Gender in Southeast Asia
Historian Barbara Watson Andaya on women, tradition, and history

Barbara Andaya in the field, Solor Island, eastern Indonesia. See article on page 10.

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Director’s Chair
James Collins

On the morning of April 26, our guests in the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) walked through Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., to take photos on Pennsylvania Avenue with a gleaming White House behind them. As they loped through the park, these twenty-seven Southeast Asian teenagers and their five adult leaders did not know that it was dedicated to four other foreigners: Lafayette, de Rochambeau, Kosciuszko, and von Steuben, all honored as heroes for their role in achieving American independence. As we Americans were taught about responsible leadership and global citizenship by the example of those French, Polish, and German heroes, the U.S. State Department entrusted this group of young Southeast Asians to us so together we could re-learn the meaning of responsibility and sacrifice. This visit to Lafayette Park, so evocative of America’s symbolic role in global democracy and celebrated diversity, closed an extraordinary semester for the Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

Since January, we have sent our NIU students, faculty members, and staff associates not just to Normal, Urbana, Kingston and Wheaton, Illinois, but also to Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Texas to bring Southeast Asian studies to new audiences ranging from elementary school kids to university professors. We hosted study tours at NIU not only for the twenty-seven teenagers from Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, but also for fifty teenagers from Chicago’s west side and twenty more from Elgin. Our Southeast Asia Club students through their culture nights and annual conference drew scores of NIU students and DeKalb community members into the reach of Southeast Asian studies, just as the introductory course in Southeast Asian studies (ILAS 225, Crossroads: An Introduction to Southeast Asia) marked a record enrollment of undergraduates last spring, 48 percent of whom were from NIU’s professional schools and programs.

Indeed, this past spring, CSEAS linked up more closely to the College of Business and the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences by appointing Mark Rosenbaum, assistant professor of marketing, and Sherry Fang, associate professor of family and child studies, respectively to the center’s Executive Committee. The center reached out, too, to the Public Health program by assisting Tomoyuki Shibata in developing the Southeast Asia content of his undergraduate course on environmental health and to the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology by collaborating with Dean Promod Vohra and Vice Provost and International Programs Director Deborah Pierce, in a CSEAS initiative to develop joint degrees with universities in Indonesia and Malaysia.

As work proceeded apace on our Burmese and Lao dictionary SEAsite projects, a federally funded endeavor supervised by language professors John Hartmann and Saw Tun, the task of making good our promise to the U.S. Department of Education’s International Research and Studies program to compile an 8,000-entry Multimedia Online Learner’s Dictionary of Malay began in earnest in January. A Malaysian project office manager, Darus Tharim, was hired as were three graduate and three undergraduate students to produce and enter the data needed for the dictionary, which will be made available on SEAsite upon its anticipated completion in August 2012. In the process, the dictionary project is also strengthening our ties to universities and institutions in Malaysia and Brunei. Language professor Patricia Henry, Darus Tharim, and I organized workshops on May 10 in Malaysia in cooperation with The Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and on May 20 in Brunei in cooperation with The National Language Agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei).

This summer, two center faculty associates are coordinating study abroad programs—Judy Ledgerwood (anthropology) in Cambodia and Eric Jones (history) in Malaysia and Brunei. Almost thirty NIU students are taking advantage of these two opportunities. The study abroad program in Malaysia and Brunei is also linked to the Malay dictionary project because students are being trained to capture images and sounds to be used in the multimedia portions of the dictionary. Also this summer, three NIU students (Laura Iandola, Froisana Gjerazi, and Mary Thomas) were awarded Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships to study intermediate Indonesian at our partner university, Universitas Hasanuddin in Makassar. Brandilyn Bolton was awarded a FLAS fellowship to SEASSI to study intermediate Tagalog. Nine undergraduate and graduate students—Elizabeth Wright, Alyssa DeLuca, Coral Carlson, Piyathida Sereevenjapol, Yanyong Innanchai, Tatchalerd Sudhipongpracha, Shawn McCafferty,
Scott Ladeur, and Aaron Johnson—were awarded funding through the Thai Teaching and Research Endowment Fund to study and do research in Thailand. The Thai studies grants also brought us visiting scholar Achakorn Wongpreedee from the National Institute of Development Administration in Bangkok for three months this spring.

Still, we hope for even more opportunities for exchange and collaborative work in Southeast Asia. In March the rector of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta visited DeKalb and signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NIU, only the second MOU with an Indonesian university. The attorney general of Brunei approved the signing of an MOU between Universiti Brunei Darussalam and NIU. Building on these achievements and opportunities for exchange and cooperation, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean Christopher McCord, Vice Provost Deb Pierce, and I visited institutions in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia in mid-May, with a firm commitment to return to Southeast Asia to visit our alumni and partner universities in Thailand as soon as the current political and social situation permits.

Besides our increasing collaboration with Southeast Asia partner institutions through MOUs, the center draws on the impact of grants from the U.S. State Department to help CSEAS and its associates build new regional exchange opportunities. In spring, the State Department funded three projects at NIU. The newest venture, the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP), is managed by the center and brought students from all over Southeast Asia to NIU in fall 2009 and spring. Two more programs, the Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) and the Philippine Minorities Program (PMP), are managed by NIU’s International Training Office under the aegis of center associates Lina Ong (ITO director) and Sue Russell (anthropology). The PYLP program is featured in the June issue of NIU’s alumni journal, Northern Now.

With the confidence of experience in these programs, the center submitted a proposal in May to seek funding for another SEAYLP program in 2010–11. We hope to welcome fifty more Southeast Asia teenagers in the next academic year so they can demonstrate what Southeast Asia means by sharing their lives and experience with the people of our campus, region, and the nation’s capital. Informal reunions with SEAYLP participants are planned so that the center can maintain communication with, and draw upon, SEAYLP alumni reflections to build better programs in the future.

Another State Department program that has proven crucial to the center’s mandate as a national resource center is the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant continued on page 4
(FLTA) program, which brings Fulbright scholars from Southeast Asia to teach their languages at NIU. Just as the SEAYLP participants enhance American understanding of the culture and societies of Southeast Asia, the FLTAs do the same by teaching the students of NIU the languages of Southeast Asia. In May we said goodbye to the four FLTAs sent to NIU in fall, 2009. These talented young specialists greatly enhanced our ability to teach Indonesian, Malay, Tagalog, and Thai. In the next academic year, four more FLTAs will join us to continue the improvement of our Southeast Asia language programs. Moreover, with the support of the foreign languages and literatures department, beginning Malay will be added, the first time beginning Malay has been offered as part of NIU’s academic program and, as far as we know, the first time beginning Malay has been taught in an American university.

In the midst of all of these activities, the center on March 23 submitted its 45-page proposal to the U.S. Department of Education to seek reconfirmation of our status as a National Resource Center for undergraduate Southeast Asian studies. If awarded, this Title VI grant will provide funding for the next four years of center activity, but more importantly all the hard work that the CSEAS staff put into writing this complex and detailed proposal served as a checklist for examining our strengths and weaknesses. It was a both a celebration of the center’s nearly fifty years of achievement and a wakeup call to find new ways to improve our service and increase our contribution to NIU and the nation.

This spring, another white house, the Pottenger House where CSEAS makes its home, has been repainted and refurbished. A gleaming, recommitted CSEAS will carry out its work at NIU and its mandate as a National Resource Center for Southeast Asian studies. This is a heavy task for our modest resources but, as this vibrant semester has shown, we have learned about responsibility and leadership. We stand ready.

Kudos

Center’s Nancy Schuneman wins College of Liberal Arts anniversary award

Since 1987, Nancy Schuneman has served as office manager for the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), which has grown to become one of the major programs of its kind in the United States and internationally. Over the years, she has welcomed, guided, and served five directors of that center and countless other faculty associates from departments within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as from other Colleges and units at NIU.

Schuneman’s position requires detailed knowledge of the programs that CSEAS coordinates, including four major federally funded grants currently totaling about $1.5 million and 25 fellowships and assistantships. It also requires excellent interpersonal skills, given the diversity of associates and students involved in the programs. Nancy has excelled on all counts.

 Officials in Washington, D.C. who supervise the grants know Nancy on a first-name basis because of the many calls she makes for information, exceptions, and extensions concerning the grants she administers. She is the voice of NIU in many federal offices, including the U.S. Department of Education. Officials trust her knowledge and professionalism, and her personal reputation has greatly contributed to NIU’s recognition as a consistently reliable national resource center.

A quality that stands out most for colleagues who have worked with Nancy is her sense of humor and penchant for reducing tensions and worries. One choice quote, which explains why she is valuable, and why so many admire and appreciate her, is her motto of “maintaining diplomacy in the face of university red tape.” Her work ethic, according to those who know her, is also extraordinary. She performs far above and beyond the call of duty, often monitoring e-mails from home on weekends. In her own humorous words, which can be read on the center’s website, she says, “My current research involves how to cram 24 hours worth of work into a 7.5-hour work day.” Colleagues assert that Nancy has become the “heart, soul, and institutional memory of the center.”

Editor’s note: In April, center office manager Nancy Schuneman received one of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ ten Golden Anniversary Faculty/Staff Awards. Following are excerpts from the awards committee’s acknowledgement of Schuneman’s accomplishments.

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By Liz Poppens Denius

Center associate **Ann Wright-Parsons** (anthropology) couldn’t be busier this summer. As director of the NIU Anthropology Museum, she is on the planning committee for the university’s multimillion-dollar project to renovate Cole Hall, the site of the Feb. 14, 2008, fatal shooting of five students by a gunman who took his own life at the scene. In May, NIU announced plans for a complete remodel of the building, which was the largest lecture facility on campus and which has been closed since the incident. The plans include transforming a significant portion of the southeast auditorium, where the shooting took place, into an elegant new home for the museum.

“I’m completely tied up with grants and plans for the renovation right now,” says Wright-Parsons. The museum currently occupies converted classroom space in the nearby Stevens Building where the anthropology department is located. But the department’s anthropology collection has been housed in the basement of Cole Hall since 1968, when the building, named for well-known anthropologist Fay-Cooper Cole, opened. Since the shooting, Wright-Parsons and her museum studies students, along with other students wishing to research the collection, have had only limited access to the space, which includes storage, offices, and laboratories for the collection, the bulk of which is from Southeast Asian cultures: Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Since its inception in 1964, the anthropology collection has grown to about 20,000 specimens and artifacts, including between 8,000 and 10,000 ethnographic and 10,000 archaeological artifacts. The strengths of the collection are in ethnic cultures of Southeast Asia (Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines) as well as the Pacific Islands, sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America, and the U.S. Southwest, according to Wright-Parsons.

With construction on Cole Hall scheduled to begin in November, the preliminary work of securing the collection and moving some artifacts to the museum in the Stevens Building has already begun, Wright-Parsons said. The last exhibit, Tourist Art, closed in spring. The entire museum will be closed until it re-opens in its new home in fall 2011.

Wright-Parsons is enthusiastic about the museum’s new location and the many improvements that will go along with it. “The space is somewhat larger than what we have now and is one very large room, which gives us more flexibility in arranging exhibitions,” she said. “Also, the ceilings, presently eight and a half feet high, will be over twelve feet high. This will allow us to display Southeast Asian kites overhead and other large or high pieces to dramatic effect.”

When complete, the Cole Hall renovation will include a new building façade, a new lobby, a high-tech studio/computer laboratory to facilitate team-based learning, a state-of-the-art redo of the southwest auditorium, updated electrical and plumbing systems, and replacement of the building’s antiquated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. The state of Illinois has allocated $10.3 million to the project, which also will cover improvements to the Stevens Building, including a new 300-seat lecture hall to replace lost auditorium space in Cole Hall.
Unanswered questions from the field and why they’re important

By Jenn Weidman

“Our way of life is dead. We have nothing. We tell our children to leave and not come back.” I translate.

The village headman and his fellow villagers watch my students’ faces as the meaning of their words sink in. The questions that had rattled around our heads a few hours earlier as we donned our hardhats at the mine now resurface. Who’s to blame? Does it matter? Finding a scapegoat doesn’t make the problem disappear.

I run an intensive professional development program in peace and conflict studies based in Thailand. Each session includes at least two field studies—one within Thailand focusing on conflict analysis and one within either Cambodia or Nepal focusing on post-conflict transformation. Field studies are magnets for difficult discussions and debates that often have no concrete answers yet are crucial for peace-building efforts. This article reflects one such situation and debate, the problem of farmland contaminated with cadmium in Mae Sot, Thailand, near the Burmese border.

Academically speaking, cadmium is perhaps a relatively small issue among hundreds along the Thai/Burma border. A natural substance that exists in different concentrations in the environment, cadmium is also often a byproduct of zinc mining. When ingested through various food sources, it is harmful to humans. In the hills and mountains along the Thai/Burma border, there is both cadmium and zinc. The first mining company to open the zinc mines decades ago has long since gone bankrupt and a new company has taken over the mining operation.

The current mining company practices a completely environmentally clean mining process. Many studies have been conducted that prove this. Unfortunately, an assessment study was not conducted before they took over the mining operation, so no evidence exists about pre-existing cadmium levels. As the big business in the situation, they have been on the receiving end of many challenges and accusations of fault. In an effort to maintain goodwill in the community, they have invested substantially in the local hospital’s cadmium clinic as well

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Peace in action

Rotary, one of the world’s largest humanitarian service organizations, selects a hundred Rotary Peace Fellows every year to study peace and conflict resolution at its seven partner universities around the world, including Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok where center alumna Jenn Weidman works. The Rotary Peace Fellowship program offers the opportunity to study peace building, conflict resolution, and mediation at one of the seven schools and the choice of either a three-month certificate course or a master’s degree program. Applicants are encouraged to apply through their local Rotary club. Information is available on the Rotary website.
as in potential solutions to the cadmium problem. The local government is also involved.

Where did the cadmium come from? No one knows for sure. Speculation now surrounds the original mining company. Perhaps they used unclean mining techniques. Perhaps the cadmium came with runoff from the mines when they were left open and exposed after the company went bankrupt. Perhaps cadmium naturally existed in the soil and mining operations simply pushed levels into the danger zone. With no pre-mine study, there are no answers.

Villagers in this area previously relied mainly on rice farming for their livelihood. When cadmium was discovered in their rice, they were unable to sell it on the national and global markets and overnight lost their main source of income. Many studies have been conducted seeking to determine the exact cadmium levels in each rice field and crop. These studies have been conducted independently by approximately fifteen different institutes and organizations and although they have duplicated efforts, they have also found vastly different results. Some organizations have independently reported their contradictory study results to now very confused villagers. Others have not reported at all. Some of the confusion centers on the use of different scientific definitions and cadmium measuring methods in different studies. The bottom line, though, is that the cadmium exists and the rice can’t be sold.

One of the core alternative livelihoods projects currently being pioneered through a cooperation of government, mining company, and civil society efforts has been the substitution of sugar cane as the main crop. Since sugar cane is used to produce bio-fuel, the presence of cadmium in the cane is unimportant. Also, because the new company’s refining process is clean, the cadmium is prevented from re-entering the ecological system. This is the first year the project will be fully operational and there are already many skeptics. Villagers say the new crop will not have the same financial yield as rice. Some also have difficulty growing sugar cane in their wetland fields.

Throughout this process, people are naturally seeking someone to blame. Who is at fault? Who is responsible to fix it? Unfortunately, we may never know. If it is somehow determined that the fault lies with the original mining company, there seems to be no recourse. Mediation efforts are underway to try to bring all sides to a mutually acceptable solution, but these efforts are troubled and a group of villagers has decided to sue the mining company—an action that may drive the situation further from a workable solution.

So what is the point? What can peace-builders gain from a circular debate about who is responsible? The real question becomes whether assigning blame really matters.

This situation allows the Rotary Peace fellows in our program to study and analyze a conflict as they hear from each point of view. Later, we discuss the situation holistically and brainstorm both solutions and preventative measures. Through the discussion, we train our fellows to look beyond the blame question to focus on solutions. As with many instances, the common questions surrounding this situation are not the issue. They are the distraction that paralyzes us in a debate which, while interesting, is not in any way helpful to those in need. Our fellows take these skills and the lessons learned from the experiences of those involved and expand, extrapolate, and apply them to conflict situations in their own locations around the world.

For example, one of our alumni works both in the Yukon, Canada, and in Kenya. In the Yukon, she works with First Nations on a range of issues from land use rights, the environment, fisheries, and social justice. Her work requires her to look beneath the surface of the obvious questions, stereotypes, claims, and blames, to find lasting solutions that benefit all involved parties. In Kenya, she works to foster sustainable development and peace by building alternative livelihoods through fisheries and community projects.

As the title of this essay reflects, one of the things our fellows continually grapple with is the presence of unanswered questions in and around conflict situations. Some of these questions have no answer. For others, as in the case above, the answers are unimportant. It becomes the job of the peace builder to find sustainable solutions to the problems at hand in place of answers to questions that may represent the truth, but can be otherwise meaningless to the real lives of the people.

Jenn Weidman is deputy director of the Rotary Peace Center at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. She graduated from NIU in 1999 with a bachelor’s degree with a contract major in Southeast Asian studies and received a master’s degree in cultural anthropology, with a certificate in applied anthropology and a concentration in Southeast Asian studies, from NIU in 2005.
Coral Carlson, a Ph.D. candidate in history, is the 2010–11 recipient of the center’s Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Southeast Asia, which provides a $5,000 grant for a graduate research project.

Carlson, as a CSEAS graduate assistant, led the spring session of the center’s Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) along with fellow students Shahin Aftabizadeh, Sean Dolan, Maria “Rai” Hancock, Shawn McCafferty, and Mary Thomas. A student of Southeast Asian ceramics for four years, she is researching Thailand’s participation in Europe-Asia trade in high-fired stoneware. Her project will take her to Thailand over the summer to study several Thai ceramics collections and to explore the connection between Thai and early Italian ceramics.

She credits taking NIU’s Study Abroad Malaysia program, led by assistant history professor and center associate Eric Jones in 2007, with inspiring her to switch her area of concentration from early modern Europe to Asia, “While in Malaysia we visited Melaka’s History, Ethnography, and Literature Museum, which had an exhibit of the ceramics found there. I stood in that gallery looking at the variety of ceramics and was overwhelmed by the sense that history was surrounding me. When I returned home that summer, I changed my major field from early modern Europe to Asia,” Carlson wrote in her fellowship application.

Having studied both art history and East Asian studies as an undergraduate in the 1970s, Carlson said she has come full circle with her cross-cultural exploration of pre-modern trade using ceramics as an indicator. “Ceramics survive unlike other trade goods,” she said.

When she returns to campus in the fall, Carlson will be a teaching assistant in the history department, finish her candidacy exams, and start work on her dissertation, possibly returning to Thailand in the winter to conduct more research. After she completes her degree, the former public relations professional hopes to teach at the university level, to write, and to bring the world of Southeast Asia to a wider audience.

“I want to teach in the widest sense of the word,” she says. “I became interested in teaching as a result of my previous life in public relations, which in the nonprofit organizations I worked with had strong writing and presentation components. I also want to write; the list of books that I want to write is up to five now. I also want to reach out to a variety of audiences with presentations. This is something that is particularly important in tax-supported educational institutions in that it helps stakeholders see the value of what we in academia do.”
Fourteen NIU undergraduate students graduated from NIU in December and May with minors in Southeast Asian studies. Fall graduates were Sagung (Mirah) Kertayuda (political science); Andrew Lindemulder (history); Lionel Newman (English and psychology); Ryan Olsen (history); and Sean Quirante (history). Graduating in spring were Robert D. Bulanda (history and anthropology); Earl (Pete) Collina (economics); Michael Garcia (history); Cherlyn Ladford (art); Jessica Larson (English); Kelly O’Shea (anthropology); Molyka Rath (organizational management); Jason Specht (political science/international politics); and Joseph Sweda (political science/public law). The center congratulates them all.

Kudos also to these Southeast Asian studies minors:

- Lionel Newman, who won the English department’s Orville Baker Essay Award for undergraduate upper-division essay writing this spring.
- Bethany Brown, a French major, who won first place in the Foreign Languages and Literatures department’s annual essay contest in April.

Anthropology graduate student Brett McCabe is spending six days this summer as a Florence Tan Moeson Fellow at the Library of Congress, where he will pursue independent research in the Asian Division on the changing role of the Jawi script in Malaysia.

Update: SEAYLP

By the time NIU’s spring semester ended in early May, CSEAS had successfully hosted two groups of students and adult leaders from around Southeast Asia who came to campus in spring and fall for the center’s new Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP). Both groups left with three weeks of leadership training behind them. And already at least two groups are putting that training to good use.

In Kampong Cham, Cambodia, SEAYLP alumni looked at the problem of street trash in the rapidly growing city and decided to form a youth environmental club with about sixty local students to combat the problem. The club’s first event was a citywide trash-collection effort on May 17 that drew even the city governor to come out and help. The group mobilized about 450 students, teachers, monks, and other community members who collected 30 bins of litter and garbage, and later took to the streets with bullhorns and environmental slogans. The bins were donated to the city afterward. The group plans to run photographs of the trash collected on three billboards in the city to raise community awareness of better garbage disposal.

In Brunei, the SEAYLP alumni group is planning a “Rediscover Brunei” event in July, patterned after the American TV show “Amazing Race,” to increase public awareness of their country’s cultural heritage, which the group says is diminishing as the world becomes more globalized. The group met in March to begin the planning.

In June the center received word that it will receive funding for a second round of SEAYLP from the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which provided $275,000 for the inaugural program.
Gender in Southeast Asia
One on one with historian Barbara Watson Andaya

Editor’s note: Historian Barbara Watson Andaya, author of *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006) and director of the University of Hawaii’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies, was the keynote speaker at the Southeast Asia Club’s Student Conference on March 20. Prior to giving her conference speech Saturday, she was the featured speaker at the center’s Friday lunchtime lecture. Afterward, she sat down with anthropology graduate student Jessica Marchetti for an informal question-and-answer session. Here are some excerpts from their conversation. Look for the entire videotaped interview on the center website.

Jessica Marchetti: You have written that it was in 1993 when you first seriously began to think about entering the field of women’s history. What happened in 1993 that shifted your focus?

Barbara Andaya: Well, in 1993 my previous book, which was on the history of Sumatra in the 17th and 18th centuries, was published, so I was looking around for a new project. I could have gone into some other area of Indonesian life — my specialization is in 17th and 18th Indonesian and Malay history. I was well acquainted with Dutch East India Company sources. I could read and use the classical Malay material. I could have moved around someplace where those two things coincided . . . . My professor at Cornell, O. W. Wolters, had always said that the major concern of my generation of scholars was to build case histories, case studies, because he felt they were the building blocks on which larger generalizations were made. He wasn’t a great supporter of general history. He felt the major priority should be case studies. So I was thinking of working in South Sumatra because it has indigenous material, there was Dutch material as well, but somehow I didn’t feel very excited about it because basically I’d be doing the kind of thing I’d done before, putting together sources from two different cultural perspectives, constructing a narrative, it would have been a contradiction, I suppose. In that year, I was asked to give a paper in London and I had to think of something to give. I’ve always been interested in change, I’ve always been interested in what goes on in people’s heads, and I suppose I’ve always had some interest in women and the family although it wasn’t very evident in my earlier work. But in my Sumatra work, I’d been really struck by the prominence of women even in the Dutch sources, and I thought to myself, goodness, there is a whole theme you could develop . . . . Then other things happened that year as well. I was living in New Zealand at that stage. My husband and I moved to Hawaii at the end of that year and that really opened up huge research possibilities.

I guess those two things came together when I was thinking of what I should do at the age of 50. And I was trying to think of something that would make a difference to the field, something that would push things along a little bit, open
things up. I suppose that’s where the interest in women came from. I could see that in anthropology it was a huge growth area, as well as in development studies. But it was like a mushroom: a very broad contemporary base and a very thin historical stem. So I thought perhaps I can do something to make the historical stem a little thicker.

JM: The work that you have done already has significantly contributed to the development of women’s histories and Southeast Asian studies. In the future in what ways would you like to see your work continue to enrich this field of study?

BA: I still think Professor Wolters was right, that what we need are more case studies . . . . It would be wonderful if historians could go back and find sufficient sources, even in an article, on specific areas of Southeast Asia, where they could look more closely at some of that material. It’s always likely to be unevenly spread. Java had a huge amount of material; upland Laos doesn’t have very much at all. So it’s not going to be distributed evenly throughout the area but that’s really what I’d like to see, more detailed work on the early modern period. It’s a challenge because people need languages; they need to be able to read scripts that often are quite archaic. They need to be willing to look for source material in unusual places, maybe in artifacts, in textiles, in murals. I see [Thai scholar] Bonnie Brereton is in the process of publishing a book on Thai murals from northeastern Thailand and these are tremendous visual materials that happen to reveal a great deal of information about male and female relationships at certain points in time. So I think there are sources that have been unexplored. So I guess that’s what I’d like to see in my work. I’d like to encourage others to work on the same period and question what I’ve said.

JM: In your most recent book, The Flaming Womb, you argue that historically Southeast Asia as a region has been characterized by attitudes toward gender which are favorable to women, and that differences and similarities in women’s comparative position stem primarily from socioeconomic conditions, rather than traditional culture. Do you think this statement still holds true for women in Southeast Asia today?

BA: A lot of people working on contemporary Southeast Asia feel that women are much less equitable than perhaps historians have claimed in the past. I made that comment with qualifications; it was a very guarded generalization. I still think on the whole that Southeast Asia women for the most part are not equal to men. I think on the whole they have a long heritage of a more complementary relationship than you find in many other parts of the world. As far as reasons for that, I think I still stick to my claim, which others might dispute, that tradition, whatever we call tradition, is really shaped by the social and economic environment and that people can quite easily abandon tradition if it fails to fulfill a function. Even economically, I remember that [anthropologist] Toby Volkman talked about weaving in Mandal, Sulawesi, where she worked. Women used to weave there because it made economic sense. There’s been all this literature built up around it, the symbolism of weaving and what it means, and so on. But these Mandal women gave it up very quickly, very easily when fishing became more profitable. So I think we have to be very careful about claiming that traditional practices are unchanging . . . . I think that the social and economic environment shapes what we think of culture and that’s always changing. There’s nothing fixed about the way men and women relate to each other. It too can change according to social and economic conditions.

I think that the social and economic environment shapes what we think of culture and that’s always changing. There’s nothing fixed about the way men and women relate to each other. It too can change according to social and economic conditions, so I think that probably it still holds today.

JM: I’d like to ask a bit about your work on religious communities, both Islamic and Christian. How has your work been perceived by these groups and have you gotten any reaction?

BA: I think most Muslim communities, as long as you are honest and acknowledge there are lots of things you don’t know, are pleased that somebody is interested in their history. I haven’t had any adverse criticism, but then I’m not looking at contemporary times. In a way a historian is kind of privileged, unless they really start attacking national myths or really start criticizing something that’s very deep in people’s identity, and I’m not doing that at all. The pre-19th century is kind of a neutral [ground] . . . . As far as Christianity goes, as you know, I started this new project looking at how Christianity was localized, again a regional study like the gender book, looking at how Christianity was received and localized by Southeast Asia communities or rejected, negotiated between the early 16th century when it first arrived and the end of the 19th century. For the most part, the historical study of Christianity in Southeast Asia has been neglected outside the Philippines, and even in the Philippines, it’s been the preserve of church historians. In the rest of Southeast Asia, if you want to look at 19th-century Christianity in Thailand, for example, most of the books are by missionaries. So to a large extent these have been written by people who do, try as they might, have some vested interest, and I can see it even when I read papers on Catholicism written by members of the church. Even when they’re trying to be dispassionate, it’s very hard [for them] to withdraw completely from

continued on page 12
their emotional involvement with the topic. In Southeast Asia generally, the study of Christianity has been confined or bounded by countries. So you have Christianity in Thailand, Christianity in Indonesia . . . But there are no regional studies, so you'd never know that at the very time the Spanish were moving through the Philippines, French missionaries were also moving into Vietnam or that Spanish missionaries were also working in northern Vietnam in the 19th century. In fact, those divisions between missionaries had a long-term effect in history, but there's not any comparative work. I'm thinking why did Christianity move here and didn't move there? Why was it accepted in this place and not in that place? I don't want to write a church history, but I want to see difference and I want to see local agency. That's a very long way of saying some people are rather nervous when they hear I want to work on Christianity because they think I'm going to be part of this old tradition of church historians who are really writing about missionaries, the Europeans, how they came and the good works they did. That's a very necessary part of what I need to know, the chronology of missionizing, but it's not what I want to write about.

JM: Some current scholars of gender find it illuminating to approach topics in international, economic, and political relations from a gender perspective. As a very oversimplified example, they see developed nations as masculinized and developing or underdeveloped nations as feminized. Do you find this sort of approach informative when discussing international relations within the context of Southeast Asia during the early modern period?

BA: Of course, international relations is a difficult concept to transfer to that early period because nations as we know them today did not exist. But if you think about power, power relationships and hierarchies of power, then indeed I do think that questions of gender are useful, not so much to think of countries in terms of male or female, but of power itself: what constitutes power, where

Historian Barbara Watson Andaya on the ferry wharf at Menanga, Solor Island, eastern Indonesia. (Photo courtesy of Andaya)
does it appropriately rest; by and large, political power is personified by men or by women who act in a male kind of way or whose behavior fits in a male framework. I don’t think that’s so very different from the way people see power in our society. People often say that women in positions of authority or responsibility have to emulate or have to act as much as they can like their successful male colleagues, and as soon as you start acting “like a woman” then your position is going to be weakened considerably. So it’s interesting to me, for example, that one of the great attributes of power, one of the great signs of power for a ruler in pre-modern Southeast Asia was the possession of many women. The more women you had, the more powerful you seemed to be. . . . But the queens of Aceh also had great harems of women. They maintained these huge female establishments like the men because that was a sign of power. So I think it is quite useful to think of how power relationships can be gendered, how international power relationships between states are often expressed in terms of male-female relationships . . . . In my Sumatra book, I argued that relationships between indigenous rulers and between indigenous rulers and Europeans were cast in terms of kinship relationships where the ruler was the father, stern at times, meting out punishment, but the wife of the ruler was seen as kinder, more approachable, more accepting of individual approaches for assistance or for help. So kings, when they wanted a favor, might send gifts to the [colonial] governor’s wife in order to get the governor to grant their request. The queen might invite the Dutch governor’s wife to tea to solve some state problem so that the men wouldn’t lose face. So thinking of international relations in terms of how men and women operate was very useful for my understanding of diplomacy in the 17th and 18th centuries.

JM: Continuing on the issue of gender, current literature on the politics and power of gender asserts that global economic restructuring in accordance with neoliberal economic theory and the demise of the welfare state have directly contributed to an increase in gendered poverty and hardship. Do you see any comparisons between this contemporary trend and the impacts of an expanding global economy in Southeast Asia during the early modern period?

BA: I’ve argued quite strongly that urbanization meant the feminization of poverty. If you look at the growth of cities in Southeast Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries, they are becoming a death sentence for destitute females. Southeast Asia was very under-urbanized in my view, though others have argued otherwise, as the 17th century dawned. With the arrival of the Europeans in places like [insular and mainland Southeast Asia], and the increase in slave trading, you find increasingly that women are released onto the market as slaves or servants of some kind. Families are being broken up and there is a breakdown in kinship relationships. The opportunities for women are limited, so prostitution grows and that means female poverty also develops. The expansion of the world economy in the 18th and 19th centuries in many respects was detrimental to women’s economic position because they lacked the capital and the resources involved in international trade, and the arrival of many Chinese in very large numbers pushed women out of the local peddling trade . . . . Yes, I think that generalization holds very, very true.

JM: Dr. Andaya, thank you very much for joining us—and for sharing your information, your scholarship, and your wisdom. We’d love to see you back here at NIU again some time.

BA: Thank you very much indeed, Jessica.

Winning words
Graduate student Matthew Jagel, far left, and undergraduate Robert Kollas, far right, won the graduate and undergraduate awards for papers they presented March 20 at the Southeast Asia Club annual student conference held in NIU’s Altgeld Hall. Jagel presented “Son Ngoc Thanh, Norodom Sihanouk, and the Formation of Khmer Nationalism, 1945–1955” and Kollas presented “Terrorism in the Philippines: Causes, History, and Solutions.” The two are seen here with keynote speaker Barbara Watson Andaya, center, flanked by club member Jessica Marchetti, left, and club president Julie Edmunds.
**Kenton Clymer** (history)  
- was invited by the U.S. embassy in Cambodia to speak in July at a special symposium in Phnom Penh commemorating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.  
- is continuing his research and writing on a general history of US-Burma relations.  
- presented a paper on the 1950–51 trial for high treason of Burma surgeon and American Gordon Seagrave at the June annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in Madison, Wis.  
- will return to campus in the fall after a year-long sabbatical.

**Rhoadlyne Crail** (foreign languages and literatures)  
- presented a program on the Philippines in June at Windows to Asian Cultures, a one-day workshop for teachers, after-school coordinators, and youth leaders, held at the University of Illinois-Urbana and sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension, the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, and co-sponsored by the center.

**Kikue Hamayotsu** (political science)  

**John Hartmann** (foreign languages and literatures)  
- presented “Chian (Xiang) Toponyms and the Middle Mekong Region: Historical Linguistics and GIS Enquiries” in July at the 3rd International Conference on Lao Studies at Khon Kaen University in northeast Thailand.  
- conducted fieldwork in January on place names in Thailand’s Nakorn Sawan Province.

**Trude Jacobsen** (history)  
- presented “Riding a Buffalo to Cross a Muddy Field: Heuristic Approaches to Feminism in Cambodia” in March at the Asia Rising symposium at the College of DuPage, co-sponsored by CSEAS at NIU.

**Judy Ledgerwood** (anthropology)  
- presented a lecture on the Cambodian genocide June 14 at the three-day Roger W. Smith Genocide and Human Rights Institute for teachers held at NIU and co-sponsored by the center and NIU’s Genocide and Human Rights Institute.  
- stepping down as chair of the anthropology department at the end of June. She will be running an ethnographic field school in Cambodia in July-August, then staying on to conduct fieldwork. She will be on sabbatical in the fall.

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**Gamelan games**  
*About 200 second- and third-graders at Kingston Elementary School in Kingston, Illinois learned about the Balinese gamelan from NIU assistant music professor and center associate Jui-Ching Wang, who was invited to the school by music teacher Liz Moore. Earlier in the year, Wang introduced Southeast Asian children’s songs and musical activities to music educators at the Illinois State Music Education Association’s All-State Conference. She provided phonetic pronunciation of song lyrics from the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia; showed video and audio clips of performances of the songs; and suggested substitutions for traditional Southeast Asian instruments. “The materials were well-received,” Wang said.*
Andrea Molnar (anthropology)
- co-editor of the quarterly journal *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, a Heldref Publication.
- working on research with NGOs in the Pattani and Yala provinces in Southern Thailand about Malay Muslim women's political engagement through civil society. While in the region, also conducted several workshops with individual NGOs and Prince of Songkla University-Pattani, continued finalizing plans for study-abroad programs with Prince of Songkla University in Hat Yai and Thammasat University in Bangkok, and gave several guest lectures at Thammasat.

Alan Potkin (NIU adjunct)
- chaired a panel on post-facto evaluation of official development projects throughout the Mekong River Basin in July at the 3rd International Conference on Lao Studies at Khon Kaen University, Thailand.

Catherine Raymond (art history; Center for Burma Studies)
- presented "A Dutch Perspective on the Buddhist Kingdom of Arakan in the mid-17th century: Dutchmen Portrayed in 18th- to 19th-century Buddhist Temples from Thailand and Laos" June 3 at a University of Amsterdam symposium.
- co-convenes the 2010 International Burma Studies Conference July 6–9 at the Universite of Provence in Marseille, France. Conference co-sponsored by NIU’s Center for Burma Studies, the Institut de Recherche sur le Sud-Est Asiatique (IRSEA-CNRS), École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO), Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CASE-CNRS), and Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO). Also co-chaired the panel “Burma, Northern Thailand, Laos, and Southwestern China: Connections in Material and Visual Cultures.”
- presented “Paintings of European in Lao and Isan Buddhist Temple Murals” at 3rd International Conference on Lao Studies in July at Khon Kaen University, Thailand.
- announces a new editorial and design format for the Center for Burma Studies’ journal, *Journal of Burma Studies*, which is edited by former center council member Alicia Turner, now teaching history at York University, Toronto, and published by the National University of Singapore Press.
- returns to campus in the fall after a year’s sabbatical.

Susan Russell (anthropology)
- presented a lecture on the Philippines and Thailand June 15 at the three-day Roger W. Smith Genocide and Human Rights Institute held at NIU.
- participated in a May workshop sponsored by the Social Science Research Council in New York City on religion, peace building, and development in Mindanao.
- participated in a briefing in Washington, D.C., March 29, on the peace process in Mindanao for the new U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, Harry Thomas.

Kheang Un (political science)

Danny Unger (political science)
- hosted a seminar in cooperation with Chulalongkorn University and the National Institute of Development Administration in July on “Reflections on a Decade of Decentralization Reforms in Thailand.”
- convened in April the inaugural meeting of a Bangkok-based research seminar designed primarily to serve the needs of Ph.D. students, Thai and foreign, doing their dissertation research.

Katharine Wiegele (anthropology)
- invited by Boston University’s Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs to participate in a working group, beginning in June, on “Markets, Democracy, and Miracles: Evangelicalism and Charismatic Christians in the Second and Third Generation.”
- travels to the Philippines in summer to conduct field research among Pentecostals and Catholic charismatics.

Ann Wright-Parsons (anthropology)
- working on the Cole Hall renovation project, which will begin in November and will move the NIU Anthropology Museum from the Stevens Building into a new space in Cole Hall (see Museum Notes, page 5).
In Memorium

Remembering Constance M. Wilson

By John Hartmann

NIU history professor emeritus Constance M. Wilson, 72, a longtime center colleague and Thai specialist, died Feb. 17, 2010, at Maine Medical Center in Portland. She was born Oct. 7, 1937, in Blackstone, Mass., a daughter of Dr. Robert W., M.D. and Eleanor L. (Nichols) Wilson. She attended local schools, and graduated from The Lincoln School in Providence, R.I. Earning her bachelor’s degree from Swarthmore College in 1959, Wilson received her doctorate in Thai history from Cornell University in 1970. She was the classmate of the late David Wyatt, who also specialized in the history of Thailand.

Wilson’s dissertation, “State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851–1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization,” with its 1,100 pages of exquisite detail, remains one of the defining works on the socioeconomic history of Siam in the mid-19th century. Following the completion of her Ph.D., she continued to pursue pioneering work on Thai economic and demographic history. She was senior editor of Thailand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics (1983) and the volume, Royalty and Commoners: Essays in Thai Administrative, Economic, and Social History (1980). Charles Keyes, another Cornell classmate, considers both to be foundational works for the study of late pre-modern Siamese history. In the 1980s, she undertook a new project on the study of history of the Thai-Burma-Yunnan frontier. She was senior editor of two volumes resulting from this research—The Burma-Thailand Frontier over Sixteen Decades: Three Descriptive Documents (1985, with Lucien M. Hanks) and her last book, The Middle Mekong River Basin: Studies in Tai history and Culture, which was published by the NIU Center for Southeast Asian Studies in 2009 shortly before her death.

She came to NIU in 1967 after her first year of teaching at San Francisco State University. She was encouraged to move to DeKalb by Emory Evans, then-chair of the history department, and George Spencer, a newly minted Asian history Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley. Spencer, her closest colleague and confidant, would later become department chair. Spencer recalls:

[Wilson] did indeed find a niche for herself at NIU, developing a remarkable range of Southeast Asian history courses and helping to enrich Northern’s growing Southeast Asia program until her 2003 retirement and subsequent move to Seattle. In the early 1970s, when the NIU Department of History suffered a catastrophic decline of enrollment and majors (plunging from roughly a thousand majors to slightly over a hundred, a 90 percent decline in roughly three years due in part to curriculum changes in the university), the department chair at the time, Carroll Moody, informed the three Asia specialists (including James Shirley, in Chinese history) that in order to save the Asian history program and our jobs, we would each have to teach a large section of U.S. history (either before or after 1865, our choice) each semester as part of our normal teaching load, along with courses in our respective specialties. I regarded teaching American History to 1865 as an interesting challenge. Constance, who was the most traumatized by this news, reluctantly agreed to teach American History Since 1865 (in which she had little training), but characteristically did it her way, as an Asia-centric foreign policy course. Predictably, a large part of the course was devoted to the Vietnam War, to the dismay of many undergraduates, taught from a Vietnamese (and her own Quaker) point of view! After about a decade, Asian history enrollments—and history enrollments generally—revived, and the Asia historians no longer had to
teach courses on the exotic West. Far more than any other NIU historian, Constance routinely subsidized her research out of her own pocket rather than undertake the hassle (and possible disappointment of rejection) of applying for research grants. She was also an intrepid traveler, journeying anywhere from the tropical lowlands of Southeast Asia to the stark highlands of Tibet. Although never in robust health, she was not to be deterred in visiting remote parts of the world.

An enthusiastic (but not uncritical) devotee of art and music (especially opera and ballet) and a strong supporter of libraries and museums, Constance in retirement provided to her distant friends (by e-mail) detailed descriptions of the many cultural events that she attended in Seattle. When she moved to Portland, Maine in 2009 to be near her ill, widowed mother (not realizing that she herself would soon be terminally ill), she lamented the relative paucity of cultural events there, but made the best of what was available.

Shortly before her death, the center received word that Wilson wanted to bequeath her private library and research materials to NIU. In the weeks following Wilson’s passing, center associate Chalermsee Olson, acting associate dean of NIU’s Founders Library, made arrangements with her family for the gifting and transfer of more than 70 boxes of microfilms, documents, books, and cultural artifacts. The bequest arrived in April.

Language professor and center associate John Hartmann is helping organize a panel in honor of Constance Wilson for the 2011 annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in Honolulu. A memorial fund in Wilson’s name has been established by the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia.

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**Remembering**

**Harold ‘Hal’ Smith**

The center was saddened to learn of the March 24 death of Harold E. “Hal” Smith, 93, NIU sociology professor emeritus and a longtime center associate who actively participated in the center’s publications program during his retirement, including a stint as book review editor for the center’s journal, *Crossroads, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. Born in 1916, Smith grew up on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania and graduated from high school at age 15. He received bachelor’s degrees from Penn State in mathematics, agricultural economics, and sociology; his master’s from Virginia Tech; and his Ph.D. from Cornell University. Smith came to NIU in 1957. In the 1960s and ’70s, Smith received three Fulbright Visiting Professorships, opportunities that took him to Thailand and to the Philippines where he researched comparative family systems and medical practices.

Retiring from NIU in 1984, Smith brought the same scholarly energy to years of travel around the world with his wife, Rhea. In 2005, at age 88, Smith published the second edition of his 1977 book, *Historical and Cultural History of Thailand* (Scarecrow Press), which was co-authored by his daughter Gayla Nieminen of Sycamore, Illinois and May Kyi Win. Smith made lifelong friends in Southeast Asia and maintained ties to Thai colleagues and friends, according to an obituary published in the *DeKalb Daily Chronicle*. He remained in close touch with many Southeast Asian studies students he mentored at NIU, and donated a series of Thai temple rubbings to NIU’s Anthropology Museum. “[Hal] left a legacy of conscientiousness, generosity, open-mindedness, humility, and love to his survivors,” the Chronicle noted. Memorials may be made to NIU’s Department of Sociology or to the First Congregational Church of DeKalb.
Visiting Scholars

Interested in learning more about American community colleges during his time at NIU, Kasiyarno, rector of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in Indonesia, met with Evelina Jose Cichy, dean of adult education at Kishwaukee College. Kasiyarno also met with Kishwaukee College President Thomas Choice and college trustee Robert Johnson.

Kasiyarno, Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
By Sean Dolan

From his arrival in early March, Kasiyarno, rector of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, felt comfortable settling into the NIU community. “It is a quiet city,” Kasiyarno said. “It is suitable for studying. Only the weather is a problem. It is changing all the time.” Kasiyarno joined the NIU community as a visiting scholar to conduct research in order to finish his Ph.D. at Gadjah Mada University, also in Yogyakarta. He already knew about NIU because of the prominence of several NIU graduates in Indonesian academia and politics. However, he only began arranging his own term at NIU after meeting center director Jim Collins last year at Gadjah Mada University, also in Yogyakarta.

Kasiyarno’s field is American studies. He is specifically interested in the relationship between the United States and Malaysia, in particular how the relationship has changed since the end of the Cold War and the era of former Prime Minister Mahathir (1981 to 2003) and to what extent that relationship is reflected in cultural relations between the two countries. After his stint at NIU, Kasiyarno hopes to conduct research in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Malaysian attitudes toward American culture.

While at NIU, Professor Kasiyarno took advantage of the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia collection at Founders Library, searching for documents related to collaboration and cultural sharing between the U.S. and Malaysia as well as investigating how Malaysia has been represented in U.S. media. He also interacted with various faculty members during his time here and was a regular attendee of the center’s Friday noon lecture series. He said he also enjoyed attending both the Southeast Asia and Thai cultural nights hosted by the Southeast Asia Club. The day before he left DeKalb for Indonesia on May 7, he visited Kishwaukee College with center outreach coordinator Julie Lamb to learn more about how community colleges like Kishwaukee operate. He encouraged NIU students interested in studying Indonesian language and culture to consider attending Ahmad Dahlan University for a semester or a year.

Sean Dolan is a graduate student in anthropology.

Achakorn Wongpreedee, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

Visiting scholar Achakorn Wongpreedee, a lecturer at National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in Bangkok, found his three months at NIU this past spring time well spent. As it turned out, he said, Illinois’ current fiscal difficulties offered a good case study to follow in his research into government decentralization and its effects on revenues and expenditures. “Illinois’ tax problems are the kind of problems we can learn from,” said Wongpreedee. “In Thailand we think everything in the United States is good. If I hadn’t come here, I might not have known that there can be problems.”

Wongpreedee came to DeKalb after being selected by the NIU Thai Studies committee to receive the Visiting Thai Scholar Award made possible by support from the Thai Teaching and Research Endowment Fund. At NIDA, he teaches graduate students majoring in local government and politics at NIDA’s Graduate School of Public Administration. While at NIU, he participated in classes from public administration professors and center associates Curt Wood and Kurt Thurmaier, spent hours at Founders Library gleaning material from databases, and met with political science graduate students to discuss his research, which compares decentralization in the United States with Thailand, other Southeast Asian countries, and Japan. Wongpreedee, who returned to Thailand in early May, said he left DeKalb happy with the amount of research material he was able to find and impressed by the “very supportive learning atmosphere at NIU. I liked the interaction between students and professors very much,” he said.
Third International Ramayana Conference

September 18–19

Scholars from around the world will converge on the Holmes Student Center at NIU for the center’s third international conference focusing on the educational and cultural themes of the Asian epic, the Ramayana. The two-day conference is co-sponsored by the University of Illinois’ Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the International Ramayana Institute of North America. In addition to scholarly presentations, the conference will host a Ramayana-focused workshop for K–12 teachers. For details, see the conference website.

New SEA fall courses

Now enrolling

FLST 181: Beginning Malay
Beginning course in the national language of Malaysia and Brunei, also spoken widely in southern Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. A written language for 1,300 years with a depth of culture and literature to match. Dr. James T. Collins, instructor.

HIST 760: History of Violence
This graduate research seminar in Asian history examines selected problems in South, East, and Southeast Asia, focusing on Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Dr. Trude Jacobsen, instructor.

POLS 376: Political Violence
This class offers an introduction to political conflict, political opposition, and methods of concluding violent conflicts, including war. Dr. Kikue Hamayotsu, instructor.

ANTH 426/526: Political Anthropology
This undergraduate and graduate course will examine how political activities articulate with other institutions. Dr. Andrea Molnar, instructor.

For details on any of these courses, contact CSEAS at 753-1771 or e-mail cseas@niu.edu.

Books to look for

NIU Press launches new SEA series

NIU Press was at the Association of Asian Studies meeting in March to tout its new Southeast Asia monograph series, a cooperative venture with CSEAS that began with the closure of the center’s publications unit in January. In April the Press released Meaningful Tone: A Study of Tonal Morphology in Compounds, Form Classes, and Expressive Phrases in White Hmong, by Martha Ratliff (978-0-87580-636-5), followed in June by Wives, Slaves, and Concubines: A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia by NIU assistant history professor Eric Jones (978-0-87580-410-1). The Press also has taken on re-publishing the center’s two signature Burmese and Vietnamese language text series, beginning with John Okell’s Burmese language course in four volumes. For details, contact NIU Press at 815-753-1075.
On Display

Legacy in Lacquer: A Living Art from Burma
August 24–October 2
NIU Art Museum

By Catherine Raymond

Lacquer has a long tradition in Burma/Myanmar—as a medium and as an evolving art form for more than a full millennium. It was used to decorate ordinary household wares as well as ceremonial objects for the nobility and Buddhist monasteries. In the nineteenth century under colonial British rule, lacquerware became a valuable commodity for Western export.

Lacquer originates from the sap of a tree native to much of tropical Southeast Asia, which when processed and polished yields its characteristic high-gloss appearance. It is a material also notable for its natural plasticity and its ability to be easily applied to, and adhere well to, nearly any substrate:

Its visual impact can be stunning — objects are dazzlingly coloured, usually with a dominance of scarlet, gold and black, and are sometimes also inlaid with . . . glass to produce a splendid effect of shimmering iridescence.

(Isaacs and Burton, Visions from a Golden Land, 2009)

Based on examples from the NIU Burma Art Collection originating from the renaissance of lacquerware during the British colonial period to the present, this exhibit will explore the techniques and designs of a vital living art.

Catherine Raymond, professor of art history and director of the Center for Burma Studies, will give two curator talks in connection with this exhibition. On Sept. 16, following a reception from 5 to 6 p.m. in the museum, Raymond will present an overview of the exhibit in Room 315 Altgeld Hall. At 2 p.m. Sept. 18 in the same location, she will discuss “Narratives in Burmese Lacquer.”

A nineteenth-century ceremonial betel-box from Burma/Myanmar, a gift of Sarah Bekker, is one of the lacquer objects from NIU’s Burma Art Collection to be featured in an upcoming exhibit at the NIU Art Museum. (Photo by NIU Media Services)