Thai government awards $100,000 to CSEAS

Thai studies at NIU got a boost this fall when the government of Thailand awarded CSEAS a $100,000 grant to support Thai studies. While most of the grant will be placed into an endowment, approximately $30,000 is available to be used for center initiatives in the 2008–09 academic year.

A committee of CSEAS associates is charged with deciding how to use the funds. They will work off of a list of ongoing and possible new projects, including student travel to Southeast Asia and strategies to draw attention to, and external support for, Thai and Southeast Asian studies programs.

The original grant proposal included a list of activities, but the committee is not limited to it. The committee is currently soliciting suggestions and specific applications for funding.

In his September 26 State of the University address, President John G. Peters recalled an outbreak of scarlet fever that swept the campus in 1907. At the time, a large group of students from the Philippines was attending NIU and had nowhere to go when the college was closed for a week to stem the epidemic. “When word of their dilemma reached the townspeople, families throughout the community took the Philippine students into their own homes to wait out the quarantine. And thanks to the rapid closure and dispersing of students, scarlet fever took no more victims at the college that year,” Peters recounted.

It was just a side note to Peters’ speech, but it serves to underscore the fact that the university has had academic links with Southeast Asia for more than 100 years. It is this relationship, stretching back to the very beginnings of the university, which anchors and informs the diverse activities of NIU’s Southeast Asian studies program.

In just the past few weeks, the center has demonstrated the strength and depth of its linkages to Southeast Asia. The successful organization of the meeting of the Council on Thai Studies was preceded by an equally impressive International Burma Studies Conference (sponsored by our sister center, the Center for Burma Studies). We also received delegations from the National Institute of Development Agencies (Thailand) and the Islamic Institute of the National University of Malaysia. Even more exciting, the government of Thailand awarded the center a substantial endowment and research grant aimed at expanding our commitment to Thai and Southeast Asian studies. Thailand’s Deputy Chief of Mission, Damrong Kraikruan, flew in from Washington, D.C., to present the gift. In his entourage was Narong Sasitorn, Thailand’s consul-general in Chicago, whose own son is now an undergraduate student at NIU.

Undergraduate education is a special mandate for NIU. The U.S. Department of Education’s four-year Title VI grant officially designates the center an undergraduate National Resource Center. This semester, 42 undergraduates at NIU are enrolled as Southeast Asian studies minors. But we need to do more—and we are. The dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences recently authorized the appointment of a half-time teaching assistant to assist the center in expanding undergraduate opportunities to enroll in the introduction to Southeast Asia: Crossroads of the World course. Beginning with spring semester, there will be not one but two sections of Crossroads for students to choose from.

Furthermore, the recent election of the officers of the Southeast Asia Club has brought undergraduates into the planning and implementation of student activities. In cooperation with the Department of History, plans are now being set for an undergraduate research grant to explore the history of NIU and its connections to Southeast Asia. The center is also working on display

continued on page 2
One-on-one with the new director

By Brett McCabe

While he was director of the University of Hawai‘i Center for Southeast Asian Studies in the early 1990s, Jim Collins worked with NIU professors Jim Henry (computer science) and fellow linguist Patricia Henry in expanding language and literature programs aimed at improving the teaching of Indonesian. After moving to Malaysia in 1991 to teach, the Chicago native kept his eye on NIU and the work in Southeast Asian studies being done there.

“In subsequent years I noticed that Southeast Asian studies at NIU had expanded and improved, so when I heard of the search for a new director of the NIU Center for Southeast Asian Studies, I was quite interested,” Collins says. “I knew that NIU had already made a lot of progress, and I thought maybe I could be part of this remarkable growth.”

He’s been happy with what he’s seen so far. “The level of cooperation and support from departments in and outside the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has exceeded my expectations,” Collins says. He is particularly impressed with the commitment of the chairs of all involved departments, his proactive dean, and the enthusiastic support of the associate provost in the Division of International Programs. Collins notes that they have all helped him assess the goals and directions of the center.

Collins is also intensely interested in bringing more students into the CSEAS major, especially undergraduates. The center was named by the Department of Education as an undergraduate National Resource Center for Southeast Asian studies, he notes. This means CSEAS should develop more classes and opportunities for undergraduates to learn and write about Southeast Asia.

In spring 2009, a second section of the Southeast Asia: Crossroads of the World survey course will be opened to ensure that undergraduates have the opportunity to enroll. Collins is also exploring the idea of setting up an undergraduate fellowship for students interested in writing about the links between NIU and Southeast Asia.

The new director has brought a variety of management skills and his reputation as a scholar to bear on strengthening Southeast Asian studies, he notes. This means the center’s legacy remains strong. “The center must be completely flexible,” Collins says. “Whatever comes our way is ours.”

Director’s Chair continued from page 1

to develop a study abroad course in cooperation with the College of Business. This, like our existing study abroad programs in Malaysia and Thailand, will be open to both undergraduate and graduate students.

At the same time that we have been expanding undergraduate participation in Southeast Asian studies, we have not overlooked our commitment to our graduate students. By adding a new section of Crossroads, we have added a graduate teaching assistant position. In proposing an undergraduate research grant in history, we have included a graduate student mentor.

By engaging the business school in setting up a study abroad program in Southeast Asia, we hope to provide more opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students to engage with the region.

These emerging networks of interdisciplinary cooperation, and the dynamic interplay of graduate and undergraduate education, have convinced me that my decision to take on this challenging job as CSEAS director has been the right one. I appreciate the support and cooperation in the center and my colleagues throughout the campus, and, of course, the enthusiasm of NIU’s students. There is a great deal of work that needs to be completed in the next few months, but I believe we are all moving forward to reach our goals.

Collins says. He is particularly impressed with the commitment of the chairs of all involved departments, his proactive dean, and the enthusiastic support of the associate provost in the Division of International Programs. Collins notes that they have all helped him
Thai scholars gather at COTS
Achan Tanot Charoenmuang of Chiang Mai University gave the keynote address at the 2009 Fall conference held October 26–28 at NIU. Celebrating 175 years of Thai–U.S. relations, the conference gave particular attention to this bilateral relationship. An unprecedented response brought us a wealth of presentations, about 100 in all, by scholars from Thailand and the U.S. and other countries. The conference was made possible by generous support of the NIU Graduate School, the Center for Burma Studies, the Burma Studies Foundation, and a grant from Drs. Oscar and Lilian Handlin. For more conference details, including the abstracts of most presentations, see www.grad.niu.edu/burma/BURMA_confpage3.html.

Alicia Turner is an instructor in the Department of History.

Islamic at the Edges: Southeast Asia
By Grant Olson

Visitors from Thailand joined Thai scholars from the Midwest and beyond to share an abundance of information and to challenge each other with new ideas at this year’s Council on Thai Studies (COTS) conference held October 2–5 at NIU. The conference was made possible by a generous support of the NIU Graduate School, the Center for Burma Studies, the Burma Studies Foundation, and a grant from Drs. Oscar and Lilian Handlin. For more conference details, including the abstracts of most presentations, see www.grad.niu.edu/burma/BURMA_confpage3.html.

Alicia Turner is an instructor in the Department of History.

Association of Asian Studies, March 26–29, Chicago
The association’s next annual meeting will be held at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, 301 E. North Water St. NIU specialists chairing or participating in panels include: Kikue Hamayotsu (political science), who will chair “Beyond Sacred and Secular: Islam and Political Mobilization in Muslim Southeast Asia,” and John Hartmann (foreign languages and literatures), who will chair “The Contribution of Pop Culture to Foreign Language and Culture Competency: Examples from Thailand and Cambodia.” A detailed list of panels is available at www.aasian.org. AAS is offering group rates through March 5.

Kenton Clymer (history) • organized and chaired a panel on “The United States and the Third World in the 1960s” at the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations conference at Ohio State University.
• his book, Troubled Relations: The United States and Cambodia Since 1870 (Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), was the subject of an H-Diplo Roundtable discussion.

Kikue Hamayotsu (political science) • authored a chapter, “Beyond Doctrine and Dogma: Religion and Politics in Southeast Asia,” in the edited volume Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis (Stanford University Press, 2008).
• John Hartmann (foreign languages and literatures) • as principal investigator on a grant from the National Science Foundation, submitted a report, “HSD: A Regional Approach to Spatial Analysis of Tai Toponyms in Southeast China and Southeast Asia Using GIS [geographic information systems].”

Jim Henry (computer science, Bob Zerwekh (computer science)) • authored a chapter, “Historical Buddhisms” panel questioned the prevailing assumptions on the state of knowledge of pre-modern Buddhism; the Art History panels presented new findings on decorative and functional art. There were a number of panels focused on ethnic minority issues, including two panels on Shan cultures that brought together scholars working on both sides of the Thai–Burma border.

Barbara Posadas (history) • received the 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Asian American Studies at the group’s annual meeting in April 2008.

Catherine Raymond (art history, director of the Center for Burma Studies) • will participate in the UNESCO-sponsored project “Preservation of Endangered Movable Cultural Heritage in Myanmar.”

The Center for Burma Studies is the northern hemisphere partner for this project.


Julia Lamb (outreach coordinator) • will co-present with October 24–25 at NIU. The conference was made possible by generous support of the NIU Graduate School, the Center for Burma Studies, the Burma Studies Foundation, and a grant from Drs. Oscar and Lilian Handlin. For more conference details, including the abstracts of most presentations, see www.grad.niu.edu/burma/BURMA_confpage3.html.

On Screen
Cambodia in real life
With funding from the DeKalb County Community Foundation, Cambodian photographer Vitharin Chan of the Royal University of Fine Arts and the Reyum Institute has created CambodiaBorn Again, a film on contemporary life in Cambodia. The 74–minute film is narrated by David Wood (chair, anthropology) —complements two exhibits about Cambodia at the NIU Anthropology Museum in Stevens Building and the Cambodian American Museum and Holocaust Memorial in Chicago (see back cover). For information on viewing the film, please contact museum director Ann Wright-Parswn at 815-753-0230 or by e-mail at awwrightparswn@nu.edu.
Bringing Southeast Asia to family and child studies

By Sherry Fang

People often ask me: "What is the name of your department? What do you do over there?" I usually reply that I teach in the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences (FCNS), and that I help prepare students to serve the many needs of diverse individuals and families. The School of FCNS approaches family and child studies from a contextual perspective by analyzing the many ways of knowing families and children in various sociocultural backgrounds.

Among the courses I teach, one in particular focuses on the development of cultural competency in serving Asian American families. As a discipline, I believe family and child studies provides an exceptional and unique lens for contextual analysis of forces such as immigration and acculturation affect gender roles, parent-child relationships, marital patterns, child-rearing practices, and other family dynamics. Those issues are extremely important to Asian families because family is the primary social unit and source of identity for many of them. Frequently, we focus our attention on immigrant and refugee families from various Asian backgrounds.

A few years ago, I received funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to transform the Asian American Families course to include more Southeast Asian American experiences. For most of us, the Asian American Families course is the first time they are exposed to immigrant and refugee issues. This course offers the space for the students to learn culture, history, theories, techniques, and specific concerns faced by these socioeconomically and linguistically diverse families. I seek to ground students with a much larger theoretical orientation; to expose students not only to frameworks fundamental to providing service to the culturally different, but also to increase their knowledge and skills about the specific Asian groups included in the course. The contextual and cultural knowledge students develop will enable such professionals to be more effective in working with families who may have a cultural background different from their own.

In an effort to tailor some of this training that students receive, and in light of the many refugees from Burma/Myanmar moving into the area, I teamed up with Professor Eric Jones (history) to think about ways we could equip our students with the cultural content knowledge possessed by both the School for Southeast Asian Studies and the Center for Burma Studies. Professor Jones, FCNS student Wendy Kraft, and I presented a paper, "Bringing the Burmese to Humanitarian Causes: Burma and Asian Immigrants," at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in November 2008. The paper has been received with great enthusiasm. Professor Jones filled our course with the actual experiences we have on Asian American family life is imperative for developing policy and has tremendous implications for practitioners delivering services to these families.

In the Field

Enhancing civic activism in the Philippines

By Susan Russell

Young leaders from the Philippines visited Chicago as part of a one-month civic activism program at NIU sponsored by CSEAS and the International Training Office. During the visit, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, third from right, met with some of the participants.

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies and the International Training Office hosted 30 young Filipino leaders from all over the Philippines in June 2008 for a one-month training program in active civic engagement as part of a larger program funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The purpose of the overall program, "Cultural Citizens and North–South Dialogue: Building the National Identity and Civic Participation in the Philippines," is to sharpen young leaders' skills in responsible citizenship, including personal safety and basic political freedoms. We foresee most of this content eventually digitized and mounted online as a virtual museum.

The event was part of a series of events sponsored by the Chicago chapter of the Council on American–Islamic Relations, and the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. The goal of the project is to strengthen community and youth participation in promoting accountable government and other forms of service in their communities back home. This project, which participants presented before they left NIU, ranged from creating an e-newsletter to organize corruption to helping illiterate children of sugar cane workers.

During their stay, members of the group interacted with more than 30 faculty members (especially from the Department of Political Science and Division of Public Administration) and leaders of various regional non-governmental organizations, including the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Wisconsin Immigrant Service Providers, Conexion Comunidad, the Interfaith Network for Peace and Justice, Hull House, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, the Chicago chapter of the Council on American–Islamic Relations, and the Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. Participants also were guests of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley at Chicago's Philippine Independence Day dinner reception, and met with Reverend Jesse Jackson and Illinois State Representative BobPitchard among other dignitaries. They also attended a Chicago concert featuring Asian performers and The Buddy Holly Story at Drury Lane Dinner Theater. The group later visited Springfield, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri.

A Karen community takes root in northern Illinois

By Catherine Raymond and Alan Potkin

The Karen people represent one of the larger minority communities in Myanmar/Burma. Like other minorities there, the Karen have been in intermittent conflict with the domi- nant majority since the emergence of the Union of Burma in 1947 following the end of the British colonial period. Refugee status and immigrant visas to the United States typically have been impeded by a claimant population's embrace of anti-national militaries. However, in 2007 U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice authorized the speedy issuance of approximately 10,000 immigrant visas to Karen refugees living in United Nations camps throughout northern Thailand.

A considerable number of these visa recipients, most of whom speak little English, are expected to be resettled in northern Illinois. The reason for this is in part the 180-year association of the Burmese Karen with American Baptist missionaries. The greatest luminary of those was Adoniram Judson, for whom Judson University in nearby Elgin is named. Judson has continued its own strong Karen affiliations through the present. These newly arriving Karen are thus on course to possibly becoming the largest Southeast Asian subculture in the area.

Traditionally, the three most-prized art forms among the Karen—whose indigenous religion was animist, but of whom about half are now Buddhist, with somewhat fewer Christians and even fewer Muslims—are weaving, music, and dance. All three skills were realized in the NIU performance in October of the Elgin–St. Charles Karen Dance Troo, which now numbers about 25 costumed performers, most of whom have arrived only within the past two years. The group's first public event was a featured presentation at the gala culture night during the International Burma Studies Conference (see page 3).

The troupe's performance was the first phase of a new cultural conservation initiative at the Northern Illinois Karen diaspora. Much credit for this first step is due to Angelene Now (professor of history at Judson), herself a Karen, whose energy and logistical assistance was indispensable; and to Drs. Oscar and Lilian Handlin of Harvard University for their generous financial support.

We hope to next develop a traveling display on the expected Karen influx, explaining who they are, where they're coming from, and why they are suddenly here. Beyond the requisite musical instruments, fact, and other artifacts, the proposed exhibition would display traditional interpretive panels and interactive media for recounting refugee oral history; for visualizing historical background and cultural geography; and, not least, for examining the Karen diaspora's remarkable constructive engagement with other Americanizing Burmese communities experiencing newfound personal safety and basic political freedoms. We foresee most of this content eventually digitized and mounted online as a virtual museum.

Catherine Raymond (art history, Center for Burma Studies), and Alan Potkin (CSEAS adjunct consultant) are the co-principal investigators of the new cultural conservation initiative for the Northern Illinois Karen diaspora.

In the Field

Bringing Southeast Asia to family and child studies

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FLAS Fellowships 2008–09

Coral Carlson (Ph.D. candidate, history) • research explores cross-cultural trade and contacts in two time periods: the ceramics trade from China and Southeast Asia to Europe between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the fashion for Khmer sculpture in Europe in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Sean Dolan (master’s degree candidate: anthropology; certificate, museum studies) • research explores globalization through examination of the halal foods industry, specifically the creation of an industry hub for halal foods in Malaysia and its effects on production and consumption of halal products in the United States.

Fellowship facts

The FLAS grants are funded by the center’s Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education. They provide student study of one of five Southeast Asian languages currently taught at NIU: Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, Tagalog, and Thai. Applications for the 2009–10 academic year are now available.

The Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Southeast Asia is funded through an endowment established by Clark Neher (professor emeritus, political science) and Arlene Neher (former director, Educational Programming, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). Applications are solicited for a graduate student in good standing who is able to demonstrate commitment to a career involving Southeast Asia.

The deadline for applications for the 2009–10 academic year are due Feb. 1.

Julie Edmunds (master’s degree candidate, anthropology; certificate, museum studies) • research interests include Indonesian material culture, gender studies, and the cultural history of Southest Asia, with particular interest in Bali. • vice-president, Southeast Asia Club; adviser, Southeast Asian Studies Board.

Allison Githens (master’s degree candidate, political science) • fields of interest are security studies, Asian foreign policy-military, and Southeast Asian politics (specifically Indonesia), identity politics, and terrorism.

Michael Hawkins (Ph.D. candidate, history) • specializes in the 2007–08 academic year in the Philippines on a Fulbright research grant. • dissertation investigates imperial discourse and policies in the Philippines’ Muslim South during the early years of the United States’ colonial regime in the islands.

Matthew Jagel (Ph.D. candidate, history) • main focus is French Indochina, its transition from colony to independence, and the role of the United States in this transformation.

Jessica Marchetti (master’s degree candidate, anthropology) • research examines the mediation between ideology and lived experience by exploring how an individual’s degree the power relations between gender, religion, and politics as they are enacted in the lives of low income women in Indonesia and Malaysia. • outreach coordinator, Southeast Asia Club.

Daniel J. Pojar, Jr. (Ph.D. candidate, political science) • research interests include Thai-U.S. relations, terrorism, and Thai politics.

Lily Ann Bolo Villaraza (Ph.D. candidate, history) • dissertation research will trace the articulation of nationalism through theater in the Philippines during the twentieth century. • Filipino American Arts and Culture Festival.

Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Southeast Asia 2008–09

Khizan Leang (Ph.D. candidate, anthropology) • research explores how technology motivates and enhances learning and teaching, specifically, the efficacy of task-based learning: acquiring Khmer through learners’ self-video production.

Alumni News

Universitas Paramadina Jakarta Rector Anwar Gani (Ph.D., education, 1999–2007) was one of several advisors assisting Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla, who mediated September 10 talks between the Thai government and representatives of southern Thai Muslim groups. Gani also included Walyudin Muhammad of the Pattani Malay Consultative Council, and General Khamsan Khlam, commander of the Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Commission, which oversees Thailand’s southern provinces. At this meeting, the two sides pledged to resume negotiations in November to find ways to meet the Muslim group demands for economic development, and use of the Malay language in Thailand’s three southernmost provinces.

John Brandon (M.A., political science, 1998–99) • director of the office at the University of Washington, D.C.-based Asia Foundation, • sent the center a copy of the foundation’s new publication, America’s Role in Asia, which is available online at asiafoundation.org/program/overview/ americas-role-in-asia. The Asia Foundation, which is available online at asiafoundation.org/program/overview/ americas-role-in-asia. The Asia Foundation, America’s Role in Asia, which is available online at asiafoundation.org/program/overview/ americas-role-in-asia. The Asia Foundation, http://www.cseas.niu.edu/People.htm.

Following is a snapshot of this year’s recipients and their research interests. For full details, please see Student News 2008.

Student News

Lily Villaraza is heading up the Southeast Asian Culture Night, which will be part of International Students Night on March 20–21, 2009 Northern Illinois University.

The Southeast Asia Club of Northern Illinois University announces a call for papers for its March 21, 2009, student conference on Southeast Asian studies, which will begin with a Southeast Asian culture night on March 20. We are accepting papers pertaining to our theme from undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines. The papers will be read by a panel of judges who will choose the best undergraduate and graduate papers.

One-page abstracts are due December 31, 2008. Final abstracts are due February 13, 2009. Please e-mail conference organizers (SEA/conference.2009@gmail.com) with the following information:

OROR
Your full name as you would like it to appear in the abstract booklet and conference schedule
Contact info (e-mail and telephone)
Major area of study (region and discipline)
Title of your presentation

One-page abstract (250 words maximum) in print-ready format, including your contact information.

Housing with NIU students on campus can be arranged. Keynote speaker to be announced. Direct questions to conference coordinator Alanna Wiley at 630-670-5703 or e-mail SEA/conference.2009@gmail.com.

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Southeast Asian Studies Culture Night and Student Conference

March 20–21

The Southeast Asia Club will kick off its student conference weekend with a celebration of Southeast Asian culture on Friday night, March 20, followed by the conference the next day. The conference theme is “Blending Borders, Mixing Margins: Hybridity and Fluidity in Southeast Asian Communities.” Papers from undergraduate and graduate students of all disciplines are now being accepted. One-page abstracts are due December 1. Final drafts are due February 13. For details, contact conference coordinator Sarah Wilby at 630-677-5073 or e-mail SEA.conference.2009@gmail.com.

Islam at the Edges: Southeast Europe and Southeast Asia

March 30

The center hosts this colloquium co-sponsored by the University of Chicago Center for East European and Eurasian Studies. Details will be posted on the center website (www.ccees.uchicago.edu) as they develop, or call 815-753-1771 for information.

Field Notes

Jawi in Malaysia: A preliminary observation

By Brett McCabe

Since the fourteenth century, the Malay language has been written in a writing system based on Arabic script with six additional characters for sounds not spoken in the Arabic language. I encountered Jawi script when I joined Professor Eric Jones’ history study abroad program in Malaysia and Singapore in May 2007. I was immediately interested because it gave me the chance to use my Arabic writing skills to enhance my study of Malay. When I was traveling in Malaysia, I was struck by the variance in Jawi use depending on the area of the country. In Kota Bharu, for example, Jawi is seen on nearly every street sign, billboard, and shop sign in the city. However, as the Pahang State Museum observed, ‘For a long time our people have almost forgotten the role of the Jawi script in daily life—it is a tool for learning or communication’ (Ahmad Farid bin Abdul Jalil and Yau Sui Bin 2005:7).

Indeed, although Jawi is found in Southern Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, Brunei, Indonesia, and the Southern Philippines, its use is in rapid decline. Although the earliest evidence of Jawi in the Malay world was found in a stone inscription from Trengganu dating to 1303, throughout its 700-year history the role of Jawi in Malaysia and elsewhere has changed significantly. Since at least 1968, Jawi has all but vanished as a source of information, communication, and innovation.

My research is focused on the circumstances of Jawi’s decline as a source of information and its contemporary role among Malays. ‘This is a broad topic; however, there are a number of avenues to follow’ (in 2004, Joose and Groeneveld). CSSE Directors James V. Collins conducted preliminary empirical research to interpret Jawi script as an identity marker in the state capitals of Kelantan, Trengganu, and Pahang. He found a deep generational gap in the use of Jawi to convey information, but a revival in its use to mark ethnicity and power.

While traveling in Malaysia, I was able to extend Collins’ research. I found exceptions to his generalizations because Jawi is sometimes still used as a source for disseminating information. For example, the State Mosque in Kuantan has a large sign at its entrance explaining where the prayer room and the library can be found. Moreover, offices, homes, and classrooms are labeled in Jawi without Roman script Malay. In Kota Bharu, again at a mosque, there is a sign on the gate written both in Jawi and Roman script Malay. The messages in the two different scripts, however, did not convey the same information. Only those who can read Jawi would know the difference. Other than these exceptions, and a few materials found in local bookstores, Jawi is usually presented side by side with Roman script Malay.

In conducting this research, the most re- parting travel in Malaysia is encountering its diverse peoples and cultures. Southeast Asia certainly lives up to its rep- utation for diversity. I stayed in and around their homes more than the time. Had I not met these individuals, my travel would have been much more difficult. Experiencing Malaysia, its peoples, and its cultures is something everyone should have on their to-do list. The spread of religions, colonial influence, and pluralistic ethnicity— features that many students only read about—flourishes everywhere in your mind and senses when you are there.

Even on the east coast, in the more “Islamic” states, you can find Protestant churches near mosques. In Kuala Lumpur, Chinese Buddhist temples, Hindu temples, and mosque line the streets of the same city. Portuguese men on the Straits of Malacca play acoustic guitars and sing “That’s Amore,” and Malaysian Sikhs will take you to Melaka to places “not found in any Lonely Planet Guide.” Indeed, once you visit Malaysia, you will spend the next academic year making plans to return.

Brett McCabe is a graduate student in anthropology.

References


Heartfelt experience in Thailand and Malaysia

By Jorge Barroso

In the U.S.


Jawi script and identity in contemporary Malaysia. Presented as a short presentation at the Conference on Southeast Asian Studies, Nov. 29–December 1, Jakarta. Organized by ISEAS, KITLV, and LEI.

Study abroad students with their host families in Malaysia.

When people ask me about my study abroad experience over the summer in Thailand (with Professor Danny Unger) and Malaysia (with Professor Eric Jones), I describe it in three words: hot, cheap, and fun. It was also kind of weird, because of my apparent Thai-Malay looks. These physical attributes in many ways gave me the opportunity to be fully immersed in the culture in that I was often treated like a native by the locals. Thus, I was able to experience what these countries have to offer with an open heart. And yes, I fell in love—with the history of the countries, the kindness of the people, the beauty of nature, the diversity of cultures, and the exotic tone of the languages.

First, many people might think that the average temperature in Thailand and Malaysia is a little too hot for them. On this note, I was able to enjoy a cool drink. The food is hot, too, but nothing compares to authentic Thai or Malay food with the right spicy ingredients that make them so delicious.

Second, I did not need a fortune to have a good time. With a moderate amount of money in my pockets, I had more than enough. There are many expensive shopping centers, such as the Siam Paragon in Bangkok or the Pavilion in downtown Kuala Lumpur, but buying brand-name items is silly when there are street markets everywhere. In Solo, I slept, and drank well without spending too much. Third, Thailand and Malaysia are so much fun. In both countries life is a daily celebration wherein time passes by slowly. There are so many things to do, and it is so easy to get around that sometimes the biggest difficulty is deciding where to go. Once a destination is chosen one must be prepared to experience unbelievable things. I never imagined that I would ever ride an elephant (Chiang Mai), or see the biggest flower in the world (Cameron Highlands), or swim at night in the ocean (Koh Samet), or sing in public (Melaka).

Going to Thailand and Malaysia has changed my perspective on life. I no longer have a one-way direction to my academic goals. At first, I was a bit skeptical about the smoothness of the programs, but I learned along the way that they have been carefully designed so that the country is the classroom. It was such a won- derful experience to get lectures on important local issues from native academics and local officials. It was also exciting traveling from one city to another, contemplating spectacu- lar views. Furthermore, it was amazing to actually be at the historical sites (temples, museums, ruins) we talked about in our pre- sentations. It is nice to get a sense of a coun- try’s culture from a book, but it is even better when it comes from the people themselves.

Jorge Barroso is a graduate student in political science.

Summer Study 2009

In the U.S.


History and Culture of Malaysia, May 10–29, Malaysia: Three-week NIU Study abroad program taught by Professor Eric Jones (history) includes extensive travel throughout Malaysia beginning in Kuala Lumpur. Students will visit museums, historical sites, religious centers, and rural areas in addition to interacting with the region’s ethnically and religiously diverse population. Students will receive three credit hours. Open to graduate and undergraduate students. Application deadline: March 1. Contact the NIU Study Abroad Office, Williston Hall 417; call 815-753-0304 or e-mail niuabroad@niu.edu.

Summer Study Abroad in Laos, June 15–Aug. 15, Vientiane, Laos: Eight-week Language training, cultural education, and one-week home stays in rural Cambodia for third-year Khmer students. The program is administered by the Khmer Language Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Fulbright- Hays, and Group Projects. Eleven fellowships will be offered for qualified applicants, contingent on funding. Application deadline: Feb. 27. For details, call 808-956-8070, e-mail sak@hawaii.edu or visit manoa.hawaii.edu/ask.

Advanced Study of Khmer (ASK), June 15–Aug. 15, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Eight-week program offered by the Center for East European and Eurasian Studies includes intensive language training, cultural education, and one-week home stays in rural Cambodia for third-year Khmer students. The program is administered by the Khmer Language Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Fulbright- Hays, and Group Projects. Eleven fellowships will be offered for qualified applicants, contingent on funding. Application deadline: Feb. 27. For details, call 808-956-8070, e-mail sak@hawaii.edu or visit manoa.hawaii.edu/ask.
ON DISPLAY

Khmer Spirit: Arts and Culture of Cambodia
October 2008–August 2009
NIU Anthropology Museum, Stevens Building

*Khmer Spirit: Arts and Culture of Cambodia* is the second half of a two-year celebration of Cambodian culture at the NIU Anthropology Museum. This exhibit, which opened Oct. 12, came to NIU from the Cambodian American Heritage Museum in Chicago. It replaces *Cambodia Born Anew: Kamnoet Khmae Tmey*, which moved in September to the heritage museum after a year at NIU. Both exhibits were funded by a grant from the Henry R. Luce Foundation.

The *Khmer Spirit* exhibit explores newly created pieces of Cambodian sculpture, painting, music, and dance. The pieces reflect the dialogue that Cambodian citizens and Cambodian-Americans have with their heritage and their desire to recreate the artistic traditions of the past, while making a new statement about which artifacts represent and serve as symbols of a national identity, according to museum director Ann Wright-Parsons.

Lim Chantou, wife of Khmer language teacher Kheang Leang, dresses a manakin in the elaborate costume of the apsara (heavenly maiden) dancer for the Khmer spirit exhibit.

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