The NIU Mandala

Director's Notes

N.I.U. LIBRARIES

Number 9, Fall 1991

Students

Welcome back to our students. The summer must have treated them well, for they look as if they were happy to be back. There were eight NIU students at Cornell this summer enrolled in SEASSI and, aside from the host institution, made up one of the largest groups there from a single institution. We were able to hold a potluck dinner in Ithaca for them. Six FLAS and five Southeast Asia fellowships sponsored by the Henry Luce Foundation were awarded for academic year 1991-92. Our congratulations to the following students:

Henry Luce grants: Imelda Chiu, history; Ida Fadzillah, anthropology; George Fisher, history; Joselito Fornier, history; Katharine Wiegele, anthropology. FLAS fellowships: John Baker, political science (Burmese); Steven Browning, political science (Thai); Michael Egan, political science (Burmese); Jeffrey Lattimer, political science (Indonesian); David Oldfield, political science (Thai); Philip Schwehm, political science (Tagalog, in the field in the Philippines).

At the Center itself, Melik Sumanandar has replaced Rosa Vore as teaching assistant in Indonesian. One of our new students, Robert Vore, has replaced Melik in the computerized language lab. Rosa has left for Arizona State where she will be teaching Indonesian at their Center. I hope they appreciate her as much as we did. She also spent the summer teaching Indonesian for John Wolff at Cornell. Our Burmese language T.A., Than Than Win, passed her English M.A. exams “with distinction.” She has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in the English language department majoring in TESOL. She also spent the summer in Burma. Supa Angkurawaranon continues to be the T.A. in Thai; and Pum is still our T.A. in the team-taught, pan-SEA course “Crossroads.” Pum has written a program using DBase IV for keeping track of the Southeast Asia survey course that is astounding. Once he leaves, the next T.A. will simply have to press a few buttons and handouts, outlines, syllabi, synopses of lectures, readings, and so on will be available. Khin Win Kyu, sponsored by the Center for Burma Studies and the Agnese Lindley Foundation out of Arizona, is on her second year here in the English Department studying rhetoric. Sandy Blanc is once more T.A. in CBS, working on her Masters of Fine Arts. David Mullikin continues to be our copy editor, and Matt Landon assists the Center’s different programs, particularly publications.

There are five new students focusing on Southeast Asia this term: Imelda Chiu comes to us from the Philippines by way of Cornell where she earned her M.A. in Southeast Asian history, and she will be studying early Burmese history; Bryan Hunsacker has arrived after received his M.A. at Brigham Young University, and he will be in the political science department; Teajoon Ahn, from Ohio University, will be in the political science department; Alexandra Green, from Hamilton College, will be studying art history; and Robert Vore will be in the English department.

The total number of graduate students concentrating in Southeast Asia this fall is twenty-eight. There are also fourteen undergraduates who are minors in Southeast Asian studies. Total enrollment in the three Southeast Asia language courses (all levels) are twenty-three for Indonesian, forty-four for Thai, and twenty-five for Burmese.

Enrollment in the “Crossroads” class continues to grow: this term there are over 90 students in our Southeast Asia survey course, almost all of whom are upper classmen, with only one freshman enrolled. Many of them are education majors, who we should welcome in an introductory class such as this, for these students will become the high school and grade school teachers of the future. And as such, they may play a significant role in teaching Americans about Southeast Asia, especially at the important early ages where the preliminary work needs to be done.

Again, my thanks to those of you who contribute to this worthy cause, including honorary faculty associates of the Southeast Asia program, such as Professor Fred Smith, Chair of Anthropology, who will be giving a lecture in our pan-SEA “Crossroads” class on “Humans and Evolution in Southeast Asia”; and Barbara Posadas on “Asian Americans and the “Melting Pot.” Clark Neher received “best Crossroads lecturer of the term” award—a free rice and curry lunch at the Friday lecture series.

Faculty

This term several faculty members will be in Southeast Asia.

—Ron Provencher has been in Malaysia and Southern Thailand since the beginning of summer on a USIA project awarded
to NIU’s International and Special Programs. He should be back in October, although once you are in Southern Thailand and Malaysia, who knows if anyone will ever return. (At least his wife won’t have to hand him sandwiches through the window of the Malaysian Transit Authority.)

—Both Clark Neher and John Hartmann will be in Southern Thailand with the same USIA project along with Sam Huang, who will be NIU’s library representative, sometime this fall and winter. Clark’s new book, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era* published by Westview press, is now available.

—Susan Russell is on a nice two-year-NSF grant, conducting research in the Philippines on a select fishing community.

—Michael Rhum, anthropology, received an NEH summer grant to translate Northern Thai texts.

—Brantly Womack received a grant from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) to study the long-term relations between China and Vietnam. He traveled to Vietnam and Cambodia in May, and to China in June. In China, he discussed China’s future relations with Southeast Asia at the Southeast Asia centers in Kunming and Guangzhou (Canton) as well as with foreign relations specialists in Beijing. In Hanoi and Phnom Penh he met with the vice foreign ministers of Vietnam and Cambodia as well as with experts on China and on foreign relations. The results of the research suggest that a new, complex relationship is emerging between Vietnam and China that has important implications for the region and the world. In contrast to the 1980s, the relationship should be marked by rapidly increasing economic ties that will especially benefit Southern China and Northern Vietnam. Nevertheless, political tensions will remain, the most important of which will continue to be conflicting territorial claim on the Spratley Islands and differences over Cambodia. In the event of serious political conflict within Vietnam it is possible that China might exert influence.

—Our productive editor, Grant A. Olson, will be on a Fulbright grant to complete a translation of a modern Thai Buddhist text; he is leaving in mid-September. He recently published “Cries Over Spilled Holy Water: ‘Complex’ Responses to a Traditional Thai Religious Practice,” in *SEAS* 22:1 (March 1991), pp. 75-85.

—There will be at least three visiting faculty this and next term. Tuan Ismail Tuan Soh, Ministry of Culture, Malaysia, will be here for a term, working closely with Han on Malaysian gamelan. Muhammed Salleh, also from Malaysia, will be on a Fulbright at Berkeley; he will visit NIU to give us a lecture and may contribute in other ways, perhaps to a new Southeast Asian Literature in Translation course set up by Pat Henry, John Hartmann, and U Saw Tun. Dr. Suntaree Komin, specializing on Thai value systems and their implications for intercultural management, will be in the U.S. on a Fulbright, and will join us during the second term to participate in the Luce exchange project (if awarded).

There are eleven adjunct professors associated with the Center. They are all *pukka* Southeast Asianists, ranging from demographers to archaeologists. We encourage them to participate in all our activities here at Northern Illinois. Some of them have already given lectures in our Speakers Series; others are scheduled for future talks.

**Southeast Asian Speakers Series**

This term, our guest speakers begin with Leonard and Barbara Andaya, who are on leave at Cornell from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. As you know, their specialty is Malaysian history. They will inaugurate this year’s speakers series, followed by our annual harvest festival, the Southeast Asia potluck at the director’s abode. The Andayas will be followed by Lorraine Gesick, University of Nebraska, on September 27th, speaking on 18th century Thailand; and Edward Bruner, University of Illinois, November 1st, who will talk about tourism and ethnography in Indonesia. In between, there will be other speakers, chosen from among us, including graduate students nearing completion of their theses and dissertations.

**Publications**

A large portion of this *mandala* contains the latest information on our publications program. Recently, *Crossroads*, the only journal exclusively on Southeast Asia in the United States, published a major article on modern Malaysian music by Craig Lockard. We hope to add a translations series to the latter category and will be soliciting manuscripts for it. Those of you with that translation you’ve always been meaning to get at, think about it now. We have several programs dealing with SE Asia fonts, and specialists who can scrutinize Thai, Lao, Old Burmese, Old Javanese, and other less commonly known languages. As you may have noticed, there are new categories in *Crossroads* as well, such as “Notes and Discoveries,” for those of you who wish to inform the rest of the field on a new discovery without wanting to wait months or even years. John Okell’s *Beginning Burmese* is one of the publications earmarked for the near future. It will be the first such text since Comyn and Roop’s, which was published in 1968. Our Burmese language *saya*, U Saw Tun, is currently preparing a text for intermediate Burmese, which we hope will also be a publication of this Center.

**Grants**

We are preparing to submit at least two proposals this fall: the three-year Luce exchange project and the usual USDE for next year’s FLAS awards. Our colleagues in the language lab—G. M. Henry, and his team of Pat Henry and John Hartmann—were awarded a new FLIS grant to develop advanced courseware for Thai, Indonesian, and Burmese. Our congratulations to them!
Other News

—I’m told that Michael Cullinane, who has been at the Michigan mandala, is defecting to the mandala of the north sometime this term. He will be associate director at the Center there and associated with the history department. This means that the northern mandala will have one of the strongest nuclei on the Philippines with Al McCoy, Ruby Van Oyen, Michael Cullinane, and Dan Doeppers. At the same time, I’m informed that Jean Taylor will be headed to a very far-off mandala in a barren land: Australia.

—Juliane Schober of Arizona State is now the secretary-treasurer of the Burma Studies Group, replacing John Ferguson who had served the BSG so well for more than a decade. Arizona State also received the distinction of National Resource Center in the undergraduate category. Our congratulations to the mandala of the near west, also known as Suvannabhumi, “land of gold,” more appropriate now than ever.

—Jim Collins, after doing a tremendous job at the mandala in the samudra, will be stepping down as director. He will be at Leiden and Malaysia on sabbatical.

—CAST (Consortium for Advanced Summer Thai) will be led by Hawaii next year. Michigan’s David Solnit was director of CAST this summer.

—Robert Wicks of Miami University of Ohio and your director are forming a committee of AAS called “The Society for the Study of Early Southeast Asia.” Once everything is in place we will be announcing it for those really interested in Southeast Asia before the Portuguese arrival.

—SEASSI will be held at the northwest mandala next year. They are on a quarter system, and so schedules for those of us on a semester system, particularly those starting the fall semester early, will be tight. Therefore, plan early for contingencies.

—When a SEASSI host institution’s term is over and a new one begins, the sacred SEASSI wok is passed on in a most solemn ritual. Currently, the SEASSI wok is in John Wolf’s basement (and he is in Germany on sabbatical); if any of you SEASSI members have any ideas how to move the wok from Ithaca to Seattle, please inform Cornell.

Michael Aung-Thwin

A Report from the Philippines
by Clark Neher

The extraordinary international sweep of change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, featuring the demise of authoritarian regimes and the rise of democratic governments, was the catalyst for an initiative by the Agency for International Development (USAID) to support the new emphasis on democracy. To develop such an initiative for the Philippines, USAID sent Clark Neber to Manila, Cebu, and Davao to map out the terrain for USAID to enhance the prospects for the survival of Philippine democracy. Joining Clark was Professor Ross Marlay from the Department of Political Science at Arkansas State University (Ph.D., Northern Illinois University, 1975). Professors Carolina Hernandez, University of the Philippines, and Violeta Lopez Gonzaga, University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City were the Filippino participants.

The task proved to be complex as the assessment team soon found numerous obstacles. The major problem concerned Philippine sensitivities. The timing of the initiative was especially tricky because negotiations were proceeding on the Military Bases Agreement and the Philippine presidential campaign had already begun. No explanation would convince skeptics that USAID was not initiating a “democratic initiative” to pressure the government to bow to U.S. foreign policy demands. Our respondents unanimously advised the team that any support related to the 1992 presidential elections or the national legislature would be counterproductive. We were reminded by many that past support for elections was sometimes carried out secretly and partisanship by Americans supporting particular candidates. We were also reminded of (then-) Vice President Bush’s infamous remark to President Marcos about admiring the President’s commitment to democracy.

After interviewing some 120 political, bureaucratic, NGO, and business leaders, as well as ordinary rural and urban citizens, the team recommended a number of areas USAID could support. In the category of “voice,” the team recommended that USAID strengthen the rural media by assisting students and schools of mass communication and funding scholarships for journalists, with special attention to the provincial press. The “voice” category also included recommendations on support for NGOs involved with voicing the needs of the people to officials. In the same category, the team recommended that USAID support programs to bring women into high-level political positions. A number of women’s NGOs were found to be qualified to carry out programs that train women to play larger political roles.

In the area of “governance,” the team endorsed support for the Philippine Congress calling on qualified academic institutions to conduct seminars and workshops for congressional staff. We were astounded by the total lack of library
resources available to Congress and proposed a mini-Library of Congress project for legislators and their staffs.

The “governance” category also included decentralization, with recommendations for USAID to support local-level institutions in order to bring government closer to the people and out of the hands of Manila bureaucrats. In the area of “accountability” and “redress” the team supported programs of judicial reform designed to assure equitable justice and due process for all Filipinos. This recommendation became the heart of our report because it deals with a problem deemed important by all of our respondents.

In the matter of human rights, we provided USAID with a number of recommendations to strengthen the Commission on Human Rights and to educate the people about their civil rights. We suggested that USAID support organizations that specialize in monitoring human rights. In this respect, the team asked USAID to place high priority on legal resources NGOs. USAID efforts to battle court delay were recommended, as well as ways to improve the accountability of judges and prosecutors.

On the day the team was to depart, the Manila skies filled with ash from the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. In early afternoon, the skies were as dark as midnight, and the air was filled with gritty sand smelling of sulfur. Because of a typhoon that arrived simultaneously with the eruption, the ash turned to a gooey substance that stuck to everything including skin, hair, clothes, windows, sidewalks. As the ash dried out, the wind caused a continual swirl of dust that burned the eyes. Most Filipinos wore hospital surgical masks or makeshift head scarves in order to breathe.

Although we were stranded for eight days, our problems were minuscule compared to hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who lost their livelihoods and homes. Some 300,000 persons fled to Manila in a city already suffering from nearly 30 percent unemployment and a lack of needed services for squatters. The ash blocked the sewers, causing dreadful floods in the areas where the million-plus squatters live in already wretched conditions.

Everybody’s favorite observation was that Mt. Pinatubo had accomplished in one day what Filipinos were unable to accomplish in several generations: moving the American military out of Clark Air Force Base. There was a commensurate realization as well that the closing of Clark and the decimation of Subic (and the probable rejection of the Military Base Agreement by the Philippine Senate) would add to the economic travails of many Filipinos.

Having returned to the Philippines on a dozen occasions over the past 30 years, I was more discouraged this trip by the economic deterioration of Manila and its surroundings than during any previous trip. Only Cebu seemed to be flourishing with great amounts of foreign capital flowing in from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan as foreign investors deliberately bypassed Manila.

The perfect symbol for the present plight of the Philippine economy and its poor infrastructure was to see thousands of Filipino laborers with coconut thatch brooms and dustpans inch by slow inch cleaning the runways and tarmac of Aquino International Airport. In contrast to Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, all of which are economically vibrant, the Philippines has decayed as a result of the ravaged economy under Marcos, a series of overwhelming natural disasters, a lack of leadership from Malacanang for needed reforms, and overall corruption and mismanagement characteristic of patronage-oriented systems. Other problems include political instability as a result of seven military coup attempts against President Aquino, the reactionary policies of the lower house of the Congress and the political dynasties in many provinces, a highly skewed income distribution, continuing communist insurgency, a clogged judicial system, and a rapid population growth. The Philippine population has multiplied by a factor of ten in the 20th century and will double again within thirty years.

Until these problems are resolved, democracy will have no chance in the Philippines no matter how much effort and money USAID provides. Under any circumstances, USAID efforts would have only a small effect in specified areas. Under the catastrophic conditions in today’s Philippines, the efforts are no more than a drop in the proverbial bucket.
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extremely readable and would supplement courses on SEA
very well.

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writers and activists, a major book review essay dealing with
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Music: Dynamics of a Steady State"

Penny Van Esterik (editor), Women of Southeast Asia (1982), is
progressing towards a mid-1992 republication date. Please
send inquiries to the Center.

New!

Occasional Paper no. 15

Irrigation in the Heartland of Burma:
Foundations of the Pre-Colonial Burmese State

Michael Aung-Thwin

Since the last two centuries of the first millennium BC, except
for a short span of sixty years, the pre-colonial state in Burma
has been centered in the dry zone of Upper Burma. The basis
of this state was agrarian, yet little has been written on its eco-


nomic wherewithal. Instead, scholars have tended to focus
their attention on the state's political, legal, religious, cultural
and administrative structures and institutions. This study
attempts to fill this crucial gap. In part, it highlights a major
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