Library who continue to give their time and treasure in contribution to the quality of our collection. These four individuals all have direct ties to the region, such as being raised in Southeast Asia, working in the region (including one as a merchant marine), or serving as Peace Corps members in Thailand. Their sustained experience with the peoples and places of the region now fuel their present enthusiasm. Working together has been heartening to us as well as for them, especially given their personal drive to make the collection more accessible and valuable to all levels of our varied national and foreign patrons.

While our material content largely focuses on books and manuscripts, a serious effort is underway that focuses on our embryonic digitization projects. In comparison to other area studies collections, Southeast Asia lags behind most other regions with regard to digitizing materials. The Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia (CORMOSEA) obtained a grant from the Luce Foundation for the preservation of palm leaf materials world-wide, rather than simply for Southeast Asia. For our part, we centered our focus on Indo-China and the Philippines slide collection.

Two former faculty members, Linda Lim and L.A. Peter Gosling, provide financial support on a per-year basis for the purchase of new materials. In addition to his generous donations, Dr. Gosling has also allowed us to digitize his 1950-1960 Indo-China and Philippine slide collections. In addition, he is presently labeling his enormous Malayan slide collection for later digital processing. Both he and Linda are stalwarts of CSEAS and devote enormous time and energy to make both CSEAS and the Library better represented at the University of Michigan.

Two additional former faculty members have made significant contributions to the library: Professor John Hartman of Northern Illinois University (NIU) and Professor Thomas Hudak of the University

of Arizona. Both men were former students of the late William Gedney during his tenure as a professor of Thai/Tai language and literature at U-M and decided to honor their mentor's memory in two different ways. Dr. Hartman, who taught Thai at NIU, has given a generous financial contribution to benefit our Thai collection, and we are currently exploring the idea of using these funds to digitize selected titles from the Gedney collection. Dr. Hudak, after retiring from the University of Arizona, has been contributing to the Southeast Asia library unit by adding Thai, Lao, and Khmer language publications to the Gedney collection. His continued vigilance over our entire Thai collection makes him a de facto, highly-informed member of my staff who ensures that our collection of materials on Thailand stands at the top of the list for academic libraries in North America.

Several years ago my supervisor provided a student Michigan Scholar to assist in establishing a thorough database and collecting materials related to Philippine-American relations from the late 19th century to present, with an emphasis on accounts of Filipino and American interactions. Today, the National Archives represents the dominant source of written materials; however, thousands of Filipino and American voices alike are not represented in the archive. Our goal, therefore, is to find and catalog materials from state and local repositories, as well as personal collections, to fill in these gaps and make more of these voices accessible to a broader audience. In working towards this objective, I am communicating with Eliza Lafferty, a graduate of Georgetown University who initiated a budding archive project with her sister. Both women share an enthusiasm for collecting materials pertaining to activities of Filipino immigrants who left the Philippines and settled in southern California after World War II. Their online repository, Pakinggan Archive, contains an extensive collection from three families. My conversation with Ms. Lafferty focused on the sustainability of the archive. We tentatively agreed that U-M will explore how to manage the archive in our platform, while the two sisters will continue to pursue collecting and archiving. The Pakinggan Archive fits perfectly within the parameters of what I have wished to accomplish with the database project, as well as promoting community-engaged work. I foresee that it will expand researchers' ability to explore in-depth materials documenting descriptions and commentaries on interaction between Filipinos and Americans over this extensive period of time.

LIBRARY UPDATE

The following are new titles selected by our staff that might pique your interest.

BURMESE BOOKS

Textiles in Burman culture / author, Sylvia Fraser-Lu; published by Silkworm Books in 2021.

Reproduced : rethinking P.A. Klier and D.A. Ahuja = Pran' lafiñ' thut' ve khran' : Pí 'E Kalfiyā nhar' Dī 'E 'Ahūgyā tu' kui pran' lafiñ' 'ok' me' tam' ta khran' / authors, Lukas Birk & Carmín Berchiolli; Burmese translation, Nyein Chan May; published by Myanmar Photo Archive, Fraglich Publishing in 2019. Biographies of P.A. Klier and D.A. Ahuja, 2 commercial photographers in the early 20th century in Burma.

Rvhe ti gum Cēñi to' mrat' krī' nhar' ran' pran' to' tac' vuk' bharā' cēñi myā' 'adhīññān' var' pūjo' chu ton' nafiñ' myā' / author, Gambhīra Charā Lha Myui; published by Majjhima Cā pe in 2019. On prayers and devotions at Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon, Burma.

Kuiluñi khet' Mran' mā' rup' rhan' sū rai koñ' Pairo' Ū' Chan'ñi (1898-1956) / author, 'A Lan' Chak' (IR) re' sā' pru cu saññ; published by Journalist Book Publishing in 2019. Biography of Pairo U Channi or Parrot U Sanny, a famous film producer in Burma.

Tap' ma to' thok' lham' re' 'a rā rhi myā' nhar' tve' chum khran' / 'Avan'luñi' Vanṇa, interviewer; published by Rvak' Cim' Cā pe in 2019. Interview with military intelligence officers on military and politics in Burma.

EAST TIMOR BOOKS

Somos arquivos da memória: reflexões históricas e sócio-antropológicas sobre Timor-Leste / editor, Vicente Paulino; published by UPDC PPGP in 2018. History and social conditions in Timor-Leste.

Desafios da educação em Timor-Leste: língua, didáctica e educação científica / published by UPDC PPGP in 2018. Educational challenges in Timor-Leste.

O Voo do POMBO: memorias de Falur Rate Laek / author, Falur Rate Laek; published in 2018. Biography of author Falur Rate Laek as the former East Timorese resistance fighter.

INDONESIAN BOOKS

Tionghoa dan Ke-Indonesia-an: Komunitas Tionghoa di Semarang dan Medan / edited by Irene Hiraswari Gayatri; published by Yayasan Pustaka Obor in 2019. Chinese community in Semarang and Medan, Indonesia.

Jurnalisme musik dan selingkar wilayahnya / author, Idhar Resmadi; published by Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia in 2018. Journalism on music in Indonesia.

Chatib sulaiman: sosok putra minang yang berjuang dan gugur untuk kemerdekaan indonesia / author, Hikmat Israr; published by Budaya Media in 2019. Biography of Chatib Sulaiman, an Indonesian hero from Sumatera Barat Province.

Perang yang tidak akan kita menangkan: anarkisme & sindikalisme dalam pergerakan kolonial hingga revolusi indonesia (1908-1948) / author, Bima Satria Putra; published by Pustaka Catut in 2018. History of anarchism and syndicalism in Indonesia, 1908- 1948.

Propaganda romusha: sandiwara dari jepang / author, Dio Yulian Sofansyan; published by Matapadi Presidio, 2019. Drama script and performance as propaganda by Japanese Empire during Japan occupation in Indonesia, 1942-1945.

100 konser musik di Indonesia / authors, Anas Syahrulalimi & Muhidin M. Dahlan; published by Rajawali Communications in 2018. Musical concerts in Indonesia.

Peta dan arkeologi gamelan nusantara 2018 / author, Abdi Karya dkk.; published by Penerbit gading in 2018. On gamelan music in Indonesia, and the archeology of different from across the archipelago.

Hadji Agus Salim: diplomat Nyentrik Penjaga Martabat Republik / author, Haldar Musyata; published by Mizan Media Utama in 2019. Biographical fiction of H. Agus Salim, an Indonesian Patriot.

Taipan : lahirmya para konglomerat / author, William Yang; published by Kompas Gramedia in 2019. History of Chinese successful businessmen in Indonesia.

Agrarian chronicles in Indonesia: expanding imagination over periods, sectors and actors / edited by Ahmad Nasih Luthfi & M. Fauzi; published by Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria in 2018. History of the agrarian policies, the Agrarian Sectoralization and the National Land Agency (BPN- Badan Pertanahan Nasional).

Ganjar Pranowo, memimpin dengan akrab / author, Anom Whani Wicaksana; published by Klik Media in 2019. Biography of Ganjar Pranowo, the governor of Central Java Province, Indonesia.

Wisata gastronomi Ubud, Gianyar / authors, I Nyoman Darma Putra (and four others), published by Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Gianyar in 2018. Gastronomic history and tourism in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia.

Hitam Putih Kesultanan Demak: sejarah kerajaan Islam pertama di Jawa dari kejayaan hingga Keruntuhan / author, Fery Taufiq; published by Araska in 2019. History of Demak Sultanate, the first Islamic kingdom in Java Island and its influence towards Islamic development in Java, Indonesia.

Deforestasi dan ketahanan sosial / edited by Herman Hidayat; published by Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia in 2019. On the social aspect of deforestation in Indonesia.

LAO BOOKS

Pūm khōmūn pavat læng thōngthēo, bun paphēñi læ sonphao thī dōtñen khōng Khwæng 'Udomsai / authors, Phanæk Thalængkhāo, Vatthanatham læ Thōngthēo Khwæng 'Udomsai; published by Phanæk Thalængkhāo, Vatthanatham læ Thōngthēo in 2019. On travel attractions, traditions and ethnic groups in Udomsai Province.

Sūpthāo Lāo mahōñi : kamnōt læ damlong yū khōng donñr-khaphlam-phēng Lāo / author, Pannā Phanthaphānit; published by Samnakphim Lāo Dūangdūan in 2019. History and contemporary of Lao traditional performances and music.

Nūhak Phūmsavan : phālakam pavatsāt sīvī kānpativat sāt pasāñhīpatali læ sangsā pathōt sāt / author, nakpaphan hæng sāt, Dūangchai Lūangphasī; published by Samnakphim Lūangphasī in 2018. Biography of Nuhak Phumsavan, former President of Lao P.D.R.

Pathān Kaisōn Phomvihān phom 4 dān / author, Kāpkæo Thammavong; published by Samnakphim Nakpaphan Lāo in 2019. Biography of Kaison Phomvihān, former Prime Minister of Lao P.D.R.

MALAYSIAN BOOKS

Rethinking Malaysia: politics, extremism and education / author, Tajuddin Rasdi; published by Strategic Information and Research Development Centre in 2020.

Moving forward : Malays for the 21st century / author, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad; published by Marshall Cavendish in 2019.

Identity, nationhood and state-building in Malaysia / author, K.J. Ratnam; published by Strategic Information and Research Development Centre in 2019.

Baba nyonya heritage : Peranakan weddings from a Malaccan perspective / author, Charles KK Chua; published by Institut Terjemahan & Buku Malaysia Berhad in 2019.

Representasi politik wanita di Parlimen: Singapura dan Malaysia / authors, Adibah Yasmin Alias, Mahfudzah Mustafa; published by Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2018. Women's political representation in Parliament: Singapore and Malaysia

Manglish : Malaysian English at its wackiest / authors, Lee Su Kim & Stephen J. Hall; published by Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2019. Humor of English language in Malaysia.

PHILIPPINES BOOKS

Upsurge of people's resistance in the Philippines and the world: selected works 2020 / author, Jose Maria Sison; published by International Network for Philippine Studies, Netherlands in 2021. Author's views on Philippine culture, art and literature.

Pigafetta's Philippine picnic: culinary encounters during the first circumnavigation, 1519-1522 / author, Sta. Maria Felice Prudente; published by National Historical Commission in 2021.

Moral politics in the Philippines: inequality, democracy and the urban poor / author, Kusaka Wataru; published by NUS Press in 2017.

Textiles in the Philippine colonial landscape: a lexicon and historical survey / author, Castro Sandra; published by Ateneo de Manila Press in 2018.

The siege of Jolo, 1974 / author, Aliman Agnes Shari Tan; published by Central Book Supply in 2021. Social history of Jolo when the MNLF battled with the Philippine Army who can control Jolo.

The ruins of Pinagbayan: a photo essay on the archaeology of a late nineteenth century Philippine town / author, Barretto-Tesoro Grace; published by University of the Philippines Press in 2021.

Impossible is not easy: a life in politics / author, Rocamora Joel; published by Ateneo de Manila University Press in 2020.

Crossings: portrait of a revolutionary / author, Rolando E. Peña; published by Central Book Supply in 2019. Biography of Rolando E. Peña.

Also Filipino: 75 regional dishes I never had growing up / author, Comsti Angelo; published by RPD Publications in 2019. Filipino cookbooks.

White lady, Black Christ / author, Ong Charleson; published by Milflores in 2021. Philippine fiction in English.

Hindi natun kinahanglan kang duro nga tinaga sa atun tunga = Hindi natin kailangan ng maraming salita sa ating pagitan / author, Asenjo, Genevieve L.; published by UP press in 2021. In Kinaray-a and Filipino poems.

Tinubdan: New voices from Northern Mindanao: a literary anthology / editors, Arlene J. Yandug and others; published by Xavier University Press in 2021.

How the Spaniards won in Marawi and lost in Cavite: Northern Mindanao rancherías in the twilight years of the Spanish empire / author, Montesclaros Rey Luis Adeva; published by New Day Publishers in 2018.

Lakbay ang sining: readings in creative and cultural work in the Philippines / published by CCP in 2020.

SINGAPORE BOOKS

Carry the spices: Singaporean doctors in medical missions and pastoral ministry / published in Singapore, 2018.

Delicious heirlooms: stories behind Singapore's oldest family-run restaurants / author, Kim Kit Ow; published by Straits Times Press, 2018.

By design: Singapore reframing what design is / editor, Justin Zhuang; published by Grenadier in 2019.

Bridges, dragons and books: reflections on Asian Children's literature / Edited by Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal; published by Asian Festival of Children's Content in 2015.

As empires fell : the life and times of Lee Hau-Shik, the first Finance Minister of Malaya / author, Ooi Kee Beng; published by ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in 2020. Life and times of Lee Hau-Shik, the first Finance Minister of Malaya

Navigating differences : integration in Singapore / edited by Terence Chong; published by ISEAS in 2020. Social sciences with multicultural city-state in Singapore.

Singapore's social and business history through paper ephemera in the Kow Seow Chuan collection / edited by Koh Keng We; published by National Library Board Singapore in 2017.

Migration, transmission, localisation: visual art in Singapore (1886-1945) / author, Yeo Mang Thong; published by National Gallery Singapore in 2019.

THAI BOOKS

Nakhon Wat thatsana Sayam / author, Sānti Phakdīkham [นครวัดที่สนะสยาม / author, ศานติ ภักดีคำ]; published by Samnakphim Matchon in 2020. History of Thailand-Cambodia relations and history of Angkor (Extinct city).

Farang affairs / author, illustrations, Stephane Peray (Stephff); published by Stephane Peray in 2020.

Tonchabap nangsū samut Thai samai 'Ayutthayā, Nanthōpanantha sūt khamlūang / author, Chaofā Thammāthibēt Chaiyachēturiwong [ต้นฉบับหนังสือสมุดไทยสมัยอยุธยา, นันโทปนันทสุตรคำหลวง / author, เจ้าฟ้าธรรมบาลีเมศร์ ไชยเชษฐสุริวงษฯ]; published by Samnak Hōsamut hāeng Chāt, Krom Sinlapākōn in 2020. Poetical writing of a Buddhist-Thai literature on the Lord Naga named Nanthopanantha.

Rūa khūāngphūk = Sewn ship : prawattisāt khwāmsamphan nap phan pī khōng chāo thālē 'Arap kap chāo thālē Chīn Tai lāo chāo Sayām / author, 'Ēpprēm lāe Yuwādī Watcharāngkūn [เรือเครื่องผูก = Sewn ship : ประวัติศาสตร์ความสัมพันธ์ในพื้นเมืองชาวทะเลอาหรับกับชาวทะเลจีนใต้และชาวยาม / author, เอิบเปรม และ ยุติ วัชรางกูร.]; published by Yīpsī Krup in 2019. History of boats, boating, boatbuilding, and underwater archaeology in Asia.

Nānā phāsā dāo / author, Niphathphōn Phengkhāo [นานาภาษาดาว / author, นิพัทธ์พร เพ็งแก้ว]; published by Phūnphūmphet in 2019. Folk beliefs on stars and Thai astrology.

'Ōk nōk khanop prawattisāt Thai : wādūai prawattisāt nōk khanop lāo withi withayā thānglūāk / author, Thongchai Winitchākūn [ออกนอกชนบทประวัติศาสตร์ไทย : ว่าด้วยประวัติศาสตร์นอกชนบทและวิถีวิทยาทางเลือก / author, สงชัย วินิจจะกุล]; published by Fā Dīeokan in 2019. On historiography, history, and politics and government of Thailand.

Sathāpat tai rom chat Phra Pokkiao... / author, Phīrāsī Phōwāthōng [สถาปัตยกรรมพระปกเกล้าฯ / author, พิธีศรี โปรวาททอง]; published by Sathāban Phra Pokkiao in 2020. History of architectures and architects in Thailand during King Prajadhipok's reign, 1925-1934.

Vanishing Bangkok: the changing face of the city / photographs and text, Ben Davies; published by Asia Horizons Books in 2020.

Kōst dīan Tulā / author, Sutham Sāengprathum [เกิดเดือนตุลา / author, สุธรรม แสงประทุม]; published by Samnakphim Sāengdāo in 2020. Thai politician Sutham Sāengprathum's personal account of the Oct. 14, 1973 student uprising and the 1976 coup d'état in Thailand.

Khwāmpenmā khōng khwāmkhīt thāng kāmōng nai Sayām Thai : botkhwām wikhro lāo tikhwām wādūai khwāmkhīt khōng phrai kradumphī hāeng Krung Rattanakōsin nai raya kào phān Chāk sangkhom Thai dōm mā sū kānpēn sangkhom samai mai / author, Thanēt 'Āphōnsuwan [ความ เป็นมาของความคิดทางการเมืองในสยามไทย : บทความวิเคราะห์และตีความ ว่า ด้วยความคิดของไพร่กระฎุมพีแห่งกรุงรัตนโกสินทร์ ในระยะก้าวผ่านจากสังคมไทยเดิม มาสู่การเป็นสังคมสมัยใหม่ / author, ธนศ อภรณ์สุวรรณ]; published by Samnakphim Sommot in 2020. Background of political thought and political participation of middle class and intellectuals in Thailand.

VIETNAMESE BOOKS

Trầu đại Hậu Lê và quyền con người trong bộ luật Hồng Đức / authors, Phan Đăng Thanh & Trương Thị Hòa; published by Nhà xuất bản Khoa học xã hội in 2021. History of Later Lê dynasty, 1428-1787 with civil rights of the Hong Duc Code in Vietnam.

Tuyển tập Trần Bằng / author, Trần Bằng; published by Nhà xuất bản Sân khấu in 2019. History and criticism on progress of stage performance drama Hát chèo in Vietnam.

Từ một cuộc đời suy nghĩ về đạo làm người / author, Đắc Trung; published by Nhà xuất bản Hà Nội in 2019. Biography of General Võ Nguyên Giáp.

Tiền sử người Việt = Prehistory of the Viet / author, Hà Văn Thủy; published by Nhà xuất bản Hồng Đức in 2020.

Con chim xanh biếc bay về: truyện dài / author, Nguyễn Nhật Ánh; published by Nhà xuất bản Trẻ in 2020. Vietnamese literature – fiction.

Quốc sử quán qua châu bản triều Nguyễn: 1802-1945 / compilers, Đoàn Thị Thu Thủy, Nguyễn Thị Thu Hoàng & Nguyễn Thị Thảo; published by Nhà xuất bản Thông tin và truyền thông in 2019. Sources on history of Nguyễn dynasty, 1802-1945 in Vietnam.

Phố cổ Hà Nội: kí họa và hồi ức = Hanoi's old quarter: sketches and memories / editor, Trần Thị Thanh Thủy; published by Nhà xuất bản Kim Đồng in 2019.

Trường Sơn một thời để nhớ: hồi ức / author Bùi Hòa Bình; published by Nhà xuất bản Hội nhà văn in 2019. Personal narratives as a soldier of author in Ho Chi Minh Trail during Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Nam Bộ từ năm 1698 đến cuối thế kỷ XIX: qua nghiên cứu của người nước ngoài / published by Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa - văn nghệ Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh in 2019. History and culture of Southern Vietnam from 1698 to the end of the 19th century.

Ngọt ngào hương vị mùa xưa: tản văn chọn lọc / many authors; published by Nhà xuất bản Văn học in 2020. Vietnamese literature – essays.

The Career of Rama

An Epic Journey Through South and Southeast Asia

From traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*) to the Lao national epic, *Phra Lak Phra Ram*, the story of Rama and Sita has left significant cultural and literary footprints across Southeast Asia. In her online curated exhibit, “The Career of Rama: An Epic Journey Through South and Southeast Asia,” Michigan Library Scholar Estrella Salgado traces the enduring legacy of the Ramayana across space and time, from its earliest inception in the 5th century BCE to contemporary interpretations and illustrations of Valmiki’s traditional tale.

In Estrella’s words, “the epic begins with Valmiki, a curious sage, seeking to learn about true heroes. The god Brahma gifts Valmiki with all the knowledge and talent needed to write a poem about the life of Rama. Valmiki begins his tale in the land of Kosala (present-day Uttar Pradesh, India), ruled by the monarch Dasaratha. Despite having three queens, Dasaratha has no heirs. The gods, meanwhile, have their own concerns. The rakshasa, or demon, Lord Ravana, is causing problems, and he is immune to attacks from any supernatural beings. To solve both issues, the gods decide to grant Dasaratha an heir who, as a mortal, will be able to vanquish Ravana. Dasaratha is given four sons, incarnations of the god Vishnu.

“As the eldest son and child of Dasaratha’s first queen, bold, blue-skinned Rama stands to inherit the throne. But just as Rama is set to become king of Kosala, his aging father is tricked into banishing him for fourteen years. Rama leaves his city of Ayodhya in peace. His beautiful wife, Sita, and loyal brother, Lakshmana, voluntarily join him. The royal band journeys through the forest when their plans are drastically changed by Ravana, who, overtaken by desire, kidnaps Sita. A brutal war ensues, and Ravana is eventually slain by Rama. His ten thousand-year reign is prosperous, and the blue-skinned king passes into legend thanks to Valmiki’s creative efforts.”



“The Death of Ravana,” unknown artist, n.d., from the Museum of Sacred Art in Ahmedabad, India. Photo from the “Career of Rama” exhibit, curated by Estrella Salgado, Jeffery Martin, and Fe Susan Go.

While the exhibit’s emphasis is on the ancient Indian version of the epic as the basis of all others, its array of visual content, ranging from a few years ago to a few centuries ago, highlights the work’s enduring nature. Due to the Ramayana’s immense popularity in diverse geographic regions across South and Southeast Asia, there are many different versions of the tale. As such, Estrella charts the Ramayana’s evolution through Balinese, Malay, and Thai culture, as well as 21st-century retellings via comic books and graphic novels.

The allure of the exhibit is its rich sensory exploration of the Ramayana and its various representations—an impressive feat given the challenges of an online platform. Estrella’s meticulous selection of both ancient and contemporary illustrations, sculptures, carvings, and puppetry is a marvelous feast for the eyes and triumphantly illuminates the ways in which the Ramayana prevails as one of the mightiest cross-cultural literary forces.

It is Estrella’s hope that newcomers to the Ramayana come to appreciate the complex relationships, timeless themes, and electrifying plot twists that make the epic so remarkable. “The Career of Rama” is currently on display at apps.lib.umich.edu/online-exhibits/exhibits/show/the-career-of-rama.



A hands-on study of food and sociality in Thailand. Photo provided by Chantal Croteau.



Vietnamese produce market. Photo provided by Emma Willoughby.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Despite the challenges of adapting to a fully virtual world, our CSEAS-affiliated students demonstrated extraordinary tenacity and resilience in working toward their intellectual and professional goals. Below we highlight some of the notable successes of our students during the 2020–2021 academic year.

Conference Panels and Presentations

Chantal Croteau, PhD candidate in Anthropology, presented her paper “Contentious Histories: Religion and Belonging in Phang Nga, Thailand” at the virtual Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference on March 26, 2021.

Megan Ryan, PhD candidate in Political Science, gave her presentation “Democratization in Southeast Asia: how dictators have (have not) learned to lose in the ASEAN regional context” at the virtual Midwest Institute for International/ Intercultural Education (MIIE) Asian Rising Conference on May 28, 2021.

Select Publications

Megan Ryan, PhD candidate in Political Science, co-authored the article “Myanmar’s military distrusts the country’s ruling party. That’s why it staged a coup and detained

leaders and activists,” published in the “Monkey Cage” section of the *Washington Post* on February 2, 2021.

Cheryl Yin, a recent PhD in Anthropology, published her article “‘Khmer Has No Grammar Rules’: Metapragmatic Commentaries and Linguistic Anxiety in Cambodia” in the *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*.

Masters Degree Conferrals

Congratulations to **Joshua Chun Wah Kam**, **Jennifer Rollison** (Masters of Arts in International and Regional Studies, Southeast Asian Studies Specialization) and **Mai Ze Vang** (Master of Arts, Southeast Asian Studies) on completing their programs.

Doctoral Dissertation Defenses

Dr. Lisa Decentecce, CSEAS affiliate in Musicology, successfully defended her

dissertation “From Being to Becoming: Protests, Festivals, and Musical Mediations of Igorot Self-Representation.”

Dr. Stephanie Fajardo, CSEAS affiliate in History, successfully defended her dissertation “Illicit Intimacies: Interracial Relationships and US Military Empire in the Philippines.” Stephanie is the 2020-2021 Postdoctoral Fellow at the Eisenburg Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Heyeon Lee, joint doctoral student in Social Work and Anthropology, successfully defended her dissertation “Korea Dreaming: Vietnamese Women’s Stories from the Marriage Migration Cycle.”

Dr. Cindy Kaiying Lin, CSEAS affiliate in the School of Information, successfully defended her dissertation “Afterlives of Authority: An Ethnography of Fire Prediction and Technocracy in Indonesia.” Cindy will be a Postdoctoral Fellow this coming fall at the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability and the Department of Information Science.

Dr. Charles Sullivan, doctoral student in History, successfully defended his dissertation “Years of Dressing Dangerously: Modern Women, National Identity and Moral Crisis in Sukarno’s Indonesia, 1945-1966.”

Dr. Cheryl Yin, CSEAS affiliate in Anthropology, successfully defended her dissertation: “Khmer Honorifics:



Balcony view of Mount Merapi from Eitan Paul's fieldsite in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Photo provided by Eitan Paul.

FLAS FELLOWS

With the generous support from the U.S Department of Education, CSEAS is able to provide tuition support and stipends to undergraduate and graduate students studying beginning, intermediate, or advanced training in the less commonly taught languages of Southeast Asia in conjunction with Southeast Asian Studies area studies coursework. This year, our center's FLAS Fellows studied Hmong, Indonesian, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese.

We congratulate these students on obtaining this prestigious award!

Adrian Beyer

Dalena Hoang

Johnson Huynh

Hilary Izatt

Natalie Lampa

Tiffany Lee

Madaline McPherson

Summer Nguyen

Megan Ryan

Ryan Waddell

Emma Willoughby

Lai Wo

Mai Ze Vang

Re-Emergence and Change after the Khmer Rouge.” Cheryl will work alongside Dr. Penny Edwards at UC Berkeley this coming fall as the Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies.

Other News

Ren Chao, PhD candidate in History, was elected Chair of the first Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asia (GETSEA) Graduate Student Advisory Council.

Moniek van Rheenen, PhD candidate in Anthropology, came in third place in the 2021 Bahasa Indonesia National Speech Competition, hosted virtually by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) and the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian (COTI).

Wilkinson Daniel Wang Gonzales, PhD candidate in Linguistics, launched the Lannang Archives, a non-profit organization to raise awareness of Sino-Philippine languages and establish their relevance to greater Filipino society.

Cheryl Yin, recent PhD in Anthropology, was selected as a member of the first cohort of ARUNA. ARUNA is an alliance of underrepresented junior scholars and thinkers working on, in, and from the Asian Global South and was founded in January 2021.

Fellowships, Grants, and Awards

Chantal Croteau, PhD candidate in Anthropology, received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant for her dissertation project, “Food, Belonging, and the Social Politics of Commensality in a Multireligious Community in Thailand.”

Eitan Paul, PhD candidate in Political Science, received a grant from the Abdul Lateef Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) Governance Initiative to support his dissertation research on inclusive participation and representation in village governance in Indonesia.

Emma Willoughby, PhD candidate in Public Health, received a David L. Boren Graduate Fellowship for language study and dissertation fieldwork in Vietnam.

Lai Wo, PhD candidate in Anthropology, received a Fulbright Student Research Grant for her doctoral dissertation research in Indonesia.



From left to right: Christopher Cañete Rodriguez Kelly, Pristina Koon, Jacob Longmeyer, and Henry Tran

2021 ALC OUTSTANDING LANGUAGE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Filipino

Christopher Cañete Rodriguez Kelly

Christopher is a PhD student in Literary Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His current research interests include Filipino folklore, as well as the shifting delimitations of geographical space through network technology and what is lost and gained in our increasingly interconnected world.

Bahasa Indonesia

Pristina Koon

Pristina is a rising sophomore double-majoring in linguistics and Asian studies at the University of Michigan. Her future goal is to enroll in a Linguistics PhD program and specialize in writing systems, translation, and typology in Asian linguistics.

Thai

Jacob Longmeyer

Jacob is a Frontier Master's degree student in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan. His field research focuses on restoration and conservation ecology in Southeast Asia.

Vietnamese

Henry Tran

Henry graduated in 2021 from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor's degree in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology. Henry is a heritage speaker of Vietnamese interested in furthering his knowledge of technical and scientific language in the medical field. He translated his honors thesis from English to Vietnamese and presented his findings in both languages.



Htet Thiha Zaw and Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol

Celebrating the 2020 Judith Becker Award Winners

We are delighted to celebrate the research of **Htet Thiha Zaw**, Ph.D Candidate, Political Science, and **Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol**, Ph.D, Art History, as the co-winners of this year's Judith Becker Award for their exemplary graduate papers. Thiha's winning paper highlights research on Konbaung-era Burma and archival work, while Kenji's work explores bio-kinetic sculpture and the repercussions of art and violence in Southeast Asia into the late-modern era and present day. We congratulate both Thiha and Kenji on their achievements!

Thiha's paper, "Pre-Colonial Origins of Colonial Coercion: Evidence from British Burma," rethinks the conversations that scholars of Myanmar have on colonialism and the ways British-colonized Burma and the successive postcolonial state relied on earlier patterns of coercion and development. A PhD candidate of political science, Thiha's research focuses primarily on militarized police stations and the relationships between villages and the Konbaung Dynasty, suggesting resilient continuities from past and present.

Kenji's paper, "David Medalla: Dreams of Sculpture," was nominated by professor Joan Kee as a commendable piece of interdisciplinary research spanning across regions and borders. His essay explores the life and work of the eponymous post-war Filipino artist, whose sculptures took London by storm in the 1960s. Kenji, who recently received his PhD in art history and is currently employed as a curator at the Singapore Art Museum, is pursuing a new project that traces creative connections throughout the developing world, including artists from both Southeast Asia and Latin America.

The Judith Becker Award for Outstanding Graduate Research on Southeast Asia is awarded each year and carries a \$1,000 cash prize administered by CSEAS. CSEAS held a celebration in Professor Becker's honor, on the occasion of her retirement in 2008.

REN Chao (PhD candidate, history) and **Chantal Croteau** (PhD candidate, anthropology) successfully inaugurated the Southeast Asian Studies Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop (SEAS RIW) during the fall 2020 semester. The SEAS RIW is an academic community that brings together graduate students and faculty from diverse disciplines to critically engage with the study of Southeast Asia. Through conversations with invited faculty, group reading discussions, and writing workshops, this workshop seeks to investigate Southeast Asia as both a geographical entity and a category of intellectual inquiry. Chao and Chantal coordinated online reading groups and discussions, peer review workshops of student writing, and various inter- and intra-university guest lectures, all in the spirit of building friendships, forging communities, and supporting each other across disciplinary boundaries during this unusual time.

“What Is Southeast Asian Studies?”

New Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop Fosters Community Among Scholars of Southeast Asia

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What were the visions and goals you had in mind when creating this RIW?

Chao: For me, the idea of a Southeast Asian Studies RIW was inspired by two things. First, when I first arrived at U-M in 2017, Matt Schissler, a PhD candidate in anthropology, took the initiative to organize a close-knit Burma reading group among graduate students. We would gather periodically to discuss new scholarship on Burma, as well as the practical challenges of doing research in Myanmar. I found those conversations to be truly candid and supportive, and it felt really welcoming to me as a newcomer to Michigan. Second, during the spring 2019 semester, Chantal took the initiative to organize an interdisciplinary graduate conference in Southeast Asian Studies, which brought together many of us working in and on Southeast Asia, both at U-M and beyond. At that time, we spoke about a shared longing for a stronger sense of community among graduate students with a Southeast Asian focus that spanned across departmental and disciplinary divides.



A screenshot of the book discussion with Professor Geoff Robinson (upper right corner) about his monograph, *The Killing Season: A History of Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66* (2018; Princeton University Press)

I think the most important thing we wanted to achieve was to promote academic interaction among both graduate students and faculty from different disciplines. Michigan has a long-established tradition of Southeast Asia-related research, but to me, it seemed like there were few opportunities to meet and get to know other Southeast Asianists across campus. Southeast Asian Studies can sometimes feel like an encapsulated endeavor, and I think we all find it beneficial to get to know others working in the region and see what others are doing with it.

The other main goal had in mind was to intellectually engage with the very idea of Southeast Asian Studies itself. We often find our work addressing the scholarly concerns of the region and those of the discipline at the same time, and there is always a question of balance—or even tension—between the two. Given the historical artificiality of the very category of Southeast Asia, we were curious about how others think of this balance or tension between the concerns for the region and the questions of the discipline. This kind of conversation also gave us an opportunity to contemplate on what it means to be studying Southeast Asia at the University of Michigan—an institution with not only long and distinguished academic traditions in Southeast Asian Studies, but also a deep historical connection with the US imperialism in the Philippines.

What kinds of events did you hold during the academic year? What kinds of opportunities did students and faculty have to engage with one another?

Chantal: The Southeast Asian Studies RIW hosted three different types of events: (1) informal “Coffee Chats” with U-M faculty; (2) graduate student research conversations where students had the opportunity to share their work and receive peer feedback; and (3) book discussions with invited authors from other institutions, made possible by the generous financial support of CSEAS.

Our “Coffee Chat” series was modeled off the notion of an informal office hours or coffee shop conversation and served to generate dialogue between graduate students

and faculty working in Southeast Asian Studies at U-M. For our first event, we invited Susan Go, the Southeast Asian bibliographer at the library, who gave an overview of the different Southeast Asian collections held by U-M and shared her experiences gathering print materials across Southeast Asia. We also held additional Coffee Chats with professors Deirdre de la Cruz (History & Southeast Asian Studies), Webb Keane (Anthropology), Dan Slater (Political Science), and Laura Rozek (Environmental Health Sciences, Nutritional Sciences, and Global Public Health), as well as LSA Collegiate Fellow Alyssa Paredes (Anthropology). Our idea was to invite faculty from an array of academic disciplines in order to foster collaborative conversation and to think about Southeast Asia—as both a region and area of study—across disciplinary lines.

For our book events, the SEAS RIW invited two authors to join a casual roundtable discussion of their recent monographs. In January 2021, we hosted renowned Thai Studies scholar Thongchai Winichakul from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to discuss his newly published monograph, *Moments of Silence: The Unforgetting of the October 6, 1976 Massacre in Bangkok* (2020: Hawaii University Press). In April, we hosted historian Professor Geoffrey Robinson from the University of California, Los Angeles, to discuss his monograph *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66* (2018: Princeton University Press). These book discussions were a hit! We found that the small discussion size fostered in-depth and rigorous conversations about the material and helped the participating students to cultivate a more personal relationship with the invited faculty. This is definitely something that the SEAS RIW would like to continue in the upcoming academic year.

What were your biggest challenges hosting a virtual RIW? Did hosting a virtual RIW make you feel open to the possibility of hosting virtual/hybrid events in the future?

Chantal: I was honestly expecting a more challenging experience hosting a virtual RIW, in the end, everything went quite smoothly, despite the collective Zoom fatigue. We did

“Though I think many of us are missing in-person connections these days, I believe the virtual RIW format actually afforded us more innovative opportunities for collaboration than before.”

CHANTAL CROTEAU

PhD candidate, anthropology

our best to vary the time of events so that students in different global time zones could participate and everyone was patient with the inevitable technological glitches.

Though I think many of us are missing in-person connections these days, I believe the virtual RIW format actually afforded us more innovative opportunities for collaboration than before. For example, graduate students in various degree stages—who might, say, be writing up in different locations or conducting research abroad—were able to join our activities in a way that was not previously possible. This geographical and temporal flexibility has allowed more students to participate, which in turn has helped expand our conversations in meaningful ways.

I personally found this form of community to be particularly significant during the pandemic. Seeing familiar and new faces on screen and coming together to talk about Southeast Asia as both a region and an area of academic inquiry has been such a wonderful experience during a time when I think many are feeling more isolated in their own work. It is this sense of a Southeast Asian Studies community that I hope will continue beyond the pandemic and this academic year. In fact, Chao and I have been talking about the possibility of continuing the RIW through a hybrid Zoom and in-person format, so that students who are writing their dissertations or conducting research off-site will be able to participate in events and maintain that vital sense of an academic community.

It's Personal: Why Tiffany Lee and Natalie Lampa Chose Southeast Asian Studies



Natalie Lampa (left) and Tiffany Lee (right)

If you spotted CSEAS Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship students Tiffany Lee and Natalie Lampa ('21) studying together last year, you might have wondered how a Biology, Health, and Society major and an Information Science major came to bond over a Filipino language class. Over the course of their studies, the two women built a strong interpersonal connection thanks to their shared double-major in Southeast Asian Studies and their personal connections to the Philippines.

Even before receiving the FLAS Fellowship, both Tiffany and Natalie were already forging relationships with the broader Filipino community at U-M. They first met while studying the history of the Philippines in a seminar led by Dr. Deirdre de la Cruz and became fast friends. Tiffany received the FLAS award for two consecutive years, while Natalie obtained the grant for her final two semesters.

Tiffany, a proud Hongkonger American from Macomb, MI, found herself wanting to connect with her Filipino cousins while by-passing the “middleman of English.” Picking up Filipino (her fourth language after English, Cantonese, and French) felt like a natural choice—a chance to find solidarities with other Asian Americans, even in her own family.

Tiffany’s coursework in history, Filipino language, and public health have influenced her plans in the near future, especially as she returns to U-M for grad school in the fall. For her, Southeast Asian Studies and Public Health aren’t separate endeavors, but uniquely intertwined fields of study. Tiffany looks forward to traveling to the Philippines when it is safe to do so and conducting research at the intersection of quantitative and qualitative data towards the goal of community-led public health initiatives. While a typical public health researcher conducts interviews and gathers data, Tiffany’s goal is to take a more ethnographic approach. “At what point do you consider your sample size as a reflection of the population? Are there subtleties you’re missing?” Tiffany wonders.

For Natalie, taking formal Filipino courses for the first time meant a chance to return to culture and to strengthen connections with her diasporic family. As a Filipina American and heritage speaker, she decided to continue her studies at U-M in part precisely because it was one of the few schools that offer Filipino.

“I wanted to learn my history and culture,” Natalie says. “I grew up hearing the language around me at Filipino parties [in Chicago]. My Dad was supposed to teach us Tagalog.” In 2018, she recalls, she and her mother

returned to the mountainous town of Dasol, Pangasinan, a rural community on the island of Luzon. The Philippines is a multilingual country, but with the gaps among regional languages, Natalie recounts struggling even with Tagalog while communicating with relatives: “I felt I was missing out on a part of who I was by not fully understanding the language...I wanted to be able to speak the language when I was there.”

While Natalie is excited to pursue a career in user interface and software development, she also sees reconnecting with the Philippines as an essential part of her identity. Natalie hopes to stay committed to her family ties on both sides of the Pacific. She harbors the goal of pursuing NGO work in the Philippines and traveling between both countries to support fair and equitable access to education at all levels.

Both women lauded the strong sense of community and belonging in the classroom that helped them forge such a strong friendship outside of coursework. “Filipino class always felt super welcoming. More of a family than a class I just [went] to every morning,” Natalie says.

You can find both the full student feature and more information about the FLAS program on the CSEAS website.



Left: Screenshot of the PCN virtual rondalla performance by members of FASA and the Filipino community, provided by Kate Sullivan.

Below: Traditional dance performance filmed for PCN. Photo provided by FASA.

Together, Apart

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS HOST VIRTUAL CULTURE NIGHTS

Philippine Culture Night (PCN), like many events during the COVID-19 pandemic, looked a little different this year.

While the 2019 PCN featured a sold-out evening of Filipino food, traditional dances, and spoken-word performances all packed into the Michigan League Ballroom, this year the U-M Filipino American Student Association (FASA) gathered viewers online on April 17, 2021, to celebrate Filipino legacy, heritage, and culture through a special YouTube premiere of “*Isang Bayang, Isang Puso: Of the Same Heart, Connected, or United.*” While the League ballroom’s capacity is only 500 people, FASA’s YouTube video has had over 1,000 individual views and counting.

FASA 2020–2021 Cultural Co-Chairs, Estelle Jude Baste (‘23) and Kate Sullivan (‘23) began planning PCN during the summer of 2020, nine months before the event. While PCN normally takes place in November, Estelle and Kate wanted to give themselves plenty of time to draft multiple plans for different-case scenarios amid the uncertainty of COVID-19 limitations and fluctuating local, state, and national public health guidelines to stop the spread. Together, they managed a team of five committees of over forty FASA members to put together the final video product: a two-hour long extravaganza featuring a rich array of masked dance performances, cleverly edited video collaborations, short films, and songs.

Although planning and pulling off FASA’s main event was challenging to coordinate over Zoom, Kate says that hosting PCN through an online platform offered its own benefits: “[A virtual PCN] meant we could invite anyone and everyone, including family members

who live abroad, to participate in our cultural celebration, which we can’t normally do.” Without the limitations of a physical space and seating capacity, Philippine Cultural Night successfully crossed literal and figurative borders to more broadly connect the Filipino community in Ann Arbor and beyond, while also ensuring that everyone who participated could stay safe and healthy. Unlimited access to the video is freely available on FASA’s official YouTube page, [FASA at UMich](#), and any donations collected from PCN directly benefited Advancement for Rural Kids in the Philippines, FASA’s charity of choice for the event.

The Vietnamese Student Association (VSA)’s hallmark cultural night also took on a new look this year as a live-stream event on YouTube, maintaining the synchronicity of the show while still creatively allowing for social distancing. *Đêm Việt Nam (A Night in Vietnam)* aired at 7 p.m. EST on Saturday on February 20, 2021, allowing



students, friends, and family in Vietnam to watch and participate in the live chat despite the 12-hour time difference. Viewers were treated to nearly twenty different performances highlighting the creativity and talent of over 100 students, featuring acts ranging from dance to variety shows with guest stars. According to current VSA president Jenny Vu ('22), generous contributions from their alumni network and the greater Vietnamese community made the evening a successful demonstration of philanthropy. Through Đêm Việt Nam, VSA raised over \$3,000 from the event

“[A virtual PCN] meant we could invite anyone and everyone, including family members who live abroad, to participate in our cultural celebration, which we can’t normally do.”

KATE SULLIVAN ('23)

FASA 2020–2021 Cultural Co-Chairs



Traditional performance by students and filmed for PCN. Photo provided by FASA.

to donate to Messengers of Love (an organization supporting the physical, emotional, and educational needs of underprivileged and orphaned children in Vietnam), the Dove Fund for International Human Rights Day, and Black Lives Matter.

Jenny shared that VSA chose “Chợ Hoa Sen,” or “Lotus Flower Market,” as this year’s theme for Đêm Việt Nam for several reasons. While the lotus flower is the national symbol of Vietnam and imbued with important

cultural and religious significance, it also more broadly represents resilience, endurance, and optimism for the future—values that especially resonate after the challenges and uncertainties that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the lotus rises from the mud to blossom at dawn, so too do students carry the hope of emerging from the pandemic with an enhanced sense of community and commitment to celebrating their cultures.

The links to FASA and VSA’s virtual culture nights can be found on their respective YouTube channels: [FASA at UMich](#) and [VSA UMich](#).

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDENT & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

CSEAS is proud to support several Southeast Asian student organizations across campus and integrated into the greater Ann Arbor community. For more information about getting involved, programming, or upcoming cultural events, please reach out to the individual organizations.

Filipino American Student Association (FASA)

2021–2022 Co-Presidents
Jolene Soriano & Janielle Calaunan
fasa-off@umich.edu
fasaumich.com

Singapore Students Association (SSA)

2021–2022 President
Aron Choo
ssa-umich-exco@umich.edu
facebook.com/groups/michigansingaporeans

Indonesian Students Association (Perhimpunan Mahasiswa Indonesia, PERMIAS)

2021–2022 President
Karen Winoto
michiganpermias@umich.edu
facebook.com/permias.michigan/

Thai Student Association (TSA)

2021–2022 Co-Presidents
Brux Pongrapapant & Ken Piyawatchara Mahattandul
brux@umich.edu
facebook.com/tsa.michigan/

Malaysian Students Association (MiMSA)

2021–2022 President
Raphael Jeong-Hin Chin
jeonghin@umich.edu
facebook.com/MiMSAatUofM/

Vietnamese Student Association (VSA)

2021–2022 Co-Presidents
Perry Sun & Jenny Vu
vsa-board@umich.edu
facebook.com/vsa.michigan



Filipino American Student Association (FASA) senior picnic, 2021. Photo provided by FASA.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Our CSEAS-affiliated faculty consistently go above and beyond in their achievements as they remain on the cutting edge of Southeast Asian studies within their respective fields. A list of some of their notable accomplishments from the 2020–2021 academic year is included below.

Conference Panels and Presentations

Alyssa Paredes, LSA Collegiate Fellow in the Department of Anthropology, and **Hieu Phung**, Lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies, organized panels and gave paper presentations at the virtual Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference on March 25, 2021. Paredes gave her talk, “Is the Philippines Asia’s Banana Republic?” as part of her panel on “*Balik Bukid*: Philippine Agrarian Studies in an Economy of Human Capital.” Phung presented her paper, “The Circulation of Spatial Schemes: Vietnamese and Chinese Map Readerships in Divergence,” on her panel “The Collision of the State, the Local, and Space/Place: Historical Lessons from Southwest China and Northern Vietnam,” co-organized with Eloise Wright (post-doctoral fellow, U-M Lieberthal & Rogel Center for Chinese Studies).

Hieu Phung gave the presentation “Water for Rice at the Time of Climate Change: Lessons from Southeast Asian History” at the virtual Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education (MIIE) Asia Rising Conference on May 28, 2021.

Select Publications

Daniel Birchok, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at U-M Flint, published his article “Ridwan’s conversion: *kandoeri* giving, moral personhood, and the re-imagining of communal difference in Indonesia,” in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (2020).

John Ciorciari, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Director of the International Policy Center and Weiser Diplomacy Center at U-M, published his book *Sovereignty*



Professor Webb Keane conducting fieldwork with alumnus Ismail Fajrie Alatas in Indonesia. Photo provided by Alatas.

Sharing in Fragile States (2021, Stanford University Press).

Allen Hicken, Professor of Political Science, and **Dan Slater**, Director of the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies and Professor of Political Science, published chapters in the edited volume *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?* (eds. T. Power and E. Warburton, 2020, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute).

Webb Keane, Professor of Anthropology, authored the chapter “Peirce Among the Muslim Saint’s Graves in Java” in the edited volume *Philosophy of Fieldwork: Case Studies in Anthropological Analysis* (eds. N. Bubandt and T.S. Wentzer, 2021, Bloomsbury Press).

Stuart Kirsch, Professor of Anthropology, published his article “Why Pacific Islanders Stopped Worrying about the Apocalypse and Started Fighting Climate Change” in *American Anthropologist* (2020).

Victor Lieberman, Professor of Asian and Comparative History, published the article “Ethnic Hatred and Universal Benevolence: Ethnicity and Loyalty in Precolonial Myanmar, and Britain” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2021).

Andrew Marshall, Professor of Anthropology, co-authored the article

“Responses to Spatial and Temporal Variation in Food Availability on the Feeding Ecology of Proboscis Monkeys (*Nasalis larvatus*) in West Kalimantan, Indonesia” in *Folia Primatologica* (2020).

Alyssa Paredes, LSA Collegiate Fellow in the Department of Anthropology, published her article “Experimental Science for the ‘Bananocalypse’: Counter Politics in the Plantationocene” in *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* (2021).

Hieu Phung, Lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies, published her article “Naming the Red River—Becoming a Vietnamese river” in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2021).

Scott Stonington, Professor of Anthropology, published his ethnography *The Spirit Ambulance: Choreographing the End of Life in Thailand* (2020, University of California Press).

Other Faculty News



Melissa Borja, Assistant Professor of the Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program, led the *Virulent Hate Project*, an ongoing interdisciplinary research initiative that

studies anti-Asian racism and Asian American activism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Melissa is also affiliated with the *Stop AAPI Hate Center*, which works to document the scope and character of rising anti-Asian hate during the pandemic.

Ricardo “Ricky” Punzalan, Associate Professor of Information and steering committee member of the Museum Studies Program, was named by the Council on Library and Information Research (CLIR) as a researcher on the *Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices* project, funded by the Mellon Foundation. Ricky was also named a new member of the Great Lakes Research Alliance (GRASAC) in September 2020.

FACULTY UPDATES

Bananapocalypse and Beyond: Southeast Asian Trade Networks, Interdisciplinary Research, and Doing Ethnography “Back Home”

An Interview with Alyssa Paredes, PhD

We are excited to welcome Alyssa Paredes as a LSA Collegiate Fellow in the Department of Anthropology between 2020–2022 and as an active affiliate to CSEAS. Alyssa is a sociocultural anthropologist with research interests in the human, environmental, and metabolic infrastructures of transnational trade. She uses multi-sited, multi-scalar, and multi-lingual methods to carry out immersive and socially engaged fieldwork in the Philippines and Japan. Alyssa holds a PhD in Anthropology with distinction from Yale University and will become an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at U-M in 2022.

How would you describe your current project?

I’m working on a book manuscript currently entitled *Bananapocalypse: Commodities and their Externalities in the Asia-Pacific*. The book centers on the plantation economies in bananas exported from the Philippines and imported in Japan. The central paradox of this commodity chain is that in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, where the bananas are grown, they are among the most resource-intensive and costly of all agricultural industries. But in the Japanese urban centers where the bananas are shipped and eventually consumed, they are ubiquitous items that sell for very cheap. My argument is that long-distance trade relies on social and environmental “externalities” to make this paradox possible, even standard and procedural. But even more than the externalities themselves, trade networks rely on a certain conceit that externalities will remain external to their pursuits. In truth, externalities double-back in the form of crop diseases incurable by conventional science, chemical drift defying regulation, contaminated water sources feeding back into irrigation systems, and food wastes impacting corporations’ own ability to accumulate capital. These pose threats that are existential in nature—thus the title, “Bananapocalypse,” which is also a reference to news reports of the last decade touting the eventual extinction of the world’s favorite fruit.

The aim of my book is to understand the fulcrums—the ecological conditions, the market devices, the scientific sensibilities, and the tools of law and bureaucracy—by which that doubling back happens in long-



Lunchtime with local environmental campaigners on the edge of a banana plantation, location undisclosed.

distance commodity chains. The idea is to paint a new picture of the plantation industry, so often held up as an indomitable force, as in fact vulnerable to its own devices. When is “Big Ag” dominant and when is it desperate? When is the plantation strong, and when is it weak? In the process of addressing these questions, I want to explore how local actors on the plantation’s peripheries—from environmental activists, labor and land rights defenders, indigenous persons, and civil society actors from both the Philippines and Japan—might re/work those systems in their favor.

What brought you to the Philippines as a primary field site, and what is it like to do research “back home?”

I grew up in Manila, but had not thought about the Philippines as a potential fieldsite until graduate school. Like many young middle-class Filipinos, I was raised admiring foreign things. When I had the chance to do my undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia, I majored in Anthropology and East Asian Studies, spent multiple summers abroad learning Japanese in Kyoto, and completed a year on a Fulbright Fellowship in Fukuoka in 2011. Eventually, I landed a job at a Japanese food and beverage company in New York City, not knowing that my work experience in transnational trade and long-distance commodity chains would lead me back home. I left the industry to start a PhD in the Anthropology of Japan at Yale University in 2013, where I had the pleasure and the privilege of meeting cohort-mates who were doing their research closer to where they were from. It struck me that for them anthropology wasn’t just an intellectual exercise, but an embodied political project. Inspired, I took a leaf from their book and designed a project of my own that would connect Japan to the Philippines, and vice versa. I’ve worked in both countries ever since.

Returning to the Philippines for fieldwork was both a homecoming and a new experience altogether. I had not traveled my own country very much as a younger person, as my family preferred to spend our summer vacations in the US and, occasionally, Europe. As a product of the private Catholic school system through high school, I rarely left our house in urban Manila unaccompanied and there were few opportunities to be outdoors. Charting my own course in



The banana packinghouse, location undisclosed.

Below: "Pres. DU30 (Duterte), look at the affected laborers! (*Iantawa ang apektadong mamumuo*)," poster on a plantation road, Tagum City, Davao del Norte.



rural Mindanao, a southern Philippine region that many Manileños can unfairly stereotype as being “backward” or “unsafe,” was not just liberating, but deeply captivating, intellectually challenging, and personally rewarding. I’ve seen the sunrise above the placid waters of Lake Sebu, spent entire afternoons chatting with farmer-activists in the Mt. Apo foothills, and driven through the pencil-straight plantation roads of Panabo in the dead of the night. I always wish I could take my friends along with me!

Your work reads as very interdisciplinary, especially in its multiple intersections among environmental and economic anthropology, science and technology studies, human geography, critical food studies, etc., and spans at least two different ‘area studies’ regions. How do you see Southeast Asian Studies fitting in with all of this?

I’ve always felt that Southeast Asian Studies is an intellectual powerhouse in several fields of critical scholarship, even as it is dedicated to a world region that might seem geographically small. As a global epicenter for industrial agricultures in palm oil, rubber, bananas, coffee, and rice, it’s a prime location to ask environmental anthropological questions. Southeast Asia’s rapidly growing economies are increasingly becoming global financial hubs or nodes in long-distance supply chains. Fascinating tensions between the legacies of colonial science and cartography, and the dynamism of indigenous knowledge systems, emerge clearly in the study of the region. And finally, Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, Singaporean, and Filipino cuisines are now well-known the world over, and their popularity presents an excellent opportunity to use the critical study of food as a prism into the realities of the region.

I should add, however, that while I find Southeast Asia to be magnetic in these ways, I also resist the thinking of “area” in ways that are parochial, inward-looking or cliquish. This can foreclose both ethnographic realities and political possibilities. Southeast Asian scholarship has avoided this issue exceedingly well, emphasizing border crossing, inter-connectivity, and intra-regional alliance well before other regional studies made their turns to the transnational. At the end of the day, if my scholarship comes across as interdisciplinary

or capacious, it is simply because I have followed the lead of my experiences in fieldwork.

What does it mean to you to conduct socially-engaged fieldwork as an anthropologist working in Southeast Asia?

Being a socially-engaged ethnographer means abandoning the presumption—once a modus operandi of anthropological research—that your presence in the field isn’t already fundamentally altering the environment. Your presence in the community matters, and you should do whatever you can to make it matter.

Speaking more personally, it occurred to me during fieldwork that I occupy a useful position as someone who has had the privilege of seeing connections across different places in the banana supply chain. Sometimes knowledge of those connections can be helpful to local communities for political purposes. To give an example, an important part of my research on the campaign against the aerial spraying of agricultural chemicals in Davao City seeks to understand how and why activism might succeed or fail, and which legal structures and campaign strategies shape those outcomes. In recent years, the practice of aerial spraying has spread beyond Davao to other provinces, where some locals are encountering the issue and its potential legal implications for the first time. One thing I have tried to do is to share what I’ve learned from the Davao movement with the folks in those other provinces, so they can take those into account as they design their own campaign strategies.

Sometimes those connections are transnational as well, and even modest contributions can be meaningful. I had the chance to help connect a Davao-based team of researchers with the California-based Pesticide Action Network in their search for scientific equipment to test the spread of chemical drift near public schools. I was a part of a Tokyo-based team that designed the questions for a “report card” that would allow Japanese consumers to assess large corporate retailers’ social and environmental responsibility in their production areas in the Philippines. I’ve also had a few opportunities to address Japanese consumers directly, through consumer cooperative systems and local NGOs, about the little-known realities on the plantations where their

FACULTY UPDATES



The “Mindanao Mission” 2016, a transnational research team composed of banana growers, Indigenous Peoples representatives, civil society actors, consumer organization delegates, and university academics from the Philippines and Japan. Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

bananas come from. A Japanese-language book and documentary film came from these collective efforts as well. By no means are any of these actions monumental or game-changing. But they do require in-depth, site-specific knowledge—the sort that only ethnographers can offer—for them to be effective at all.

What excites you about being at the University of Michigan and working with CSEAS?

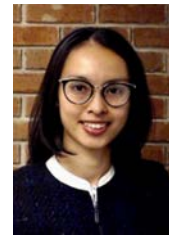
The University of Michigan has more than a century’s worth of historical ties to the Philippines and the Philippine government. Michigan houses numerous primary source materials, especially from the period under American colonial administration, at the Bentley Historical Library and the Museum of Anthropological Archaeology. The phenomenal archival work that faculty members Deirdre De La Cruz, Ricky Punzalan and many others in the “Philippines and the University of Michigan” project and the “ReConnect/ReCollect” project has helped the university community reflect on the colonial heritage of these linkages and proactively chart a course of reparative action. In the short time I’ve had since moving to Ann Arbor in the summer of 2020, it’s been exciting to see these projects develop around me, and to have numerous Filipinx members of the university community reach out to connect. Already, I’ve been moved by the enthusiastic support that the Center for Southeast Asian Studies has shown for the work I’d like to do in terms of organizing workshops and co-sponsoring cross-institutional events. Many of my colleagues from other institutions know the University of Michigan as a central hub of Southeast Asian research materials and are already planning their visits here as pandemic restrictions continue to ease. I’m looking forward to being a part of the welcoming committee!

Photos by Alyssa Paredes

CSEAS Welcomes Lecturer Hieu Phung

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies was thrilled to introduce Dr. Hieu Phung as a new lecturer during the 2020–2021 academic year. Hieu is an environmental historian with a focus on pre-modern Vietnam and Southeast Asia. She graduated with her Ph.D in History from the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa in 2017 and splits her time living between Columbus, OH, and Ann Arbor, MI. Alongside teaching “Introduction to Southeast Asian Studies” and “Environmental Crises in Southeast Asia: Past & Present” at U-M, Hieu is also a lecturer for UH Mānoa and is a visiting scholar at the Ohio State University.

Hieu has conducted extensive research on the environmental history of northern Vietnam from approximately 1000–1800 A.D. and the relationship between the environment and state-building, with a particular focus on the historical agency of water and climate in stimulating social and political change. Prior to



starting her doctoral studies, Hieu trained for years in reading classical Chinese and the colloquial Vietnamese Nôm script, which she says had initially “trapped” her into focusing singularly on the longstanding, complicated relationship between Vietnam and China. It was during her time at U-H under Professor Barbara Watson Andaya

that she happened upon environmental history as an innovative means of re-examining the history of the Vietnamese people by analyzing their interaction with the natural environment. In retrospect, her pivot to studying the relationship of people with the world around them opened her research and teaching to new interdisciplinary intersections within the study of Southeast Asia. In particular, she makes extensive use of archival texts, traditional maps, and cartography to better understand the production of geographical knowledge.

Born and raised in Vietnam, Hieu has published widely in Vietnamese, Chinese, and English, making her work accessible to a broader, multilingual audience. She is currently working on her first book project—tentatively titled *The Production of a Water Space: An Environmental History of Pre-Modern Vietnam*—and has also written on river history, meteorological history, traditional maps, and historical geography. Her most recent article, “Naming the Red River—Becoming a Vietnamese River,” was published in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* in December 2020.

Dr. Scott Stonington publishes *The Spirit Ambulance: Choreographing the End of Life in Thailand*

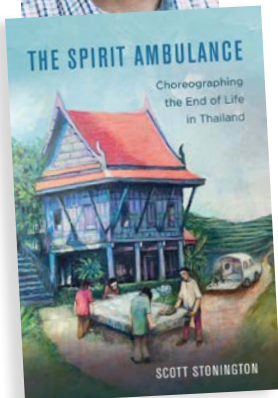
Drawing from his unique perspective as a sociocultural anthropologist and medical doctor, Scott Stonington explores decision-making at the end of life in contemporary Thailand in his most recent book, *The Spirit Ambulance: Choreographing the End of Life in Thailand*, published in August 2020 by the California University Press as an installment of the “California Series in Public Anthropology.”

Based on two years of in-depth fieldwork, *The Spirit Ambulance* examines the ways in which Thai families attempt to design ‘good’ deaths for their elders in the face of clashing ethical frameworks by acknowledging the demands of the modern world and medical system while simultaneously honoring

Buddhist practices and traditions. Stonington’s gripping ethnography documents how these families attempt to pay back a “debt of life” to their elders through intensive medical care, followed by the ensuing “spirit ambulance:” a medically-assisted rush to get patients home from the ghost-infested hospital to orchestrate their final breath in a spiritually advantageous place. The result is a powerful exploration of the nature of death and the complexities arising from the globalization of biomedical expertise and ethics around the world.

The Spirit Ambulance was featured on January 29 as part of the CSEAS 2020-2021

lecture series. In his talk, Stonington abstracted outward from Thailand to Southeast Asia and the globe to examine the effects of high-tech medicine on vital life transitions. His book is a great read for anyone interested in the global dynamics of healthcare and biomedicine, globalization, rapidly-expanding technology, comparing cultures and systems of meaning, and the ways in which global forces act upon the lives of individuals worldwide.



IN MEMORIAM

JOHN K. WHITMORE

By Vic Lieberman

Dr. John K. Whitmore, a renowned scholar of early Vietnamese history, an esteemed teacher, an active member of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, and a personal friend, passed away in November 2020.

John’s research focused on Vietnamese political and cultural evolution from the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries. When he began his work, during the height of the Vietnam War, antiwar activists had popularized an image of Vietnam as an ancient, homogeneous, historically stable “nation” whose struggle against the Americans simply continued an age-old struggle for independence from China. But, without getting involved in contemporary politics, John undertook fine-grained studies of Chinese-language Vietnamese sources to chart carefully the origin and evolution of Vietnamese identity. He discovered, first, that in the early centuries of the second millennium what is now northern Vietnam was home to three principal groups—recent Chinese immigrants, older populations of mixed Chinese-indigenous origin, and upland communities speaking local Vietnamese dialects. In competitive and cooperative configurations these groups evolved and interacted, but there was no coherent Vietnamese identity on an elite level until the late fifteenth century, and on a popular level until very much later. To speak of a premodern “nation” is anachronistic. John was particularly interested in the long-term impact on Vietnamese society of Chinese and regional commercial currents. In his last years, he also charted the history in what is now central Vietnam of the Cham kingdom, for which he worked out an entirely new chronology and theoretical framework.

John was a scholar’s scholar. A meticulous no-nonsense researcher, his conclusions followed wherever his primary materials led him. He was not the least reluctant to revise his own earlier interpretations in the light of new evidence; indeed he exulted in the joy of discovery. His love of research, his mastery of complex



Professor John K. Whitmore with Thuy Anh Nguyen, a lecturer in Vietnamese Language at the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures.

detail, his openness to new historiographic approaches, but also his uncompromising intellectual independence and disregard for fleeting fashion, were never far from the surface.

As a teacher, he was unfailingly patient, amiable, sympathetic, and encouraging. Students, although in awe of his expertise, eagerly sought him out. As a colleague, he was no less supportive. Most of what I know about early Vietnamese history I learned from John, both from his writings and from innumerable dinner conversations over many years.

We first met some 57 years ago when he was an instructor in

an undergraduate course in Southeast Asian history that I took at Yale. Although our physical paths diverged not long thereafter, we remained in contact, only to find ourselves once again on the same campus, this time in Ann Arbor, in 1984. Since then we have remained in regular contact. For years we co-taught a U-M seminar on early Southeast Asia. And we saw one another on frequent social occasions. John was an unfailingly loyal and generous friend, and his passing will leave a hole in many people's lives.

John is survived by his former wife, three sons, and six grandchildren.

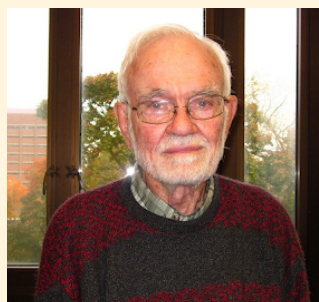
IN MEMORIAM

ROBBINS BURLING

Robbins Burling, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Michigan, passed away peacefully on January 2, 2021, at the age of 94 after a full, rich life. An eminent scholar in the field of anthropological linguistics, Burling was particularly known for his pioneering work in ethnography and linguistics of northeastern India, where he conducted his doctoral fieldwork and where he returned for research visits until the latter years of his life. Burling's work has played a seminal role in the development of Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman) linguistics, inspiring generations of scholars and producing some of the field's most formative works. Professor Burling also had a strong interest in the evolution of the human ability to learn a language. He authored more than 130 scholarly publications including books, monographs, research papers and reviews across the fields of social and cultural anthropology, descriptive and historical linguistics, language pedagogy and linguistic theory. In many of these works, he engaged in some of the major debates of his era, especially regarding the nature and origin of human language. Throughout his career, Burling's work was marked by uncompromising scholarly excellence, methodological rigor as well as solid empirical grounding in first-hand field data.

After receiving his Ph.D from Harvard in 1958, Rob worked at the University of Pennsylvania as an instructor before receiving a Fulbright Scholarship in 1959, which took the family to Burma for a year as a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Rangoon (Burma). He returned to Penn as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology (1959-1963) and Assistant Curator of General Ethnology at the University Museum at Penn.

These early years of Rob's career saw the publication of several groundbreaking works in linguistics and anthropology, including *A Garo Grammar* (1961)—the first modern grammar of a northeast



Indian language—a reconstruction of Proto-Bodo (in *Language*, 1959)—the first reconstruction of a Trans-Himalayan language at the subgroup level—a pioneering study of early child language acquisition in a minority language setting (in *Word*, 1959),

a monograph *Rengsangri: Family and Kinship in a Garo Village* (1963), a popular textbook *Hill Farms and Padi Fields: Life in Mainland Southeast Asia* (1965, re-issued in 1992), and an influential reconstruction of Proto-Lolo-Burmese in 1967.

In 1963, Rob received a one-year Fellowship to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. In 1964, he joined the University of Michigan as an associate professor of anthropology. In 1966, he became professor of linguistics and anthropology, and associate of the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies until his retirement in 1995.

Rob was predeceased by his wife Sibyl, his partner Anne Hvenekilde of Oslo, Norway, his brother James, and his sister Helen. He is survived by his partner Sheila Procter and her family in England, his children, Stephen (Deborah), Helen "Nono" (Charles Pitz) and Adele (Fritz Yunck), four grandsons and a great granddaughter, several beloved nieces and nephews and daughter-in-spirit Beth Genne (Allan Gibbard) in the US. In Norway he is survived by Anne's children, Karin and Audun Hvenekilde and their families. Rob will be deeply missed by his family and friends around the world and across all walks of life, the many students that he mentored and colleagues with whom he worked.

A full commemoration of Robbin Burling's life and scholarship can be found at <https://lsa.umich.edu/linguistics/alumni-friends/in-memoriam/robbins-burling.html>.

Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants

Marina Oktavia taught Bahasa Indonesia during the 2020–2021 academic year as a Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA). She hails from Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia, and earned her bachelor’s degree in teacher training and education from Sriwijaya University. Prior to her time as an FLTA, she taught English at Al-Azhar Cairo Islamic Secondary School in Palembang for the past eight years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Marina taught remotely from Indonesia for the first three months of her grant before finally arriving in Ann Arbor in November, just in time to experience Thanksgiving in the United States. Although she continued teaching virtually and never met her students in person, Marina appreciated their warm and welcoming personalities, work ethic, and positive attitudes. She admired the mutual respect she saw between students and instructors and their willingness to help each other through a challenging semester. Marina is grateful for her supervisor, Ibu Agustini, and the friendships she made with other FLTA grantees and Indonesian students at U-M, as well as the kindness and friendliness shown to her by the greater Ann Arbor community. She plans to pursue her master’s degree abroad and become a full-time lecturer in the near future.

Kristiana Michaela Embate was the Filipino (Tagalog) FLTA during the 2020–2021 academic year and comes from Pili, Camarines Sur, Philippines. Despite the challenges of teaching virtually from her home in the Philippines for the first three months and navigating international travel

during the pandemic, she was grateful for the chance to grow both personally and professionally and become more flexible and resourceful while building rapport with her students and experimenting with new ways of teaching. One of the highlights of her grant period was taking classes on gender and power in Southeast Asia, transnational feminism, Asian solidarity movements, and AAPI history, which dovetail nicely with research interests in gender power relations, visual literacy, and critical media literacy. Kristiana Michaela felt inspired by the passion that Filipino-American students showed for learning about their language and culture, as well as the friendships she developed with the gregarious Filipino community in Ann Arbor. Beyond U-M, Kristiana Michaela gave thanks for the connections she made with her fellow FLTAs across the U.S. and the opportunity to learn from them during their virtual mid-year conference, as well as the opportunity to visit some of them in-person and travel to different states! Prior to being an FLTA, Kristiana Michaela taught language, literature, and professional development classes for two years at Ateneo de Naga University before becoming an English teacher at San Jose Pili National High School in 2015. In 2020, she received her master’s degree from Ateneo de Naga University for her thesis, “Teaching Gender Power Relations in Picturebooks to High School Students: An Action Research,” which she hopes will form the basis for future doctoral studies. When she’s not in the classroom, Kristiana Michaela enjoys painting and opened an online gallery to showcase and sell her artwork during quarantine.



Marina Oktavia



Kristiana Michaela Embate

“Virgin, Mother, Goddess”: Abrahamic Women and Religious Syncretism

By Rima Hassouneh
Outreach Coordinator

“What’s it like being the most famous woman in the world?”

“Do you ever get tired of being eclipsed by your son?”

“What’s your favorite portrait of yourself?”

These were some of the thoughts entertained by fifty-two educators across the U.S. in response to the question, “If you could meet the Virgin Mary, what would you ask her?” The teachers had gathered at the workshop, “Biblical Women Across Abrahamic Religions,” which was held the day before (U.S.) Mother’s Day, on Saturday, May 8th, 2021. Considering that the Virgin Mary is arguably the most celebrated mother around the world and the recipient of countless prayers for intercessions, said Deirdre de la Cruz, U-M professor and guest speaker, the timing of the workshop and question were perfect. De la Cruz has spent a lot of time thinking about Mary: her book, *Mother Figured: Marian Apparitions and the Making of a Filipino Universal*, is a study of the efflorescence of the Virgin’s apparitions and miracles in the Philippines.

Four National Resource Centers (NRCs) at U-M organized and held the teacher workshop: the Center for Middle Eastern & North African Studies, the Center for South Asian Studies, the Center for Southeast

Asian Studies, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. The day’s activities and instructional resources were funded by Title VI grants awarded to the NRCs from the U.S. Department of Education.

Professor of Comparative Literature and Women’s Studies Ruth Tsoffar kicked off and spoke lengthily about Abram’s wife Sarai (Sarah) and her slave Hagar in the Hebrew tradition. Possibly the first example of surrogate motherhood, the story of these two dueling women is also a reaffirmation of both divine and male supremacy. The audience was especially drawn to Tsoffar’s elaboration on the “pregnancy gaze”—the forerunner of patriarchy—in this Hebrew story of genesis. “To claim that the male gaze has become the panoptic surveillance of women’s psyche is not an overstatement,” asserted Tsoffar. “Genesis and the patriarchal gaze have paved the way to this system of control and discipline of the body.”

Sarai and Hagar prepared the ground, biblically speaking, for the most famous mother in the Abrahamic tradition. Audience members “loved exploring the different perspectives and interpretations of Mary” provided by Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at U-M. Some admitted to ignorance that Maryam—as she is called by Muslims—appears at all in the Islamic tradition. Indeed, they were surprised to learn, she has been revered since her appearance in the Holy Qur’an. Exceptionally



Mary and Jesus (Maryam and Isa) in a Persian miniature. Photo provided by Rima Hassouneh.

pious and spiritually highest amongst all women, Mary(am) connects the Islamic and Christian traditions. Fun facts: Only one surah/chapter (No: 19) in the entire Qur’an is named after a woman. Maryam holds the title of sole woman named in the Qur’an. The conception of Jesus is miraculous in the Muslim tradition as well.

Because so little is known of Mary from Scripture, “you can project on her whatever cultural values you have,” writes Amy-Jill Levine, professor of New Testament and Jewish studies at Vanderbilt University. “She can be the grieving mother, the young virgin, the goddess figure. Just as Jesus is the ideal man, Mary is the ideal woman.”

This projection of values happened in the Philippines, where today about eight out of ten Filipinos are Catholic. In the pre-colonial era, began de la Cruz, who is also a historian and cultural anthropologist, women and transgendered women had played key roles as healers, midwives, and priestesses. However, with the arrival of Spanish colonialism and conversion to Christianity in

the 1550s, Mary was strategically deployed for the purpose of converting the indigenous populations. Native sacred objects, de la Cruz added, were replaced with Catholic images of saints and Mary. Many teachers in the audience had “never really understood the connection between Spain and the Philippines before!” De la Cruz also modeled the use of primary sources and offered these overarching questions to frame instruction about the history of religion and conversion in the Philippines: “How to incorporate religion as content without advocating a religious perspective?” “How can you read religious actors, texts, objects, practices or events historically and culturally?” And “How does religion articulate gender roles, and changes in gender roles, over time?” One teacher later remarked enthusiastically: “I loved [this] session and the demonstration of how to use a primary source passage with a focus on bias and alternative explanations.”

About the Latin American and Caribbean context spoke Jamie Lee Anderson, postdoctoral fellow at Penn State University’s Africana Research Center, where she researches religions of the African Diasporas and the politics of cultural heritage, with a focus on the Candomblé religion of Brazil. Anderson introduced key concepts of syncretism across world religions, including the ubiquity of a central Mother figure, fertility worship, and indigenous symbols as sites of activism and decolonial mobilization.

“I always knew Mary was an important religious and cultural figure,” said one teacher later, “but to see how interconnected her representation has become with that of indigenous groups/religions all over the planet was fascinating and an important reminder that we all might see things differently depending on where we come from.” The perfect example of African, Caribbean, and Brazilian religious syncretism is Yemoja (Iemanjá), a water spirit from the Yoruba religion. In a practice that emerged during the transatlantic slave trade, she is often syncretized with Our Lady of Regla in the Afro-Cuban diaspora and various other Virgin Mary figures of the Catholic Church.



La Virgen del Cerro, depicting the Virgin Mary as Pachamama, circa the 18th century. Photo provided by Rima Hassouneh.

“Pachamama is linked to climate change... and my students are teen parents or pregnant, so global Mary etc. could be a really good jumping-off point into... a truly cross-curricular project, with math and science and world history and English.”

Every year on February 2nd, in Salvador and other Brazilian cities, this Rainha do Mar—Queen of the Sea—is celebrated with much fanfare. Another example of syncretism and indigenous resistance against colonial subversion is the earth goddess Pachamama. The highest divinity of the Andeans, she is associated with earth, farming, crops, fertility, and, increasingly in the 21st century, with environmental crises, as people take too much from Pachamama/nature.

Darin Stockdill concluded the workshop activities, suggesting strategies and resources for teaching about syncretism through global representations of Mary. He is the design

coordinator at the Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER) at the UM School of Education. “Using the figure of Mary,” said one workshop participant, “as a tool to teach cultural/religious diffusion and imperialism was my a-ha moment—“brilliant!” Of the workshop perks were multimedia resources as well as a classroom-ready lesson plan created by CEDER and titled—of course—“Something About Mary.”

To watch any or all of five sessions, please visit ii.umich.edu/ii/news-events/all-news/search-news/teacher-workshop-biblical-women.html

SEA-MENA Teacher Program Explores Religious and Cultural Diversity

Teachers today increasingly need expertise and innovative ways to teach about world cultures and global issues. The Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies (CMENAS) and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) partnered together to welcome their second cohort of educators from across Michigan as part of the MENA-SEA Teacher Program. This program seeks to build a community of Grade 6–12 educators who will enrich and revitalize their teaching together, with a particular focus on this year’s theme, *Religious and Cultural Diversity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and in Southeast Asia (SEA)*.

Over the course of the 2020–2021 academic year, our cohort of eight educators attended expert-led workshops, discussed assigned readings, met with religious leaders and representatives from local MENA and SEA communities, and participated in virtual collaborations with the Arab American National Museum, the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, and the Global Project in Applied Social Sciences (GPASS). They also worked in tandem with several local colleges and universities, including Michigan State and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Other activities included exploring classroom strategies for teaching about the topic and developing curricular components and units about MENA and SEA.

The MENA-SEA Teacher Program is excited to expand its 2021–2022 cohort to 12 fellows from as nearby as Detroit and as far away as Wyoming, Texas, and Arizona. The program also hopes to offer an optional Global Exploration for Educators (GEEO) trip in July 2022 to one or more countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or North Africa. On this trip, the cohort will together expand the knowledge and skills acquired in the year-long program to bring their travel experiences directly into their classrooms.

For more information about the program, please visit ii.umich.edu/ii/outreach/cmenas-cseas-teacher-program, or contact Outreach Coordinator Rima Hassouneh at rhassoun@umich.edu.



The faces of the 2020–2021 MENA-SEA Teacher Program.

CSEAS Joins GETSEA Consortium

We are pleased to announce that the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) is a founding member of the newly-established Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies (GETSEA) consortium. The Henry Luce Foundation has awarded the consortium a \$275,000 grant through its Luce Initiative on Southeast Asia (LuceSEA). GETSEA was formed with the mission of enhancing graduate education in Southeast Asian studies across North America through innovation and collaboration.

As a cross-institutional network led by the eight current and recent National Resource Centers (NRCs) on Southeast Asia, GETSEA works to



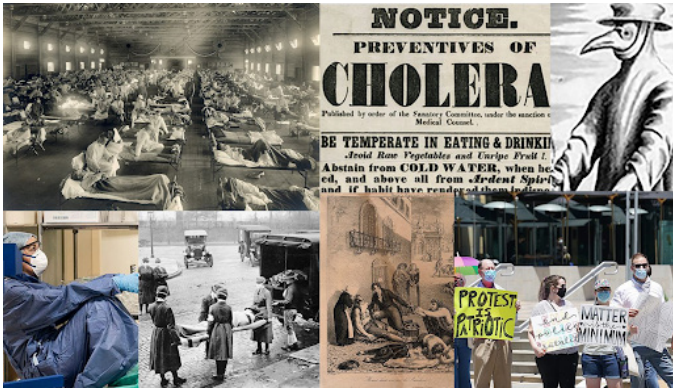
expand the collaborative infrastructure between the centers of Southeast Asian studies, including a virtual speaker series,

specialized online mini-courses, a mentoring network, professional development workshops for graduate students, and the creation of a framework for shared language instruction.

This collaboration between Southeast Asia centers is critical as we continue to adapt to new virtual learning environments. This grant will allow CSEAS and our fellow NRCs to foster productive new connections in our teaching and research, and to come together during a time of social distancing to strengthen our scholarly interactions.

The Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University is serving as the initial administrative host for GETSEA. The other members of the consortium include: University of Michigan; Northern Illinois University; University of Hawai'i at Manoa; University of Washington; University of Wisconsin-Madison; University of California, Los Angeles; and University of California, Berkeley.

For more information, please visit get-sea.org.



WHaLI 2020: Pandemics & Power

By Rima Hassouneh
Outreach Coordinator

On November 21st, and December 5th and 12th, 2020, the World History and Literature Initiative (WHaLI) held “Pandemics and Power in World History & Literature” for teachers of history, social studies, and English Language Arts.

“Infectious disease, which antedated the emergence of humankind,” historian William H. McNeill asserted, “will last as long as humanity itself, and will surely remain, as it has been hitherto, one of the fundamental parameters and determinants of human history.” The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic confirms McNeill’s assertion, while also reminding us that human understanding of pandemic disease is historically contingent. Using examples from different historical times and areas of the world, WHaLI 2020 illuminated challenges students face in learning such content, explored ways teachers might meet those challenges, and provided participants with relevant resources that can be used in the classroom.

All participating educators reported high satisfaction with the symposium’s modules and educational resources, despite the virtual format. Unanimously, they found the workshop very or quite useful for understanding global pandemics and power in world history, and for providing ways to teach the materials. “I think this workshop will continue to be useful after today,” reported one teacher. “And I plan on exploring the archives further and bringing WHaLI content to my classroom.” Another wrote, “The sources are incredible, and I’m so grateful for the time/effort that the WHaLI team puts into source curation each year. They’re also extremely well organized, increasing the likelihood that I’ll begin using them this year.”

WHaLI 2020 was sponsored by U-M’s International Institute, School of Education, and Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies. It was funded in part by Title VI NRC grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

CSEAS Sponsors Two MIIE Workshops

By Rima Hassouneh
Outreach Coordinator

CSEAS sponsored two interactive and virtual workshops held in 2021 by the Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education (MIIE). Delivered on February 27th, “Citizenship in the 21st Century,” explored the production and education of a global citizenry and its ethical distinctions. Forty community-college faculty representing disciplines such as nursing, gender studies, sociology, physics, and art participated. 82% of survey respondents found the workshop very useful for their professional development. “I really enjoyed hearing the keynote, reading the articles, and talking with other professionals about their projects, practices, and, most importantly, their perspectives,” said one faculty member. “The whole experience has definitely inspired ideas for my own teaching and project development with my colleagues. Thank you for a wonderful program!”

“The whole experience has definitely inspired ideas for my own teaching and project development with my colleagues.”

90% of survey respondents are “quite or very likely” to use in their courses some of the concepts and/or materials from the second workshop, “Asia Rising,” held on May 28th. For the audience of 44 faculty, CSEAS-affiliate Meg Ryan introduced concepts and theories of transitions to democracy, applying these frameworks to case studies in Southeast Asia. U-M visiting scholar and historian of premodern Southeast Asia, Hieu Phung then explored the different strategies utilized in the region to find a timely water supply for rice crops. By focusing on the premodern and traditional cultivation of rice in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, her presentation argued that the long history of growing rice helped create a culture both of living with predictable seasonal rainfall, as well as with the unexpected fluctuation of climate.

CSEAS EVENTS

Video recordings of some of these events are now available to watch.

Please visit [ii.umich.edu/cseas/news-events/events/videos](https://www.umich.edu/cseas/news-events/events/videos)

CSEAS Friday Lecture Series

OCTOBER 9

Drawing Borders in Blood: DNA Testing, Citizenship, and Statelessness Prevention in Thailand

SPEAKER: Amanda Flaim, Michigan State University

OCTOBER 23

The Indies of the Setting Sun: Asia and the Early Modern Spanish Geopolitical Imagination

SPEAKER: Ricardo Padrón, University of Virginia

NOVEMBER 13

Uprooting the Diasporic Histories of Southeast Asia

SPEAKER: Fadzilah Yahaya, National University of Singapore

DECEMBER 4

What Kind of Ecological Culture Do We Need?: Drought History and Lessons from Premodern Southeast Asia

SPEAKER: Hieu Phung, University of Michigan

JANUARY 22

Moments of Silence: The Unforgetting of the October 6, 1976 Massacre in Bangkok

SPEAKER: Thongchai Winichakul, University of Wisconsin-Madison

JANUARY 29

The Spirit Ambulance: Choreographing the End of Life in Thailand

SPEAKER: Scott Stonington, University of Michigan

FEBRUARY 12

Ghost Tape #10 Film Screening and Q&A with the Director

SPEAKER: Sean David Christensen, Filmmaker

FEBRUARY 18

A Village Called Versailles Film Screening and Discussion Panel Film by S. Leo Chiang

SPEAKER: Mark VanLandingham, Tulane University; Cam-Thanh Tran, Tulane University; Aurora Le, University of Michigan

FEBRUARY 19

Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition across Southeast Asia

SPEAKER: Diana Kim, Georgetown University

MARCH 12

Making Property Out of Air: Experiments in Urban Form in Phnom Penh

SPEAKER: Sylvia Nam, University of California-Irvine

MARCH 19

Tradition Never Dies: “Lắng nghe,” Active Listening, and Activism in Contemporary Vietnam

SPEAKER: Alexander Cannon, University of Birmingham, UK

APRIL 2

How Conservation-Induced Sedentarization Undermines Upland Livelihoods and Environments in Northern Thailand

SPEAKER: Daniel Ahlquist, Michigan State University

APRIL 16

Stemming the Nationalist Tide: Imperial Control and the Protection of Traditional Islam in British Malaya

SPEAKER: Hanisah Binte Abdullah Sani, University of Michigan

Symposia, Film Screenings, and Cosponsored Events

SEPTEMBER 18

CSEAS VIRTUAL MINI SYMPOSIUM. Press Freedom and the Pandemic in Duterte’s Philippines: Views from the Ground Up

PANELISTS: José Manuel ‘Chel’ Diokno, a human rights lawyer and founding dean of the De La Salle University College of Law; Inday Espina-Varona, award-winning journalist, former chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines; Carlos Conde, former journalist, and researcher of Human Rights Watch; Mike Navallo, lawyer and broadcast journalist; Odessa Gonzalez Benson (discussant), School of Social Work, University of Michigan; and Allen Hicken (moderator), Political Science, University of Michigan

SEPTEMBER 19–OCTOBER 30

A Thousand Cuts Virtual Film Screening

DIRECTOR: Ramona S. Diaz

SEPTEMBER 22

WCED PANEL. Democratic Survival in the Muslim World

SPEAKERS: Hanisah Binte Abdullah Sani WCED visiting associate and Professor Mark Tessler, University of Michigan.

OCTOBER 27

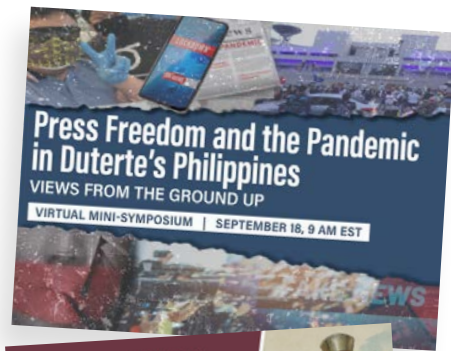
Democracy and its Impediments in Southeast Asia

SPEAKERS: Pavin Chachavalponpun, Kyoto University; Wai Wai Nu, Women Peace Network; Bui Hai Thiem, National Assembly Standing Committee of Vietnam

OCTOBER 30

Books and Press Under Different Regimes of Power: The Philippines between 1850 and 1950.

SPEAKERS: Marlon James Sales, Postdoctoral Fellow, Critical Translation Studies, University of Michigan



FEBRUARY 19

Colonial Archives and Decolonial Museology: The National Museum of the Philippines and Philippine Collections at the University of Michigan

SPEAKERS: Deirdre de la Cruz, Associate Professor of SE Asian Studies, and Ricky Punzalan, Associate Professor of Information, University of Michigan

FEBRUARY 26

II ROUNDTABLE. Open Access Publishing in Asian Studies



MARCH 3 / MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY & ARAB AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

Muslim Journeys: I Was Their American Dream by Malaka Gharib

SPEAKERS: Anna Pegler-Gordon, Professor of Asian Pacific American Studies, Michigan State University

MARCH 4

II COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE.

Arts of Devotion

SPEAKERS: Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol, Singapore Art Museum (PhD, University of Michigan)

MARCH 12

Translation and Memory: Hispanofilipino Literature and the Archive in the U.S. Midwest

SPEAKERS: Marlon James Sales, Postdoctoral Fellow, Critical Translation Studies; Ricky Punzalan, Professor of Information; Deirdre de la Cruz, Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures; Barbara Alvarez and Fe Susan Go, U-M Library; Charlotte Fater, U-M Library Scholar; Colin Garon, Anthropology-History Doctoral Student, University of Michigan; Gina Apostol, author; Harold Augenbraum, National Book Foundation

MARCH 22 / DONIA HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER Shared Sovereignty and Accountability in Fragile States

SPEAKERS: John Ciociari, Associate Professor, Ford School of Public Policy, U-M; Susanna Campbell, Assistant Professor, School of International Service, American University

APRIL 9

Globally Engaged Career Panel

SPEAKERS: Emily Etue, Program Coordination & Sustainable Tourism in Southeast Asia; Frank Hennick, Grants Manager, CAPO USA

APRIL 14

The Crisis in Myanmar: Repression, Resistance, Repercussions

SPEAKERS: David Steinberg, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Asian Studies; Moe Thuzar, Fellow, Myanmar Studies Programme, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

APRIL 20

Judaic Studies: The Buddha in 10th–17th Century Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Narratives

SPEAKER: Shatha Almutawa, American University

APRIL 22

II ROUND TABLE. Coronavirus Politics: The Comparative Politics and Policy of COVID-19 Response

SPEAKERS: Scott Greer, Professor of Public Health; Elizabeth King, Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education; Emma Willoughby, PhD Student, Public Health

APRIL 23

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES RACKHAM INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP.

The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66 Author Discussion

SPEAKERS: Geoffrey Robinson, University of California-Los Angeles

APRIL 30–JULY 21

ONLINE LIBRARY EXHIBIT. The Career of Rama: An Epic Journey through South and Southeast Asia.

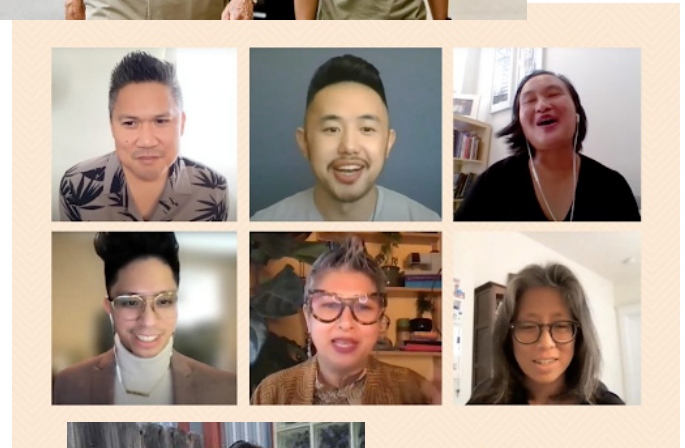
CURATOR: Estrella Salgado, 2019 Michigan Library Fellow

Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies program celebrates Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month is usually observed in May, but the Asian/Pacific Islander American (A/PIA) Studies program—part of the department of American Culture—kicked off their celebration at the end of the Winter 2021 term with a six-part series of talks, conversations, and readings from various AAPI actors, filmmakers, scholars, and authors who document different aspects of AAPI representation and lived experiences in the United States.

The first event, **From Rufio to Zuko and The Debut**, was a conversation with actor **Dante Basco**, known as the voice behind Prince Zuko of the Fire Nation in *Avatar, the Last Airbender*. Basco discussed his career, the representation of Filipino Americans in film, his memoir, and his new film, *The Fabulous Filipino Brothers*, which premiered at the 2021 SXSW Festival. Basco is an award-winning film, television, and voice actor who has appeared in over 30 films, 65 television shows, web series, and video games, including the films *Hook* (1991) and *The Debut* (2000), and the animated tv series *American Dragon: Jake Long* and *Carmen Sandiego*. Basco's memoir, *From Rufio to Zuko*, was published in 2019 and documents his life as a working-class actor of Filipino heritage and coming-of-age in California among a Filipino American family of performing artists.

The second event, **Gran Torino, Refugees, and Anti-Asian Racism**, featured another actor, **Bee Vang**, who held the leading Hmong American role as Thao Vang Lor in the 2008 film *Gran Torino*. He subsequently performed in independent films and on stage at Brown University where he received a 2016 liberal arts degree in international politics, media, and cultural studies. Throughout this time, Vang engaged in social justice and media activism, and published works related to the visibility and inclusion of Southeast Asian Americans and, more broadly, Asian Americans in Hollywood and mainstream



popular culture. His work covered such topics as representation, race, gender, sexuality, production, geopolitics, refugees, criminal justice, mass incarceration. Vang has worked at MSNBC with the Rachel Maddow Show, *The Economist*, and at First Look Media in documentary filmmaking with Laura Poitras.

The month of March culminated with a reading by **Barbara Jane Reyes** from her recent poetry collection, *Letters to a Young Brown Girl* (2020, BOA Editions Ltd.). Reyes was born in Manila, the Philippines, and was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has authored five previous collections of poetry, including *Diwata* (2010, BOA Editions Ltd.), which received the Global Filipino Literary Award for Poetry. Reyes received her B.A. in Ethnic Studies at U.C. Berkeley and her M.F.A. at San Francisco State University and is now an adjunct professor at the University of San Francisco's Yuchengco Philippine Studies Program. *Letters to a Young Brown Girl* is praised for "answer[ing] the questions of Filipino American girls and young woman of color with bold affirmations of hard-won empathy and fierce intelligence....The Brown Girl of these poems is fed up with being shushed, with being constantly told ow foreign and unattractive and unwanted she is....[S]he's writing through the depths of her 'otherness' to find beauty and even grace amidst her rage. Simultaneously looking into the mirror and out into the world, Reyes exposes the sensitive nerve-endings of life under patriarchy as a visible immigrant woman of color as she reaches toward her unflinching center."

Michigan's **James Beni Wilson** talked about his career as an independent filmmaker and how it was shaped by his experience as a Filipino adoptee in the United States. His first film project, *Binitay: Journey of a Filipino Adoptee* (2014), documents the time from birth in the village of Mábuli in Tabógon, Cebu, the Philippines to his transracial adoption at the age of three and captures his childhood growing up as an adopted Filipino in Novi, Michigan, his search for his heritage and cultural roots, and the eventual search for his birth family. His sequel, *Ochia and Sa Pag-uli ni Isagani (When Isagani Comes Home)*, highlights the post-reunion relationship, sociocultural challenges, and collective narratives of his biological family. Wilson received his B.S. in Sociology at Arizona State University and currently resides in Metro Detroit. He is active in several Filipino organizations, including the Filipino American Community Council of Michigan (FILAMCCO) and the Philippine American Community Center of Michigan (PACCM). In 2013 Wilson was awarded the Rising Star Award by APIA-Vote Michigan for his dedication and leadership in the APIA community.

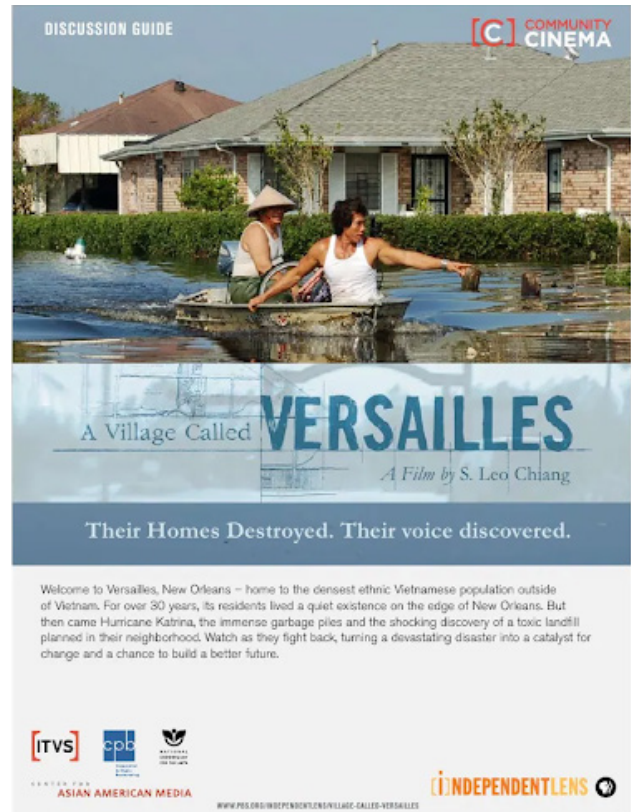
The penultimate event featured a conversation with Asian American Studies professors **Wei Ming Dariotis** (San Francisco State University) and **Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde** (University of California-Davis) about their book *Fight the Tower: Asian American Women Scholars' Resistance and Renewal in the Academy* (2019, Rutgers University Press.) In their monograph, they describe how

"Simultaneously looking into the mirror and out into the world, Reyes exposes the sensitive nerve-endings of life under patriarchy as a visible immigrant woman of color as she reaches toward her unflinching center."

Asian American women scholars experience shockingly low rates of tenure and promotion because of the particular ways they are marginalized by the intersectionalities of race and gender in academia. Although Asian American studies critics have long since debunked the model minority myth that constructs Asian Americans as the ideal academic subject, university administrators still treat Asian American women in academia as though they will simply show up and shut up. Consequently, because silent complicity is expected, power-holders will punish and oppress Asian American women severely when they question or critique the system. However, change is in the air. *Fight the Tower* is a continuation of the "Fight the Tower movement," which supports women standing up for their rights to claim their earned place in academia and to work for positive change for all within academic institutions. The essays provide powerful portraits, reflections, and analyses of a population often rendered invisible by the lies that sustain intersectional injustices in order to operate an oppressive system.

Finally, A/PIA Studies wrapped up their series with **Asian American Activism & Documentary Films**, featuring independent producer, director, and writer **Grace Lee**. Lee works in both narrative and nonfiction film and is known for her Peabody Award-winning documentary *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* (2014), which follows the 99-year-old Chinese American and her lifelong devotion to an evolving revolution encompassing America's past and potentially radical future. Her previous documentary, *The Grace Lee Project*, disrupting the common assumption of all Grace Lees as "nice, dutiful, piano-playing bookworms" to highlight intriguing contradiction of the "Grace Lee" persona as "simultaneously impressive and forgettable, special and generic, and emblem of subculture and an individual who defies categorization." in pursuit of the moving target of Asian American female identity. Lee has been a Sundance Institute Fellow, an envoy of the American Film Showcase, and is the co-founder of the Asian-American Documentary Network. Her current project is a five-part landmark PBS series, *The Asian Americans*, and *She Could Be Next*, about women of color transforming politics and civic engagement.

The full links to the video recordings of each event are available on the Department of American Culture's website: lsa.umich.edu/ac/news-events/all-news/search-news/winter-2021-a-pia-events.html



Strength in Solidarity: *A Village Called Versailles* film screening and discussion

By Aurora Le, Assistant Professor of Environmental Health Sciences

In February 18, 2021, as part of their virtual 2020-2021 lecture series, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and the School of Public Health's Department of Environmental Health Sciences co-sponsored a film screening of *A Village Called Versailles* (2009), followed by a panel discussion from subject matter experts. *A Village Called Versailles* is a documentary that showcases the New Orleans neighborhood of Versailles and how its tight-knit Vietnamese American community not only overcame obstacles to rebuild their lives after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but also rallied together to empower themselves and fight and protect their homes and livelihoods from a government-imposed toxic landfill.

The panelists following the film screening included Dr. Mark VanLandingham (Professor and Director of Center for

Studies of Displaced Populations at Tulane University), who has worked closely with the Vietnamese community in New Orleans for decades. Also part of the conversation was Cam-Thanh Tran (Assistant Director of the Center for Studies of Displaced Populations at Tulane University), who was part of the community rebuilding efforts in Versailles and also appears in the documentary. Aurora Le, a new Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Michigan, facilitated the panel, often drawing on her own experiences as a woman of Vietnamese descent to offer insights into both the film and the discussion.

The panelists reflected on the resiliency of Vietnamese Americans, the power of grassroots, community-led efforts to combat environmental and social injustices, and

the possible factors that contributed to the success of Versailles. Although the events of the documentary took place over 15 years ago, the panelists drew parallels with current-day issues in which Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities still struggle to overcome structural racism and fight for environmental justice so that BIPOC communities do not continue to disproportionately bear the burden of negative health outcomes. The panelists also discussed how all BIPOC communities can show solidarity and support for each other during social movements—including Black Lives Matter—and being allies for the Asian American community in the face of rising anti-Asian sentiments and hate crimes, especially after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Welcoming Steve Laronga Back to the U-M Gamelan Program

One of the programs hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic was Javanese gamelan—understandably so, considering the immense challenge of trying to coordinate over 20 percussive instruments over a single Zoom call. After being put on hold for the past academic year, CSEAS is delighted to announce the return of the gamelan program with Steve Laronga at the helm. This isn't Steve's first foray at the University of Michigan: he was the guest gamelan director at U-M in the Winter 2018 semester during one of the program's busiest seasons, with three performances taking place within a few weeks of each other. Prior to his tenure at U-M, Steve directed the gamelan at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 2007 to 2016, while also pursuing his PhD in ethnomusicology. His previous research centered on the working lives of professional gamelan musicians in the East Javanese port city of Surabaya. Steve is especially interested in popular traditions of gamelan music and the ways in which the relationships between performers and performance sponsors may influence the shaping of musical repertoires and conventions. We are looking forward to the return of in-person gamelan performances in the near future!

Laronga (far left) during a gamelan rehearsal at U-M during the Winter 2018 semester.



Steve Laronga (right) with Consul Fajar Yusuf (center) of the Indonesian Consulate in Chicago at a gamelan performance in 2018. Photo by Sakti Suryani Laronga.

GIVE TO CSEAS

CSEAS not only serves the U-M community by funding research, but also the wider Southeast Michigan community. Programs such as the MENA-SEA Teacher Program exemplify the center's outreach. While CSEAS is among a small number of centers with the status of Title VI National Resource Center, it still relies on the generosity of donors to sustain its programming. Currently, the center is planning a weekend of lectures and performances exploring the theme of sustainability in Southeast Asia; the center especially needs your support to host an expert gamelan musician to provide artistic direction for this event.

How to Give

[II.UMICH.EDU/CSEAS/DONATE](https://www.umich.edu/cseas/donate)

Or mail a check made out to the University of Michigan to:

Center for Southeast Asian Studies

Weiser Hall, 500 Church St., Ste. 400
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1106

Donations are sought in the CSEAS Strategic Fund (365095), the Javanese Gamelan Endowment (731164), and the Indonesian Alumni Student Support Fund (700174).

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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DESIGN

Susan Ackermann

