

# EXPLORATIONS

a graduate student journal of southeast asian studies

Volume 11 Spring 2011



Anthony Medrano. Ipoh. Malaysia

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Volume 11 | Issue 1 | Spring 2011

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Dear readers –

Welcome to **EXPLORATIONS: a graduate student journal of southeast asian studies**. This year, the editorial staff is happy to announce a Philippine focus as a sign of our gratitude to the two departing directors of the Center for Philippine Studies, Drs. Belinda Aquino and Ricardo Trimillos.

In addition, we have a wide variety of topics in this issue ranging from Cam manuscripts to Bay-of-Bengal connectivities to Indonesian *chic lit*. Coupled with our Philippine focus, we are proud to say that nearly the entire geography of Southeast Asia, in one way or another, is included within the covers of our journal.

We are pleased to provide this intellectual forum and look forward to supporting graduate scholarship in dynamic and innovative ways.

Editor,

Anthony Medrano

**EXPLORATIONS** can be accessed on-line at: <http://www.cseashawaii.com/wordpress/explorations/>

**EXPLORATIONS** is a student publication of the Southeast Asian Studies Student Association in conjunction with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa and partially funded by the Student Activity and Program Fee Board at the University of Hawai`i.

The principle mission of **EXPLORATIONS** is to offer a forum for students to present disciplinary and interdisciplinary research on a broad range of issues relating principally to the region which today constitutes Southeast Asia. Embracing both the diversity of academic interests and scholastic expertise, it is hoped that this forum will introduce students to the work of their colleagues, encourage discussion both within and across disciplines, and foster a sense of community among those interested in Southeast Asia.

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# What Really Made the World go Around?:

## *Indio* Contributions to the Acapulco-Manila Galleon Trade

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### Introduction

The importance of the Manila-Acapulco trade to the development of the early-modern world economy is undeniable. Many historians, foremost Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, have convincingly argued that the arrival of the first Spanish settlers to the Philippines and the opening of the port of Manila in 1571 marked the inception of a globalized world economy.<sup>1</sup> The trans-Pacific trade route turned Manila into a center of global trade in a matter of years. As early as the 1580s the port city of Manila became a veritable clearing-house for goods from all over East and Southeast Asia. Spices, porcelains, gunpowder, rice, fruits, exotic birds, silk, and gold ornaments flowed through Manila Bay, as did Spanish, Malay, Japanese, and Chinese merchants.<sup>2</sup> However, during the seventeenth century, the bulk of trade centered around the exchange of Spanish silver for Chinese silks, with as many as thirty to forty Chinese ocean-going vessels arriving annually in Manila to trade.<sup>3</sup> Though the exact figures are impossible to calculate, it is likely that Spaniards unloaded as much as 2,000,000 pesos (51.12 tons) of silver at Manila annually in the late sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Such numbers have led many world historians—Flynn and Giraldez especially—to view silver as a commodity of utmost importance to the early modern world economy. For Andre Gunder Frank, silver was the catalyst for the formation of a global economic network, and “silver money was the blood that

flowed thorough its circulatory system and oiled the wheels of production and exchange.”<sup>5</sup> In short, “Money went around [the world] and made the world go round.”<sup>6</sup> The galleon trade was a vital link in this global silver exchange, connecting the rich mines at Potosí and Lima to the silver-hungry markets of East Asia.

However, academic works that focus on the broader picture of trade, silver, and the global economic significance of Manila in the early modern period leave many aspects of Spain’s presence in the Philippines unexamined. Histories of the galleon trade should not allow the “silk-for-silver” trade to command

too much attention, important though it was to the development of the global economy.

By looking past the macroeconomics and global ramifications of the galleon trade this paper instead



*A Spanish Galleons in Southeast Asia*



asks, what made the galleon trade possible in the first place? How was Spain able to overcome the tremendous logistical obstacles to establish and maintain a foothold on the far side of the Pacific? One must address these questions by surveying the vital contributions the native *indios* of the Philippines made to the galleon trade.<sup>7</sup> The *indios* served as the laborers, shipwrights, mariners, navigators, deckhands, and soldiers—often taking on duties the Spanish were either unwilling or unable to fulfill. By the sixteenth century, the *indios*' intimate involvement with the galleon trade extended across the Pacific, with diaspora communities of *indio* shipwrights, merchants, and runaway crewmen emerging along the coasts of México and California.

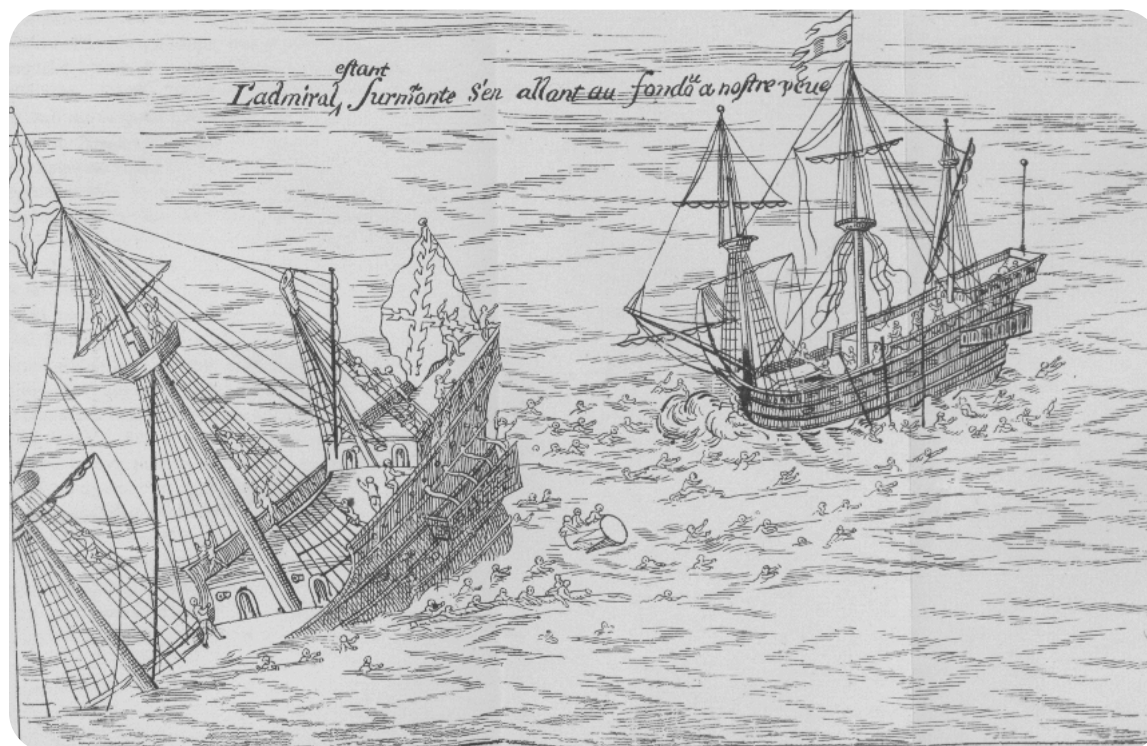
While there can be no mistaking the fact that the Spanish provided the impetus in inaugurating the trans-Pacific trade by setting out across the *Mar del Sur* and establishing a colonial presence at both ends of the route, one must resist viewing the Acapulco-Manila galleon trade as wholly a Spanish enterprise. Likewise, one must not allow the big picture, in this case the global trade in silver, to overwhelm history. While historians such as Frank, Flynn, and Giráldez have a right to draw our attention to the global dimensions of the Acapulco-Manila trade and its place in the early modern world economy, this paper serves as a reminder that Spain's presence in the Philippines and the success of the galleon trade was in many respects dependent upon the often overlooked *indios*. If silver made the world go around and the Spanish forged the last (Pacific) link in the emergent global network of trade, then the *indios*, who were instrumental in both these developments, deserve far greater attention than has typically been given by historians.

### Indio Shipbuilders

Because of the immense distance and attrition involved in crossing the Pacific, Spaniards in the Philippines were constantly short of food, supplies, money, and manpower throughout much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In order to sustain their colony, the Spanish relied upon Chinese traders for imports of food and vital supplies, and upon the *indios* of the Philippines to fill an ever-widening labor gap. This labor gap was a result of the fact that there simply were never enough Spaniards in the Philippines to maintain the colony; some estimates put the total Spanish popula-

tion of Manila in the early seventeenth century at a mere 300, and prior to 1700 Spaniards never numbered more than 2,000.<sup>8</sup> But to maintain a foothold in the East Indies required a strong navy, which required a large workforce. The need for ocean-going vessels was all the more great in the Philippines, an archipelago of hundreds of islands. To maintain a fleet as large as Spain needed in the Philippines required thousands of laborers. After the arduous crossing of the Pacific, a distance of roughly 9,000 miles, most galleons that survived to reach Manila Bay from New Spain were in no condition to attempt a return voyage, with their hulls split, swollen, and worm-eaten, and rotten rigging and sails. Galleons looking to make the return voyage to Acapulco either faced months of extensive renovations, or were scrapped, and any useful materials salvaged were put towards the construction of an entirely new vessel. The *indios*, organized through the *polo* labor system imposed by the Spanish, were the ones who felled and transported all the timber, manned the shipyards, conducted repairs, and built the majority of Spain's trans-Pacific galleons and inter-island craft.

The practice of utilizing local Southeast Asian labor and craftsmanship to repair Spanish vessels began from the start of Spain's presence in the East Indies and stemmed from a dire need for manpower. Alvaro de Saavedra Cerón led the first expedition to bridge the Pacific from New Spain, departing from the port of Zihuatanejo on 31 October 1527 with three ships and 115 men.<sup>9</sup> The policy of sending ships to the East Indies from the Pacific coast of New Spain was introduced after decades of disastrous voyages that departed from the distant port of Seville. Prior to Saavedra's departure, there had been three expeditions, totaling eleven ships, dispatched from Seville with orders to make for the Moluccas (Magellan's expedition in 1519, Loaysa's in 1525, and Cabot's in 1526). Of these, only one ship with a surviving crew of nineteen men had met with success, making it to the East Indies and returning to Spain. This failure rate is not surprising; voyaging to the Moluccas from Spain entailed sailing halfway around the world *and back*, which was far too great a distance for a sixteenth century galleon and crew to endure. It was from these combined experiences that in 1527 Saavedra inaugurated the outbound leg of what was later to become the Acapulco-Manila galleon trade route.



Left:  
A high seas  
rescue.  
Galleons  
plying  
Southeast  
Asia at the  
close of the  
16th century.

Unfortunately, the infrastructure, materials, and skilled craftsmen required to manufacture quality vessels capable of enduring a Pacific crossing were not present in México in the 1520s (and would not be until well into the eighteenth century). As such, Saavedra's three small ships, the *Florida*, the *Santiago*, and *Espíritu Santo*, which were sloppily constructed in New Spain at the exorbitant cost of 60,000 pesos, were literally torn apart in the Pacific. A mere fourteen days into the voyage the flagship began taking on water to the extent that thirty *quinuales* of food rations had to be thrown overboard to keep the vessel afloat.<sup>10</sup> Pushing on, it was less than a month later when a storm ran the *Santiago* and *Espíritu Santo* aground somewhere in the Marshall Islands, destroying both ships and leaving no survivors.<sup>11</sup> Once the leaky *Florida* reached the Moluccas, a complete overhaul was required if the vessel was to have any chance of making the return voyage. Saavedra's starved crew, now numbering only thirty, relied on the aid of the small Spanish garrison on Tidore, in addition to the labor and skilled craftsmanship of the natives. The *Florida* was beached, and during the course of ten weeks the rotted planking was replaced with local hardwood, the hull was re-caulked and sealed with a mixture of beeswax and coconut oil, and the ship's rigging was refitted with fresh cordage.<sup>12</sup> Thus began a 250-year long dependence upon local South-

east Asian labor and materials, which would ultimately prove decisive in maintaining Spain's Pacific operations and would carry over to Spain's colony in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup>

Following Saavedra, it would take two more trans-Pacific voyages before Miguel Lopez de Legazpi managed to establish a permanent Spanish settlement in 1565. Equally important, Legazpi successfully dispatched a ship to New Spain eastward across the Pacific. With this done, the eastbound trans-Pacific link was established, and Spain's newly founded colony in the Philippines could be resupplied by roundtrips into and out of the Pacific ports of México. But as a flourishing global trade opened at the port of Manila, almost every ship the Spanish sent to the Philippines, upon arrival in Manila, was unfit for a return voyage. How then were Spaniards in the Philippines able to overcome this problem? How did Spaniards manage to maintain a presence in the Philippines with the trans-Pacific voyage being so detrimental to ships and their crew? While trade at Manila boomed, and the port developed a reputation as the "Venice of the East" and "la maravilla y perla del Oriente," the Spaniards were still struggling to overcome the logistics of reaching the Philippines safely and regularly.<sup>14</sup>

Although his mission was ultimately a failure, Saavedra found the ultimate way forward in his reliance upon native labor, material and craftsmanship in the East Indies to repair and rebuild his vessel. The success of Spain's Philippine colony would become entirely dependent upon the *indio* population as a means of keeping their ships seaworthy and maintaining the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade. Until the mid eighteenth century New Spain would continually prove unable to produce durable trans-Pacific galleons for the Acapulco-Manila trade, which only increased the dependence upon native shipwrights in the Philippines. The *San Jeronimo* serves as a typical example of the damage a single Pacific crossing could inflict upon a New Spanish galleon. In 1566 the *San Jeronimo* arrived in the Philippines to support Legazpi's colonizing efforts, having departed México only a few months prior. Upon inspection of the *San Jeronimo* by Legazpi's men, it was decided that the ship was in such a poor condition that it would have to be dismantled, even though the Spanish were in desperate need of vessels. The official report of the inspection states that,

...the ship, *San Jeronimo* had come from Nueva España lately, leaking very badly and is maintained with great difficulty by the people. Through diverse means they have tried to plug the holes, drain the ship of water but have not succeeded [illegible] either from the inside or the outside. Instead, each day, it seems that the water increases.<sup>15</sup>

The *San Jeronimo's* problems were typical, and stemmed primarily from the rotting of the hull. The pilot of the *San Jeronimo* testified that the vessel was

...very worm eaten...it leaks very much and each day it grows worse...they had tried to drain the water from it but they had not succeeded because it had been destroyed by worms...If it was to sail, it was necessary that a new keel be made... And the seams of the planks are more than three-fingers apart which is very dangerous. Furthermore, even if it were still in good condition it was unrigged. It lacks anchors and cables and so it does not have what are needed to sail.<sup>16</sup>

The damage inflicted on Spain's trans-Pacific galleons came not just during the crossing, but from the harsh Southeast Asian climate. Frequent rains and high humidity quickly warped wood and frayed ropes and sails.<sup>17</sup> Worst of all for Spain's vessels (as was clearly the case with the *San Jeronimo*) was the damage

wrought from shipworms. Shipworms (*broma*) were a common blight for wooden vessels operating in warm waters, particularly in the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Unfortunately for the Spanish, the Pasig River at Manila Bay was a great source of shipworms.<sup>18</sup> Those ships built in Europe destined for service in the Indies commonly had their hulls reinforced with layers of tarred cloth and lead sheathing for added protection against shipworms.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, these materials were not readily available in the Philippines. And without a means to keep a fleet of seaworthy vessels on hand for trade, transport, and defense, Spain's colony would not have long survived. The bustling galleon trade would never have developed.

The lowland *indio* population of the Philippine archipelago proved to be the solution to Spain's problems, as did the indigenous timber of the archipelago, which was ideal for ship construction. The lowland *indios* of the Philippines were a people intimately linked to the water that surrounded them. Nearly every native coastal settlement was dependent upon fishing and maritime trade. The smallest native watercrafts were simple large canoes, some with keels and plank benches.<sup>20</sup> However, the largest of their ships were double-decked vessels with oarsmen and sails, capable of entering the open sea. Antonio de Morga observed the variety of native ships in the Philippines at the close of the sixteenth century:

...*vireyes* and *barangays* which are slender, light, low-lying boats held together with small wooden bolts and as narrow at the stern as at the prow. These carry a large number of oarsmen on either side who row the vessel with paddles...Above the oarsmen is a platform, or gangway, made of cane upon which the fighting-men stand...There too they hoist the sail, which is square and made of form linen, upon a support made from two thick bamboos which serve as a mast...These ships have been used throughout the islands from earliest times; they have others, larger ones called *caracoas*, *lapis* and *tapaques* for carrying merchandise, which are very suitable indeed since they are roomy and draw little water...All the natives know how to row and manage these boats. Some are big enough to carry one hundred rowers each side and thirty soldiers besides. The most usual sort of boats are *barangays* and *vireyes* which carry smaller crews and fewer people. Many of them are put together with iron nails instead of wooden bolts and splices in the planks.<sup>21</sup>

It was this knowledge and skill in ship design, combined with the superior timber of the Philippines, that enabled the Spanish to begin constructing vessels capable of withstanding the grueling trans-Pacific voyage as well as the oppressive Southeast Asian climate.<sup>22</sup>

For ship construction, the timber on hand in the Philippines proved to be far superior to anything available in Europe or the Americas. Where teak was used as the frame of the galleons, “the ribs and knees, the keel and rudder, and inside work” was fabricated from Philippine *molave*. The planking outside the ribs were made of *lanang*, “a wood of great toughness, but of such peculiar nature that small cannon balls remained embedded in it, while larger shot rebounded from the hull made of this timber.”<sup>23</sup> There was *maria*, which the *indios* introduced to the Spaniards. *Maria* was reportedly so strong that “once a nail is hammered into it, it is impossible to withdraw it without breaking it.”<sup>24</sup> Antonio de Morga was impressed with the woods of the Philippines as well.

This wood is suitable for houses and buildings as well as for constructing large or small boats. There are in addition many stout, straight trees which are also light and pliant and can be used for making mats for ships or galleons. Thus any sort of vessel may be fitted with a mast made from a single trunk from one of these trees, without there being any need for splicing or fishing; to make them up from different pieces. For the hulls of ships, for keels, futtock- and top-timbers, and any other kinds of futtocks, breasthooks, *puercas*, transoms, *llaves*, and rudders, all sorts of good timber can be found easily. There is also good planking of quite suitable timber for the sides, decks, and upper works.<sup>25</sup>

These excellent hardwoods combined with the skilled craftsmanship of the natives yielded galleons of unparalleled strength and durability. Spanish ships constructed in Europe were made largely of oak and pine, woods well suited for maritime applications, but not as durable as *molave* or *lanang*.<sup>26</sup> Another Philippine timber, known to the *indios* as *laguan*, proved decisive in the battle against shipworm infestation. *Laguan* was far more resistant to shipworms than anything available in Europe and was used in the construction of nearly every galleon produced in the Philippines.<sup>27</sup>

No doubt, the greatest advantage the forests of the Philippines offered was the abundant supply of masts. The masts of a sail ship were the most crucial unit, having to be of a single piece of timber of great

strength. By the seventeenth century, the Iberian Peninsula was already running short on trees suitable for masts, forcing Spain and Portugal to import costly Prussian pine.<sup>28</sup> But in the Philippines the Spanish had a fresh supply of mast timber, which grew straight and tall enough to form the mainmasts of up to seventy-two *codos* long.<sup>29</sup> And in addition to the fine woods of the archipelago, the Philippines also had *abacá*, a hemp-like material that was ideal for making rope. The need for rope, which deteriorated rather easily during the course of a Pacific voyage, was prevalent from the outset of Spain’s presence in the Philippines. One of the first official requests for men and materials to be sent to the Philippines from New Spain in 1568 lists first—above food and craftsmen—“30 quintales of cordage.”<sup>30</sup> *Abacá* would prove vitally important as cordage imported into the Philippines from Europe via New Spain was heavily worn and had often rotted beyond any usefulness by the time it arrived.<sup>31</sup>

Because of its proximity to the city of Manila, the safety of its harbor, and the abundance of timber and local labor, the majority of shipbuilding was conducted at Cavite in Manila Bay. However, many other locations throughout the archipelago met these basic criteria, and by the mid seventeenth century, smaller shipyards could be found on the islands of Panay, Albay, Marinduque, and along the Pangasinan coast north of Manila.<sup>32</sup> These shipyards produced many smaller inter-island craft like the *vireyes* and *barangayes* described by de Morga in addition to the famous trans-Pacific galleons.<sup>33</sup> During the brief tenure of governor Juan de Silva (1609-1616), Captain Sebastian de Pineda recorded the completion of the galleons *Espiritu Santo* and *San Miguel* at Cavite, the *San Felipe* and the *Santiago* on the island of Albay, the *San Marcos* on Marinduque, the *San Carlos* and the *San Jose* in Pangasinan, the *Salvador* in Masbate, and the *San Juan Bautista* in Mindoro.<sup>34</sup> Such output required a tremendous amount of labor.

The labor at Cavite, as in the other shipyards, was organized under the *polo* system, which was modeled off the *repartimiento* system in México.<sup>35</sup> Every *indio* of working age, except the chieftain of each *barangay*, was obliged under Spanish rule to contribute labor in any number of capacities for a fixed amount of time each year. *Indios* were often recruited through the polo system as crewmen on galleons, as domestic servants, or laborers and craftsmen in the shipyards. By far the



most grueling and demanding of the labor assignments was working in a woodcutting gang (*cagayan*), where *indios* were made to gather timber for the construction of galleons. Each gang of woodcutters typically numbered well into the thousands, sometimes reaching 8,000.<sup>36</sup> Conscripted from the lowlands, the *indio* woodcutters were forced to march far into the interior where the timber was located, meaning workers spent many months away from home, laboring in an unfamiliar climate. The poor working conditions were aggravated by the meager ration of four pesos worth of rice each month.<sup>37</sup> Conscripted into a woodcutting gang was a death sentence for many *indios*. The 1782 report of Ciriaco Gonzalez Carvajal is particularly illustrative of the appalling conditions typically experienced by *indios* in woodcutting gangs.

The cutting of wood is the most difficult and arduous of labors because they work from four in the morning to eight at night. They are not given time to eat and rest, are poorly fed, exposed to the sun and wind in unpleasant, harsh and mountainous areas without any comforts, defenses or shelter for the few hours they are allowed to sleep. They must pay for the threshing of their rice and for the water buffalo which bring it to them, and, then, if they do not fall ill and are fortunate enough to complete the thirty days of work which is required of them, they end up with a salary of only thirteen reals, and for the water buffalo some of them must provide to haul the wood, they are only paid seven reals, which is only a *quartilla* a day, despite the regulation that they are to receive one-half a real a day.<sup>38</sup>

Underpaying and overworking the *indios* yielded tremendous benefits for the Spanish who could now construct ships in the Philippines at a fraction of the cost in Europe or the Americas. Alonso Sanchez's 1589 report to King Philip II revealed that *indio* woodcutters and shipyard laborers received only four *reals* a month, when "at least forty *reals* a month were needed to keep body and soul together."<sup>39</sup> And in 1619, Sebastain de Pineda reported that the common *indio* woodcutters still only received seven to eight *reals* a month while those *indios* of greater skill who took part in the design and construction of vessels earned a meager twelve *reals* per month.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Spanish carpenters working in shipyards on Spain's northern coast in the early seventeenth century earned around 135 *reals* per month. In Seville the price for a single carpenter ran to eight *reals* per day.<sup>41</sup> And in New Spain, the cost of

labor, including carpentry and shipbuilding, was roughly double that in Spain.<sup>42</sup> Thus, while *indios* suffered greatly under the *polo* system, their skill and hard labor made the Philippines the cheapest place within Spain's vast empire to build vessels.

In 1586 a 600-ton ship was built for "little over four thousand pesos."<sup>43</sup> Compare this figure with a report of the same year that claimed two ships, the *San Martin* and the *Santa Ana*, were built in New Spain for "more than 140 thousand ducats," which is roughly equivalent to 70,000 pesos.<sup>44</sup> If it were not for the supply of cheap yet highly skilled *indio* laborers, supplying the distant Philippines with enough vessels to defend and run the trans-Pacific trade would have meant securing vessels from New Spain, which would have cost the crown dearly, and would have more than likely made the venture financially unfeasible.

Spain's exploitation of *indio* workers reached its height during war time. From 1609 to 1649 the Philippine archipelago was under frequent attack by the Dutch, who were hoping to gain control over the lucrative trade at Manila. On many occasions the Dutch blockaded Manila and attacked key settlements and shipping throughout the Philippines. During this period Spain needed ships in the Philippines more than ever, both to protect the treasure-laden galleons—which some years did not sail at all due to the Dutch threat—and for the defense of the colony itself. As such, *indio* labor was exploited to the fullest under the harsh rule of Governor Don Juan de Silva, who took office just as the Dutch conflict began. De Silva oversaw the construction of several new shipyards to meet the growing wartime demand. Complaining of Governor de Silva's harsh policies of excessive taxation, forced labor, and seizure of native foodstuffs, Fray Pedro de San Pablo of the San Gregorio province wrote in 1620 that "in the space of ten years, did the country become in great measure ruined. Some natives took to the woods; others were made slaves; many others were killed; and the rest were exhausted and ruined."<sup>45</sup> Governor de Silva reported in 1619 that the *indio* population of the Philippines was in decline as a result of the high mortality rates in both the shipyards and woodcutting gangs.<sup>46</sup> A pre-war census recorded a growing *indio* population of 590,820 in the year 1606.<sup>47</sup> In 1655, immediately following the Dutch conflict, the population had dropped markedly to 505,250.<sup>48</sup> Work in the shipyards and woodcutting

gangs became so oppressive that it was not uncommon for those *indios* with enough money to hire replacements, or, as was more often the case, desert; still others sold themselves into slavery to pay their way out of cutting timber.<sup>49</sup> The cost to buy one's way out of woodcutting was too great for most *indios* to afford. In 1782 it was estimated that "each tribute [*indio*] who does not want to go to the mountains must pay five pesos and three *reals*, as well as the ration and salary, in order to have someone else take his place."<sup>50</sup> The province hardest hit during the early seventeenth century was no doubt Pampanga. Adjacent to Manila, Pampanga was not only readily accessible to the Spanish but possessed expansive rice fields and superior stocks of timber as well. These factors made it a prime target for Spanish exploitation. Akin to the forced labor of the *polo* system, the *vandala* was implemented to force *indios* to relinquish a portion of their food and trade goods to the Spanish in exchange for IOUs. The *vandala* became a critical means of supporting the Spanish colony in the face of Dutch blockades, when food was scarce and/or too expensive. By 1616 the Spanish government owed the natives of Pampanga 70,000 pesos in payments for goods forcibly repossessed. By 1660, Pampanga was owed 220,000 pesos. *Indio* rebellions protesting both the *polo* and *vandala* were common during much of the seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, both these systems of oppression were instrumental in making the Philippines a sustainable venture for the Spanish.

Suffering and abuses aside, the native labor and high-quality raw materials that went into Spain's shipyards in the Philippines yielded ships of remarkable durability and strength. In the mid sixteenth century most ships were only capable of sailing one trans-Pacific voyage before deteriorating, as was the case with the *San Jeronimo*. By the mid seventeenth century, the galleons produced at Cavite were routinely making multiple round-trip voyages between Manila and Acapulco. More remarkable still, when pitted against Dutch and English attack, the Manila galleons proved to be nothing short of floating fortresses. Woodes Rogers' 1709 attack on the 900-ton galleon *Begoña* serves as a prime example. Ambushing the galleon off the coast of New Spain, and with the superior firepower of his ships the *Duke* and *Dutchess*, Rogers was unable to inflict any significant damage upon the *Begoña*, which had just completed the long voyage from

Manila. And although Rogers had managed to capture the *Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación y Desengaño* days earlier, that galleon too was unscathed—indeed it was sailed by her captors all the way to England as a prize. Rogers came away from the encounter with great respect for the strength and craftsmanship of the Manila galleons: "These large ships are built with excellent timber, that will not splinter...they have very thick sides, much stronger than we build in Europe."<sup>52</sup>

The history of the galleons *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and *Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación* is similarly compelling and exemplary. While there is no historical record extant definitively stating where these two galleons were built, I argue that given their strength and durability, the *Encarnación* and *Rosario* were most likely built in the Philippines. These vessels, constructed sometime prior to 1643, were in continuous operation on the Manila-Acapulco line for an unprecedented length of time. The first recorded voyage of the *Encarnación* and *Rosario* was made from Acapulco to Manila in 1643. The pair was dispatched back to Acapulco in 1644, arriving February 1645. Following another voyage to Manila the same year the ships were fitted with cannons and used to successfully fend off five separate Dutch attacks on Manila and Cavite in 1646. Following this, the *Rosario* was decommissioned, but the *Encarnación* continued trans-Pacific service until 1649 when the ship ended its career running aground off Leyte. The long and proud history of these two ships is a testament to the marked increase in the quality of craftsmanship in galleon construction during this period.<sup>53</sup>

As we have seen, a number of factors combined to make the Philippines a center for shipbuilding. Firstly, the Philippine archipelago possessed a ready and abundant supply of some of the best timber in the world for the construction of ships. But it was the *indio* labor organized through the *polo* system that proved the key factor. The *indios* of the Philippines had centuries of experience in navigation and shipbuilding from which the Spaniards were able to draw from and exploit. The result was not only an abundant labor force, but a skilled labor force as well. Thus Spaniards were able to harness local knowledge and labor to produce durable vessels at a relatively low cost. And it was the Philippines' effectiveness as a center of shipbuilding, which enabled Spain to maintain its hold on the archipelago and keep the galleon trade running.

## Indios at Sea

*Indio* participation in the galleon trade was not confined to the Philippines. Natives of the archipelago, particularly in the early years of the Acapulco-Manila trade, were forced into service as crewmen on the galleons. Mortality rates were particularly high in the early galleon trade with starvation and scurvy comprising the leading causes of death for sailors on the open Pacific. Therefore, Spain needed a ready and abundant source of skilled crewmen to fill the ranks aboard the trans-Pacific galleons. Vessels departing New Spain in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century would often arrive in the Philippines with only a portion of their crews still alive. Thus Spaniards in the Philippines found it increasingly difficult to man galleons making the return voyage to Acapulco. And it was not just the galleon trade that forced *indios* to the sea; many thousands of natives were drawn into service aboard Spanish warships defending the Philippine archipelago and the port of Manila from Dutch, English, Portuguese, and Chinese enemies. Serving as soldiers aboard these warships, the *indios* made possible not only the functioning of the colony, but its defense as well.

The attrition experienced by both men and their ships in crossing the Pacific was apparent to the very first Spanish expedition to bridge the expansive ocean. Magellan entered the *Mar del Sur* with three ships on 28 November 1520. By the time he reached the Philippines on 16 March 1521 his small fleet was on the verge of complete collapse. In the course of the 106-day crossing, scurvy and hunger took their toll, reducing Magellan's crew by nineteen. And the damage that the sea inflicted upon the *Trinidad*, *Victoria*, and *Concepción* was only added to by the starving crewmen who devoured the leather sail covers and shaved slices of wood off the masts, to be boiled and eaten. The chronicler of the voyage, Antonio de Pigafetta, professed, "I do not think that anyone in the future will dare to undertake such a voyage."<sup>54</sup> With not enough crewmen to man her, the *Concepción* was destroyed. All told, only one ship and nineteen men made it back to Seville. But what most histories do not record is that in addition to the nineteen Spanish survivors were several Southeast Asian sailors, taken onboard the *Victoria* as navigators, pilots, and crewmen at various points during the voyage. These local navigators aided in piloting the *Victoria* along the trade routes familiar to them, between

Map of the Galleons trade between South America and Southeast Asia in the 16th century.



Buru and Ceram, passing just north of Timor. While it was the commander del Cano who received the credit for getting the *Victoria* and her precious cargo of spices back to Spain, history has largely failed to recognize the vital contributions of the Southeast Asian crewmen. Without the native crewmen, Magellan's expedition would have never found the Moluccas, would have found navigating their way to the Indian Ocean quite difficult, and would surely have had too few men to reach Spain. Indeed, when the *Victoria* at long last reached Seville on 8 September 1522, nearly 20% of the total surviving crew of 22 was of Southeast Asian origin.

Once Spain's colonial foothold was established in the Philippines, the *indios* became the natural choice to fill out the crews of the trans-Pacific galleons. In the early years of the galleon traffic, natives were taken aboard not so much for their labor and service as crewmen—as would be the case later—but for their intimate knowledge of the region and their skills as navigators. Indeed, the first ship to successfully make the voyage from the Philippines back to New Spain had aboard two *indios* from the island of Cebu and one native of Guam.<sup>55</sup> Departing Cebu in June of 1565, the officers of the *San Pedro* were charged with the most difficult task of finding a route eastward across the Pacific. The natives aboard the *San Pedro* furnished the vital information needed to find the Pacific return route, directing the Spaniards through the San Juanico Strait between Leyte and Samar and into the Pacific via the San Bernardino Strait. Once out of the Visayas the *San Pedro* was able to sail north and capture the steady westerly winds above 30° N.<sup>56</sup> While credit for the discovery of the eastbound leg across the Pacific typically goes to the Spaniard Andrés de Urdaneta, we must not discount the strong possibility that the founding of what was soon to become the eastward leg of the Acapulco-Manila galleon trade route owes more to the *indios* than it does to the Spanish.

As the galleon trade evolved and became ever more focused on the ports of Manila and Acapulco, native navigators and pilots were no longer in great demand. Instead, as the galleon traffic expanded to accommodate the flourishing trade at Manila, Spain's need for cheap and readily available crews increased tremendously. By the early 1580s, anywhere from fifty to eighty percent of the crews of Spain's trans-Pacific galleons were *indios*. Oftentimes, only the key admin-

istrative positions onboard the galleons were filled by Spaniards.<sup>57</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, *indio* mariners were highly appreciated for their service. Writing in 1765, Francisco Leandro de Viana wrote,

There is not an Indian in these islands [The Philippines] who has not a remarkable inclination for the sea; nor is there at present in all the world a people more agile in maneuvers on shipboard, or who learn so quickly nautical terms and whatever in the presence of a Spaniard, and they show him great respect; but than can teach many of the Spanish mariners who sail in these seas...these are a people most situated for the sea; and that if the ships are manned with crews one-third Spaniards and the other two-thirds Indians, the best mariners of these islands can be obtained, and many of them can be employed in our warships. There is hardly an Indian who has sailed the seas who does not understand the mariner's compass, and therefore on this [Acapulco] trade route there are some very skillful and dexterous helmsmen.<sup>58</sup>

The reliance upon *indios* to man the trans-Pacific galleons did not abate over time. The crew manifest of the *La Santissima Trinidad*, sailing from Manila in 1755, listed 310 Philippine-born crewmen out of a total of 370 (84%). More remarkable still, 250 (68%) of these sailors came from the port of Cavite.<sup>59</sup>

For the *indios*, working aboard an Acapulco-bound galleon was akin to working on a woodcutting gang. Life aboard a Pacific galleon was brutal for all those aboard, but most of all for the *indios*, who were treated as expendable resources. Wages for *indios* were below subsistence levels, conditions were harsh, and mortality rates were high. Where a skilled Spanish sailor received 350 pesos for a round-trip voyage in 1697, an *indio* was paid as little as 48 pesos.<sup>60</sup> Wages were often withheld to ensure that the crew, once at Acapulco, would not flee, leaving the vessel without a crew for the return voyage. Hernando de los Rios Coronel, in his call for better treatment of *indio* sailors, recounted the many abuses he witnessed during his Pacific crossing in the mid seventeenth century. According to Coronel, the daily ration of an *indio* aboard a galleon was less than half that of a Spaniard. Towards the end of the voyage, when food was running short, the rations for the *indios* were the first to be cut. Furthermore, Coronel observed a particularly high mortality rate amongst those *indios* unaccustomed to colder climates.<sup>61</sup> Without the proper clothing, Coronel writes, “when each

new dawn comes...there are three or four dead men.”<sup>62</sup> A galleon crossing from Manila to Acapulco could reach as high as 41° N latitude, where the temperature at night was low enough to freeze many crewmen to death. Because of these harsh conditions, desertion was common. After three or more months at sea many *indios* jumped ship as soon as the shores of North America were near enough. Others waited until making landfall at Acapulco to flee.

Perhaps the most widely known example of *indio* desertion in the New World occurred in 1618 when all but five of the seventy-five *indio* crewmen of the *Esperitu Sancto* jumped overboard en masse.<sup>63</sup> This was only one occurrence among many, and soon thousands of *indios* had settled in New Spain. Sizable diaspora communities formed not just in Acapulco, but also in the key port towns of Navidad, Zihuatenejo, Puerto Vallarta, San Blas, and Texpan. Others fled into the interior and intermixed with the natives of México. But it must be noted that to Spaniards in México, natives of the Philippine archipelago were not distinguishable from other Asian ethnicities. Thus *indios*, along with Chinese, Japanese, and Malay immigrants, were incorporated into the *casta* system collectively as “*chinos*.”<sup>64</sup> This ambiguity transferred into official government documents, making it difficult to trace the history of *indios* amidst other Asian immigrants. Likely, many *chinos* in New Spain were *indios* from the Cavite region.

Once in New Spain, many *indios* remained along the coast and took up professions that supported the galleon trade. The port of San Blas became a center for trade and galleon repair once *indios* skilled in sail making and carpentry settled in the region.<sup>65</sup> Skilled shipwrights were also employed along the Pacific coast of New Spain, designing and overseeing the construction of vessels starting in the early 1700s. Gaspar Molina, an *indio* immigrant to México, built two ships for the viceroy of New Spain. Under Molina’s supervision the *Nuestra Señora de Loreto* was completed in 1760. It was built for Jesuit missionaries traveling along the coast of Baja California.<sup>66</sup> Molina completed his second vessel, *Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion*, in 1764.<sup>67</sup>

With English and Dutch threats increasing, *chino* immigrants (namely *indios* and Chinese) were used in the construction of defensive structures, namely Fort San Diego, which was completed in 1617. *Chinos* also

served as militiamen for the fort.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the most audacious use for *indios*—though the plan was never implemented—was proposed by Pedro Enriquez Calderon. Calderon drafted a scheme in the mid eighteenth century whereby the Spanish government could protect Northern California from foreign encroachment by establishing *indio* communities, or bases, along the coastline. Calderon wrote that “from the Philippines 300 men of all trades can be conveyed on a frigate which can be built there...with all the nails, locks, tools and everything necessary to found a town at once, and with 25 Indians [*Indios*] from the shipyard at Cavite to build brigantines such as those they build there for commerce with the islands and voyages to China and Java.” Once established on the Pacific coast of America, “with the suitable rigging, cables, sails, pitch, and everything else necessary for their provisions...a great spiritual and temporal conquest can be effected.” Continuing, “from the port [Monterey] it will be easy, with two brigantines, to take possession of the coast up to 52 degrees and thus prevent the Russians from moving further south. Besides, the port would serve as a resupply base for the galleons arriving from the Philippines.”<sup>69</sup> While such a plan never materialized, *indio* communities were well established in Mexico and California by the close of the seventeenth century.

Estimating the total number of *indios* displaced to the New World as a result of the 250-year long galleon trade is difficult. For the broad classification of “*chinos*,” Ed Slack Jr. proposes the minimum figure of 40,000 – 60,000, “while a figure double that amount (100,000) would be within the bounds of probability.”<sup>70</sup> Floro Mercene, dealing specifically with *indio* migration, claims 60,000 native Filipinos made their way to the New World by 1815.<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Israel estimates that during the course of the seventeenth century, the height of the galleon trade, 6,000 Asians arrived in New Spain every decade.<sup>72</sup> Jose Maria S. Luengo has proposed the extreme and unfounded number of 4,000,000 total *indios* enslaved and brought to the New World by Spaniards via the galleon trade. Luengo is adamant that the galleon trade should be viewed as a slave trade parallel to that in the Atlantic, and that Manila functioned first and foremost as a slave port akin to Goree Island, Senegal.<sup>73</sup> While Luceno’s use of the term slavery may be appropriate, we can dismiss his proposed figure of 4,000,000. Such a



number is unsupportable and impossible given the logistics of the galleon trade and the relatively low *indio* population in the Philippines.

While *Indios* were an ever-present fixture on Spanish vessels from the start of the galleon trade, the King of Spain limited the Acapulco-Manila traffic to a mere two vessels a year for a majority of the trade's history. While there was no doubt substantial (and unrecorded) private trade across the Pacific, we cannot safely claim that more than an average of two to four vessels made the round trip each year from 1565 to 1815. Indeed, two galleons per year is likely a more accurate estimate on account of the many years when ship traffic was limited due to war with the English and Dutch, or the many instances when galleons were either captured or lost at sea. An average of two roundtrips per year over the span of 250 years would mean 500 total roundtrips over the entire history of the Acapulco-Manila trade. As was discussed above, the crews of these galleons were primarily *indio* with very few Spaniards. The size of a galleon crew ranged depending upon the size of the vessel; while some ships were large enough for a crew of 400, most ships did not carry more than 200–250 persons. Thomas Cavendish captured the 700-ton *Santa Ana* in 1587 and discovered a total of 190 Filipino natives aboard.<sup>74</sup> As recounted above, the *Espíritu Santo* sailing in 1618 had a complement of 75 *indios* aboard—70 of which jumped ship once insight of the New Spanish coast. And Woodes Rogers captured the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* in 1709 and took 193 prisoners, most all of Asian dissent.<sup>75</sup> Assuming that these numbers represent the normal range of crew-size and ethnic makeup, it seems reasonable to estimate that between 80 and 200 *indios* accompanied most galleons from Manila to Acapulco. We are left then with a range of anywhere between 40,000 – 100,000 *indios* making the voyage to Acapulco between 1565 and 1815. Slack's estimate of 60,000 *chinos* therefore seems very reasonable, as does Mercene's estimate. Jonathan Israel's proposal of 6,000 Asians per decade in the seventeenth century may be too high, but not out of the realm of possibility. And Luengo's proposed 4,000,000 *indio* "slaves" is in every way impossible. (In 1606 there were only 590,820 recorded tribute-paying *indios* under Spanish rule in the Philippines.)<sup>76</sup>

The trans-Pacific galleons were not the only vessels that *indios* served aboard;—many more were pressed into service aboard vessels operating closer to home,

patrolling Luzon and the Visayas, managing inter-island trade, and defending the colony against foreign attack. Native Filipinos, on account of the dearth of Spaniards in the archipelago, manned most every Spanish vessel plying the waters of the Philippines. The need for maritime defense of the colony during the Hispano-Dutch wars in the seventeenth century led to the greatest period of *indio* sailor recruitment by the Spaniards, drawing thousands into service aboard warships. This dependence upon *indios* once again stemmed from a lack of Spanish forces on hand in the Philippines. In December of 1618, in the midst of Spain's war with the Dutch, Joan de Ribera wrote from Manila to the King of Spain begging for troops to be sent. "Your most illustrious Lordship may rest assured that if his Majesty does not actually send a great reinforcement [sic] of military aid to these islands, they must be lost... For twenty years we have been hoping for the coming of a fleet and galleons, and none have come save a few small caravels..."<sup>77</sup> The presence of Dutch ships in and around the Philippines ensured that very few Spanish vessels or reinforcements were able to reach Manila. Recruiting *indios* therefore became the only viable option in warding off the numerous Dutch attacks and blockades.

In 1616 governor de Silva, hoping to seize the initiative against the Dutch, amassed a fleet of twenty-three vessels ranging from 600 to 2,000 tons in size. The crew for the armada—the largest Spain would ever assemble in Asian waters—was 66% *indio*, numbering 2,000 Spaniards and 3,000 *indios*.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, without the *indio* crewmen there would have never been enough Spaniards on hand to man such a fleet. Though the armada was an impressive concentration of forces, following the sudden death of Governor de Silva later that year the fleet suffered greatly from mismanagement and ultimately accomplished little. Nevertheless, *indios* were a vital asset in making such a concentration of forces possible and in warding off future Dutch on-slaughts in 1619, 1620, and 1621. The Dutch threat was at its peak when in 1643–1647 Dutch warships blockaded the Philippines, attacked the galleon *San Diego*, engaged the *Rosario* and *Encarnación* in battle, and launched an attack on the shipyards at Cavite. Spaniards successfully resisted such military pressure only through the aid of the numerically superior *indios* and the products of their labor.

## Conclusion

From the sixteenth century well into the nineteenth century all the major European maritime powers, not just the Spanish, drew upon local labor to maintain their fleets in the remote waters of East, Southeast, and South Asia. To be sure, the problem of how to maintain a colonial foothold and strong military presence in the distant East Indies was not Spain's problem alone. The British, for example, relied upon the shipyards at Bombay, Surat, and along the Masulapatam coast to maintain their maritime presence in South Asia starting in the eighteenth century. Indian shipyards were producing 600-ton vessels for Europeans as early as 1600.<sup>79</sup> Like the Philippines, India had a large pool of skilled labor with a long heritage of seafaring and ship construction. Just as was the case with *indio* vessels, Indian-made ships of the subcontinent proved to be more durable and far cheaper than their European-made counterparts.<sup>80</sup> However, the experience of the Spanish in the Philippines was unique from that of the Dutch, Portuguese, British, and French elsewhere in the East Indies and deserves special attention. While all European colonial powers exploited indigenous populations, the Spaniards' need for native labor was the greatest. There was a dearth of supply bases and outposts in the Pacific. With no way to segment the 9,000-mile crossing to and from México (a round-trip distance of over 18,000 miles), Manila and Acapulco became the only points for resupply, putting a tremendous burden on the Philippines. Additionally, because Spain had no other major territorial holding in the East Indies aside from the Philippines, the archipelago became the de facto center of Spain's entire East Indies enterprise. Other European powers were able to spread themselves between dozens of ports along the coasts of Africa, India, Southeast Asia and China. Therefore, at every stage of Spain's Pacific operations *indios* were intimately involved: they were vital in the construction and maintenance of Spain's Pacific fleet, in navigating the treacherous trans-Pacific trade route, in defending Spain's interests from Dutch attack, and in manning the many hundreds of voyages made between Manila and Acapulco.

This paper addressed only one group of many that contributed to the trans-Pacific trade between 1565 and 1815. Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Muslim, and other Southeast Asian peoples, all participated in the galleon trade and kept the port of Manila bustling

and profitable. However, not since William L. Schurz's *The Manila Galleon*, published in 1939, has there been any comprehensive effort made to examine the totality of the Manila-Acapulco trade, its economy, its long history, and the many actors involved, *indios* included. Presently, research on the trans-Pacific trade of the early-modern era tends towards objective, quantitative, economic analysis, such as the focus on global flows of silver. The benefit of such a focus is that a great many connections can be made between the trade in the Pacific and the development of the larger world economy, particularly in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But such an approach has also led to distortion and misrepresentation. This paper has attempted to offer an alternative view of the Manila-Acapulco trade—one in which the indigenous actors are given their due recognition.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez both argue strongly that 1571 and the opening of Manila mark globalization's inception. So too has J. J. TePaske, C. R. Boxer, and many others. See "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6 no. 2 (1995): 201-221; Flynn and Giraldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13 no. 2 (2002): 391-427; Flynn and Giraldez, "Born Again: Globalizations Sixteenth Century Origins (Asian/Global Versus European Dynamics)," *Pacific Economic Review* 13 no. 3 (2008): 395-387; Flynn and Giraldez, "Globalization Began in 1571," in *Globalization and Global History*, ed. Barry K. Gills and William R. Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 232-247; J. J. TePaske, "New World Silver, Castile, and the Philippines, 1590-1800," in *Precious Metals in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. J. F. Richards (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1983); C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1969) 17.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, trans. J. S. Cummins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 305-306.

<sup>3</sup> De Morga, *Sucesos*, 305.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "Arbitrage, China, and World Trade in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38 no. 4 (1995): 429-448. Flynn and Giraldez cite Han-sheng Ch'üan's estimates for the period 1598-1699. See Han-sheng Ch'üan "The Inflow of American Silver into China from the Late Ming to the Mid-Ch'ing Period," *The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong*, vol. 2, 79. Some documents from the period indicate years of much higher silver traffic. For example, the *Cabildo* of Mexico City reported an outflow of 5,000,000 pesos (127.8 tons) of silver to Manila in the year 1602 alone. In 1597, a unique year, the shipments of silver over the Pacific spiked to 12 million pesos. Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 154.

<sup>5</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 132.

<sup>6</sup> Frank, *ReOrient*, 131.

- <sup>7</sup> The Spanish referred to the natives of the Philippine archipelago as *indios*, while the term *Filipino* denoted a Philippine-born Spaniard. It was not until the nineteenth century that "*Filipino*" came to denote a native of the archipelago. Therefore, this paper will use the term *indios* as a general reference to the native inhabitants of the Philippines. Additionally, natives of the Philippines who made their way to New Spain were often labeled as *Chinos*. *Chino* was used as a collective term for all persons of Southeast and East Asian descent in New Spain.
- <sup>8</sup> John E. Wills Jr., "Relations with Maritime Europeans, 1514-1662," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, ed. Denis Twitchett and Fredrick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 554. Wills states that in 1586 only 2,000 Spaniards were living in the Philippines, compared to the roughly 10,000 Chinese merchants. The recorded tribute-paying *indio* population of the Philippines in the early seventeenth century exceeded 500,000.
- <sup>9</sup> Ione Stuessy Wright, *Voyages of Alvaro de Saavedra Cerón, 1527-1529* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1951), 14.
- <sup>10</sup> Account of Álvaro de Saavedra Cerón, in Wright, *Voyages*, 99; Martín Fernández Navarrete, *Colección de los Viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles desde fines del siglo XV*, vol. 5 (Madrid: 1825-1837), 465.
- <sup>11</sup> Wright, *Voyages*, 21. Wright fixes on Gaspar Rico as the likely final resting place of the *Santiago* and *Espíritu Santo*.
- <sup>12</sup> Account of Vincente de Nápoles, in Wright, *Voyages*, 120; Martin J. Noone, *The Islands Saw It: The Discovery and Conquest of the Philippines, 1521-1581* (Manila: R. P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1986), 89, 180.
- <sup>13</sup> Ultimately the effort of Saavedra's men was all for naught. They twice attempted a return voyage across the Pacific, with the *Florida* loaded down with seventy *quintales* of spices, but failing both times in the face of steady contrary winds. Following Saavedra's death on the second attempt, the handful of surviving Spaniards were left to surrender to the Portuguese on the neighboring island of Ternate.
- <sup>14</sup> Fr. Juan Delgado, *Historia sacro-profana, politica y natural de las Islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas* (Manila: 1892), 51-52; original publication 1751.
- <sup>15</sup> Testimony given by the officials of His Majesty on why the galleon San Jeronimo had to be dismantled, in *The Philippines Under Spain: A Compilation and Translation of Original Documents*, vol. II, ed. Virginia Benitez Licuanan and Jose Llavadro Mira (Philippines: National Trust for Historical and Cultural Preservation of the Philippines, 1993), 227.
- <sup>16</sup> Testimony given by the officials of His Majesty, Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 2, 223-224.
- <sup>17</sup> William L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1939), 198.
- <sup>18</sup> An incomplete and unsigned letter of a religious to the Viceroy of Nueva España, 1572 or 1573, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 2, 370. "The river that traverses this city empties into the sea. The said river is heavily infested with Shipworms (*broma*) [illegible] in the port for the ship, it would be [illegible] if this is the be [illegible] to seek a more healthful place with a better port in the future."
- <sup>19</sup> Carla Rahn Phillips, *Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 24, 57.
- <sup>20</sup> Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1497; De Morga, *Sucesos*, 252.
- <sup>21</sup> De Morga, *Sucesos*, 252-253.

- <sup>22</sup> The Spanish were not the only colonizers to exploit an indigenous population for their skill in ship design and maritime knowledge. As Arnold Pacey notes in *Technology in World Civilization*, the British, experiencing similar shortages in manpower and a harsh tropical climate turned to the local population of India to work shipyards and produce their own East Indies fleet. And like the shipyard at Cavite, Bombay earned a reputation for producing ships of great durability. See Arnold Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization: A Thousand Year History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 125-128.
- <sup>23</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 196.
- <sup>24</sup> Report of Sebastian de Pineda, 1619, in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 18 (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1903-1909), vol. 18, 172.
- <sup>25</sup> Morga, *Sucesos*, 253-254.
- <sup>26</sup> Phillips, *Six Galleons*, 79-80.
- <sup>27</sup> Report of Sebastian de Pineda, 1619, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 18, 171.
- <sup>28</sup> Phillips, *Six Galleons*, 80.
- <sup>29</sup> Report of Sebastian de Pineda, 1619, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 18, 171. A *codo* is a cubit, roughly measured as the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.
- <sup>30</sup> A list of what should be sent from Nueva España to Las Islas Filipinas thru Juan de las Ysla, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 2, 295.
- <sup>31</sup> Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, after receiving a shipment of rope from Vera Cruz, complained of its inferior quality. Letter of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, 11 August 1572, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 2, 365-366.
- <sup>32</sup> Nicholas P. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines: From Conquest to Revolution* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 1971), 117; Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 195-196.
- <sup>33</sup> The first case of *indios* building ships for the Spanish occurred on the Island of Panay. Miguel Lopez de Legazpi had a galliot constructed by the *indios* in 1570-1 for the purpose of sailing to Manila Bay. Once completed, the ship was manned by "twenty-three pairs of *Indio* rowers..." From a copy of a letter of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi to the Viceroy of Nueva España, about Panay, Manila, etc., in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 2, 358.
- <sup>34</sup> Report of Sebastian de Pineda, 1619, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 18 173-174.
- <sup>35</sup> John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 99.
- <sup>36</sup> Floro L. Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World: Filipino Migration to Mexico and the Americas from the Sixteenth Century* (Quezon City, Philippines: The University of the Philippines Press, 2007), 2.
- <sup>37</sup> Phelan, *Hispanization*, 99.
- <sup>38</sup> Dennis Roth, "The Casas de Reservas in the Philippines," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5 no. 1 (March 1974), 116. Roth takes this quotation from A report on the general condition of the Islas Filipinas, 20 April 1586, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 4, 360; Letter of Doctor Santiago de Vera, 26 June 1586, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 4, 391.
- <sup>39</sup> Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 120.
- <sup>40</sup> Letter of Sebastian de Pineda, 1619, in B & R, vol. 18, 174.
- <sup>41</sup> Phillips, *Six Galleons*, 78.
- <sup>42</sup> Phillips, *Six Galleons*, 79.
- <sup>43</sup> An account of what is known about the Islas Filipinas, 1586, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 4, 410.
- <sup>44</sup> An account of what is known about the Islas Filipinas, 1586, in Licuanan and Llavadro, vol. 4, 410.
- <sup>45</sup> Opinion Addressed to His Majesty by Fray Pedro de San Pablo, August 7, 1620, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 19, 71-72.
- <sup>46</sup> Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 119.



- <sup>47</sup> Treasury Report of 1606, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 14, 247-248; John Leddy Phelan, "Free Versus Compulsory Labor: Mexico and the Philippines 1540-1648," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1 no. 2 (January 1959): 193-194.
- <sup>48</sup> Phelan, "Free Versus Compulsory Labor," 193-194.
- <sup>49</sup> Blair and Robertson, vol. 19, 71-72; Phelan, *Hispanization*, 99. Phelan draws attention to the high fatality amongst indios in the *polo* system. During the Hispano-Dutch wars, from 1609-1648, with demand for timber at its greatest, the overall population of indios actually declined. An estimated 610,000 indios in 1621 dropped sharply to 505,250 by 1655. Phelan argues much, but not all, of the decline can be attributed to the poor working conditions and lack of food.
- <sup>50</sup> Roth, "Casas de Reservas," 116.
- <sup>51</sup> Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History: The Philippines Since Pre-Spanish Times*, vol. 1 (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1949), 343. Zaide cites the following indio revolts having occurred in protest of forced labor and tribute: "Magalat's Revolt in 1596, the Gaddang Revolt in 1621, the Caraga Revolt in 1630, the Cagayan Revolt in 1639, Sumoroy's Revolt in 1649-50, Malong's Revolt in 1660-61, Dagohoy's Revolt in 1744-1829, Silang's Revolt in 1762-63, and Palari's Revolt in 1762-64."
- <sup>52</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 196.
- <sup>53</sup> For a history of the *Encarnación* and *Rosario*, see Thomas Peterson, *Secrets of the Manila Galleons* (Corvallis, OR: 2005), chapter 11.
- <sup>54</sup> Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 16.
- <sup>55</sup> Noone, *The Islands Saw It*, 330; see also Lorraine Crouchett, *Filipinos in California: From the days of the Galleons to the Present* (El Cerrito, CA: Downey Place Publishing House, 1982). Crouchett claims 8 indios were aboard the *San Pablo*.
- <sup>56</sup> Noone, *The Islands Saw It*, 330-331.
- <sup>57</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 210; Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 3.
- <sup>58</sup> Francisco Leandro de Viana, Memorial, February 10, 1765, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 48, 301.
- <sup>59</sup> Ed Slack Jr., "The Chinos in New Spain: A Corrective Lens for a Distorted Image," *Journal of World History* 20 no. 1 (March 2009), 39.
- <sup>60</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 211.
- <sup>61</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 212.
- <sup>62</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 212.
- <sup>63</sup> Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History*, 335.
- <sup>64</sup> For a thorough examination of Chinos in New Spain during the galleon era, see Slack Jr., "The Chinos in New Spain," 35-67.
- <sup>65</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 9.
- <sup>66</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 9.
- <sup>67</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 9.
- <sup>68</sup> Slack, "The Chinos in New Spain," 40.
- <sup>69</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 17-18. Quoted from Memorial of Pedro Calderón y Henríquez, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 23 (1944): 219-225.
- <sup>70</sup> Slack, "The Chinos in New Spain," 37.
- <sup>71</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*.
- <sup>72</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Race, Class, and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610-1670* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 75-76.
- <sup>73</sup> Jose Maria S. Luengo, *A History of the Manila-Acapulco Slave Trade, 1565-1815* (Tubigon, Philippines: Mater Dei Publications, 1996), 7; Jose Maria S. Luengo, *Lorenzo Ruiz: The Filipino Protomartyr in Nagasaki* (Tubigon, Philippines: Luengo Foundation Incorporated, 1984), 20-34. As if his proposed figure of four million were not enough, in *Lorenzo Ruiz* Luengo uses the term holocaust when discussing the depopulation of the Philippines as a result of the galleon trade and Spanish occupation.
- <sup>74</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World*, 30-31.

<sup>75</sup> Woodes Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (London: 1712).

<sup>76</sup> Treasury Report of 1606, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 14, 247-248; Phelan, "Free Versus Compulsory Labor," 193-194.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of Joan de Ribera, S.J., December 20, 1618, in Blair and Robertson, vol. 18, 161-165.

<sup>78</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 346.

<sup>79</sup> Pacey, *Technology in World civilization*, 67, 127. After 1790, ships built in India for European customers could exceed 1,000 tons.

<sup>80</sup> Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization*, 67-68.

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# Jose E. Marco's Kalantiaw Code: Implications for Philippine Historiography and Filipinos' Historical Consciousness

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## Introduction

This proposed study started as a simple examination of the infamous antiquarian from the island of Negros in the Visayan region, Jose E. Marco, and his many alleged 'historical works' that influenced the writings of Philippine history. Many Philippine historians considered Marco to have revolutionized the dissemination, and perhaps the manufacturing, of pre-colonial Philippine documents during the early twentieth century. Frankly, the task is daunting because there are many avenues of inquiry that required close examination to even cover the tip of this 'confabulation.'

Therefore, for this research, I have decided to narrow down my focus on the implications of discovering and proving that the Kalantiaw Code of 1433 had no historical basis apart from its only known reference mentioned in the two-volume Pavon manuscript presented in 1914 by Filipino antique collector Jose E. Marco to the Director of Philippine National Library, James A. Robertson.<sup>1</sup> The perceived historical significance and authenticity of this alleged ancient penal code from the Visayan region has persisted despite being proven as a work of historical fiction.

In terms of available literature on the issue of Marco and his 'historical' works, there are several scholars such as William Henry Scott, John N. Schumacher, Augusto de Viana and Michael Salman, who have already examined certain aspects of Marco's historical contributions. However, they all seemed to focus on contesting the authenticity of various historical documents linked to Marco, or looking at the motivation/s behind the creation and publication of these fraudulent documents.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, there is not much discourse on the kind of public responses and the possible social impacts of revelation surrounding these fraudulent documents that I believe can provide further understanding of Philippine society as well as the shaping of Philippine historiography. The only comprehensive study on the impacts (or lack thereof) of the exposure of these forgeries is that of independent Philippine scholar Paul Morrow's online article "Kalantiaw: The Hoax." In his article, Morrow examines how Philippine state institutions and Filipino academic scholars continued to propagate the validity of the Code of Kalantiaw even though it had been debunked along with other documents related to Jose Marco.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to expand this inquiry by examining how Filipino scholars, different government institutions, and the Filipino public responded to Scott's potentially-devastating findings, which were associated with these important pre-hispanic source materials. I will do this by addressing why Scott's revelation was largely ignored for several decades since 1968, even though many prominent Filipino historians such as Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Gregorio Zaide did not challenge a foreign scholar's claims against the validity of these documents. Given the various responses and reactions of Filipinos to the Code of Kalantiaw issue, I would like to further examine the reasons behind such responses (or lack thereof). There are two main questions that I will address in this project: (1) why this potentially-charged historical issue did not evoke a much stronger reaction from Filipinos (particularly from Filipino scholars and government institutions such as the Department of Education, Culture and Sports); and (2) what does this tell us about Philippine

society and how it perceives the significance of pre-colonial history in the Filipino national consciousness.

### Jose E. Marco and his pre-colonial 'Code of Kalantiaw'

The antiquarian and stamp collector from the island of Negros in the Visayan region by the name of Jose E. Marco became part of ancient Philippine historiography when he presented several manuscripts containing significant historical information about ancient Filipino society to James A. Robertson, Director of Philippine National Library, in 1914. One of these source materials was the Pavon manuscript, *Las antiguas de leyendas de la isla de Negros* (*Ancient Legends of the Island of Negros*) that was allegedly written by Father Jose Maria Pavon y Araguro, a Spanish secular priest in the Diocese of Cebu, during the mid-nineteenth century. This two-volume manuscript supposedly contained the only reference to one of the oldest penal codes in pre-colonial Philippines, the so-called Code of Kalantiaw promulgated by Datu Kalantiaw from the island of Panay in 1433.<sup>4</sup>

Anyone who has read or who is familiar with the Code of Kalantiaw took notice of Datu Kalantiaw's harsh approach in enforcing social order within his chiefdom. In Philippine schools, Filipino students are taught about Datu Kalantiaw's laws, which clearly emphasized that he ruled with an iron-fist to ensure obedience and order from his people. However, upon close examination of the actual laws listed in the penal code (see Appendix I), there are contradictions and the laws themselves are just plain outrageous.<sup>5</sup> When I first learned about these laws in secondary schools, I began to wonder what kind of society would actually enforce such peculiar and brutal laws because there seemed to be no rationale behind them.

Despite the peculiarity and absurdity of the penal code of Kalantiaw, both Filipino and non-Filipino scholars immediately embraced it as a definitive source of existence of ancient Philippine legal system. Moreover, throughout the early and mid-twentieth century Philippine scholars referred to Marco's documents such as the Pavon manuscript as the key to understanding ancient Philippine civilization and society.

### The Discovery and Debunking of Marco's pre-colonial documents

For most of the twentieth century, Marco's historical documents were rarely scrutinized or questioned until a retired American lay missionary, William Henry Scott, examined the available pre-hispanic source materials, including the Pavon manuscript, which supposedly contained invaluable information on pre-colonial Philippine state and society. Scott challenged the validity of several Philippine ancient documents while pursuing his doctoral degree in Philippine history at the University of Santo Tomas (Manila, Philippines) in 1965. In his doctoral dissertation Scott asserted, and later proved, that many important pre-colonial documents considered as definitive sources of the official version of ancient Philippine history were fraudulent works provided by Jose E. Marco. In his dissertation chapter on Jose Marco's contributions, Scott concludes that Marco's collection of ancient documents, including the Pavon manuscript, "appear to be deliberate fabrications with no historical validity. There is no present evidence that any Filipino ruler by the name of Kalantiaw ever existed or that the Kalantiaw penal code is any older than 1914."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Scott recalled that during his 1968 doctoral defense==

... before a panel of eminent Filipino historians such as Teodoro Agoncillo, Horacio de la Costa, Marcelino Foronda, Mercedes Grau Santamaria, Nicholas Zafra and Gregorio Zaide. ... not a single question was raised about the chapter which I called 'The Contributions of Jose E. Marco to Philippine historiography' ... For some years after these publications, I have reason to hope that the ghost of Kalantiaw had finally been laid. ... Yet, at the time I retired from teaching Philippine history in 1982, freshmen were still entering the State University persuaded that Kalantiaw was an actual historic figure and that he promulgated a genuine Philippine penal code in 1433. I wonder if my successors are still sharing their classrooms with this Filipino phantom and the law code that never was.<sup>7</sup>

However, it should be noted that Scott was not the first scholar to question the validity of these source materials. Mauro Garcia, a prominent Filipino scholar on ancient Philippine history and a bibliographer, raised questions about the documents obtained from Marco as early as 1950s in his public lectures. In January 1968 Garcia also participated in (and perhaps, organized) a symposium dealing with the *Maragtas* leg-

end that originated from one of Marco's source materials, which narrates the arrival of ten datu/chiefs from Borneo who settled in the Visayan region and established flourishing settlements. According to the *Maragtas* Symposium proceedings:

[a] panel of Filipino historians and folklorists met in Manila a few weeks ago to explore the many subsidiary factors involved in the *Maragtas* account. Several of them denounced it as a palpable fake. . . . Dissatisfaction with history and historiography has been diffuse and largely inarticulate in Manila, but nevertheless there. A new understanding is apparent that historians after all are not technicians piling up cold hard facts into a brick wall. They must move in a complex web of circumstantial evidence, full of loose ends and maddening strings and probably silly old men making up pretty tales in their dotage. The feeling is that perhaps Filipino historians have gone too fast or too far afield without the worthwhile antidotes to the passionate search for identity.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the panels focused on the *Maragtas* narrative, several papers, including the one presented by Mauro Garcia, addressed the issue of provenance and the fact that the leading source materials on ancient Philippine history came "from a dealer or collector of questionable reputation."<sup>9</sup> Even though Jose E. Marco's name was not mentioned in any of these papers, it was still implied because references were made to the dubious Paxon manuscript where the Code of Kalantiaw was cited.

During the symposium, Garcia raised the point that many Filipino historians placed great importance on the pre-hispanic source materials acquired from Marco because "[they] constitute a real foundation for history of the Visayan people," without being critical of their origins.<sup>10</sup> Garcia then added, "a local scholar [Scott] who has devoted considerable research on the Paxon [manuscript] is coming out soon with his findings that this is one document that is definitely fake or spurious. Should he prove himself correct, then the code of Kalantiao [sic] loses its props as a genuine material and should be expunged from the books."<sup>11</sup>

Mauro Garcia was actually the one who first suggested to W. H. Scott in 1965 to focus his doctoral research on examining the pre-hispanic source materials available for the study of Philippine history.<sup>12</sup> Garcia chose not to disclose his own suspicions to Scott concerning Marco's source materials so Scott could "ex-

amine the earlier Marco contributions without prejudice."<sup>13</sup> Scott added that "a review of the notebooks which record our [with Garcia] collaboration reveals that the more blatant forgeries were not presented to me until after I had already drawn my conclusions about the so-called Povedano and Paxon manuscripts."<sup>14</sup> In 1969 Scott published his dissertation entitled "A Critical Study of the Pre-hispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History," which included a separate section on Marco's contributions to Philippine historiography.

Despite his published findings on Marco's fraudulent source materials that proved that the Code of Kalantiaw had no historical basis, the necessary changes in textbooks and in academic curriculum were not forthcoming until almost thirty years following the release of Scott's publication in 1969. In the interim, Filipino students have continued to internalize the Code of Kalantiaw as an integral part of ancient Philippine history.<sup>15</sup> Although Scott has proven that the Kalantiaw Code was clearly a hoax, why did many Filipinos continue to believe in the existence of Datu Kalantiaw and his brutal code of laws?

To better understand why this still persisted even after Scott's findings, it is important to examine how Filipinos reacted and responded to the debunking of the Kalantiaw Code. For the purpose of this research, I have narrowed down my analysis on the responses of three groups: Filipino scholars, government institutions dealing with historical education of Filipinos such as the National Historical Institute (currently the National Historical Commission) and the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), and the Filipino public.

## Filipino Scholars' Responses to Scott's Findings

It is interesting to know why many Filipino scholars chose not to directly address such findings - whether to publicly acknowledge Scott's claims or even to merely review Scott's published dissertation *A Critical Study of the Pre-hispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (1969). It seems that many Filipino scholars would rather not deal with, or even acknowledge, Scott's assessment of the validity of some Philippine source materials that shaped the study of ancient Philippine history. Perhaps, they did not want to be

confronted with their own inadequacy in conducting analytical research, so they have decided to just ignore the significance of Scott's critical examination of the available source materials that were accepted at face value, regardless of the fact that their provenance was questionable or even unascertainable. On the other hand, there might be other explanations as to why many Filipino scholars have remained complacent to the public dissemination of false historical facts such as the existence of Kalantiaw Code after 1969.

Since the publication of Scott's book in 1969, no major academic journal in the Philippines, including *Philippine Studies*, *Philippine Historical Bulletin* and the *Historical Review*, reviewed the book. Thus far there have been only two reviews available on W. H. Scott's book – the 1970 book review by Donn Hart in the *Journal of Asian Studies* and the 1971 book review by Fr. Juan Mario Francisco, S. J. in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. In his book review, Hart writes, "If future authors of Filipino college history textbooks consult Scott's book there will be more fact and less fancy in their books. Scott's scholarly alchemy is devastating when he transmutes popular fact into actual myth or legend."<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, Fr. Francisco's review of Scott's book only briefly comments on Scott's conclusion of Marco's contribution as 'deliberate fabrications with no historic validity' (p. 134) to be "a significant point" without elaborating on why Scott's assessment of Marco's source materials was important to the study of ancient Philippine history.<sup>17</sup>

Even though all the eminent Filipino scholars in Scott's doctoral defense did not question his conclusion regarding the validity of source materials obtained from Marco, most of their scholarly works did not reflect such significant findings. In fact, one of the leading Philippine historians in Scott's panel, Gregorio F. Zaide, continued to include the Code of Kalantiaw in all of his history textbooks for all academic levels (primary, secondary and post-secondary education) until his death in 1986.<sup>18</sup> However, upon his death, his daughter and co-author Sonia M. Zaide immediately released a corrected edition of his textbook, *Philippine History* (1987) in which she included among her list of updates the "(3) Correction of the historical interpretation of the role of Panay (a legend, the Confederation of Madya-as (fiction), the legal codes of *Datu Kalantiao* and *Sumakwel* (fakes)). This is due to recent historical findings which cast doubt on the authenticity of the

historical documents upon which these 'events' are based [emphasis mine]."<sup>19</sup> Another major Philippine historian, Teodoro A. Agoncillo, also kept the section on the Kalantiaw Code in his college textbooks; however, at least Agoncillo changed the section's title as 'The Alleged Code of Kalantiyaw' even though he still listed all the laws for students' reference.<sup>20</sup> In his work, Agoncillo wrote "[t]his so-called Code of Kalantiyaw is a disputed document" and cited Scott's work that questioned "the authenticity of the Kalantiyaw Code."<sup>21</sup> As for the other scholars who were part of Scott's defense committee, they either did not acknowledge Scott's findings in their own work or just mentioned it in passing because they did not agree with Scott's conclusion even though they found his arguments sound.

Another possible reason for many Filipino scholars' reluctance to acknowledge Scott's assessment of the Code of Kalantiaw is attributed to how former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos embraced the master narrative on the decline of glorious Philippine past after the Spanish conquest by promoting the Code of Kalantiaw and the need for a strong ruler, similar to the socio-political conditions of pre-colonial period to legitimize his dictatorial regime. By the early 1970s, President Marcos issued several presidential decrees that promoted and highlighted the historical significance of Datu Kalantiaw and his penal code –

[In March 1971] Marcos instituted the 'Order of Kalantiaw,' an award 'for services to the country in the areas of law and justice' (Executive Order No. 294). . . . [and] on January 24, 1973, Marcos also issued Presidential Decree No. 105, which declared that the Kalantiaw Shrine, and all national shrines, sacred. The decree prohibited all forms of desecration including 'unnecessary noise and committing unbecoming acts'. . . . [that were punishable by law] 'imprisonment for not less than ten (10) years or a fine not less than ten thousand pesos (P10,000) or both.'<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, Marcos ensured the promotion of Datu Kalantiaw and his code of laws by literally rewriting the history book of the Philippines to represent the '*Bagong Lipunan*' (New Society) of the Filipinos, who finally broke free from colonial bondage to live in prosperity, peace and order under his iron-fisted leadership. In other words, Marcos needed a new version of Philippine history that could justify and legitimize his 1972 declaration of Martial Law, so he commissioned leading Philippine historians, under the supervision of



Serafin D. Quiason, to ‘ghostwrite’ for him a multi-volume Philippine history book entitled *Tadhana* (*Destiny*).<sup>23</sup> The original 19-volume *Tadhana* (only three volumes were completed) that attributed Marcos as the sole author tried to promote the need to have a strong leader enforcing harsh laws to maintain social order, like the ‘famous Datu Kalantiaw’ who supposedly governed with an iron-fist.

During the period following the 1969 release of Scott’s book, the public acknowledgment of Scott’s findings would be deemed as challenging Marcos’ accepted version of history. Thus, it was simply dangerous for Filipino scholars to openly oppose Marcos during the Martial law period, so they either remained silent about the issue surrounding the authenticity of Kalantiaw Code, or just removed any reference to Kalantiaw from their book without fanfare to divert any attention from them. The failure of many Filipino scholars to address the issue of Kalantiaw Code in their published works, or within the classroom during the Marcos dictatorial regime (1972-1986), can be attributed to fear for one’s safety and fear of losing one’s academic position (especially if one were employed at the state-controlled University of the Philippines).

However, once the Marcos regime was replaced by the Aquino administration in 1986, it seemed difficult to use the same rationale in explaining why some Filipino scholars still neglected to make the necessary changes in their works, or refer to other source materials to conduct their study of ancient Philippine history. While there were Filipino scholars, such as Sonia M. Zaide, who made an effort to update their textbooks to reflect Scott’s findings about the Code of Kalantiaw, there were still others who continued to embrace the authenticity of the Pavon manuscript and other source materials from Jose Marco, even after the end of Marcos regime.<sup>24</sup> As such, it would have been difficult to justify “fear for one’s safety” or “fear of losing one’s position” as motivations for not making the appropriate changes in the writing and teaching of ancient Philippine history.

However, another possible reason for the apathetic response of other Filipino scholars to Scott’s discovery could have been attributed to passive resistance against a perceived foreign scholar’s attempt to control historical discourse in the Philippines. Although Scott’s arguments were supported by solid evidence, the fact that he was an American scholar debunking native his-

torical beliefs where ‘facts’ might have worked against him led to Filipino scholars ignoring his findings rather than considering them based on their merits. At this point, logic and rational thinking no longer persisted. Instead, it was replaced by strong nationalistic fervor geared towards ignoring, attacking or discrediting scholars (especially directed towards non-Filipinos) who dared to challenge the prevalent historical narratives and interpretations concerning ancient Philippine society, and imposed their own ‘correct’ versions of Philippine history.

The period between 1970s and 1980s saw the resurgence of strong nationalist sentiments within the academe, especially within the field of History. Many leading Philippine historians such as Teodoro A. Agoncillo, Renato Constantino and Reynaldo Ileto published their works on aspects of Philippine history that have been neglected because the focus has always been ‘from without’ (ie. colonial power, metropole, etc.) and the ‘above’ (educated elites, urban-based middle class, etc.), rather than ‘from within’ (ie. colonies, periphery) and the ‘below’ (Filipino masses, rural-based peasants, etc.). These historians were very weary of encroachment of foreign scholars who were perceived to impose on their imperialistic and condescending versions of Philippine history on Filipinos. Perhaps, many Filipino scholars considered Scott’s findings to be an effort to undermine the existence of flourishing and civilized ancient Philippine past by asserting American superiority and benevolence over uncivilized Filipinos.

To some extent, this reasoning might have some merit as a recent essay on Jose E. Marco’s contribution by Michael Salman argues that Marco was not the only one serving his own interests by providing these questionable documents to the Americans.<sup>25</sup> The American scholars and administrators such as Philippine National Library Director, James A. Robertson, and scholars from the University of Chicago validated Marco’s documents and ensured these documents would be disseminated throughout academia as legitimate source materials for the study of ancient Philippines, even though some scholars from University of Chicago had some initial reservations. Salman stresses that these Americans also used these documents to serve their own imperialist interests by ensuring that “the colonial state based in Manila. . . played a central role in the formulation of American imperial knowledge about the Philippines.”<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, Salman does not suggest that Scott was motivated by similar interests when he conducted his research, but rather points out that Scott had made a mistake in his assessment of the extent of Marco's contribution. According to Salman, "it is more proper to speak of Robertson's contributions to Philippine historiography than Marco's. . . . [Even though] Marco was an agent in his own history and that of the Filipino nation, but it was Robertson who was at the center of authority, able to authorize Marco's texts as authentic and put them into circulation."<sup>27</sup> Perhaps, some Filipino scholars assumed that Scott was trying to undermine Filipinos understanding and interpretation of their own history that these scholars would not even bother to take into consideration Scott's analysis of Marco's fraudulent source materials.

Of course, this was not the only case in which such ambivalence to hostile reception towards foreign scholars' examinations of well-known historical documents in the Philippines has occurred. One example was Filipino scholars' strong reactions against American historian Glenn A. May's *Inventing a Hero: The Posthumous Re-creation of Andres Bonifacio* (1996). Compared to the Filipino responses to Scott's debunking of the Kalantiaw Code, the majority of Filipino reactions to May's book ranged from negative to outright hostile toward the author himself.

I can only attribute this to the fact that May's book basically questioned Filipinos' admiration and veneration of one of the leading Tagalog figures of Philippine nationalism as opposed to dealing with an alleged fifteenth-century penal code promulgated by a certain Datu Kalantiaw that ruled in the Visayan region. This only proves that there is a clear distinction in terms of historical importance that many Filipino historians and the general public placed upon events happening within the capital of Manila or the Tagalog region, as opposed to the rest of the Philippine archipelago. Unfortunately, the periphery and its history only become important when they serve a purpose to augment the national narrative dominated by historical events and figures from the Tagalog region.

As mentioned earlier, the end of the Marcos regime did not ensure that Filipino scholars would purge their writings and their lectures of references to the Code of Kalantiaw. In fact, since 1986 (with the change in political regime in the Philippines) many different history textbooks from all academic levels as well as other

scholarly works still referred to the Code of Kalantiaw as evidence of flourishing ancient past before the Spanish conquest.<sup>28</sup> Other Filipino scholars such as Sonia Zaide and Teodoro Agoncillo already incorporated some changes in their textbooks. However, many Filipino authors of history textbooks commissioned by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) for school curriculum took some time to make their necessary changes. Therefore, students still encounter the Code of Kalantiaw in their history lessons as late as the beginning of the twenty-first century. From the proliferation of the Code of Kalantiaw in textbooks as well as the cementing of this code into public historical memory even after the release of Scott's book in 1969, it seems that no one actually took heed of Hart's advice.

### Responses from Government Institutions Dealing with Public Education and Historical Memory

While the initiatives must come from the Filipino scholars themselves to ensure that the historical information that they included in their textbooks and other publications are based on reputable and authentic source materials, government institutions dealing with public education and public historical memory must also undergo changes and careful deliberation to properly regulate the version of history being taught to Filipino students. By the 1990s extensive campaigns already existed to correct historical errors that persisted in Philippine historiography as well as to standardize history textbooks in all academic levels. In fact, both the Philippine Senate and the House of Representatives proposed resolutions to address the issue of teaching history in schools such as the Senate Resolution No. 116 "[c]alling for the Nationalization in the Prescription of Textbooks in all Schools. . ."; the First Session House Resolution No. 691 "[d]irecting the proper agencies of the government to review and revise the Philippine History books to reflect a nationalist perspective of Philippine history of the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the post-world war II period, in the aid of the teaching of nationalism pursuant to the provisions of the constitution"; and the Second Regular Session, House Bill No. 15404 which "seeks to amend the Act establishing the National Historical Commission with the main purpose of rewriting

Philippine history to emphasize nationalism and adherence to democratic principles and practices”.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to point out that the House Resolution No. 691 sought to rewrite Philippine history books due to the fact that “there is a wide difference between historical facts and what are taught in Filipino textbooks. . . [and that] the difference is not only in substance but also in point of view which results in a distortion of our history that is inimical to the attainment by Filipinos of nationalism.”<sup>30</sup> However, the resolutions proposing for a ‘one-textbook policy’ were not passed due to opposition from various government sectors and publishing industry. Nonetheless, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) has the authority to award contracts to publishing companies and authors to produce textbooks for specific levels and subjects; it is widely believed, DECS has been involved in textbook scams and inclusion of glaring errors appearing in history textbooks because the system lacks serious regulation. This can also be considered as one of the reasons why erroneous historical information continues to be included in school textbooks. In addition, DECS heavily relies on the expertise of their contracted authors from leading universities in the Philippines that it does not spend considerable effort in editing and checking the contents of the textbooks.

While DECS handles the concerns of public education, the National Historical Institute (NHI recently changed its name to National Historical Commission of the Philippines) established in 1972 is mandated to undertake historical research, publication of historical works and promotion of cultural heritage through preservation and restoration of artifacts and sites.<sup>31</sup> During the Marcos regime, the NHI served as an important government institution under the Office of the President that oversaw the historical research, preservation and reconstruction of the past to forge national identity and unity. Since 1972, under various chairmanships, including Serafin Quiason, who served both the Marcos regime as the Director of the National Library in 1981 and the Aquino administration as the NHI Chairman in 1986, the NHI widely promoted the narrative of Datu Kalantiaw and his code of laws.

The NHI is also mandated to endorse history textbooks that are used at all school levels. One example is the 1989 secondary history textbook by Filipino journalist Isidro Escare Abeto, which included a formal

letter of appraisal from the Acting NHI Chairman Quiason in May 1986. Abeto’s textbook was recommended by the NHI despite the fact that there were two separate chapters on Datu Kalantiaw as the first law-giver, and on the Kalantiaw Code.<sup>32</sup> It is also interesting to note that most information and narratives in Abeto’s textbook were obtained from Jose Marco’s source materials. Given the fact that Abeto was a journalist and not a professionally-trained historian, he might not have been familiar with W. H. Scott’s findings on the fraudulent works attributed to Jose Marco. However, as the Acting Chairman of NHI publicly endorsing this textbook, Quiason should have at least alerted Abeto to the issue concerning Kalantiaw and the controversy surrounding it.

Since 1972, the NHI did not do much to correct the erroneous historical information of Datu Kalantiaw. In fact, it successfully promoted and disseminated the historical significance of the Kalantiaw Code not only in the Aklan province (where it supposedly originated), but the rest of the Philippines. However, as a number of Filipino scholars began to remove the discussion of Kalantiaw from their teachings, many students began to associate Kalantiaw as an elaborate hoax by Jose Marco.

There has been a slow move towards purging Kalantiaw reference from textbooks until 2002, when Filipino historian Ambeth R. Ocampo was appointed the new NHI Chairman. One of the first things on his agenda was to conduct a thorough research on the validity of the Kalantiaw Code to finally finish what Mauro Garcia and William H. Scott had started. The deliberation took almost two years until Ocampo and the NHI were able to pass NHI Resolution No. 12 in 2004 “[d]eclaring that Code of Kalantiao/Kalantiaw has no Valid Historical Basis”. This resolution called for: (1) the official affirmation that the Kalantiaw Code is a twentieth-century fraudulent work by Jose Marco, (2) the President of the Philippines cease to honor retiring Supreme justices and other international dignitaries with the ‘Order of Kalantiaw’, and (3) the revoking of Executive Order 234, which declared the municipality of Batan, Province of Aklan as a national shrine.<sup>33</sup> This NHI resolution was finally approved by the Office of the President in 2005 and taken into effect immediately, despite strong protests from the people of the province of Aklan.

However, the issue of the Code of Kalantiaw is far from over. Regardless of the government's official statement concerning its authenticity, reference to the Code of Kalantiaw continues to appear in unlikely places such as the 2001 International conference presentation on 'The Philippine Judicial System' by Dr. Raul Pangalangan, Dean, College of Law from the University of the Philippines in which he talked about "all ancient written laws of the Filipinos were lost with the exception of the Code of Maragtas and the Code of Kalantiaw, both from Panay Island."<sup>34</sup> Another mention of the Code of Kalantiaw occurred during the House of Representative 2<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session in August 2008 when Congress was deliberating over the issue of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. While Congressman Cerilles was discussing the tribal /aboriginal rights extended to Native Americans and aborigines in Australia, he then referred—

...to the signing of the *Code of Kalantiaw in Panay*, then the Gentleman will see that the native inhabitants of this Philippine Archipelago. . . was the Aetas. . . . all other tribes – including my tribe. . . are supposed to have come from Indonesia and Malaysia. We can understand each other – the North and the South – because we come from one commonality. That is why there is the so-called '*The Code of Kalantiaw*,' where a person called Marikudo signed a treaty with Sumakwel, Mr. Speaker. [emphasis added]<sup>35</sup>

### Filipino Public's Ambivalence or Apathy towards Discourses on Philippine History

It is interesting that some Filipinos (both scholars and non-scholars) continue to believe that the Code of Kalantiaw and the *datu*/chieftain who supposedly promulgated these laws actually existed; and therefore, there is no need to pursue the issue any further. On the other hand, it is also surprising that some Filipino scholars, who were aware of the Kalantiaw Code's questionable provenance, chose not to acknowledge it and just continued to treat the existence of the Kalantiaw Code as historical fact.

As for the rest of the Filipino population, they have seemed to remain ambivalent or even downright apathetic towards Philippine history because of the way history courses have been taught to Filipino students. Students are not expected to engage in historical dis-

course but rather memorize 'historical facts,' only to be regurgitated during quizzes and exams. The fact is many Filipinos could care less about the discussions of Philippine history unless the issues directly affect them. The only Filipinos who continue to engage in historical discourse are the ones who are really interested in history, or the ones who have vested interests on the historical information mined from the past.

My personal communication with my Ateneo University history professor and former NHI Chairman, Ambeth R. Ocampo, concerning the infamous Code of Kalantiaw led him to write an article in his weekly column, 'Looking Back' in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* addressing my research questions about Filipino responses to Scott's revelations.<sup>36</sup> Since I already knew the information that Prof. Ocampo had included in his article, I was far more interested in the comments that were received in response to his article which Ocampo himself also posted on his fanpage on the social network, Facebook, to initiate discussion.<sup>37</sup> The kinds of interaction and responses that Ocampo's article on Kalantiaw received made me rethink my own assessment of Filipinos' general apathy towards discussions about history. The age range of the respondents was not limited to young adults or university students but also included middle-aged individuals who were interested in Philippine history. From their comments (both in English and Filipino), these individuals were neither apathetic nor indifferent toward the Code of Kalantiaw or other aspects of Philippine history. Granted this is only a small portion of the Filipino public, I cannot ascertain precisely what most Filipinos' reactions would be to the debunking of the Kalantiaw Code. However, based on just the comments of the people who read Ocampo's article, I can see that they are more or less familiar with the Code of Kalantiaw because it was taught in school, and most of them acknowledged the fact that it has no historical basis. At the same time, few individuals also mentioned that they have friends who still refused to question the authenticity of the Kalantiaw Code.<sup>38</sup>

While it is convenient to conclude that most Filipinos could care less about the Kalantiaw Code which is why it did not elicit strong reactions from Filipino scholars and non-scholars, I would argue that there are many factors that affected how different Filipinos reacted or responded. The Filipinos reactions are not just simply based on one's interest or disinterest in

history, but they also depend on the kinds of opportunity individuals are given to engage in the past. I think the way history is taught in the Philippines does not allow students to actively participate in their learning because instruction was primarily based on memorizing tons of information without engaging in critical thinking. I believe that the danger inherent in such passive learning and understanding of the past becomes more pronounced when vested interests (whether personal or national) supersede the quest for historical truth.

## Appendix I: Laws of the Code of Kalantiaw (English Translation)

### Article I

You shall not kill, neither shall you steal, neither shall you do harm to the aged, lest you incur the danger of death. All those who infringe this order shall be condemned to death by being drowned in the river, or in boiling water.

### Article II

You shall obey. Let all your debts with the headman be met punctually. He who does not obey shall receive for the first time one hundred lashes. If the debt is large, he shall be condemned to thrust his hand in boiling water thrice. For the second time, he shall be beaten to death.

### Article III

Obey you: let no one have women that are very young nor more than he can support; nor be given to excessive lust. He who does not comply with, obey, and observe this order shall be condemned to swim for three hours for the first time and for the second time, to be beaten to death with sharp thorns.

### Article IV

Observe and obey; let no one disturb the quiet of the graves. When passing by the caves and trees where they are, give respect to them. He who does not observe this shall be killed by ants, or beaten to death with thorns.

### Article V

You shall obey; he who exchanges for food, let it be always done in accordance with his word. He who does not comply, shall be beaten for one hour, he who repeats the offense shall be exposed for one day among ants.

### Article VI

You shall be obliged to revere sights that are held in respect, such as those of trees of recognized worth and other sights. He who fails to comply shall pay with one month's work in gold or in honey.

### Article VII

These shall be put to death; he who kills trees of venerable appearance; who shoot arrows at night at old men and women; he who enters the houses of the headmen without permission; he who kills a shark or a streaked cayman.

### Article VIII

Slavery for a *doam* (a certain period of time) shall be suffered by those who steal away the women of the headmen; by him who keep ill-tempered dogs that bite the headmen; by him who burns the fields of another.

### Article IX

All these shall be beaten for two days: who sing while traveling by night; kill the Manual; tear the documents belonging to the headmen; are malicious liars; or who mock the dead.

### Article X

It is decreed an obligation; that every mother teach secretly to her daughters matters pertaining to lust and prepare them for womanhood; let not men be cruel nor punish their women when they catch them in the act of adultery. Whoever shall disobey shall be killed by being cut to pieces and thrown to the caymans.

### Article XI

These shall be burned: who by their strength or cunning have mocked at and escaped punishment or who have killed young boys; or try to steal away the women of the elders.

### Article XII

These shall be drowned: all who interfere with their superiors, or their owners or masters; all those who abuse themselves through their lust; those who destroy their *anitos* (religious icons) by breaking them or throwing them down.

### Article XIII

All these shall be exposed to ants for half a day: who kill black cats during a new moon; or steal anything from the chiefs or *agorangs*, however small the object may be.

### Article XIV

These shall be made slave for life: who have beautiful daughters and deny them to the sons of chiefs, and with bad faith hide them away.

### Article XV

Concerning beliefs and traditions; these shall be beaten: who eat the diseased flesh of beasts which they hold in respect, or the herb which they consider good, who wound or kill the young of the Manual, or the white monkey.

### Article XVI

The fingers shall be cut-off: of all those who break *anitos* of wood and clay in their *alangans* and temples; of those who destroy the daggers of the *catalonans* (priest/priestess), or break the drinking jars of the latter.

### Article XVII

These shall be killed: who profane sites where *anitos* are kept, and sites where are buried the sacred things of their *divaans* and headmen. He who performs his necessities in those places shall be burned.

### Article XVIII

Those who do not cause these rules to be obeyed: if they are headmen, they shall be put to death by being stoned and crushed; and if they are *agorangs* they shall be placed in rivers to be eaten by sharks and caymans.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> William Henry Scott, "Kalantiaw Code that Never Was," in *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), 160.

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Scott, "Chap. 5: The Contributions of Jose E. Marco to Philippine Historiography," in *Prehispanic Source Materials: For the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 104-135; John N. Schumacher S.J., "Chap. 4: The Authenticity of the Writings Attributed to Father Jose Burgos," in *The Making of a Nation, Essays on Nineteenth-Century Filipino Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991), 44-70; Augusto V. de Viana, "The Order of Kalantiaw? Haosiao!" *The Manila Times*, September 17, 2006, Sunday edition, [http://web.archive.org/web/20070915022234/http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2006/sept/17/yehey/top\\_stories/20060917to p3.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20070915022234/http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2006/sept/17/yehey/top_stories/20060917to p3.html) (Accessed 15 March 2010); and Michael Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines: What the Social Life of Jose E. Marco's Forgeries and Ahmed Chalabi Can Tell Us about the Epistemology of Empire," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* edited by Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 260-270.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Morrow, "Kalantiaw: The Hoax," [http://www.mts.net/~pmorrow/kalant\\_e.htm](http://www.mts.net/~pmorrow/kalant_e.htm) (Accessed 21 February 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Jose Maria Pavon, "The Ancient Legends of the Islands of Negros: Book First, Part 1-2, Transcript No. 5B", in *The Robertson translations of the Pavon manuscripts of 1838-1839* (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1957), 21-25.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for the translated copy of the Code of Kalantiaw taken from the Robertson translation of the two-volume Pavon manuscript. The original copy of the Pavon manuscript along with other alleged ancient manuscript presented by Marco to Robertson were kept at the National Library during the early twentieth century, and were destroyed during World War II. The only available copy of the manuscript is the Robertson translation and photographs of the original title cover and the first 3 pages of the manuscript. Cited from Jose Maria Pavon, "The Ancient Legends of the Islands of Negros: Book First, Part 1-2, Transcript No. 5B", in *The Robertson translations of the Pavon manuscripts of 1838-1839*, 21-25.

<sup>6</sup> W. H. Scott, "The Contributions of Jose E. Marco," in *Prehispanic Source Materials*, 134.

<sup>7</sup> W. H. Scott, "Kalantiaw Code that Never Was," in *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino*, 167-168.

<sup>8</sup> Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, "Introduction," in *Maragtas Symposium: A Symposium on The Maragtas Held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 1968 at the Epifanio de los Santos Auditorium* (National Library Building) (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1970), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Mauro Garcia, "The Sources and Provenience of the Maragtas," in *Maragtas Symposium*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Garcia, "The Sources and Provenience of the Maragtas," 3-6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> William Henry Scott, "Preface to the 1984 Edition" and "Chap. 5: The Contributions of Jose E. Marco to Philippine Historiography," in *Prehispanic Source Materials: For the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), ix, 134; Michael Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines," in *Colonial Crucible*, 268.

<sup>13</sup> W. H. Scott, "The Contributions of Jose E. Marco to Philippine Historiography," in *Prehispanic Source Materials*, 134-135.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.



- <sup>15</sup> Scott, *Looking for the Prehispanic Filipino*, 168.
- <sup>16</sup> Donn V. Hart, "Review of *A Critical Study of the Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, by William Henry Scott," *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, No. 4 (August 1970), 996.
- <sup>17</sup> Fr. Juan R. Francisco, "Review of Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. II, No. 2 (September 1971), 256.
- <sup>18</sup> Gregorio F. Zaide, *History of the Republic of the Philippines, College edition* (Metro Manila: National Bookstore Inc., 1983), 49-52; *Philippine History for High Schools, Revised edition* (Manila: Modern Book Co., 1953, c1946), 26.
- <sup>19</sup> Gregorio F. Zaide and Sonia M. Zaide, *Philippine History, Corrected edition* (Metro Manila: National Bookstore Inc., 1987, c1984), preface.
- <sup>20</sup> Teodoro Agoncillo, "Before the Conquest," in *History of the Filipino People, 8th edition* (Quezon City: Garotech Publishing, 1990), 28-31.
- <sup>21</sup> T. Agoncillo, "Before the Conquest," in *History of the Filipino People, 8th edition*, 28.
- <sup>22</sup> Paul Morrow, "Kalantiaw: The Hoax," [http://www.mts.net/~pmorrow/kalant\\_e.htm](http://www.mts.net/~pmorrow/kalant_e.htm) (Accessed 21 February 2010).
- <sup>23</sup> Jaime B. Veneracion, "Ang Historiyograpiyang Pilipino sa Gitna ng mga Pagbabagong Panlipunan, 1950-1986," in *Pagbabalik sa Bayan: Mga Lektura sa Kasaysayan ng Historiograpiya at Pagkabansang Pilipino* edited by Ferdinand C. Llanes (Manila: REX Book Store, 1993), 60-61.
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- <sup>25</sup> M. Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, 260-270.
- <sup>26</sup> Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines," 260.
- <sup>27</sup> M. Salman, "Confabulating American Colonial Knowledge of the Philippines," 266-67.
- <sup>28</sup> National Historical Institute, "Datu Kalantiaw (ca. 1410-1433), Ancient Law-Giver," biographical entry in *Filipinos in History, Volume IV* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1996, c1994), 160-161; Carlos Quirino, *Who's Who in Philippine History* (Makati: Tahanan Books, 1995), 118; Juana Jimenez Pelmoka, *Pre-spanish Philippines* (Caloocan City: Philippine Graphic Arts, Inc., 1996), 86-88; Ma. Bernadette Abrera and Dedina A. Lapar, eds., "Malayang Talakayan, Marso 28," in *Ulat ng Unang Pambansang Kumperensya sa Historiograpiyang Pilipino, Marso 27 – Abril 1, 1989. Paksa, Paraan at Pananaw sa Kasaysayan* (Quezon City: Komisyon ng Kultura at Sining and Adhika ng Pilipinas Inc., 1993), 80.
- <sup>29</sup> Ma. Bernadette Abrera and Dedina A. Lapar, eds., "Congress First Session House Resolution No. 691," Second Regular Session House Bill No. 155404" and "Senate P. S. Resolution No. 116, Introduced by Senator Alberto G. Romulo," in *Ulat ng Unang Pambansang Kumperensya sa Historiograpiyang Pilipino, Marso 27 – Abril 1, 1989. Paksa, Paraan at Pananaw sa Kasaysayan*, 133-137.
- <sup>30</sup> "Congress First Session House Resolution No. 691," cited in *Ulat ng Unang Pambansang Kumperensya sa Historiograpiyang Pilipino, Marso 27 – Abril 1, 1989. Paksa, Paraan at Pananaw sa Kasaysayan*, 133.
- <sup>31</sup> National Historical Institute official website, "About Us" [http://www.nhi.gov.ph/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=session&id=5&Itemid=4](http://www.nhi.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=session&id=5&Itemid=4) (Accessed 10 May 2010)
- <sup>32</sup> Isidro Escare Abeto, "Chapter IV: The First Ylayan Law-giver" and "Chapter V: Kalantiaw's Criminal Code," in *Philippine History Reassessed, Book 1, A Collection of Undiscovered Historical Facts from Prehistoric Time to 1872*, 24-29 (Ch. IV), 30-35 (Ch. V).
- <sup>33</sup> NHI Resolution No. 12, S. 2004 'Declaring that Code of Kalantiao has No Valid Historical Basis,' obtained from NHI website, <http://www.nhi.gov.ph/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=538> (Accessed on 17 May 2010).
- <sup>34</sup> Raul Pangalangan, "The Philippine Judicial System," *IDE Asian Law Series No. 5: Judicial System and Reforms in Asian Countries (Philippines)* (Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, 2001), 1-104, <http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Als/05.html> (Accessed 05 May 2010)
- <sup>35</sup> Philippine Congress, *Congressional Record, Plenary Proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Regular Session* Vol. 1, no. 8 (2008), 278.
- <sup>36</sup> Ambeth R. Ocampo, "Revisiting the Kalantiaw Hoax", *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (14 April 2010). (Accessed in 20 April 2010) - <http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20100413-264099/Revisiting-the-Kalantiaw-hoax>
- <sup>37</sup> Ambeth R. Ocampo's Facebook profile - <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Ambeth-R-Ocampo/47261762634?ref=ts> (Accessed 20 April 2010)
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# Dansuer Bantugen:

## Gendering of the Filipino Hero

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### Introduction

*With the stage black, a melody of a chant filters hauntingly through the air. One cannot decipher if it is a woman chanting, or perhaps a flute rendering a similar sound. A lively, bouncing kobing<sup>1</sup> enters the melodic soundscape. Rattling engenders anticipation in a suspense-filled theater. The thumping of a primal drum and the clashing/crashing of gongs generate sounding in a chaotic frenzy, which makes its way into for the procession from stage left; it is led by two bare-chested men carrying 10 foot poles with flag like tassels hanging from what looks like large pointy "rice hats." Three malong<sup>2</sup>-clad ballerinas follow closely behind, executing coupé en dehor pirouettes alternately left, right, left, right twirling their woven palm leaf fans. They are partnered with three men with arms in a stylized fourth position<sup>3</sup>, wearing spandexed purple knee length tights with a silver sash/apron hanging from hips. The sash is perhaps a fusion of an Ancient Roman warrior costume and a "native" g-string<sup>4</sup>. A line of maidens in long orange dresses and gold okir<sup>5</sup>-esque tiaras walk in smilingly, arms in a Bayanihan<sup>6</sup> Pangalay style fourth position, with flexed wrists. Kolintang<sup>6</sup> gongs tinkle in the background as the "King" strides in, donned in a black waist-length jacket, knee length tights, gold apron and a bright gold-sequined crown, followed by several sabulayan<sup>7</sup> bearers. The King walks upstage center and stands confidently, defiantly, legs parted in second position<sup>8</sup>, in an assuringly masculine way.*

*The three fan dancers and their partners enter into a short combination mid-stage in circular formation. The women and men dance in ballet flats in contrast to the pointe-shoed<sup>9</sup> maidens observing on the side as part of the King's court. The couples go into a two-line formation executing various arabesques, jumps and pirou-*



Figure 1:  
Poster of  
the  
Daranjen  
ni Bantugen

*ettes. The men, choreographed in a musical queue, with legs splayed in second position, imitate the pounding drums in the air, as if manifesting what has become a very "native" or "primal" atmosphere. The men's movements are open and staccato in comparison to the women who gracefully manipulate their fans, confined within their own personal space.*

*Suddenly, rattling erupts. The dancers leave mid stage. Bantugen enters from stage left, defying gravity by executing a grand switch leap in what seems to be six feet in the air. He is wearing a simple green jacket, a white leotard, and green tights with a green sash tied around his head. Bantugen ends in relevé<sup>10</sup>, thrusting his kampilan<sup>11</sup> in the air. He hands the kampilan to an*

*attendant, greets the King with a bow and an appropriate handshake then touching the heart, in true Southeast Asian (Muslim) male protocol. Bantugen then prepares for his solo, as the maidens gaze in admiration and desire. In a whirlwind combination, Bantugen performs tour jetés, tour en seconde, tour en l'air, pirouettes in grande allegro style- a feat for the prince danseur.*

The Philippine Ballet Theatre performed *Darangen ni Bantugen* at the Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo Theater, located in the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) on May 14, 2008. It was premiered as part of a month long celebration of Filipino culture and arts, organized by the Filipino Heritage Festival Committee. On November 25, 2005, UNESCO declared the Darangen, a Maranao epic chant, a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage.<sup>12</sup> The Maranaos of Mindanao (from namely the Lake Lanao region) are considered to be the largest of the thirteen Moro<sup>13</sup>-ethnolinguistic groups in the Southern Philippines.<sup>14</sup> According to UNESCO, the Darangen, composed in classical Maranao verse, is the longest Philippine epic with 72,000 lines. The epic, which is chanted by a professional singer called an *onor*<sup>15</sup>, can take days or even weeks to recite in its entirety. Gener Caringal, Philippine Ballet Theatre's artistic director during the 2008-2009 season, choreographed a ballet based on the Darangen fittingly titled *Darangen ni Bantugen*, the story of Bantugen. As part of the lineage of Philippine dance housed in the government-subsidized CCP, the Philippine Ballet Theatre is one of three major ballet companies in the Philippines, including Ballet Philippines and Ballet Manila<sup>16</sup>. Also within the auspices of the CCP is the celebrated Bayanihan National Dance Company, the Philippine cultural "attaché" that has defined and brought "national" dance and music to an international audience through its tours. Central to the many myths and stories contained within the Darangen is the mythical hero Bantugen, or *Paramata Bantogen*, who is considered by the Maranao to be the "perfect model of all the qualities that should be found in a man."<sup>17</sup>

In this paper, I will discuss how the ballet *Darangen ni Bantugen*, as performed by the Philippine Ballet Theatre, is a reflection of the shifting ideas of "Filipinoness" and "Maranaoness" in modern Philippine society. I argue that the shift echoed in *Darangen ni*

*Bantugen* is a direct attempt (by the State) to subsume Maranao identity under the Philippine body politic through the appropriation of the cultural arts: that is, what is Maranao becomes Filipino through a process of refashioning. *Darangen ni Bantugen* recontextualizes images of "Moro" masculinity from what was historically considered in the Philippine arts as the Muslim Other to the refined Filipino Hero. In this context essentialized ideas of masculinity have morphed from the belligerent, morally deprived Moro found in *komedya* plays to the warrior/prince of Bayanihan's dance piece *Singkil*, thus culminating in the Filipino Hero observed in *Darangen ni Bantugen*. Borrowing from Shay, I contend that "balleticizing" an indigenous folk form is an attempt to create a high art that is understood within the Manileño<sup>18</sup> gaze as belonging not only to the Maranao, but rendering it as part of the Philippine nation's cultural history. *Darangen ni Bantugen* reassigns an ownership of culture, from being Moro or Muslim to Filipino, thus legitimizing and adhering to the UNESCO recognition of the Darangen epic as intangible heritage. This recognition invokes a set of issues and concerns over ownership: Who "owns" this art? Who can create from this art? Who is this art for? Against this backdrop, the ballet *Darangen ni Bantugen* becomes the manifested answer to these questions: the Darangen, a Maranao art form, is simultaneously both Filipino AND Maranao/Muslim/Moro. The ballet is syncretic, mixing balletic forms with Bayanihan derived movements, infusing Filipino ideas of masculinity and femininity within a seemingly "originally" Maranao and ultimately "Filipino" story.

The construction and dynamics of performance as practiced within Maranao society through the holistic chanting performance of one woman or man and her/his kolintang ensemble is different from a ballet where theatric devices such as sophisticated lighting design, a musical score and dramatized choreography interact to produce a spectacle onstage. The "western" theater experience creates certain protocols of performance, using the different sensory experiences of the audience member's eyes and ears, which that are focused and separated from a proscenium stage. This is in contrast to a Maranao gathering or celebration that may be held at someone's house, where people may have their attention elsewhere besides the musical performance.

For Filipinos, the desire to retrieve and attach a perceived pre-Islamic art form such as the Darangen is a

deliberate attempt aimed at connecting to what is seen as an uncolonized past. The *Darangen* represents a rich cultural history *that is* Filipino, contradicting and reacting to the notion that Filipinos are a “people without culture.”<sup>19</sup> As a result of this appropriation, the Christian versus Moro dichotomy in Filipino performing arts, from *komedya* plays to dances such as *Maglalatik*<sup>20</sup>, is redefined: *Darangen ni Bantugen* becomes a manifestation of this dialogue as Bantugen transforms into the “syncretized” male who dons/embodies both the Filipino and Maranao/Moro identity. Bantugen is refashioned as the cultured Moro, the ballerino, the warrior and the hero. Watching *Darangen ni Bantugen* “being” Filipino resituates the Moro as Other; it visually and performatively integrates the Moro as Self, even if such a theatrical movements derives from an image or sense that exoticizes and idealizes the cultural heritage of the Moro as Other. *Darangen ni Bantugen* constructs the mythical Maranao world of *Bembaran*<sup>21</sup> as the Other in relation to the urban and national center of Manila, creating a valued binary between Manileño hegemony and the Moro Other. By identifying with the Moro Other through an assertion that the *Darangen* is “Filipino” and thus reconstructing the Moro image that had pervaded and informed certain Philippine cultural art forms such as the *komedya* and Bayanihan’s *Muslim Suite*, the Philippine Ballet Theatre is attempting to re-present Bantugen as a quintessential “Filipino Hero.” *Darangen ni Bantugen*’s choreographic dance argument<sup>22</sup> situates Bantugen as a legitimate Filipino cultural hero whose story has been preserved by the Maranao, in spite of Spanish colonization. Though wrought out of the mold of the image of the “Muslim” in the Philippines, Bantugen is a manifestation of an assembly of masculinities: the Moro, the Warrior, *and* the Hero.

In order to understand how and why the character of Bantugen was “choreographed” the way he was in the *Darangen ni Bantugen*, we must look at the dominant constructions of Moro masculinity. In particular, I will examine the portrayal of the Moro in the following two Philippine performances: the *komedya* play and the “Prince” in Bayanihan’s dance *Singkil*. Against these representations, we will begin to see emerge the ways in which the *Darangen ni Bantugen* as a descendant image from the Moro and the Prince characters, that although it emerges with some of the cultural “DNA” of these images, *Darangen ni Bantugen* attempts to re-



Figures 2 & 3:  
Sultan,  
Sultana and  
Princess  
Christian  
Soldiers.  
*Komedya ng  
Don Galo*  
performed at  
*Komedya  
Fiesta 2008* at  
University of  
the Philippines  
(Skyscraper  
City: Asian  
Forums 2010)

image the gendered Moro male as a “Cultural” Hero. The depiction of Bantugen through its “make it macho”<sup>23</sup> balletic choreography supplants the conventionalized gender constructions that are present in the original narrative chants and songs with different categorizations of gender. Women who have more prominent roles in the *Darangen* chants have minor roles in the ballet, thus reiterating and reifying a patriarchal order where Bantugen is *King*. First, however, I will discuss briefly the chanting form from which the *Darangen* has traditionally been sung.

## The *Darangen* and the *Onor*

The *Darangen* is one of the longest epics in the Philippines and was declared by UNESCO as “another Philippine masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity” in 2005.<sup>24</sup> The *Darangen* is an epic chanted by an *onor* who narrates the history of the Maranao through legend, and tells of the mythical Kingdom of Bembaran. As such, “before the introduction of Islam, the *Darangen* was the source of wisdom that validated acts in the society.”<sup>25</sup> The *Darangen* is

memorized by the *onor* and is performed in what is considered a holistic presentation, where the *onor* is expected to chant, recite poetry, dance and play the *kolintang*. The role of the *onor* carries with it the responsibility of perfecting and displaying the vocal and musical arts of the Maranao, and serves as the transmitter and carrier of tradition. The process of training an *onor* involves a retired *Goro* (teacher) teaching the young *Morù* (apprentice) by the rote system where the student emulates the stylings of the *Goro*.<sup>26</sup> According to the documentary *Darangen: A Maranao Epic Chant*, the increasing Islamic influence in Lanao del Sur has crafted a perception that sees all, which is pre-Islamic and culturally folk as un-Islamic, contributing to the alleged demise of the practice of the chant.

Interwoven in the chant are social values, wisdom and a code of personhood for the Maranao people. The *Darangen* can thus be viewed as the epitome of Maranao culture and contains the “essence” of what it means to be Maranao, and ultimately what it means to be a man. For example, a popular chant in the *Darangen* called *Mamayog* tells of the edicts of how to become and what it means to be a good Maranao leader. Accordingly, it is “common in the epic to find... advice to the young generation to be like the heroes” as the heroes are “not extraordinary persons or people gifted with special powers, but as ordinary men whose virtues are the source of their power because the gods always help good men.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, masculinity is not defined by the physical power and ability of a man, but is rooted in his virtues and actions.

Bantugen as depicted within the *Darangen* is the perfect man. “Bantugen [*sic*] was humble. Much loved by his people, he was the most popular person in the whole of Bembaran because he was so helpful that no one who came to him for help was ever disappointed, whether the help needed was financial or physical... He was noble, wise, and handsome, so attractive to the ladies that he was much sought after, but he was never one to court.”<sup>28</sup> Many of the descriptions from the Maranao perspective portray Bantugen as great not necessarily for his physical strength but because of his refinement, integrity, bravery, and especially his desirability among many women.

## Komedya in the Philippines

During the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, various types of propaganda were used as tools to support the colonial order.<sup>29</sup> As the Spanish were unsuccessful in colonizing parts of Mindanao and Sulu, in part due to the fierce resistance of the Moros, the Spanish introduced the *komedya*, or the *moro-moro*, plays that depicted conflicts between Christians and Muslims, in an attempt to create a divide between the two groups. The Christians, the protagonists of the plays were modeled after the Spanish. According to Nicanor Tiongson, in a *komedya* “both the characters and the actors playing those characters are called *personahe* and are usually divided into: *Cristianos* (Christians) from the kingdoms, principalities or countries of Medieval Europe.... and *Moros* (*Moors* or Muslims) from the Muslim Sultanates or Caliphates.”<sup>30</sup> Demonizing the Moro, “the plays, accordingly, recite the struggles between these and the Christian tribes, the former attempting to seduce the latter to Islam, with the alternative of death in various horrible forms”<sup>31</sup>. Eventually the Moro-Moro was appropriated and became a popular genre of Tagalog theater and rose to prominence in the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> According to Tofighian, “When indigenous writers started to write plays, the Moro-Moro became secularized, focusing on love stories set against the background of Christian-Moor hostilities.”<sup>33</sup> This form of Spanish propaganda, along with the history of slavery whereby Moros would raid Christian coastal towns in Luzon and the Visayas, reinforced difference, along with animosity, between the Christians and Moros. These sentiments served as a backdrop from which a negative constructed image of the Moro emerged.

The Moor *personahe* in a *komedya* play is defined by a certain hierarchy: the sultan or *emperador* (emperor), the *princesa* (princess), the *konsehero* (counselor), *heneral* (general) and *soldado* (soldier). According to Tiongson “all the male characters in a *komedya*, except the villagers, shepherds, and hermits, are bursting with belligerence and quick to draw the sword. However, Christians are described as more civilized, more loyal to their king and faith, more noble in court or battlefield, while Moors are uncouth, self-serving, disloyal to their sultan and cowardly in the face of death.”<sup>34</sup>



When viewed as a system of gendering, the Spanish-Indio relations take on new meanings: Indios as feminized, powerless, and cared for subjects, while the Spanish are represented as paternal and hyper-masculine. Within this system, the Moros came to symbolize a threat to the established patriarchy and colonial order of things. In so doing, the Moro was highly characterized, based on the European Spanish colonial gaze that associated Islam with Arabic cultures. This is evidenced in the costuming where “Moorish males wear... Arabian-inspired headdresses- all in bright red or orange... The Sultan is identified by his chest band, big cape and large turbante”<sup>35</sup>. The Christian courtiers modeled after Spanish military officials of the nineteenth century dressing in black and blue attire (See Figures 2 & 3). This is an Orientalist construct wherein the *komedya* play in Mindanao becomes the dark continent of the Other occupied by uncivilized, strange and morally inferior Moros.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Spanish colonization came to an end and the Philippines was ceded to the U.S. in the 1898 Treaty of Paris. Although the Moro Province was created in 1903 under American military rule as a distinct economic territory, the shift from a Republican U.S. Congress to a Democratic one in 1913 marked major changes in Mindanao relations and called for the integration of the southern regions into the Philippine nation-state. With the creation and building of the Philippine nation came the need for the creation of a Filipino national identity and “Filipino leaders regarded ‘Muslim identity’ as an intrinsic part of being Filipino.”<sup>36</sup> The process however of defining “what is Filipino” and incorporating the Moros into a “Filipino” body politic created a socio-political relationship between dominant Filipino culture and the subjugated Moro culture. As power switched “hands” from the Americans to the central Philippine government, so did the colonial patriarchal order. The Moros became “feminized” as the assertion of patriarchal domination under the Americans morphed into the dominance of the Philippine central government, with Manila as its center. Within this conceptual gendering framework, the “internal colonization” of the Moro in the Philippine nation-building project was seen through their subjugation under the patriarchal rule of the Philippine central government.

## Nationalism and the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company

In 1957, the Commission on National Integration (CNI) was created to “achieve real, complete and permanent integration of all cultural minorities into the national polity.”<sup>37</sup> Coincidentally the same year, Dr. Helena Z. Benitez founded the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company based in Manila. During this nation-building period “the Philippines was coming near the close of its first quarter-century of American colonial rule, and Western influence was changing Filipino social customs. The old dances were dying out and American dances were extremely popular, especially in the urban centers and areas reached by American cultural and educational influence.”<sup>38</sup> In response to the “Americanization” of the Filipino, one of Bayanihan’s objectives was to “collect indigenous art forms as expressed in music, dance, literature, arts and crafts; to distill and transform these cultural traditions into theatrical representation.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as part of the process to find the “roots” of Filipino culture, Bayanihan dance researchers had gone into the field to document and record the dance and music of the “Filipino” people. In a speech during a visit to Marawi City in Lanao del Sur, Lucrecia R. Kasilag, the musical director of Bayanihan, proclaimed to a majority Maranao audience, “not only do all of us become inseparable partners in nation-building but more importantly, together we forge an enduring bond of mutual respect and love for each other as brothers and fellow citizens of a great nation.”<sup>40</sup>

Bayanihan, as a “civic response to a government appeal for a cultural program”, participated in the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair, and has since become the “depository of almost all Filipino dances, dress and songs.”<sup>41</sup> By implication, Bayanihan serves as *the* authority on and source of authentic knowledge regarding Filipino dance and music, including that of the Moro people. In this capacity and as a result of the international acclaim it has received, Bayanihan alleges to have “awakened a new pride among Filipinos in their culture heritage; added a new dimension to the country’s dance tradition; and has built a rich reserve of international goodwill.” The recognition by the international community further reinforces Bayanihan’s credibility as the authority on national cultural forms.

Interestingly, according to Bayanihan, the dances and musical cultures of Christian Filipinos trace their source-origins to the Moro-Moro plays performed during the Spanish colonial period.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, the



Figure 4:  
Early  
version of  
Singkil  
(Santos  
2004)



Figure 5:  
Bayanihan  
during the  
U.S. tour  
2001

cultural arts traditions of the Moro people were allegedly gathered in the “field” by Bayanihan’s dance researchers Francisca Reyes Aquino, Leonor Orosa Go-quiringco and Henrietta Hofer-Ele. One can still see traces of the Moro from *komedya* plays in Bayanihan’s *Muslim Suite*. Upon observation, the dancers in the

*Muslim Suite* exude an aristocratic and somewhat defiant image of the Moro: the serious facial expression and the “regal” posture of the female dancers and the warrior, fierce and formidable attitude of the male dancers.<sup>43</sup> In a sense, the image of the Moro as depicted in the *Muslim Suite* is a reflection of the dominant culture’s perspective of the Moro people. As Shay states, “dance performances often create and perpetuate devastatingly accurate portraits of national prejudices, class strife and ethnic religious tensions and they express a reality often avoided in the verbal discourse of strident nationalism and chauvinism.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, as Gaerlan discusses, the Moro depiction is that “Muslims are exotic; they have slaves; they are warlike; their leaders and they live in a ‘sensuous’ atmosphere.”<sup>45</sup> The politics of representation demonstrate the power dynamics between the Christian majority and Muslim minority, where non-Moros perform the “Muslim dancer” on stage. The support and propagation of Bayanihan by the Philippines government, and private funders, can be seen as an attempt to construct and define the image of the Filipino as well as represent it to the international community. Thus, the “Moro” in Bayanihan’s *Muslim Suite* purports an image of the “Moro” as fully integrated within the Philippine nation.

In 2000, Bayanihan was named “The Philippines National Folk Dance Company.”<sup>46</sup> The creation and inclusion of the *Muslim Suite* in the Bayanihan repertoire is symbolic of the political agenda of the Philippine government to assimilate the Moros into the Philippine national body politic. In this regard, Bayanihan has effectively become the symbol of the successful cohesive Philippine nation whereby the Christian and Moro peoples, in the spirit of *bayanihan*, meaning to work together, share the same stage under the Philippine flag. For the Philippine government “the value of utilizing folk dance for the representation of an entire nation emerges from the common public view that these dances originate in some primordial source of the nation’s purest value.”<sup>47</sup> “Moro” has been transformed from being the label used by the Spaniards to create difference between Christianized “Indios” and Islamic “Moros,” to a constructed, politicized representation of “Moro” in Bayanihan’s *Muslim Suite*, the Philippine “cultural attaché” to the international community. Moreover, Bayanihan has become the standard from which many cultural performance groups base



their own repertoire. One can see evidence of such an influence, especially in dance companies housed in the CCP, including the Philippine Ballet Theatre.

### The Muslim Suite: Singkil, the "Maranao" Component of Bayanihan's Repertoire

*Entering from stage right, a woman wearing a white, form-fitted bejeweled frock clasping two fans is seated atop two bamboo poles carried by two men. Her apparent "royalty" is made obvious by the "crown" of a golden bird called the sarimanok on her head. A slow melody emerges from the kolintang gong set, which seems to heighten this somewhat brooding, exotic atmosphere. Upstage left, seated on his royal "throne" is a Prince, with his sword in his right hand and shield in his left. He sits in desire observing the Princess. He is bare-chested, donning a kopia.<sup>48</sup> The carriage halts mid-stage, the Princess' female attendant/umbrella holder kneels before her, opening the royal umbrella and offering her hand to assist the Princess off her perch. Elegantly the Princess places her right hand in her attendant's hand and steps down, waving the fans in figure eight motions through the air. Her attendant follows suit, carrying the umbrella to cover her majesty's precious head. The Princess saunters across the stage, walking suggestively swaying her hips, waving her fans alternating her right fan and left fan up and down. Her chin is stylistically cocked up, while her eyes are cast down. She makes no qualms with having the occasional eye contact with the audience members. The bamboo poles are laid in on the floor, two pairs in a criss-cross formation, held by four holders. They bow on their knees, with their heads down awaiting a command from their Princess.*

*After the Princess circles the bamboo poles once, she comes downstage, with bells on her ankles, wearing a pair of golden Aladdin shoes. As she pauses, the kolintang tinkling stops, and everyone waits in anticipation of the Princess' next move. She stamps her foot... once... twice... three times; the bamboo holders come up from their bow. She stamps once... twice... three times again and in an instance the bamboo clackers start their rhythm slowly. The Princess and her attendant begin to weave in and out of the bamboo, walking through on half toe. The tempo speeds up. The Prince, perhaps excited by this irresistible display of the Princess below*

*him, stands up, he thrusts his sword in the air, as if on the attack. The clashing on the rim of the gong and the thundering roll of the drum signals his desire to enter the bamboo with the Princess. Also donning a pair of "royal" Aladdin shoes, the Prince, with his sword and shield, weaves in and out of the bamboo also on half toe, swinging his sword like a baton in his hand. The dance ends in the climax of both the Prince and the Princess with incredible speed weaving through the bamboo in a flurry of fans and swords and shields.*

According to National Dance Artist Leonor Goquingco "dancing among the Muslim peoples is more Oriental, mystical (specially for the women)... having flowered in a culture touched by the influences of the Hindu, Javanese, Chinese and Arab-Persian civilizations, yet retaining its individuality... Inner intensity and absorption, mysticism, languid grace, much use of the upper torso, flowing, extended movements of the arms as they change from pose to pose.... all these bespeak the Oriental style."<sup>49</sup> It seems obvious from the description of *Singkil* that there is an eroticism in the exoticization of the "Muslim" in the performance of *Singkil*. It "harkens back to the lurid Orientalist vision of Muslim slaves and harems in the Middle East." When the Prince enters the bamboos "he gives an impression analogous to the macho (and Orientalist) King of Siam played by Yul Brynner in Rogers and Hammerstein's 1951 film *The King and I*."<sup>50</sup> Through use of choreography and costuming, *Singkil* is the manifestation of the essentialized Moro. The liberties of costuming recalls the Arabian-esque turbans of the *komedya*, with the Aladdin shoes and the white form-fitting outfit of the Princess, replacing what would traditionally be a very shapeless, loose-fitting *malong*. The absence of a very traditional Maranao piece of clothing such as the *malong* (see Figure 4, the tubular cloth worn around the waist of the dancers) and, instead, the use of the body hugging costume in the modern Bayanihan *Singkil* (see Figure 5) draws the audience's gaze more explicitly to the female body, exposing a sense of her physicality and the "shapeliness" of her hips. The body of the Princess is treated "as a kind of canvas on which culture paints images of gender."<sup>51</sup> The Prince, with his open vest to expose his bare chest emphasizes his fit body, indeed an act of physical "macho-ness." In a sense, the Princess and the

Prince become the eroticized depictions of the body of the Moro Other.

The Prince's fierce and bombastic sexuality as he "thrusts" his sword in the air prior to entering the bamboo poles to dance with the Princess is perhaps symbolic of the latent eroticism and sensuality between the two characters. Similarly, this sword's "thrusting" motion conjures certain phallic connotations, his sword symbolic of an erection as he pursues the Princess, the object of his desire, the "chase" being a danced form of foreplay. At one point after the Prince enters the bamboos, the "haughty Princess reclines submissively... at his feet."<sup>52</sup> This submissive gesture by the Princess reemphasizes the hyper-masculinity of the Prince, the dance being a very macho display of his



Figure 6: Prince Bantugen executing a Grande Jete (Ador Pamintuan 2009)

sexuality. The "orgasmic" climax unfolds at an incredible speed in which the two performers weave in and out of the bamboo—as spectacle that amazes and wows audiences.

What is not made obvious by the staging of this scene by Bayanihan is that it has its origins in the Darangen. In this regard, the Prince actually depicts Bantugen, while the Princess serves as one of the many women he pursues (in Singkil it is Princess Gandigan). The part of the epic in which Bayanihan draws this scene from tells of "a prince noted for his amorous exploits, who was finally captivated by a lovely princess, and loses no time in pursuing her. But the spirits of the forest will not leave him unpunished for his philandering, so they set his path with difficulties... to make his pursuit of the princess extremely challenging."<sup>53</sup> As she enters on stage, the Princess is with her carriage on display, a

visual feast for the Prince. Here, the gaze of the audience is that of the Prince, the Princess the object of his desire as she attempts to "seduce" the Prince as she walks suggestively, swaying her hips, across the stage. The dance culminates with the Prince achieving sexual satisfaction by "capturing" the Princess after a speedy chase through the bamboo.

However, as Cadar argues, "Maranao society sanctions against male and female dancing together."<sup>54</sup> The "original" Singkil consisted of a single female dancer weaving in and out of the bamboo; there was no Bantugen saving or pursuing the Princess.<sup>55</sup> While strict social norms about the sexes 'dancing' together might have informed traditional Maranao society, particularly when Cadar was disputing the 'authenticity' of Bayanihan's depiction of Maranaos in *Muslim Suite* many contemporary Mindanaoan cultural arts troupes in fact have men and women dancing, interacting, and performing onstage together. I would argue that this performance reality is in part attributable to the revisionist work of the Bayanihan Dance Company. Indeed, one could look at the many different Mindanaoan performance groups that have modeled themselves after the Bayanihan Singkil and its presentation of a lovely Princess being "chased" or courted by a Prince, both stepping through clacking bamboo.

The inclusion of the Prince in Bayanihan's Singkil is an intriguing addition that raises several important issues. According to Ricardo Trimillos, as told to him by Bayanihan's "mother" Lucrecia R. Kasilag, "Freddie Durano of Bayanihan was the one who created the prince character for himself."<sup>56</sup> Based on his surname, one could infer that Durano is not Maranao and thus explains, in part, his willingness to break Maranao social protocols, possibly unbeknownst to him, by having the Prince dance with a woman. Durano's interpretation of the Prince character has become part of the Bayanihan's "tradition" when performing the Singkil dance. The orientalized, bombastic sexuality of the Prince speaks to the performance of masculinity onstage, whereby Durano created a fantasized depiction of a hyper-sexualized man within a heteronormative context. The addition of the Prince, moreover, has some pertinent implications: it adds a dramatic element to a dance, i.e. a man chasing a woman through fast clacking bamboo; it reinforces an idea that a woman needs to be "saved"; a woman submits, while simultaneously being attracted to a strong, domineer-

ing male; and, that men are always victim to their sexual passions. In this sense, the inclusion of the Bantugen character reflects Jacques Lacan's phallocentric notion, where from the phallus "the place of authority, the privileged subjectivity, is always normative" and, in doing so, the audience shares the gaze of the Prince as he watches the Princess.<sup>57</sup> The Prince eventually is able to "capture" and "subjugate" the Princess. Similarly, the Prince is rendered as a symbol of Moro masculinity by the non-Maranao, Durano, and "falls under the category of artistic creation."<sup>58</sup>

Accordingly, the appropriation of the art forms of marginalized peoples (i.e. the Maranaos) by a dominant group (i.e. the Philippine government-supported Bayanihan National Dance Company) results in the powerlessness of a minoritized group, the Moros, in any rendering of their cultural arts within the national scheme. This is relevant in that Bayanihan has become the authority and source of 'authentic' depiction of many dances and music performances of the Philippines from which cultural arts companies have based their "folk" dances on. In this context, Santos notes:

Authenticity requires going out into the field to observe the dance at its place of origin, as Bayanihan has done... the approach is, first of all, humanistic: to know and understand the people- their lives, occupations, aesthetic concepts, and history... In the adaptation of the ethnic and period dances to the stage, authenticity is still the decisive consideration. It is, above all, essential not to lose the original flavor and feeling of the dance.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast, I argue that the addition of the Prince character in *Singkil* can be seen more as an artistic rendering of the Darangen narrative by Bayanihan rather than an "authentic" depiction attempting to capture the "original flavor" of the dance. Bayanihan's depiction fosters the image of a hyper-sexualized Moro masculinity as opposed to the "original" feeling in the dance that is performed traditionally only by women. However, Bayanihan's alleged National Dance Company status situates the choreographers of *Singkil*, including Durano in his creation of the Bantugen character, as legitimate purveyors of Maranao music, dance and tradition.

## Why Danseur Bantugen could not be Maranao

The Prince's costume disallows certain ways of being Maranao, while purporting an 'inauthentic' image of Maranao masculinity through Bayanihan's portrayal of Bantugen. According to Cadar, the "displaying of the chest and abdomen...is offensive to the Maranao sense of decency."<sup>60</sup> Also rubbing against this misrepresentation is how the Prince's costume accentuates Bantugen's genitalia, his sex, through the spandexed snugness of his tights. Granted the costuming may be seen as appropriate for a ballerino because the balletic



Figure 7:  
Male  
Ensemble  
Dancers  
(Facebook  
Philippine  
Ballet  
Theatre  
2010)

form of dancing requires a man to be able to move freely, jump, jeté, pirouette without having any material restriction or impediment to his movement. Similarly, one notices that all other danseurs (See Figure 7), including the King, have a sash strategically covering their genitalia. The sash is reminiscent of a g-string commonly found among Philippine cultural communities such as the Ibaloi and Kankaney in the Cordillera region. An exception to the g-string costume is the "genderless" bottled souls in the scene the *Abode of Death*; these dancers perform in nude-colored unitards guided by gender-neutral movements (See Synopsis *Darangen ni Bantugen*). The direct display of Bantugen's genitalia onstage reinforces his hyper-masculinity in contradistinction to not only the female dancers, and their "lack" of a phallus, but also in relation to other men who are covered and fail to "measure-up" to Bantugen.

The other men's crotches are "veiled," thereby directing a genitalic gaze to Bantugen's "package" and emphasizing his genitalia that is in constant display. Besides the non-gendered bottled soul exception

where men and women seemingly wear the same unitard costume, Bantugen does not have the g-string costume accessory. Why? Perhaps it is because of the technical difficulty of the choreography of Bantugen that the sash might get in the way perhaps as Bantugen executes a grande turning jete across the stage. This may be true. But perhaps it is to display the very masculinity of the character, as shown through his body, his fit athletic, muscled male physique. By accentuating Bantugen's genitalia via his tights, his masculinity, his sex, is drawn into focus. Consequently, and, in combination with the outstanding athletic ability of the dancer, he represents the essentialization of an ideal epitome of a man. As costuming engenders the "body as canvas" concept, "the ideal" writes Tolentino, "is to infuse the dance with the masculine personality, initially presented by the dancer's costume."<sup>61</sup> As the use of tights in ballet have always been associated with the ballerina, thus having been a feminizing aspect of ballet when a man dons them, by contrast, in *Darangen ni*

*Bantugen*, in combination with masculine choreographies, accentuates the masculinity of Bantugen.

Similar to Bayanihan's inclusion of the bare-chested Prince character, Bantugen in tights displays the "phallus as master-symbol" in that Bantugen's flaunted genitalia re-emphasizes male authority and power.<sup>62</sup> In the ballet, Bantugen is aroused and tempted by women. The first temptation is by Magimar, whose engagement to Bantugen's brother Madale and subsequent flirtations and seduction of Bantugen led to his exile from Bembaran. The second instance is a vision that Bantugen has of Datimbang, and his search for her, which leads him on a tumultuous journey, resulting in his death. Despite Bantugen's apparent weakness for women, he is never emasculated. Rather, he is depicted as hypersexual. Though the actual ballet form has a certain technical refinement in comparison to Bayanihan's *Singkil* where the focus is on the dancer's agility while stepping through clacking bamboo at an incredible speed, Bantugen's performance in *Singkil* is similarly depicted as the hypersexual man. The two artistic



Figure 8:  
Bantugen  
lifting his  
Diwata  
(Facebook  
Philippine  
Ballet Theatre  
2010)

renditions focus on Bantugen's relation to women. In this sense, *Darangen ni Bantugen* emerges as a masculine ballet, while *Singkil* becomes a masculinized interpretation of the all female "original."

## Balleticizing Bantugen

"The dance itself serves as a sign of the cultural process of 'othering' through representation- on ongoing process of construction that is always self-reflexive with regard to the culture that produces it."<sup>63</sup> Ballet came to Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>64</sup> What seems to be a relatively new phenomenon is a dance genre termed "*neo-ethnic*" which emphasizes contemporary works using "ethnic" or traditional forms. According to Sally Ann Ness, the neo-ethnic ballet is the Filipinized embodiment of ballet and *Darangen ni Bantugen* has been classified by the CCP as a part of the neoethnic genre.<sup>65</sup> While the Other is the "ethnic," it has simultaneously become a part of the Filipino cultural identity. In reviews and in its marketing, *Darangen ni Bantugen* has been described as a Filipino piece, and proud part of Filipino heritage. Understanding this appropriation of the ballet dance form within a post-colonial Philippine context creates "high art" of the Other. Caringal states that "the most important thing here is that Filipinos, no(t) necessarily the ones from Mindanao or Luzon or Visayas, have a very, very, good material, an epic that we can be proud of."<sup>66</sup> Bantugen thus becomes a "Filipino" and a Maranao symbol. The Christian symbology is that can be read in the ballet is interesting (see the Synopsis of *Darangen ni Bantugen*). The parallel of the story of the *Darangen ni Bantugen* to the sacrificial death of the National Hero during Spanish colonization, José Rizal, and to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is perhaps a reflection of the agenda of the creators of the ballet to have chosen a story that would be most familiar to a majority Christian nation.

In Joelle Jacinto's article on the opening of *Darangen ni Bantugen* in 2008, "Maranaos in the audience at the May 14 and 15 premiere at the CCP sought Caringal out to share that he had managed to show a representation of their culture that they were able to relate to."<sup>67</sup> The Philippine Ballet Theatre, with their vast repertoire, has "expanded its vision and pursues the goal of bringing upscale art of dance to general appreciation among Filipino audiences."<sup>68</sup> Perhaps

what the Maranaos recognize in the ballet is the recognition of an art form that originates with their own people, that the balleticizing of the *Darangen* has in some way "legitimized" their contribution to the greater Filipino society. And they can claim, with pride, that one of their own, Prince Bantugen, is a mythical Filipino Hero.

*Darangen ni Bantugen's* choreography is a combination of classical ballet, modern and contemporary dance genres.<sup>69</sup> However, if choreography "focuses attention on the interrelationality of various sets of codes and conventions through which identity is represented," then the performance could be read in many ways.<sup>70</sup> For example, Berger has suggested that the ballet form has been "embedded with feminine and homosexual stereotypes" and dance, in general, stage men as the emasculated "Other."<sup>71</sup> In the context of this reading, Bantugen can be viewed as an attempt by the hegemonic Manila arts community, an extension of the patriarchal Philippine Government, to appropriate a Maranao art form, subjugating it through a process of feminization or more accurately, *balleticization*. In contrast, by examining the choreography, the character of Bantugen also reinforces a typical patriarchal structure. As Hanna adds, "Movement metaphors distinguish male from female. Danced gender patterns serve to remind audience members of their respective identities and roles."<sup>72</sup> Gendering can be observed through the syntactic ballet vocabularies in *Darangen ni Bantugen* where men control women and become the base from which women move. The man constantly displays the female body while reiterating his masculinity as shown in his strength and agility. During the *pas de deux* sections, the danseur is able to control, manipulate and lift the female body, exerting a certain amount of power within the dynamic of a duet (See Figure 8).

Daly reminds us, "Pointe work often frames the ballerina as needy of her partner's help" where the ballerina cannot execute specific movements, such as quadruple pirouettes or arabesques without the assistance and control of her male partner.<sup>73</sup> Where the danseur's movement is outward, occupying much of the physical space on stage with jumps and turning combinations, the ballerina is confined to a smaller space where her pointe shoes bring her more upward than outward, limiting her mobility and utilization of the stage space. Hanna also explains, "these patterns of gender in

space- female immobility and male coming and going- are expressed in dance.”<sup>74</sup>

The choreography for the male ensemble in *Darangen ni Bantugen* is quite masculine in its athleticism; it uses a combination of jumps and pirouettes, for example. Through syntactic ballet choreography, *Darangen ni Bantugen* attempts to create ballet “as macho, in the sense of making it seem athletically masculine and resolutely heterosexual” countering the “effeminate stereotyping in the ballet world.”<sup>75</sup> As one blogger stated with regard to *Darangen ni Bantugen*:

I must commend the dancers in the play, especially the main characters...Most especially, the dancer who portrayed Prince Bantugen. Aside from being a great dancer, he acted so well and was so much into the character. There was a scene I really commend. There was this scene where his soul wandered in the heavens and saw the other souls. His dance was really fantastic and there was this step (I don't know how to describe it, and I don't know the name either.) which he executed many times without pause! And it was like he's pausing in the air when he leaps!<sup>76</sup>

The blogger's use of “step” is a reference to “barrel turns.” In this movement, the dancer turns consecutively in a fantastic display of technique and athleticism, jumping in the air with one leg extended outward in front of the body as the back leg is bent in a *derrière* attitude. This is one indication of how movement is gendered in the ballet, as one would not see a ballerina attempt to perform such a movement. Such athleticism characterizes *Darangen ni Bantugen*, not only in the choreography of Bantugen, but also in the male ensemble work. For example, during the final battle scene between Prince Miskoyaw and Madale, to which Bantugen eventually joins, the danseurs are hoisted atop of the shoulders of another ballerino as they “ride” them like horses and joust with *kampilans*. The battle itself, a very masculine display, ends with Miskoyaw's defeat and Bantugen's triumph. Whether the audience reads the ballerinos who carry the premier danseur as horses, servants, or just stage effect, one sees visually the dominating power of the premier danseur in contrast to the ballerinos representing a “subordinate masculinity.”<sup>77</sup>

Bantugen is not the bombastic, hypersexual male in *Singkil* or the *komedya*; rather, he “seduces” his partners in lifts, he assists them in their pirouette combinations. Bantugen, though masculine and sexual in the

sense that he is in pursuit of women in the ballet, there is an attempt to project him as a refined male in the balletic choreography.

## The Role of Women in the Darangen and the ballet *Darangen ni Bantugen*

There are marked differences when comparing the “original” Darangen narrative with the staged ballet. Initially while reading the text of the Darangen one is struck by the hyper-sexualization of Bantugen whose sex drive is so powerful that he seems to be constantly risking his life to find “sweethearts” in every kingdom.<sup>78</sup> On Bantugen's quest to see the beautiful Maginar [*sic*], Queen of Babalayan Anonen, he is faced with some life risking feats and requests the help of the *tonongs*.<sup>79</sup> They respond:

Now you have seen, Bantugen, what  
A foolish, boastful prince you are!  
You have many sweethearts, but now  
Must you still look for another  
While undergoing such hardships?  
For you could, indeed, have been killed  
And would now be long forgotten  
Passing through that thick cogon field!<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, while reading deeper into the text we encounter images of women who actively participate in affairs that are considered within male “space.” For example, in negotiating with the other Datus as to what to do with Bantugen's body after his death, and as the news of Bantugen's death could possibly cause a misunderstanding and worse spark a war between Bembaran and Natangkopan a Ragat, Datimbang convinces her brother Makadalongdong Lena (Ayonan sa Nasopan), to send her own *nori* (pet bird) with Bantugen's *nori* with the news of Bantugen's death. The Ayonen sa Nasopan listens to his sister Datimbang, who is considered wise and beautiful: “For who will not agree with the/ Wise advice of Datimbang who/ Had always been praised for her great/ Wisdom, in fact, famous for it?”<sup>81</sup> During a gathering of all of the datus of Bembaran during Bantugen's death, many of Bantugen's “sweethearts” willingly offer themselves to marry any man who can travel to the *Abode of Death* and retrieve Bantugen's soul. Though this might be understood as treating women as chattel, the women in the Darangen narrative leverage their power of beauty, desirability, and wanting of men. This is most evident in the charac-



ter of Maginar whose appearance lures Bantugen to her and whose power as a “witch” ultimately leads to Bantugen’s death and subsequent resurrection.

Similarly, it is quite often mentioned that women consensually enter into relationships with Bantugen. They do so either out of free-will or they are unable to resist his “masculinity” and gracefulness. The women therefore *choose* to be with Bantugen. Depictions of women occur in the songs of the Darangen, many of which describe Bantugen and his adventures in courting women. Bantugen describes himself as the “favorite pet of princesses/ Cherished sweetly like a nori/ Sheltered by the royal ladies”<sup>82</sup>. This is significant since much of the Darangen narrative exists due to Bantugen’s romantic exploits, his heroic feats of “rescuing” women (for example, the way Princess Gandigan is portrayed in Bayanihan’s *Singkil*) and “saving” Bembaran itself (as in the story Kapnatangkopan a Ragat, Bantugen is resurrected from the dead by Maginar and defends Bembaran from attack). Within this understanding, it becomes clear that Bantugen as a Maranao hero cannot exist without women; his gender depends on the gender of others. He courts women, saves women, and is saved by women. Bantugen’s masculinity, and his heroic status, is tied to the role of women in his life.

### Women in the ballet *Darangen ni Bantugen*

In the ballet *Darangen ni Bantugen*, it is obvious that the insatiable desire for women is one of Bantugen’s flaws, his weakness. For the choreographer Caringal, it was a big challenge “to show the greatness of Bantugen and his weaknesses when it comes to women.”<sup>83</sup> Perhaps this is why the female characters in the ballet take somewhat of a minor role and are mostly posited as Bantugen’s objects of desire. The premier ballerina Datimbang cares for Bantugen as he dies by calling a “shaman” in an attempt to heal him of his ailments. Though she is unsuccessful in reviving him, she weds Bantugen after he is resurrected. Datimbang’s primary role in the ballet is that of Bantugen’s love interest.

Diwata and the *nori* are both played by women and take on roles in service to Bantugen. After Bantugen’s banishment and his subsequent

journey that leaves him weak and close to dying, Diwata saves him and brings him to the Kingdom Between Two Seas. Bantugen’s *nori* has a similar role as she accompanies Mabaning and Magali to the Skyworld to retrieve Bantugen’s soul. The roles of Datimbang, Diwata and the *nori* are as caretakers of Bantugen. Though there is evidence of this type of patriarchal relationship in the Darangen narrative between Bantugen and the women in his life, what is absent in the play is the role women take outside of the care-giver mold. Thus the prescriptive behavior for women throughout the ballet is that of subservience to Bantugen, emphasizing his “greatness,” his masculinity. This is reinforced by the Bantugen’s patriarchal balletic choreography. The ballerina becomes an essentialized figure “because ballerinas are smaller and lighter than danseurs, they are biologically determined to be the supported rather than the supporter.”<sup>84</sup>

### Divergent Stories: Differences in the narrative and in the ballet: Magimar

In the narrative Darangen, Magimar is not betrothed to Bantugen’s brother Madale, but is sought by Bantugen after he meets her beautiful *nori*. After his tumultuous journey, Bantugen encounters an old ugly woman who offers him a prepared betelnut quid as she believes him to be her husband. Bantugen is so offended by her ugliness that he attempts to kill her, unbeknownst to him that it is Magimar in disguise. In the ballet, Magimar takes a brief and nominal role, whose seduction of/by Bantugen results in his banishment from Bembaran. In the narrative, Magimar not only



Figure 9:  
The ballerino  
Mabaning as  
a “woman”  
and the  
Angel of  
Death (skr15  
2009)



enchants Bantugen by casting a spell on him to stay in Babalayan Anonen, but she also causes his death as the Angel of Death who keeps his soul in a bottle in her *tonong*. Similarly, she resurrects Bantugen by pouring his soul back into his bellybutton. Magimar's role in the ballet is marginal and is a reflection of how women are treated throughout the ballet. Within the narrative, Magimar is empowered by her sorcery, and subsequently her femininity, as she is able to enchant Bantugen not only with spells but also with her beauty.

### In the Abode of Death- playing a woman or latent homosexuality?

In the narrative, Mabaning Ndaw Rogong and Madali travel to the Skyworld to retrieve Bantugen's soul. As part of the strategy to distract the *tonong* Inirandang sa Baya, or the Angel of Death, Mabaning transforms himself into a beautiful Queen. Mabaning is successful in luring the *tonong* away from the bottled souls by promising to marry him if the *tonong* can accomplish two things: pick a particular type of flower that is grown on a particular tree in the Skyworld; and, find out when Mabaning will die. In the ballet, the ballerino who plays Mabaning "transforms" himself into a woman by veiling himself and using very "effeminate" movement. In *Darangen ni Bantugen*, the use of the veil coupled with the movement indicates to the audience that Mabaning is playing a woman—costuming and embodied movement become critical in deciphering the gendering of the scene. Rather than having an actual ballerina perform as Queen Mabaning, the choreographer decided to have a ballerino "veiled" as a woman, executing feminine-esque movements. Why? As part of a macho ballet, the homosexual connotations between the *tonong*, who is played by a man, and the ballerino who plays Mabaning, is obvious. Mabaning's character is disgusted by the affections of the *tonong*, reemphasizing the heteronormative theme in the masculine ballet. Additionally, the audience notices the intentional latent homosexuality of the scene. The "make it macho" strategy of the ballet takes into consideration the different types of masculinities in the Philippines: the hypersexual hero, the lesser, subjugated masculinity, and the marginal masculinity of homosexuality. It is significant that Mabaning and Magali save Bantugen in the ballet, as opposed to Magimar in the narrative. This emphasizes the masculine-centricity of the ballet.

### Conclusion: Ballet is "culture's most powerful models of patriarchal ceremony"<sup>85</sup>

In this paper, I have argued that essentialized ideas of masculinity have transformed in the Philippine performing arts over time. The range of masculinities in Philippine performing arts, from the belligerent, morally deprived Moro found in *komedya* plays to the "integrated-Filipino" warrior/prince of Bayanihan's dance piece *Singkil*, culminates ultimately in the Filipino Hero depicted in *Darangen ni Bantugen*. The seemingly "threatening" Moro men depicted in *komedya* plays sets moro masculinity as inferior to the morally upright *Cristianos*. Moros in *komedya* plays were belligerent and morally deprived. Traces of this depiction are seen in Bayanihan's *Singkil* with the inclusion of the warrior/prince character in the dance that produces a latent eroticism between he and the princess. The thrust and use of the sword in his pursuit of the princess interlaces the erotic with the phallogocentric. The belligerence that is reminiscent of *komedya* plays becomes eroticized creating an orientalized atmosphere in *Singkil*. The balleticized Bantugen in *Darangen ni Bantugen* constructs Moro masculinity yet again as being "weakened" by his unending desire for women and while simultaneously being heroic. The "make it macho" choreographies of Bantugen in the ballet subjugate women and other men in an effort to depict Bantugen as a hero, creating a masculine ballet suited for a Filipino Hero. *Darangen ni Bantugen* is indeed a masculine ballet that attempts to recontextualize the Moro Other into the Filipino hero. In the pre-colonial "original" narrative the role of women in relation to Bantugen is that of a reflexive relationship. In the ballet, Bantugen takes on a more patriarchal role, the women being defined by Bantugen, their actions all in relation to him, reinforcing "traditional" patriarchal structures that are remnants of a colonial gender structure. Ultimately, the journey of the image of the Moro, from the *komedya* plays, to Bayanihan's *Singkil*, to the premier danseur in *Darangen ni Bantugen* is that of a masculinizing project, attempting to define, in its many degrees, Filipino masculinity.

## Appendix One: Synopsis of Darangen: Two Songs

### 1. *Kapmaginar*

Bantugen is sitting on a rock as the *nori*, pet bird, of Maginar circles above his head. The *nori*'s name is Sampiri Kagadongan. He asks the *nori* where it is from and who her mistress is. The *nori* lies and says she is a stray bird. She asks for Bantugen's name, which he tells, she then finally tells him who her master is. She speaks of Maginar's beauty in Babalayan Anonen, where no man has ever reached. Everyone has died attempting to reach Babalayan Anonen, a place with lovely maidens with a queen with incomparable beauty. Sampiri describes all of the obstacles that Bantugen will have to encounter and then leaves him.

Bantugen begins his journey encountering various obstacles: an igang tree with giant roots where giant crabs live, tall palm trees that capture and hold people for eternity, a ring of fire that he conquered by walking through it using "his great power and wit"<sup>36</sup>, a place of perpetual daylight, then darkness that brought a hail of stones and a typhoon. On his journey Bantugen starts to grieve as he feels he might not survey and may never see any of his sweethearts again. As the sky clears, Bantugen sits and rests at a beach filled with skulls of men who had failed on the journey. He has a dream that a beautiful Princess tells him to go to Babalayan Anonen lest he be killed. He awakens and begins to cry. Five large crocodiles emerge from the river and grant him access to visit the *lamin*, a tower constructed on top of a *torogan* (royal house) to hide the princess and her ladies.

Bantugen enters the *lamin* and is received by Mangoda Linimbowan, the sister of Maginar [*sic*]. She seats him on a "richly embellished bed" and offers him betelnut quid that she prepared especially for him. She suggestively asks if he is there to visit her, and Bantugen responds, asking for friendship instead. Linimbowan then insists that he is her elder brother "Ndawan" and takes out a knife, threatening to kill herself if he doesn't agree. Bantugen dumbfounded as he has never encountered such a thing, concedes and says she is his sister. Linimbowan then takes Bantugen to the upper *lamin*.

Bantugen sees the stunning Maginar, but she refuses to look at him as "she remembered the sufferings/ that he had caused her earlier". Maginar reveals that she was that ugly old woman that he had tried to kill after she offered him betelnut quid. Bantugen apologizes but Maginar refuses. Linimbowan interrupts and threatens to leave Maginar if she doesn't serve betelnut to Bantugen and

accept him. Maginar thinks and hand over betelnut to Bantugen. He accepts it and falls under a spell

### 2. *Kapnatangkopan A Ragat*

Inayonan o Kampong, king of Bembaran, orders all datus and subjects to reject Bantugen as he has been living with Maginar, a much feared witch. Maginar, having a vision that Bantugen will die, sends him back to Bembaran. When Bantugen arrives he is not greeted and is ignored by all. He asks his sister Arkat a Lawanen what is happening, she informs him but asks him to stay with her in her *lamin*. Bantugen leaves Bembaran broken hearted.

Bantugen grows weaker and weaker, perhaps because he is rejected by everyone in his kingdom. He makes his way to another *torogan* in Natangkopan a Ragat. He reaches the *lamin* where Datimbang comes to his aid. Too weak to speak his name, Bantugen attempts to eat the betelnut quid she gives him. Bantugen dies and his soul is taken by Inirandang sa Baya, who is Maginar's *tonong* in the Skyworld. Datimbang tells her brother and advises him to sound all the agongs to announce that someone has died. This is in hopes that someone will be alarmed and could give the identity of this Prince.

Bantugen's *nori* flies into the Natangkopan a Ragat in hopes that she will find her master. Datimbang reveals Bantugen's body and the *nori* reveals his identity. Datimbang suggest that Bantugen's *nori* be accompanied by her own to Bembaran to tell of the news of Bantugen. In Bembaran, there is much grief and anger after the news of Bantugen's death reaches them. All the datus set sail for Natangkopan a Ragat to claim Bantugen's body and possibly start a war.

Datimbang greets the datus and convinces them that they did not know the identity of the Prince and that he was close to death when she found him. The datus believe her and they, together with Datimbang and the King of Natnangkopan a Ragat, sail back to Bembaran.

Meanwhile Bantugen's friends Madali and Mabaning travel to the Skyworld to retrieve Bantugen's soul. They are able to travel through all the layers of the Skyworld. Mabaning transforms into a beautiful Queen in order to trick the *tonong* Inirandang sa Baya. Mabaning asks the *tonong* to find out when he will die and to pick a particular flower for her/him. The *tonong* leaves and Mabaning and Madali leave with Bantugen's bottled soul. Exhausted from the trip, Mabaning and Madali take rest on a rock in the middle of a lake. As they sleep, a *tonong* of Maginar comes and takes the bottle.

Back in Bembaran, the datus assemble and all of Bantugen's sweethearts are present. Each one of his sweethearts offers to marry any man who can bring Bantugen's

soul back from the Skyworld. Maginar is present. Her sister Linimbinow notices that Maginar has a bottle and convinces her sister to save Bantugen. Linimbinow threatens to leave Maginar forever if she doesn't save Bantugen. Maginar pours Bantugen's soul back into his body.

Meanwhile Misoyow, Bantugen's rival, plans to sack Bembaran since the news of Bantugen's death reaches his kingdom. He does not know Bantugen has been revived. A battle commences. Bantugen fights fearlessly and is only stopped when his cousin Minabay sa Alongan asks him to stop the war.

## Appendix Two: Synopsis of *Darangen ni Bantugen* as performed by Philippine Ballet Theatre

### Act One: *Madale's Kingdom*

Prince Bantugen, a beloved Maranao prince and warrior, gathers with the people of the land to celebrate the engagement of his brother, Datu Madale, the king and a princess of another land, Maginar. However, unable to resist Bantugen, Maginar flirts and attempts to seduce him. Though Bantugen is warned by his friends Magali and Mabaning, he gives into Maginar's seduction. This betrayal angers Datu Madale and consequently Bantugen is banished from the kingdom.

### *Vision and the Journey*

As Bantugen laments his fate he receives a vision of another Princess in a distant kingdom, the Kingdom Between Two Seas. In his quest to find this Princess, Bantugen encounters and is able to overcome the elements: fire, earth, air and water.

### *Diwata and Princess Datimbang*

Though Bantugen survives these ordeals, he is severely weakened and calls for the help of his spirit protector, Diwata. Diwata and her fairies carry Bantugen to the Kingdom Between Two Seas. Datimbang, the princess in his vision, attempts to save Bantugen. He falls unconscious and Datimbang calls for a healer who is unsuccessful in reviving Bantugen.

### *Angel of Death*

The Angel of Death descends from the Sky World takes Bantugen's soul. Datimbang and Diwata grieve over Bantugen's death as his pet bird, looking for her master, flies into the palace. Upon discovering Bantugen's body, she asks Datimbang and Diwata to bring his body back to his home.

### Act Two: *Madale's Kingdom*

Datimbang and Diwata bring Bantugen's body back to Datu Madale's palace. The kingdom goes into mourning. Magali and Mabaning, Bantugen's friends, set out to find and retrieve Bantugen's soul from the Angel of Death. Bantugen's bird leads them the Sky World.

### *The Sky World*

After adding Bantugen to his collection of souls that are bottled in jars, the Angel of Death falls asleep. The bird, Magali and Mabaning search for Bantugen's soul but cannot locate him. As the Angel starts to wake up, Mabaning dresses as a woman in order to seduce him. Magali and the bird hide. Mabaning is able to convince the Angel of Death to pick some flowers for him in the land of the living. In the Angel's absence, they are able to retrieve jar with Bantugen's soul.

### *At Madale's kingdom*

Bantugen's rival, Prince Miskoyaw attempts to invade Madale's kingdom after hearing of Bantugen's death. Mabaning and Magali arrive in time to revive Bantugen. He awakens and wins the battle. Madale, thankful, accepts Bantugen back into the kingdom. Datimbang and Bantugen then wed.

(Joelle Jacinto 2009; Shireen K. Rosales 2009  
<http://skr15.multiply.com/journal/item/448>)

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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A kobing is a bamboo mouth harp.
- <sup>2</sup> A malong is a tubular skirt that is found in many parts of Southeast Asia. The malong is worn by both men and women.
- <sup>3</sup> Fourth position is where one arm is placed above the head, and the other is held in front of the body.
- <sup>4</sup> Geometric and/or flower designs found in the Southern Philippines. Okir is the term used by the Maranao.
- <sup>5</sup> Bayanihan National Dance Company.
- <sup>6</sup> Term used to describe a musical instrument made up of graduated knobbed gongs that are laid in a row.
- <sup>7</sup> Maranao term for flag.
- <sup>8</sup> Second position is a balletic stance where the feet are placed slightly wider than hip-width apart with the feet turned out.
- <sup>9</sup> A pointe shoe refers to a type of ballet slipper. The square box at the toe of the shoe is meant to provide balance for the dancer.
- <sup>10</sup> Relevé is a ballet position where the dancer stands on points or demi-pointe
- <sup>11</sup> A type of sword that is made of steel "forged with any one of three blade designs: curved, straight or with two points" (*Darangen* 1993:474). In the ballet, Bantugen brandishes a kampilan with two points.
- <sup>12</sup> National Commission for Culture and the Arts, "Intangible Heritage: Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage," <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/culture-profile/culture-profile-intangible-heritage.php> (accessed April 15, 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> According to the U.S. Library of Congress, Moro was the name given to Muslim Filipinos by the Spanish ([http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/philippines/ph\\_glos.html](http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/philippines/ph_glos.html)).

- <sup>14</sup> Myrthena Fianza, "Contesting Land and Identity in the Periphery: The Moro Indigenous People of the Southern Philippines," (paper presented at "The Commons in an Age of Global Transition: Challenges, Risks and Opportunities," the Tenth Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Oaxaca, Mexico, August 9-13, 2004). [http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001673/01/Contesting\\_La nd.pdf](http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001673/01/Contesting_La nd.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Onor- "From the English "honor," referring to the singers of the genre Kambuyok/Kambuyoka who have become famous through public acclamation; fame (frequently used by the singers as part of their praise language" (Cadar *Vocal Music* 1980: 150)
- <sup>16</sup> Joelle Jacinto. "The 3 Major Ballet Companies in the Philippines," [http://dance-companies.suite101.com/article.cfm/the\\_3\\_major\\_ballet\\_comp anies\\_in\\_the\\_philippines](http://dance-companies.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_3_major_ballet_comp anies_in_the_philippines) (accessed March 15, 2010)
- <sup>17</sup> Hadji Cali Lawa, "Some Male Characters in the Darangen," in *The Maranao Man* by Maranao Men (Marawi City: University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1980), 11-14.
- <sup>18</sup> Manileño- people who reside in Manila, the urban center and capital of the Philippines.
- <sup>19</sup> Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 197.
- <sup>20</sup> *Maglalatik* is a percussive coconut dance depicting Christians vs. Moros performed by men. It is interesting to note that the color scheme reflects similarities in *komedya* plays: dances who "play" Christians wear blue pants and Moros wear red pants.
- <sup>21</sup> *Bemburan* is a mythical kingdom from which the Maranao claim to originate.
- <sup>22</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Gender," *Signs*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1998): 8.
- <sup>23</sup> Jennifer Fisher, "Make it Maverick: Rethinking the 'Make it Macho' Strategy for Men in Ballet." *Dance Chronicle*, 30 (2007): 46. <http://www.informaworld.com/eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/smpp/ftinterface~db=all~content=a7722847 82~fulltext=713240930> (accessed March 25, 2010).
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- <sup>25</sup> "Darangen: A Maranao Epic Chant," a documentary in National Commission for Culture and the Arts. <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/culture-profile/culture-profile-intangible-heritage.php> (accessed March 15, 2010).
- <sup>26</sup> Usopay H. Cadar, *Context and Style in the Vocal Music of the Maranao in Mindanao, Philippines* (Marawi City: University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1985), 34-35.
- <sup>27</sup> Lawa, "Male Characters," 11.
- <sup>28</sup> Lawa, "Male Characters," 11.
- <sup>29</sup> Nicanor G. Tiongson, *Philippine Theatre: History and Anthology Vol. II- Komedya*. (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 23.
- <sup>30</sup> Tiongson, "Komedya," 11.
- <sup>31</sup> Stanley Riggs, "The Drama of the Filipinos," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 1, No. 67 (Oct.-Dec. 1904): 281.
- <sup>32</sup> Tiongson, "Komedya," 3.
- <sup>33</sup> Nadi Tofighian, "Jose Nepomuceno and the creation of a Filipino national consciousness," *Film History*, Vol. 20 (2008): 79.
- <sup>34</sup> Tiongson, "Komedya," 12.
- <sup>35</sup> Tiongson, "Komedya," 20.
- <sup>36</sup> Patricio N. Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato & Davao in the Philippine Nation-State*. (Quezon City: ADMC Press, c 2000), 185.
- <sup>37</sup> William LaRousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace: The Local Church of Mindanao- Sulu Journeying in Dialogue with the Muslim Community* (1965-2000), (Quezon City: Claretian Publicans, Inc, 2001), 97.
- <sup>38</sup> Barbara Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan: Orientalism, Nationalism, and Modernity in Philippine and Filipino American Dance," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1999): 260.
- <sup>39</sup> Columbia Artists Management, Inc (CAMI), "Bayanihan, The National Folk Dance Company of the Philippines: A National Treasure," <http://www.cami.com/?webid=28>, (accessed February 15, 2010).
- <sup>40</sup> Lucrecia R. Kasilag, "Toward Revitalization of Our Indigenous Cultures," *Mindanao Journal*, Vol. X, No. I (July-Sep 1983): 11-14.
- <sup>41</sup> Senor Guillermo Gomez Rivera, "Bayanihan: The Treasure Chest of Filipino Dances and Culture," Bayanihan: The Philippine National Dance Company, (accessed February 15, 2010) <http://www.bayanihannationaldanceco.ph/>
- <sup>42</sup> Rivera, "Bayanihan: Treasure Chest," (accessed February 15, 2010).
- <sup>43</sup> The *Muslim Suite* is a segment of Bayanihan's performance that is dedicated to the dances of the "Muslims" in the Philippines.
- <sup>44</sup> Anthony Shay, "Parallel Traditions: State Folk Dance Ensembles and Folk Dance in 'The Field'," *Research Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Spring 1999): 35.
- <sup>45</sup> Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 259.
- <sup>46</sup> The Bayanihan was named the Philippine National Dance Company through the passing of R.A. 8626 through the the through the passing of R.A. 8626 through the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress through the passing of R.A. 8626 through the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- <sup>47</sup> Shay, "Parallel Traditions," 35.
- <sup>48</sup> The Kopia is found throughout Southeast Asia. The kopia is usually worn by men during formal occasions. Though it was indicated to the author that it known to be worn by older, more distinguished men on a daily basis. In Singkil, the kopia as a costume seems to reference more to the "Muslim-ness" of the Prince character.
- <sup>49</sup> Leonor Orosa Goquingco, *The Dances of the Emerald Isles* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ben Lor Publishers, 1980), 159-161.
- <sup>50</sup> Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 262.
- <sup>51</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender, In World Perspective* (Polity Press, UK 2009): 52-53.
- <sup>52</sup> Gaerlan, "In the Court of the Sultan," 262.
- <sup>53</sup> Isabel A. Santos, *Bayanihan The National Folk Dance Company of the Philippines* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2004), 58.
- <sup>54</sup> Cadar, Usopay H. "The Bayanihan: How Authentic is its Repertoire?" *Solidarity*, (1967): 50.
- <sup>55</sup> The term "original" is used or referenced by various Maranao writers to describe the dance of Singkil as done traditionally by the Maranao. These writers include Minerva S. Sani, Edna C. de los Santos and Usopay H. Cadar. Sani writes "Strangely, the ancient 'choreographer,' if there were such a person, never depicted Prince Bantugen with the princess because a Maranao male and a female are not customarily paired in a dancing performance (Sani 1979: 108).
- <sup>56</sup> Ricardo Trimillos, Personal Communication. Notes on Draft. April 6, 2010.
- <sup>57</sup> Connell, *Gender*, 84.

- <sup>58</sup> Cadar, "The Bayanihan," 50.
- <sup>59</sup> Santos, *Bayanihan*, 35.
- <sup>60</sup> Cadar, "The Bayanihan," 50.
- <sup>61</sup> Rolando B. Tolentino, "Macho Dancing, the Feminization of Labor, and Neoliberalism in the Philippines," *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 2009): 83.
- <sup>62</sup> Connell, *Gender*, 84.
- <sup>63</sup> Jane Desmond, "Dancing Out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's 'Radha' of 1906," *Signs*, Vol 17, No. 1 (1991): 47.
- <sup>64</sup> Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz, *Treading Through 45 Years of Philippines Dance*. (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2006), 92.
- <sup>65</sup> Sally A. Ness, "Originality in the Postcolony: Choreographing the Neoethnic Body of Philippine Ballet," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1997): 78.
- <sup>66</sup> Roel Hoang Manipon, "Dancing Darangen: The Way to the Maranao Epic." (*National Commission For Culture and the Arts*. May 27, 2008), <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-na/article.php?i=293&subcat=13> (Accessed March 25, 2010).
- <sup>67</sup> Joelle Jacinto, "Recreating an Epic: PBT's Darangan ni Bantugen," *Runthru*, Issue 2, (Jul-Sep 2008).
- <sup>68</sup> Cultural Center of the Philippines. "Philippine Ballet Theatre" [www.culturalcenter.gov.ph](http://www.culturalcenter.gov.ph) (accessed March 15, 2010).
- <sup>69</sup> Roel Hoang Manipon, "Dancing Darangen: The Way to the Maranao Epic." *National Commission For Culture and the Arts*. <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-na/article.php?i=293&subcat=13> (Accessed March 25, 2010).
- <sup>70</sup> Foster, "Choreographies," 6.
- <sup>71</sup> Amanda Berger, "Dance & Masculinity, Shifting Social Constructions of Gender" (MA Thesis, Boston College, May 2003), 3.
- <sup>72</sup> Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 77.
- <sup>73</sup> Ann Daly, "The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers," *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1987): 16.
- <sup>74</sup> Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender*, 77.
- <sup>75</sup> Fisher, "Make it Maverick," 46.
- <sup>76</sup> Roxanne Vida, comment on "Darangen ni Bantugen," The Dawn of Life Blog, comment posted May 16, 2008, <http://roxie07.multiply.com/reviews/item/30> (accessed April 1, 2010).
- <sup>77</sup> Connell, *Gender*, 183.
- <sup>78</sup> Hadji Lawa Cali et al., *Darangen: in Original Maranao verse, with English translation, Vol. 7*. (Mindanao State University, University Research Center, Philippines 1993), 3.
- <sup>79</sup> Tonong refers to spirits. There are three kinds "those who live in the air or the clouds, those who live in tall trees, and those who live in the water. They serve men, in particular those to whom they have been given as guardian spirits and whom they must guard and defend" (Darangen 1993: 482).
- <sup>80</sup> Cali et al., *Darangen: in Original Maranao*, 222.
- <sup>81</sup> Cali et al., *Darangen: in Original Maranao*, 309.
- <sup>82</sup> Cali et al., *Darangen: in Original Maranao*, 212.
- <sup>83</sup> Manipon, "Dancing Darangen" (accessed March 25, 2010).
- <sup>84</sup> Daly, "Balanchine Woman," 17.
- <sup>85</sup> Daly, "Balanchine Woman," 17.
- <sup>86</sup> Cali et al., *Darangen in Original Maranao*, 219.



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# Toward the Intellectualization of Ilokano:

## Practices and Philosophies

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### Introduction

Within the Ilokano community—from the center of the Amianan<sup>1</sup> all the way to the margins of the diaspora—there are contentions advocating for the “true” preservation of the Ilokano language. This debate is leading to an unfortunate split in the language’s mission for survival into the modern era. Not only are there wider disagreements regarding the distinction between the Iloko (the lingua franca) and the Ilokano (the people); there are also contentious debates about seemingly minor matters, such as when to use the contested “c” or “k” in the language’s orthography leading to a “luko/luco”<sup>2</sup> situation. Hence, the main discussions at Ilokano language-based conferences typically lead to a call for the academic standardization of the language.

This paper has two parts. The first part will argue for the need to move towards the intellectualization of Ilokano.<sup>3</sup> The second part, subdivided into three sections, will draw on my own research and experience as a court interpreter to explore some sources that help to historicize this issue and demonstrate how the Ilokano diaspora is contributing to the development of vocabulary and concepts that are critical to intellectualizing and ultimately standardizing the language. The sources from which I have drawn may appear very different, but in combination they provide a point of departure for thinking about the processes by which Ilokanos in the diaspora began to articulate new emotions and new expedience.

The paper is built on the assumption that Ilokano academic discourse will only be achieved once standardization occurs. A developed academic discourse will enable Ilokano children’s education through a mother-tongue medium. By not providing an option for mother-tongue medium education, governments

and educators are denying basic linguistic human rights and creating all sorts of consequences that are now understood as contributing directly to the denial of these rights.<sup>4</sup> Research shows that students who are taught their mother-tongue language from an early age do better academically than students who are only immersed in a hegemonic language.<sup>5</sup> I also argue that “intellectualizing” involves a diachronic approach that not only seeks consistency in the language but the ability to communicate in the Ilokano language at any given place or situation. My aim, after intellectualization, is for consistency so wherever an Ilokano “interpreter” role is needed (e.g. in the areas of legal, medical, academic, early education, and cyber), a more consistent and modern interpretation of the language should replace archaic practices of only using “core” Ilokano. This is to say not to perpetuate a fossilized myth of the glorious past—the romanticized and idealized period of Ilokano history—where only good, beautiful and true things happened in the way that people would look at the grammar and semantics in their own way of who they were and what they wanted to become while still maintaining the “core” of the Ilokano (Agcaoili et al., 2006, 24). Hence, to intellectualize is to revisit the Ilokano language with a dynamic view to engender its evolution and adaptation to the changing human condition of global/glocal Ilokano, while keeping up with the technological processes of globalization.

An imperative for an expeditious change, in Ilokano, must take place in the periphery. Why must changes come from the margins of the diaspora? In Intercultural Studies, it is taught that those from the fringes sometimes create a reverse-reverberation from what the center emits – what is emitted back is slightly transformed. The altered result is eventually used by the center/metropolis. The hope of this paper is to use the

robust experiences of Hawai`i-Ilokano literatures which can illustrate the processes of intellectualizing and preserving the “true” essence of the Ilokano language. Intellectualizing is still happening in Hawai`i from such places as the Ilokano Program at the University of Hawai`i – Manoa (ILOUHM<sup>6</sup>) and the Hawai`i Courts. Members of the ILOUHM are debating several questions such as, “What problems develop when we stick to the ‘true’ sense of the language as we translate and interpret?” “Must there be a need to perpetually romanticize the Ilokano language when we translate or interpret English idioms or descriptive words (e.g. wild imagination)?” How do we include in our language modern global words and phrases invented from the not so distant past such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) or “cyberspace?” “How do you write in Ilokano ‘taxi’ or ‘zoo’ using current canonized convoids and contoids without misleading the reader?” These questions inform the contours of this essay.

In this paper, I am concerned with the context in which the diasporic Ilokano corpus became intellectualized. I will also attempt to discuss the periodization and the locations for the intellectualization of Ilokano. Finally, I will explain why I am interested in the intellectualization of Ilokano.

The geographical location of my physical birth was in the Amianan—in Rosales, Pangasinan. At the age of ten, I left the beauty and security of Bauang, La Union (where I grew up) and migrated to Hawai`i and have since become a “settler.”<sup>7</sup> However, I have always felt my being in Hawai`i was in some ways Foucauldian, creating a personal sense of being the “other” whenever publicly invoked my Ilokano.<sup>8</sup> Hence, for filial comfort and foreigner-immigrant-alien survival, Ilokano has been a part of my life at home. In fact, outside my home, I have also taken on the role as a certified Ilokano interpreter for the Hawai`i Courts and the United States Federal Courts. I am constantly reminded from my assigned court appearances that although legal proceedings function efficiently and effectively, Ilokano with limited-English proficiency can only have equal access to justice by intellectualizing Ilokano.

There is another important reason why I feel I should do this research. I would like to suggest that this paper serve as a proof (*pammaneknek*) that students of the ILOUHM are involved in high academic pursuits.<sup>9</sup> While there is increased attendance to the ILOUHM in

Hawai`i, there is no single Ilokano program in the Philippines. Hence, it is with great possibility that intellectualizing Ilokano would take place in the periphery of the Ilokano diaspora.

However, from these interstitial spaces, Ilokano has become a minority language in the periphery. It has to be intellectualized in order to serve the migrants away from the “heart” that pumps Ilokano blood for survival. The Ilokano community is accustomed to thinking of Ilokano projects of liberty as emanating from the Amianan-center, but less accustomed to thinking about them emanating from the periphery into the Amianan (Pratt, 1992). In order for the standardization of Ilokano to take place, the center must accept what the periphery is instigating.

## Methodology

I will use several ethnographic-diasporic materials that are of importance to local Hawai`i-Ilokano. The literature I discuss includes the following: Hawai`i Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) materials, court-related documents, and publications originating from ILOUHM. From these findings I will postulate that the intellectualization of Ilokano has been a robust exercise in Hawai`i.

Before I go further there are important terms that need to be defined. First, when I discuss *diaspora*, I would like to add here that my scope and limitation of intellectualization is bounded to Hawai`i. I will accede that Ilokano intellectualization took place since Western contact in the Amianan. Intellectualization in the Ilocos had to take place to appease the hegemonic interlopers (i.e. “buis [tax]”). Since then, there are many locations that have created an Ilokano diaspora. I have seen occupants of the Ilokano diaspora in Banff, British-Columbia, and Toronto, Canada. Moreover, I have relatives in Israel, Sydney, Singapore, Denmark, New York, the Carolinas, Alaska, District of Columbia, California, and t mark geographically diverse community. *Diasporic literature*, when used in this paper, refer to materials produced only in Hawai`i—materials produced far from our established or ancestral homeland. Some of this literature was created in English and was translated into Ilokano. In such cases, the main focus of this paper is the translated copies.

And finally, *mother-tongue language*, also known as “first language,” “native language,” or “Li,” is the first

language of a child and is part of his or her personal, social and cultural identity. Another impact of the first language is that it brings about the reflection and learning of successful social patterns of acting and speaking. It is basically responsible for differentiating the linguistic competence of acting.

## A Word on Intellectualization

One of the proponents for the intellectualization of Ilokano, Aurelio Agcaoili, suggests that intellectualization is not reintellectualization. Ilokano writers such as Joel Manuel favors intellectualizing the Ilokano by adding “f, v, c, and x” into the Ilokano orthography and arguing that all words that we inherit from Spanish and English must be respected in the way they are pronounced and as far as we can accept their spelling (Agcaoili et al., 2006, 25). Agcaoili argues this is flawed since Manuel hints at “re-intellectualization.” It becomes problematic since indigenous Ilokano can only be (re)intellectualized by outside interlopers – a model created by hegemonic Spanish and English. Re-intellectualization suggests a burden of allowing oneself to become an appendage of another linguistic and cultural empire. Intellectualization is to initiate the secular process by which Ilokano will gradually eliminate the dominance of Spanish/English in the controlling domains of language by creating an Ilokano lexical expansion (25).

Second, Andrew Gonzalez also provides an important caveat that in the minds of certain egalitarians ... (e)ven to suggest that some languages are not yet fully capable of being instruments of ‘thinking’, ‘ratiocinating’, ‘using scientific discourse’ is tantamount to labeling certain languages as inferior (compared to ‘superior’ languages), as ‘primitive’ rather than equally ‘advanced’ (Gonzalez, 2002, 12-13). Gonzalez rejects this attack by reasoning:

To speak of stages of development is not to denigrate ... those who have not yet attained such development, but rather merely to give an objective description showing that they are still in the process ... of becoming what they are potentially capable of becoming, and hence are still in the process of actualization (Gonzalez, 2002, 13-15).

When one attempts to search for a lexical definition of “intellectualization,” what is usually found is archaic and circuitous explanations such as—“the act, process, or an instance of intellectualizing” (Webster 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1966,

1174). Further research will reveal intellectualization to be a cognate of the mind. As suggested in the title of my paper, a lingual context of intellectualization suggests an enriching of the language, possibly by appropriation from other languages. It could even propose, borrowing/opening the possibilities of taking for oneself words that we do not have direct experiences for (e.g. the Japanese created the word “pasokon” to translate “personal computer”). The word may even advocate modernizing Ilokano to help us adopt the language to the changing needs of the times. Intellectualization will enable us to narrate experiences that are currently not “sayable” both in oral and written form—within the context of interest in things Ilokano in the Philippines and the diaspora.<sup>10</sup>

Hence, I approach the word “intellectualization” from a certain angle—another domain. Recently, other disciplines have begun to create their own theory of intellectualization—as an example, psychology (Gabbard, 2004). This paper’s discussion of intellectualization is connected to the domain of language. Although “language intellectualization” is a fairly “new” concept, it was Vilem Mathesius who coined the term in 1920 and called attention to this process as a specific aspect of *language cultivation* (Gonzalez, 2002, 5-27).<sup>11</sup> Examples of language intellectualization are taking place in Africa, the Pacific islands of Vanuatu and Fiji, as well as in the Philippines for /P/F/ilipino (Tagalog) (Alexander, 2005; Gonzalez, 2002; Sibayan, 1991). However, a discussion and argument for the intellectualization of Ilokano has never been proposed for or presented in any academic endeavor.<sup>12</sup>

The ultimate goal for intellectualizing Ilokano is for the language to undergo a process of standardization whereby forms and structures become more or less uniform because of social consensus among its speakers (Gonzalez, 2002, 5-27). An important register is the creation of a body of literature, usually imaginative literature, subsequently other types of writing especially for use at all levels of schooling from elementary to tertiary, assuming that the language becomes a language of the schools (5).

According to Gonzalez, what we find at the highest levels of Ilokano discourse is a process of intellectualization. In this regard, the language begins to be used not only in everyday conversational discourse, but also as a means of learning subject matter especially in legal, professional, and academic circles.<sup>13</sup> Ilokano, how-

ever, is not (yet) an intellectualized language. The only language domain where Ilokano is intellectualized is literature. In Ilokano, there is a respectable body of literature, substantial writers, and support organizations and publications for the development of Ilokano literature. In spite of Ilokano's literary achievements, one cannot acquire a university degree in Ilokano other than at the ILOUHM. Core subjects such as math and courses in the social sciences are not available in Ilokano. What is needed then is the building up of various populations such as agricultural scientists, medical doctors, lawyers, and accountants who possess different knowledge and skills as well as a good command of Ilokano. The language used in medicine differs from the language of law, that is, the two differ in registers so that even if they both speak English, the medical doctor may not understand the register of law and vice versa. This is what is crucial in the development of an intellectualized language: each domain, sub-domains and sub-sub-domains (fields of specialization) have specific registers. The registers for practically all areas of knowledge are available in intellectualized languages, but not in [Ilokano] (Sibayan, 1991).

This paper will show that developed registers of Ilokano (from various areas of knowledge) have already taken place in Hawai'i. Some are used and others should be used as educational materials for the populations who can command and use these registers. My historical samples consist of letter writing templates, printed union speeches, newspapers, ILOUHM translated documents, and my personal translation of various documents. Again let me reiterate that Ilokano is not (yet) an intellectualized language. The aim of this paper is for a standardization of Ilokano in order to achieve Ilokano academic discourse. My paper will highlight steps that are being taken in Hawaii, which support the intellectualization of Ilokano.

### Reading the Romance<sup>14</sup>: an exegesis of Combined Love Letters (1929-1946)<sup>15</sup>

Ilokano was first spoken in Hawai'i on December 20, 1906. Eighteen year-old Francisco Genironella was the first English-Ilokano interpreter in Hawai'i. According to HSPA documents, Francisco served as an interpreter for the first fifteen Ilokanos who arrived in Hawai'i.<sup>16</sup> The fifteen Ilokanos who arrived on the ship

*S.S. Doric* were primarily investigating the housing and general plantation conditions (*Hawaii Filipino News*, 1981, 12).

We do know whether the fifteen Ilokanos returned to their homeland to spread the "good word" after spending sometime at Ola'a plantation (Anderson, 1984, 2; *Hawaii Filipino News*, 1981, 12). Small groups of indentured<sup>17</sup> Ilokano workers followed later in 1907 and 1908 and eventually initiated the First Wave<sup>18</sup> of Filipino immigrants, popularly called *sakadas*<sup>19</sup> (*Hawaii Filipino News*, 1981, 12, 25). I have dropped this term, *sakadas*, in favor of "Filipino plantation workers." It is from the experience of these Ilokano plantation-workers that I started to explore the availability of source materials, which would support my study of the intellectualization of Ilokano.

Before I commence my argument for Ilokano intellectualization using love letters, let me provide some background as to why these missives were created. It was noted during the early years of the twentieth-century that Hawai'i's in-migration entailed European laborers who brought their wives (Adams, 1937, 8). In contrast, many of the Japanese and some of the Chinese and later Korean laborers secured wives from their native lands (9). The great majority of the Hawai'i-Ilokanos were living as single men (Cariaga, 1937, 2). According to the 1930 census, Filipino males greatly outnumbered Filipino females in Hawai'i, a sex imbalance not uncommon in immigrant communities—one female to every four males (Young, 1971, 54). More broadly, this absence of Ilokanas alongside Ilokano-plantation-laborers engendered criticism toward Filipinos.<sup>20</sup> It was through love-letters that many Hawai'i-Ilokanos' persuaded or enticed Ilokanas to join them in Hawaii. This history of romantic correspondence has been captured by Carlos Bulosan in his work, *Magno Rubio*.<sup>21</sup> But there was an obstacle to the Ilokanos goal of expressing their ardent adoration. Because of the plantation experience with previous imported groups, the HSPA wanted only to accept Filipinos who had received at the most only a basic education and whose potential to conform and not complain was great (Hunter, 1971, 54).<sup>22</sup> It was believed that most of the Hawai'i-Ilokano laborers were illiterate and uneducated. Although the Ilokano men could not write, they were able to select "templates" of love-letters from so with assistance they could express their love.

Conchita Valdez's<sup>23</sup> work is an extensive literary work of compiled love-letters.<sup>24</sup> Each letter is presented in English and in Ilokano consecutively. Valdez hoped that her work would "meet the peculiar situation which young [Ilokano] lovers find themselves in Hawaii" ("Valdez," 1948, preface). According to "Valdez," Hawai'i-Ilokano plantation-workers "often get embarrassed as they do not know how to express their admiration by letter writing" ("Valdez," Preface). The book's mission was to help these young men in the expression of their true love to their love interests who were thousands of miles away across the sea, in their hometowns or *barrios*, in the Philippines. A glance of *Combined Love Letters* gives the reader the impression that its use could facilitate the uneducated provincial Ilokano in the expression of his love. I selected *Combined Love Letters* because of its popularity among the Hawai'i-Ilokanos. The popularity of the book is defended by the author, "Conchita Valdez." "Valdez" claims her work has been through editions "because of the demand of many [Ilokanos] in the Territory of Hawaii and [the United States Mainland] for the book" ("Valdez," Preface).

There is a letter signed by a "Nicolas Rania" entitled, "To a Japanese Girl" ("Valdez," 1948, 102). Here, "Valdez" helps to facilitate Ilokano migrant expression of love toward another ethnicity particularly during territorial Hawaii's anti-miscegenation laws. Ilokanos "could" now write, "Perhaps this will be a surprise to you for I belong to a different nationality from that of yours, but we who live in Hawaii, the melting pot of races disregard mere racial differences ..." (22-23). Readers of *Combined Love Letters* are able to see how an "un-educated" migrant is enabled to express Western notions of race (*burik*) and the mythical-egalitarian concept of a "melting pot" (*nagitipunan dagiti nagduduma a burik*) (ibid). But for this research, what is more important is a letter entitled, "A Favorable Reply" to Mr. Rania. In the template, "Valdez" pretends "Yuriko Tanabe" has written the following to Mr. Rania:

I too, like you, don't believe in race prejudice...I know you are a Filipino, but what difference is there between you and a Japanese or a Haole. The color of a person is merely due to the pigment of the skin. Some Haoles are darker than other; while some Japanese are taller than some Haoles, etc. These things are merely in the outside and do not mean anything

*Siak, a kas met kenka, diak patien ti panaglais iti maysa a burik ... Ammok nga sika Filipino ka, ngem ania aya ti pakaigidiatam kadagiti Japon wenno Haole. Ti color ti kudil iparangarangna laeng kolor to kudil. Dadduma a Haole, nangisng-issitda met ngem dagiti dadduma ket dadduma a Japon nataytayag da ngem dagiti dadduma nga Haole, ken dadduma pay a pagsusupadian. Dagitoy nga paggiddiatan, iso da laeng iti agparang iti ruar* ("Valdez," 1948, pp. 23-26).

From this letter, we glean words that were created to describe social and democratic experiences of Ilokano plantation workers used as steps in the intellectualization of Ilokano. The intellectualized Ilokano words bring about the traced and genealogical presence of Said's (1978) hierarchical notions of "us" against "them."

Another letter goes beyond race and tackles love-war memories. Philosophical notions of "war hysteria" (*guranggura a bunga ti gubat*), atrocities (*kinadawel*), and "inhumanities" (*kinadangkok*)—words already present in the Amianan—are now being used to communicate horrifying war concepts between two migrants coming from nations that recently experienced wars amongst each other ("Valdez," 1948, 102). "Valdez" portrays her fictional Japanese letter writer, "Ms. Gladys Yamauchi" to encourage "Gregorio Udarbe" by penning:

I too, like you, was not affected by the hysteria of the war. In spite of those bitter and cruel words that I had read from day to day in the newspapers my love for you had been true. 'What,' I said, 'even if those atrocities and terrible inhumanities were really committed they had nothing to do with us.' Beside those people were hating and were engaged in war which General Sherman called, 'hell'.

*Uray siak, kas kenka, saanak a naan-anu kabayatan kapigsa ti guranggura a bunga ti gubat. Toy ayatko kenka sipupudno nupay kasano ti pait ken ranggas dagiti adu a pammadpadakes a nabasbasak kadagiti pagiwarnak ti inaldaw. Kunak iti kapanpanumutak, 'Uray pay pudno kas pagarigan dagiti kinadawel ken kinadangkok a mabasbasak, awan pannakairamanta kadakuada.' Maysa pay, dagitoy nga agbinbinnusor, aggiginurada ket adda iti gubatan isu a pinanagan ni General Sherman iti 'inferno' ("Valdez," 1948, pp. 103,104).*

Other fictional characters such as "Narciso Pambid" intellectualized Ilokano and provided explanations for such metaphors as "blood is thicker than water" (*ti dara napuspuskol ngem ti danum*) to explain why it

was possible for him and his interest to elope—“since you are their daughter and they are your father and mother, they would be reconciled by and by after we have been married” (“Valdez,” 1948, 75).

From *Combined Love Letters*, new words introduced new concepts because of the location for the use of the words. Intellectualized Ilokano had to be created to negotiate the plantation workers’ world for survival. However, *Combined Love Letters* was not the only HSPA era text that was produced for the Hawai’i-Ilokano for their survival. Years later, the Filipino laborers became a collected group and challenged once again the narrative of labor in Hawai’i—again, for their survival.

### Ilokano as a Bridge To Your Rights—A Discussion of Fear(Buteng)

In 1951, Ilokanos were part of a larger group seeking to unionize in order to achieve the “American dream.” On Labor Day (1951) attorney Harriet Bouslog Sawyer gave a speech to Ilokano union members. Arinaga writes of the scene, “Out of the gloomy crowd of tired women who have been up since before dawn and unschooled men who have never before heard any lawyer speak heard Bouslog call them “brothers and sisters” (Arinaga, n.d.). Bouslog was considered an advocate for the poor, ordinary laborers, and union sympathizers. According to Arinaga (n.d.), on that particular Labor Day, her speech enlightened a crowd as to how they might achieve justice for those accused of supporting Communism. Therefore, her speech should be considered as a part of the intellectualization of diasporic Ilokano literature since it was later printed as “information” to help Ilokanos partake in organizing a union “against the powerful opposition of the Big 5.” The Big 5 did not hesitate in their struggle to use all the offices of the government—police, the legislature, and the courts—to interfere with every attempt to organize a successful union (Bouslog-Sawyer, 1951, 1). The printed form of her speech is entitled, “*Fear (Buteng)*” (Bouslog-Sawyer, 22).<sup>25</sup>

Bouslog’s main question in *Fear (Buteng)* is, “How does it happen, then, that the government of the United States calls a man who has contributed so much to bringing democracy to Hawaii, a dangerous person?” (Bouslog-Sawyer, 1951, 3). Upon inspection as to whether this should be considered literature or not,

one can find a considerable amount of instances of Ilokano intellectualization taking place. In this section, I will present intellectualized Ilokano in bullet forms to highlight the strong presence of intellectualization.

- True democrats (*pudpudno a demokrata*); democracy in action (*maipagna ti demokrasya*)
- Human dignity (*kabibiagna*)
- Participated in the making of union policy (*naki-paggamulo iti pannaka-tubay dagiti pang-ngeddeng ken pag-takderan* (policy) *ti Union*)
- A charge of spies and subversives in Hawaii, the national frontier (*Ti panag-darum nga adda dagiti espia ken agdadael ditoy Hawaii, isu a makunkuna nga igid ti nasion*)
- Criticize the policies of the government (*binalaw dagiti pagna ti gobierno*)
- Thus, the government has, in a deliberate and long standing policy, built up a boogey-man in the United States (*Iti kasta, babaen ingagara ken nabaybayagen a pannagnana, nabalanan ti gobierno a pinataur iti sakup ti Estados Unidos, ti maysa a sinsinan-al-alia iti lab-labbasit ken kumunismo*)
- “We have nothing to fear except fear itself” (“*Awan aniaman a kabutengtayo no di ti panag-buteng met laeng*”)
- Thought police (*kayatna a saoen, panagturay polis*)
- Fascist technique (*wagas fasista*)
- Brand as subversive (*markaan nga agdadael*)
- Since 1848, when the communist Manifesto was published by Karl Marx, there have been advocates in the United States of the doctrine known as Marxism ... (*Manipud idi 1848, pananangimaldit ni Karl Marx iti Communist Manifesto, adudan ditoy Estados Unidos, ti nangikaskasaba iti doktrina managan Marxism*)
- The danger in the United States today is not that the ink on the Declaration of Independence is fading, or the ink on the Constitution and Bill of Rights is fading. The danger is that officials of government are destroying the substance of these documents (*Ti peggad ita ditoy Estados Unidos saan a ti panag-kusnaw tinta ti Declaration of Independence wenno ti Konstitusion ken ti Bill of Rights. Ti peggad isu daytoy, a dagiti oficiales iti gobierno dad-dadaelenda ti sustansia wenno anag dagitoy a dokumento*) (Bouslog-Sawyer, 1951, 1-18).

As we can see, *Fear (Buteng)* provides a glimpse of the steps toward intellectualizing Ilokano in Hawai’i. But, the most notable occurrence in *Fear (Buteng)* is

the Ilokano's attempt to intellectualize the *Declaration of Independence (Deklarasion iti Panag-waywayas)*. To date, I have not seen any other Ilokano translation of the *Declaration of Independence*. On page 18 of *Fear (Buteng)*, a complete Ilokano translation of the Declaration of Independence is printed adding a testament that those in the periphery made an attempt to intellectualize Ilokano.

Prior to gaining membership as a collective bargaining unit, the Ilokano's future in Hawai'i was bleak. The translated Ilokano version entitled, *Buteng* may have made an impact on Ilokans in gaining solidarity to unionize. They were eventually part of a successful group who was able to unionize. Hence, Bouslog's speech (the Ilokano copy) played a part in helping intellectualize the Ilokano in Hawai'i.

During the period when *Combined Love Letters* and *Fear (Buteng)* were created, Ilokano newspapers flourished in Hawaiiia. I make a mention of this not as a tangent but to include Gonzalez's argument that, "newspapers are likewise indicator of intellectualization of a language and constitute part to the publication output (Gonzalez, 2002, 5-27).

Samples of Hawai'i newspapers compiled by Chapin (2000) that had Ilokano titles include:

- Masakbayanmi nga Filipinos
- Ti Mangyuna (Pioneer)
- Naimbag A Nakem
- Ti Progressibo (Progressive)
- Pudno A Damag
- Ti Pudno (Truth)
- Ti Bannawag
- Ti Silaw (Light)
- Ti Ling-et
- Ti Timek Ti Vibora Luvminda
- Ti Managservi
- Ti Trabajador (Worker)
- Ti Mangitandodo
- Ti Union (Union)
- Ti Mangiturong
- Wagayway

Further research of these materials could lead to more findings of Ilokano intellectualization. It would be an excellent research topic to see if some of the new terminology was being used and popularized. How-

ever, proof of most Ilokano intellectualization in Hawai'i seems to point to the recent past. This section will now attempt to present modern findings of Ilokano intellectualization.

## Rethinking the Center from the Margin

Today, there is an Ilokano group that has successfully made a claim in Hawai'i's contested spaces and is taking the lead in the intellectualization of Ilokano—the University of Hawai'i's Indo-Pacific Languages and Literature Philippine Program with concentrations in Ilokano, which I have termed: ILOUHM.

Fifteen years ago, I translated a document entitled, "Statement of the Patient Bill of Rights" for one of the local hospitals. From that document, many medical terms were intellectualized into Ilokano. Concepts such as:

- Human relationships essential to the provision of dignified and proper medical care (*panaglalan-gen ti tao a kasapulan ti panangted iti natakneng ken umno a panakaagas*)
- Major overriding objective (*panggep*)
- Your rights as a patient and human being are respected at all times (*marespeto ti karbenganyo kas pasiente ken kas tao ket mabigbig ti amin nga oras*)
- Diagnosis (*naamuan a sakit*)
- Prognosis (*pagbanagan ti sakit*)
- Informed consent (*naipakaamo a pammalubos*)
- Possible result of non-treatment (*posible a mapasamak no saan a maagasan*)
- Significant alternatives (*sabali pay a wagas iti pannakaagas*)
- The patient also has the right to be free from chemical and physical restraints ... (*Ti pasiente ket adda pay karbengan a saan nga agusar ti kimikal ken pagel ti bagi ...*)
- Advance directives (*nasakbay a pakaamo*)
- The right to exercise the patient's own cultural/religious beliefs within the hospital as long as such practice is not medically contraindicated and/or does not infringe upon the rights and safety of others (*Kalintegan na nga irupir ti kultura/pammati iti uneg ti ospital no saan a maiparit ti panakaagas ken/wenno saan nga makadangran iti sabali*).
- Therapeutic purposes (*plano ti nasayaat a pan-nakaaywan*)



The preceding examples were medical and other terms intellectualized by me into Ilokano in the interest of better patient care. However, my performance for the intellectualization of Ilokano was not limited to the medical field.

Several years ago, I also co-wrote with now-retired ILOUHM professor, Josie P. Clausen, *Interpreting for an Ilokano Immigrant in the American Legal System*. That paper was presented to coincide with the 1<sup>st</sup> Nakem Centennial Conference in 2006. In that paper we wrote, “Besides court representations, Ilokano clients are also assisted in what we consider non-legal experiences” (Clausen & Flores, 2006, 110). These locations would be medical, governmental, private, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) interpreting settings. In these settings we set out several scenarios how to intellectualize Ilokano.

If a word or concept does not exist in the Ilokano language for cultural reasons, the Ilokano interpreter may resort to these procedures: (a) the interpreter explains this situation to the presiding decision-maker, such as a judge or the attending physician; (b) the interpreter would courteously remind everyone that the word used such as an idiom, cannot be literally interpreted; and (c) the interpreter asks the decision maker if the interpreter may be allowed to resort to the use of a definition ... to convey its meaning, or to use words equivalent to those used by the speaker. An instantia for this would be the use of “struck.” The word “assaulted” would not serve; the appropriate equivalent term would be hit (Clausen & Flores, 2006, 120).

Since then, Hawai`i Ilokano interpreters took heed of this and other advice that we offered in our paper. In addition, at about that the same time that we published our paper, we also added Ilokano intellectualization materials for the Hawai`i-Ilokano interpreter community by translating *Policies for Interpreted Proceedings in the Courts of the State of Hawai`i*. Indeed, Ilokano interpreters are now able to explain, in Ilokano, notions of “privileged communications” (*nalimed a nagsasariwaan*), “conflict of interest” (*kasla maikan-niwas a ugnay*), “interpret accurately and faithfully” (*agbinsabinsada iti napudno ken natulnog a panangitatus*), “legal advice” (*legal a balakad*), “personal opinion” (*nakataoan a panunot*), “due process” (*patas a proses*), “embellishing” (*artina*), “omitting” (*panangikkat*), or “editing” (*pananguynos*), “ambigui-

ties and nuances” (*nalitaw ken agbabaliw*), “remuneration and valuable consideration” (*bayad ken nangina nga utoben*), “bound by this Code” (*naisingalut iti daytoy a Kodigo*), “sanctions” (*maikutop a pabulos*), and “willful violation” (*sipapanakem a panagbasol*).

Aside from the medical and legal fields, intellectualizing Ilokano has also been undertaken by other ILOUHM faculty. Academic products emanating from this program range from plenary papers, published materials, and translated documents (e.g. court, government, university, etc.). ILOUHM has translate the following judicial materials:

- Guilty Plea
- No Contest Plea
- Motion to Defer
- Waiver of Indictment
- Arraignment & Plea Advisement
- Waiver of Trial by Jury
- Rules and Condition of Probation and Order
- Waiver of Preliminary Hearing

## Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued and sought to demonstrate how the intellectualizing of Ilokano has been occurring in Hawai`i. *Combined Love Letters* not only contains reflections of commodified-humans in border-crossing contexts, but these love letters also speak to the intellectualization of Ilokano. *Combined Love Letters* provides a lens to see the Filipino’s difficult working and living conditions and their efforts at cultural preservation and assimilation using intellectualized Ilokano concepts. *Fear (Buteng)* conveys the plight of migrant laborers and serves as an exposé to the moral attacks and criticisms that Filipino migrant workers were forced to endure after coming to America in pursuit of “the dream”. Intellectualizing words and concepts was a way that helped them to communicate how they could garner a place in a contested space.

In addition, I have noted how ILOUHM has been actively creating Ilokano registers in order to achieve the vision of Ilokano standardization. In fact, the ILOUHM program continues to take steps to end the divide between a language and the people speaking that language. It is my hope that one day the program

can say that their standard (ILOUHM's) of definition of plain and simple 'Ilokano' to mean both [the lingua franca and the people]; and the use of writing 'Ilokano' with a 'k' (using the Ilokano syllabary as the reference point), without being accused of impurity or linguistic pollution when using other variations. Then the [ILOUHM] standardization would be consistently used in our classrooms as well as in our Ilokano publications. The score has been settled for us and we try to become as aware as everyone else of the uneasy difficult history behind this need to settle it" (Agcaoili et al., 2006, 24). I myself will continue to take part in intellectualizing Ilokano and will keep on creating new intellectualized words and concepts to ensure that Ilokano evolves and stays relevant in relation to today's changing times. Translations seem to be the greatest location to locate the process of intellectualization. My research and translation work as well as my colleagues' translational scholarship serve as a corpus of writings that can be built up to thematize topics of value in Ilokano society. This body of writing connects to Gonzalez's "registers of the language" (or what the Program Coordinator of the ILOUHM calls a "repertoire") and supports the process of intellectualizing Ilokano within the domain of language policy and planning. Further, intellectualizing Ilokano demands a long-term commitment to language development (corpus planning) and to the use of Ilokano in all facets of everyday life. As such, it is a long-term process that will test the political will and stamina of the Ilokano diaspora to the fullest.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Literally in the Ilokano language, “the north.” Ilokans occupy the narrow, barren strip of land in the northwestern tip of Luzon, squeezed in between the inhospitable Cordillera mountain range to the east and the South China Sea to the west. Although the Ilokano’s homeland originally constitutes the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Abra, their population has spread east and south of their original territorial borders. In metaphorical terms, it designates everyone within the Ilokano diaspora.

<sup>2</sup> A play on the colonized-Ilokano word *luko-luko* which refers to something that cannot be taken seriously.

<sup>3</sup> Following Cribb’s coining of “euphoric couplet,” “intellectualization of Ilokano” creates a sense of nuance that reaches far beyond the specific conditions for which the term is coined, it is easily remembered, and the ambiguity gives a potential value far beyond the empirical framework within which it is developed. See: Cribb (2005).

<sup>4</sup> See: Skutnabb-Kangas (1994).

<sup>5</sup> See: Cummins (2001).

<sup>6</sup> According to the Program’s brochure, the Bachelor of Arts in Philippine Languages and Literature -- with concentrations in -- Ilokano was approved by the University of Hawai’i at Manoa (UHM) Board of Regents on May 17, 2002. The program’s mission is to prepare students for future careers in community service and education, and for advanced research and/or graduate studies in various fields in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

<sup>7</sup> A few Hawai’i scholars argue that Hawai’i-born Asians and immigrants are equally guilty (albeit unknowingly) in the settler colonial agenda of disenfranchisement of Native Hawaiians. See: Fujikane & Okamura (2008).

<sup>8</sup> See: Foucault (1995).

<sup>9</sup> It is my hope that this exploratory paper will be expounded or challenged by other researchers thereby adding more branches to this research.

<sup>10</sup> When activist and scholar Gloria Anzaldua (who helped defined “the new mestiza”) was asked to explain if her lesbian perspective evolved she responded by elaborating languages she used to identify herself during phases of her life. In south Texas the word “queer” was very much what she called the “de las otras,” which means “of the others” that she wrote about in her book, *Borderlands/Los Frontera*. When she left home and became part of the women of color community and came out as a lesbian, she started not liking to use the word “lesbian.” Hence, when she would dialogue with herself or with other women of color, she would use “dyke” or “queer” and with Chicanas she started using the Nahuatl word “patlache.” Anzaldua comments, “I started seeing that what the white lesbian community was imposing on me was a Eurocentric view, a label that derived from Greece, Sappho, and was very white and that I wanted to articulate my queerness because it was different from their queerness and so I needed a different kind of language.” By embracing the “white lesbian’s” books and their theories, and the way they dressed and everything began to be very constrictive for her in that she thought she was in a cage and the white lesbians were defining the bar. She didn’t want to be a lesbian, because a lesbian is somebody who is white and middle class. Anzaldua started chafing at the boundaries and limitations set by the white lesbian community and instead created herself a concept that came into play in her life – a mestiza. See: Reuman (2000).

<sup>11</sup> I argue “new” since as I write this paper, no language since Mathesius introduced his concept of the word have not been formally intellectualized.

<sup>12</sup> This paper will skirt around a discussion of language intellectualization. Other researchers have already written many papers discussing theories of language intellectualization. For a superb introduction to and discussion of intellectualizing a language see: Gonzalez (2002).

<sup>13</sup> This is in line with Sibayan’s argument that language has three classes of language domains. These are the non-controlling domains (NCDs) of the home and the lingua franca, and the semi-controlling domains (SCDs) which include religion, politics, and entertainment. What we are interested in is the controlling domains (CDs) chief of which are (1) government, with sub-domains of executive, judiciary, and legislature, (2) education, with sub-domains of elementary, secondary, vocational-technical, and higher education, (3) the professions, such as law, medicine, accountancy, etc., (4) science and technology, (5) business, commerce and industry; (6) information technology, which includes mass media, (7) literature and (8) international relations. The main language used in the CDs of language is always intellectualized. An intellectualized language is that language that can be used for giving and obtaining a complete education in any field of knowledge from kindergarten to the university and beyond. Knowledge and information on any subject are stored in and retrieved from various written sources and new knowledge and information as a result of research are reported in an intellectualized language. See: Sibayan (1991).

<sup>14</sup> Sub-title is borrowed from Radway’s (1991) work of the same title.

<sup>15</sup> “A rare book authored by ‘Conchita Valdez’, was published in Honolulu, Hawai’i presumably right after the Second World War. The book, *Combined Love Letters in English and Ilocano*, does not bear any year of printing but the letters bear the years spanning 1929 to 1946. The book’s reference to S.S. Maunawili, the last ship that would bring the last batch of workers from the Philippines to the plantations of Hawai’i, suggests that the ‘Letters’ could have been printed in 1946 or a bit later. But we must understand that this book that I have is the third edition, which explains the earlier letters bearing the year 1929.” See: Agcaoili (2008).

<sup>16</sup> “[T]he U.S. Bureau of the Interior reports (1846-1854) lists ‘Two Gentlemen from Manila’ (sic) among the applicants for Hawaiian citizenship during the reign of King Kalakaua.’ The two might have been part of a group of Filipino musicians/entertainers who were on a ship bound for the United States and who while the ship rode at anchor in Honolulu Harbor for provisions or repairs, made use of their time by wangling engagements to entertain ashore. The chronicles have it that they were enthusiastically received by the Islanders. Filipinos were later to be known throughout Asia as musicians.

When it was time for the ship to leave, there was dispute about pay that the musicians were supposed to receive for their work on the voyage. Dissatisfied, disgusted and angered, the musicians walked off the ship which sailed without them. The surmise is that the Filipinos settled in Hawai’i but no one can say that they left any foot prints.” See: Hawaii Filipino News (1981).

<sup>17</sup> “‘a form of standing [status] between free labor and unfree labor. It is distinguished from peonage by its definite period of service... It is distinguished from free labor in that neither the employer nor the employee is free to bargain the terms and withdraw their services whenever conditions are unsuitable.’” See: CLEAR, 2006, *Glossary: Indenture*.

<sup>18</sup> “If one were to define a ‘wave’ ... as a series of regular arrivals within a given period of time with a break in between ... [u]sing this definition,” there were three Waves of Filipino immigrants to Hawai‘i, the First Wave “consist[ing] of arrivals from 1906 to 1919 when approximately 24,400 men, 3,056 women, and 2,330 children were brought into the territory by the HSPA; the Second Wave: 1920 – 1929; and the final Third Wave of Filipino immigration to Hawai‘i taking place from 1930 – 1934. See: Hawaii Filipino News (1981).

UHM-Ethnic Studies dates the First Wave as 1906 – 1934, the Second Wave from 1946 – 1960 (through “windows of opportunities”), and the Third Wave from 1965 – present.

<sup>19</sup> The term *sakada* is used advisedly. But you say you are not going to use it! In a continuing discussion with Dr. Aurelio Agcaoili, he has registered a revisiting of the term and is not exactly comfortable with it, given some conflicting accounts of how it began. Another opinion of the meaning of the term is “[probably derived from the Ilocano phrase ‘*sakasakada amin*’ meaning, barefoot workers struggling to earn a living.] Filipino term that has come to be applied to workers recruited from the Philippines to work in Hawai‘i’s sugar plantations between 1906 and 1946.” See: CLEAR, (2006), *Glossary: Sakada*.

<sup>20</sup> A related reason for the undertaking of this research is that in my previous research (2008) I concluded that the presence of a sex-imbalance led to a local rhetoric against twenty-four executed Hawai‘i-Filipinos. I argued in *Sex, Sharps, and Strangulation: Journalistic Demonization of Hawai‘i Filipinos, 1911-1944*, that abnormal sex ratio among Filipinos in the United States led to social and psychological maladjustment which in turn led to moral problems, assault, and murder. Also see: Cariga (1937); Domingo (1983); Hawaii Filipino News (1981); Jung (2006); Ngai (2004); Porteus & Babcock (1926).

<sup>21</sup> I have to concede that some readers of my research may find it academically irresponsible to use a fictional work as a framework to my discussion of Ilokano love-letters. However, there are certain fictional texts that clearly and truthfully represent the Filipino’s life experience. Jose Rizal’s (2006) *Noli Me Tangere* is a creative indictment against the *patronato real* – the close relationship of colonial Spain and the Catholic church. From this literary fictive, we are able to get a glimpse of “true” Filipino life experiences. See: Rizal (2006).

<sup>22</sup> In reality, it was doubtful that many of the uneducated and non-English speaking Ilokano who came to Hawai‘i as laborers fully understood the nature of the legalities involved. The HSPA’s ideal hires were men who could only sign their name with an “x” or men with calluses on their hands that was believed by the HSPA agents to show that they were hard-workers who skipped schooling. See: Anderson (1984).

<sup>23</sup> In *Combined Love Letters*, the name Conchita Valdez is written in quotes. Besides three other locations where her name is also mentioned in quotes, “Valdez” becomes absent. There is no background, no achievements, and no history presented for “Ms. Conchita Valdez.” In fact the bottom of the Preface is signed in bold letter, “The Author” - no longer “Conchita Valdez.” I concluded in another research that a close search for the author leads us to conclude that “Valdez” is a phantasm. The purported author, “Valdez,” could be just a metaphor for any Filipina that male Hawai‘i-Ilokano lover is seeking for. It is reasonable to conclude that the real “author” could be anyone – even a non-Ilokano that have a personal agenda. See: Flores (2009).

<sup>24</sup> I presented my argument at the 4th Nakem Conference that the templates’ purposes could be bifurcated – possessing another sharpened and tainted edge. My close reading of *Combined Love Letters* led me to conclude that if we use a colonial-study lens to study the grand narratives of the love-letters, we will see traces for the colonizing of the Ilokano.

<sup>25</sup> *Fear(Buteng)* was a reprint of a speech for the International Longshoremen’s & Warehousemen’s Union in defense of Jack Hall, a Hawaiian ILWU leader, against a frame-up. See: Bouslog-Sawyer (1951).

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# Magh Marauders, Portuguese Pirates, White Elephants and Persian Poets:

Arakan and Its Bay-of-Bengal Connectivities in the Early Modern Era<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The plight of Muslims in the western Burmese state of Arakan (or Rakhine) illustrates a tendency in nationalist historical consciousness to deny those aspects of the past, which would otherwise unsettle dominant national narratives. Since Burmese independence from British colonialism in 1948, many Muslims have been denied Burmese citizenship under the rationale that they are “illegal immigrants” who entered the country from Bengal as compradors of the exploitative colonial regime of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Having suffered several waves of state-sponsored oppression and violence in the latter part of the twentieth century, large numbers of people have fled Arakan for refugee camps in neighboring countries. The specific cause of refugees often identified as Rohingya has received some media attention in recent times, although a chronic refugee problem has been ongoing for many decades.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the Rohingya people and other Muslim Arakanese have had little support from the nativist Rakhaing nationalist movement, which has vigorously opposed both Burmese imperialism and what it sees as the foreign influence of Islamicization.<sup>3</sup> Despite such narratives of Arakanese purity, abundant evidence points to over one thousand years of settlement in Arakan by Muslims, who came from various places across the seas and around the Bay in several distinct waves of immigration prior to the colonial era.

One of the major aims of this paper is to chart the many ways in which this post-colonial nationalist view of the Arakanese past fails to account for the diverse, cosmopolitan and indeed multicultural nature of Arakan in the early modern period. In taking a view

from the sea, as opposed to one limited by territorial boundaries, this paper aims to show that during its ascendancy as a maritime power of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Kingdom of Arakan participated in and was shaped by a cultural continuum of a heterogeneous littoral society that extended in an arc around the Bay of Bengal. This is not to discount the importance of autochthonous traditions, or influences emanating from further inland and outside of this Bay of Bengal zone of cultural interaction. Indeed, to a large extent we might recognize that a distinctive era was brought to a close as the seventeenth century progressed, and the connectivities that gave life to this distinctive littoral society were terminally interrupted by territorial divisions imposed by the landed empires of the Burmese from the east and the Mughals from the west. Nonetheless, when Arakan’s early modern history is viewed in terms of its connectivities to other parts of the Bay of Bengal via the sea, the parochial excesses of tropes of Arakan’s Buddhist purity become impossible to sustain.

## Earliest Arrivals of Islam

Contemporary Muslims, and the Rohingya<sup>4</sup> themselves trace their ancestry in Arakan, in part, to the shipwreck of seafaring Arab and Persian traders, as early as the eighth century of the Common Era.<sup>5</sup> While positive identification of many of their referents is difficult, Arab geographers of the tenth and twelfth centuries, such as Al-Masudi and Al-Idrisi respectively, mention ports in the eastern Indian Ocean like *Samandar* and *Ruhmi*, which modern scholars have identified with Chittagong and lower Burma.<sup>6</sup> As Karim argues, if



Arab sailors were familiar with Chittagong and lower Burma there is no reason that they shouldn't also have called at those of Arakan proper.

Certainly, Arakanese chronicles record that during the reign of Ma-ha-toing Tsan-da-ya in the late eighth to the early ninth centuries of the Common Era, several foreign ships were wrecked on the coast of the island of *Ran-byi* (or Rambree). According to the chronicles, the Muslim survivors of these vessels were taken to Arakan proper and settled in villages.<sup>7</sup> Although more positive evidence is lacking prior to the modern era, it seems likely, since the coast of Burma was well known to Arab pilots from very early times, that Arab traders were no novelty in Arakan.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of the extent of these earliest arrivals, the early modern period was certainly one in which Arakan became integrated with other regions of the Bay of Bengal littoral; areas which were also increasingly falling under the influence of Islam. This integration within an increasingly Islamic sphere during the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a corresponding increase in Arakan's Muslim population at various levels of society, from the rural peasantry to the courtly elite at the capital of Mrauk-U. Michael Charney has convincingly argued that current notions of religious identity cannot be unproblematically applied to Arakan of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> In neighboring Bengal itself, the arrival of Islam was a comparatively recent occurrence, with popular conversion often the gradual result of syncretic blendings of charismatic Sufi teachings with Hindu and other indigenous beliefs and practices.<sup>10</sup> Rather than being rigidly determined by belonging to a religious community, Charney suggests that the construction of an individual's sense of identity in Arakan during this period depended much more upon kinship ties and patron-client relationships, as well as local spirit cults.<sup>11</sup>

This important caveat notwithstanding, this period saw a growing Islamic presence in Arakan via a range of

processes, such that Islam was practiced, in some form or another, at many levels of society. It became the faith not only of visiting sailors and merchants, but also segments of the artisanal and agricultural laboring classes, and by courtly elites. Indeed, despite state patronage of Buddhism and the central importance of the Mahamuni image at Mrauk-U, the trappings and political symbolism of the Dar-al-Islam were invoked by no less than the rulers of Arakan themselves.

### Indo-Islamic Cultural Influences on Arakan

The rise of Arakan as a maritime power in the Bay of Bengal might be said to



Right: A political and topographical map of Arakan and the Bay of Bengal

originate with the troubled though ultimately redemptive career of the early-fifteenth-century King Naramaikla.<sup>12</sup> This king, according to Arakanese chronicles, ruled central Arakan briefly from the capital of Laun-kret beginning in 1404, before fleeing to Bengal in the face of invading armies of Mons and Burmans from beyond the Yoma Mountains. While some scholars have expressed doubts as to the reliability of these Arakanese chronicles as historical sources,<sup>13</sup> they do tell us that Naramaikla took refuge in the Islamic Sultanate of Bengal for a quarter of a century between 1406 and 1430. There he served a succession of Sultans in their struggles to remain autonomous from rival lords and ultimately Northern India's imperial center at Delhi.<sup>14</sup>

The Arakanese king is said to have trained the Sultan's men in capturing and training wild elephants, as well as offering sage advice on how to expedite the clearing of a bamboo forest that stood in the path of the Sultan's army. Naramaikla advised the Sultan to have coins scattered among the canes so that the common people would of their own volition cut down the forest in order to collect the wealth.<sup>15</sup> Having thus earned the gratitude of Jalal-ud-din, the Sultan of Bengal, Naramaikla is said to have returned to Arakan with the support of 'Muslim' or *Rohinga* troops,<sup>16</sup> and, after an initially abortive mission marred by treachery committed as the force approached Arakan from Chittagong, to have finally recovered his kingdom on the second attempt. This new era of sovereignty was gained then, it is said, at the price of owing vassalage to Bengal. While Arakan had a long history of absorbing Hindu and Buddhist influences from across the Bay, Naramaikla's sojourn in Banga would appear to have inaugurated a more intensive phase of interaction with the Bay's Islamic culture.

Historians have reached little agreement as to the nature of Arakanese sovereignty during this period of the early to middle fifteenth century. While nineteenth and twentieth-century colonialist scholarship by the likes of A.P. Phayre and G.E. Harvey tended to base their narratives relatively uncritically on selected narratives from the Arakanese chronicle tradition, more recent work on Arakan has questioned the validity of much of this received wisdom.<sup>17</sup> Leider, for example, dismisses the various sources, which claim Naramaikla and his heirs were tributary to the Bengal Sultanate or that Islamic influence on the Arakanese court was par-

ticularly significant. He views the chronicles upon which so many histories of this period have been based as unreliable, since they are legendary in tone, tend to contradict one another, and were recorded well after the era to which they refer.<sup>18</sup> However, the important question remains: What might have motivated Arakanese chroniclers to claim that their kings had been subordinate to their Bengali neighbors were this not based on some truth?

Other evidence, though generally supportive of the chronicles in this regard, has also produced skepticism and debate. From the time of Naramaikla's successor, Min Khari, until 1622, Arakanese kings often adopted Islamic titles, in addition to ones derived locally and from Buddhist conceptions of kingship. For instance, Min-Khari was also known as Ali Khan, while several of the more powerful Arakanese monarchs, Razagri and Thirithudhamma took the title, Salim Shah, to name a couple of examples.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Arakanese coinage, until the year 1634, sported Persian inscriptions attesting to the use of these titles, in addition to being stamped with the *kalima* (or the Muslim declaration of faith).<sup>20</sup> Subrahmanyam has suggested that the adoption of Islamic titles by Arakanese rulers was their way of claiming sovereignty over eastern Bengal during the decline of the Sultanate of Gaur and before the Mughal Empire had consolidated its claim on the entire region.<sup>21</sup>

Leider raises many worthwhile objections against the undiscerning use of admittedly thin evidence to construct a picture of the Arakanese court as one steeped in Islamic culture and values, arguing instead for the central importance of Buddhism in courtly culture. Yet, it remains difficult to refute early sixteenth-century sources such as the observation made in passing by the visiting Portuguese apothecary Tome Pires in the early 1500s, who noted that the king of Arakan was "very warlike," "always at war," and, importantly, was "tributary to the said king of Bengal."<sup>22</sup> It is almost certainly not the case that these Arakanese kings became Muslims in any religious sense. For a host of cultural and political reasons they adopted Islamic titles and embossed their coinage with the Islamic declaration of faith. For these reasons it seems prudent to consider Islamic influence at the court of Mrauk-U as having a greater role than Leider is willing to accept.

Many historians, following Phayre and Harvey, have inferred that Naramaikla's return to Arakan with the

support of a 'Muslim' army from Bengal would very likely have resulted in an influx of Muslims into the general population of Arakan. More recently, Abdul Karim cites an eighteenth-century genealogy from Bengal, the *Shariatnamah* which adds weight to this inference.

...in Bengala (East Bengal) in the kingdom of Gaur, there was a Wazir named Hamid-ud-din. His son Burhan-ud-din left the country with his followers and soldiers and settled in Roshang [Arakan]. In those days there was no cavalry in Arakan. Considering that Burhan-ud-din was an efficient soldier, the king appointed him Lashkar Wazir or head of the army or defense or war minister.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, if we accept the narrative in the Arakanese chronicles regarding the treachery of the first army sent with Naramaikla, we have the presence of not one but two armies for which we must account. As Karim argues, it is rather unlikely that the first army would have returned to Bengal en masse, having failed to carry out the Sultan's orders. Furthermore, these armies would have been accompanied into Arakan by large numbers of "... auxiliary forces, like carriers, tent bearers, cooks and butlers, washer-men etc."<sup>24</sup> The Santikhan or Sindhi Khan Mosque in Mrauk-U (recently destroyed) is thought by some to have been built by Naramaikla's Muslim followers upon his triumphant return to Arakan.<sup>25</sup> Proponents of this view cite stylistic similarities with roughly contemporaneous Mosque architecture in east Bengal. This too has been disputed by Leider who, following nineteenth-century archaeologist Forchhammer, argues that the Santikhan mosque bore greater stylistic affinity with sixteenth-century Buddhist architecture such as the Dukkanthein and Chitethaung pagodas.<sup>26</sup>

### Buddermokan

Meanwhile, on the promontory known to the British as 'the Point,' near the city of Akyab on the island of Sittwe, at the entrance to the Kaladan River and what was effectively the gateway to the Kingdom of Arakan from the Bay of Bengal, stands a shrine to a Sufi saint closely associated with the ocean. This shrine is not only evidence of a pre-colonial presence of Islam, but constitutes an apt symbol of the plurality that characterized that cosmopolitan pre-modern society. Known locally as the *Buddermokan* (from *Badr Makan* or 'house of Badr') this structure of rock and brick over-

looking the mouth of the river commemorates Pir Badr al-Din Auliya, a Sufi saint originally from Meerut in northern India who is said to have journeyed across the Bay of Bengal and preached Islam at Chittagong, perhaps around the middle of the fifteenth century, though some versions place him centuries earlier.<sup>27</sup> This saint is "reputed primarily to be the patron of seafarers and boatmen and fisher-folk."<sup>28</sup> Although, the existing structures on Sittwe are believed to date from the 1770s, it is likely that the site itself has been venerated since considerably earlier times. In local traditions collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by British administrator Richard Temple, Pir Badr was believed to have spent a lengthy period at the site in hermitage and meditation.<sup>29</sup>

According to some accounts, Pir Badr was closely identified with the earlier tradition of Kwadja Khizr, a heroic figure of pre-Islamic Arabic legends associated with the well of immortality, who, in India at least, came to be identified with seas and rivers, having "powers to rule the waters and control the storms."<sup>30</sup> People of various faiths including Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists as well as Chinese are said to have propitiated Badr at shrines situated all along the eastern Bay of Bengal littoral at locations such as "at the mouths of rivers, on boulders or crags," in places including Sandoway (or Sundwip), Chittagong, Akyab, Cheduba, and Mergui.<sup>31</sup> In the early twentieth century, Temple summed up Badr's broad appeal in the following way. "To the Buddhists he is a *nat*; to the Hindus he is a *deva* or inferior god; to the Muhammadans a saint; to the Chinese a spirit."<sup>32</sup> The following version of a popular legend was related to Temple by Colonel Parrot, the British Commissioner of Arakan in 1893.

The legend states, that, on one occasion, two Hindus, by the name of Manich (?Manik) and Chand were returning by sea from Bassein to Chittagong, and put into Akyab to take in water. They anchored off the rock known as Buddermakam, and proceeded to a small tank near the sacred rocks. There they met the *fakir*, and were asked by him to hollow out the cave, which was to form his future habitation. They pleaded poverty and the losses they had sustained in their trading adventure.

The *fakir* said, 'never mind, do as I bid you. If you are poor and without merchandise, load the soil from this sacred spot, and before your journey's end, you will be rewarded.' The brothers did as they were bid. The cave was constructed, a well dug and they proceed on their journey to Chitta-

gong. The *fakir*'s words came true. On proceeding to unload their goods, they found in their place nothing but gold and the most valuable of gems.<sup>33</sup>

In another version, the brothers were carrying a load of turmeric and the Pir appeared to one of them in a vision. Having built the shrine the brothers discovered that their cargo had turned into gold.<sup>34</sup>

The existence of such a complex cult illuminates the fluid nature of boundaries between religious identities, and reminds us of Michael Charney's notion that pre-modern Arakanese identities stemmed not from rigid notions of religious community, but from connections with local spirits, along with a range of other factors. At the same time, the cult of Pir Badr seems to have resonated with peoples all along the Arakanese littoral and beyond, creating common ties that could have been reinforced by contact with fellow devotees who used the sea and movement upon it as part of their livelihoods. Then too, this popular saint clearly played an important role in bringing Islamic ideas and practices to the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal. While we cannot know the extent to which such ideas and practices informed the worship of the common people who lived along the Arakanese coastline, we might assume, at least, that in sharing in this veneration of "the saint of the sea," Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims alike appreciated that the potential benefits outweighed the risks of interacting with the sea in order to participate in the world beyond.

## Islamic Influence on the Court of Mrauk-U

While it is perhaps impossible to know how deeply Islamic culture and religion permeated the Arakanese worldview via contact with seafaring traders and Sufi cults like that of Pir Badr, it is fairly clear that elite Arakanese society adopted many of the symbols, if not the substance, of the Islamic culture of their neighbours in the Bay of Bengal. Certainly, we know that during the seventeenth century high offices in Arakan were occupied by individuals of Bengali descent, most of whom, judging from their names, were Muslims. Ashraf Khan served King Thirithudhamma (r. 1622-1638) as Lashkar Wazir, or Minister of Defense. The immense power wielded over the Arakanese government by Ashraf Khan as the head of the military is attested to in some of the court poetry he sponsored. We

might dismiss such references as self-serving hyperbole, but they are corroborated by correspondence in which some very frustrated Dutch traders complain that their designs were often thwarted by this powerful minister.<sup>35</sup> Later, Bara Thakur (of Siddiq lineage, descended from Abu Bakr the first Caliph, and therefore not Hindu, as the name Thakur would otherwise indicate) also occupied that post under King Narapatigyi (r. 1638-1645). Bara Thakur's son, Magan Thakur served the same ruler as Wazir-e-Azam, or Prime Minister, a position that was subsequently occupied by other Muslim individuals such as Sayid Musa and Nabaraj Majlis.<sup>36</sup>

Our main sources of information on this subject are two poets, Qazi Daulat and Sayyid Alaol, who were patronized by the court of Mrauk-U and composed poetry in both Urdu (or Hindustani) and Bengali, as well as Persian, while drawing freely on both Arabic and Sanskrit. Alaol, the son of a highly ranked Mughal cavalry officer from Fatchpur in eastern Bengal, was travelling by river in Bengal with his father when they were attacked by Portuguese and Magh (Arakanese) slavers. His father was killed in the ensuing battle, and Alaol was captured and eventually sold to the king of Arakan, where he was assigned to work in the king's stables. His quick wit was evident and his literary talents were soon discovered by Ashraf Khan who elevated him in status and commissioned him to write various works of poetry.<sup>37</sup>

Both Daulat and Alaol are considered to have "played a crucial role in the cultivation of Bengali literature, giving rise to what may even be called a seventeenth-century Bengal renaissance."<sup>38</sup> So, for whom were these poets writing in the Bengali language? The answer to this question indicates that at this time Arakan participated as part of a broader literary and cultural continuum stretching along the Bay of Bengal. As Bhattacharya speculates, this cultivation of Bengali literature on the part of the Arakanese court would have had the purpose of consolidating Arakanese claims over the recently acquired prize of Chittagong, a flourishing port city in the extreme southeast of Bengal.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, it is clear from Alaol's own writing, in a tribute penned for his patron Magan Thakur, that there was a local audience at Mrauk-U for his work.

Many Muslims live in Roshang [Arakan], they are all learned, virtuous and come out good family

[sic]. All help me and treat me well because I am an educated man. Thakur Magan, the truthful and saintly person was the minister of the Chief Queen... He treats me well and his generosity bound my neck towards him. The learned people sit in his assembly and enjoy vocal instrumental music... When they heard the story of the Padmavati they became happy.<sup>40</sup> The people of Roshang do not understand the language [Awadhi, a language related to Hindi from central northern India], **so if it was composed in Bengali poem, all will be happy.** So Magan Thakur ordered me to compose Padmavati and by his order I promised to compose the book.<sup>41</sup>

A further suggestion that Hindustani was spoken in Arakan, at least among the elites of Mrauk-U, can be found in the account of Friar Sebastien Manrique, the Portuguese monk of the Augustinian order who visited the court during the reign of Thirithudhamma on an extended diplomatic mission from the Portuguese enclave at Dianga. Although at their first encounter Manrique communicated with the King in Portuguese via a local interpreter or 'Ramallu,' subsequent encounters are described as taking place without any intermediary.<sup>42</sup> We are informed that Manrique had some training "in the languages of Bengala and Indus-tanee" before leaving the seminary, though the extent of his proficiency is not indicated.<sup>43</sup> While Manrique does not explicitly state that he used Hindustani with the king, his editor and translator, Col. E. Luard, surmises from Manrique's use of the words *hāthi* (elephant) and *tamāsha* (spectacle, entertainment) that "a good deal of Hindustani seems to have been spoken at Arakan, at any rate, if Manrique is not interpolating."<sup>44</sup>

While more tantalizing than conclusive, taken together these strands of evidence suggest that Arakanese society, at least in the urban capital of Mrauk-U, was multi-lingual and a participant in the larger cultural sphere of the Bay of Bengal. That the king was perhaps capable of conversing with foreigners in Hindustani, and that the "poet laureate" would translate an Awadhi epic into Bengali in order to give it a local audience, suggests both a substantial Bengali presence in Mrauk-U, and a cultural orientation directed decidedly towards the Bay. As noted above, Burmese and Arakanese nationalists and certain scholars have obdurately resisted the notion that Arakan was historically influenced by Islam or that it had a substantial Muslim presence before the colonial era. While the underlying causes and the extent of this influence and

presence are obviously open to discussion, the evidence presented thus far suggests that Islamic (and more specifically Indo-Islamic) culture was a vibrant feature of Arakanese society in the early modern era.

Scholars such as Michael Charney and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have described the appeal of Persianate and Indo-Islamic culture for Arakanese rulers during this period in terms similar to Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital."<sup>45</sup> Charney views the borrowing of regnal titles as fitting into "a prevailing pattern of kingship in the Arakan littoral... whereby Arakanese kings borrowed symbols of kingship from powerful states to the northwest and the east, that is, Bengal and Burma."<sup>46</sup> The adoption of outward symbols of an Islamic sensibility makes perfect sense for Arakanese rulers in a period in which trade facilitated an "expansion of Islam on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the growing presence of Muslim mercantile communities."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, as a littoral kingdom perched on a narrow strip of land between the imposing Yoma Mountains in the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east, participation in the culture of maritime trade was a key aspect in the rise of Arakan.

## The Ebb and Flow of Buddhist Connectivities Across the Bay of Bengal

Before turning to a discussion of the rise of Arakan as an economic power in the Bay of Bengal, it is important to temper the above discussion by recognizing that despite a growing Islamic presence in Arakan during the early modern period, Buddhism continued to play a central role in constituting the Arakanese cultural and social order. Just as participation in an Indo-Islamic culture brought Arakan into more intimate contact with the northern reaches of the Bay of Bengal world, the maintenance of a reciprocal relationship with the Buddhist sangha in Sri Lanka also sustained connections between Arakan and a larger Buddhist world.

According to Arakanese chronicles, the Gautama Buddha himself made a supernatural flight in the company of five hundred *arhats* to the kingdom of Arakan during the reign of King Candrasuriya, who ascended the throne in 146 C.E.<sup>48</sup> Having spent a week preaching on Selagiri Hill, the Buddha allowed a bronze likeness of himself to be commissioned by King Candrasuriya. The resulting Mahamuni image became the

focus of pilgrimage for Buddhist devotees from surrounding countries and a source of envy for their Buddhist rulers. Indeed, the Arakanese chronicles refer to many failed forays by neighboring kingdoms to acquire the coveted image. The Arakanese themselves believed that the statue was a “vehicle of divine protection,” which protected them from foreign incursions.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the final denouement of the kingdom’s gradual decline came with Burmese invasion in 1785, and the carrying off of the Mahamuni image.<sup>50</sup>

An Arakanese source written during the Mrauk-U era, the *Sappadanapakarana*, claims that religious exchange with Sri Lanka was initiated as early as the second century of the Common Era, when Sinhalese bhikkus traversed the ocean in order to pay homage to the Mahamuni image, while other chronicles tell of Arakanese king Thuriyathiri sending a dozen monks on a mission to Ceylon.<sup>51</sup> Certainly, stone inscriptions in Sri Lanka dated as early as 1256 indicate that the erudite Buddhist scholar and Arakanese King Alawmaphru travelled across the sea to visit Ceylon.<sup>52</sup>

During the Mrauk-U era itself, connections between these two Buddhist kingdoms played an important role in the legitimation of royal rule. According to Raymond, an apparent convention in Theravada Buddhism requires that a capital city – the seat of both secular and religious authority – meet certain important criteria. Such a city must contain a major stupa containing an important relic, and should also house at least one library containing a complete set of canonical texts.<sup>53</sup> In 1439, Mon Khari (aka Ali Khan) received from Sri Lanka a complete copy of the *Tipitaka* (or Theravada Buddhist cannon), while his son and successor Basawphru also sent to Ceylon for another complete set of texts, and having received it, dispatched a religious delegation in return. In 1531, Min Bin (aka Zabauk Shah), who with the help of Portuguese engineers vastly upgraded the fortifications of Mrauk-U by greatly expanding its walls and moats, also established new stupas throughout the kingdom, supplying each new location with a copy of the *Tipitaka* based on the prototype sent from Ceylon.<sup>54</sup> One of Min Bin’s largest gestures in this regard was the Andaw stupa in Mrauk-U itself, in which he had installed a copy of the Buddha’s tooth relic from Kandy.<sup>55</sup>

Colonial interference in Sri Lanka eventually affected its external relations with Arakan. The reign of Min Phalaung (1571–93), who built the Dukkanthein Pagoda

at Mrauk-U and installed in it a new set of the *Tipitaka*, was a difficult time for Sri Lankan Buddhism. Not only had the arrival of Portuguese missionaries led to the conversion of large numbers of the sangha, in particular among the fishing villages, but this period also saw the rule of several Ceylonese kings who were actively antagonistic to the Buddhist order.<sup>56</sup> When sympathetic Sri Lankan ruler Vimaladhamma Surya I assumed the throne in 1592 he turned to Arakan to request the assistance of leading *theravada* (or respected monk) Nandicakka in reconstituting the monkhood in his dominion. In 1593, Min Raza Gyi responded to this request by dispatching Nandicakka in a party of twenty learned monks who carried out a missionary program, conducting the proper and necessary ordination rituals with which to reestablish a Buddhist community.<sup>57</sup> Later, during his reign of 1638–45, in an effort to legitimize his authority in Arakan, Narapati, the usurper who poisoned Thirithudhamma, had thirty complete new sets of the *Tipitaka* imported from across the Bay.<sup>58</sup>

In his romantic narration of Friar Manrique’s travels in the Bay of Bengal, early twentieth-century British scholar and official Maurice Collis, delights in recounting an episode in the career of the great sixteenth-century Burmese empire builder, Bayin-naung.<sup>59</sup> Although Collis’ handling of the tale demonstrates a particularly smug, if not altogether unsympathetic Orientalism, it is nonetheless illustrative of the kinds of triangular connectivities alive in the Bay during this period. Essentially, Collis’ story revolves around the king’s obsession with acquiring certain Buddhist symbols of legitimacy which would confirm his status as a universal ruler, or *cakravartin*, (a trope common also in Collis’ treatment of the Arakanese monarch of Manrique’s time, Thirithudhamma).

Having already acquired four white Siamese elephants in his invasion of Ayudhya in 1563, Bayin-naung now turned his attention across the Bay to the Buddhist kingdom of Colombo. Bayin-naung’s astrologers had foretold that he was to marry a Ceylonese princess and cement an alliance with this prestigious Buddhist realm. Fearful of incurring the displeasure of the Burmese emperor, the king of Colombo dared not admit that he had no daughter, and instead sent to a suitable lady of his court in the guise of a princess. To smooth over any suspicions he included as part of her dowry the highly coveted tooth relic of the Buddha.

As Collis explains, Bayin-naung believed this relic had been captured by the Portuguese and taken to Goa and destroyed. Despite his attempts to purchase the relic, and the Viceroy's eagerness to come to terms, (a small fortune having been offered), the Archbishop at Goa interceded, forbidding the sale of idols within his jurisdiction and personally presiding over the very public and ceremonial destruction of the tooth. The King of Colombo however, assured the Burmese envoys that at the moment of its destruction a spirit had replaced the relic with a porcelain copy, magically transporting the genuine relic back to Ceylon and entrusting it to his care. High among Collis' objectives in relating this exotic narrative was to demonstrate the gullibility of the superstitious 'native' in contradistinction to the rationality of the colonial state of which he was a part. Yet he also captures a vivid sense of the shared conceptions of Buddhist kingship and the sometimes tangled web of interactions that characterized and connected the Bay during this period.

By the late seventeenth century, the monarchy at Mrauk-U was severely weakened due to a "decline in commerce, de-urbanization and the diffusion of power throughout the Arakan littoral."<sup>60</sup> This complex of factors in turn had led to a serious decline in state patronage of Buddhism in Arakan. When an envoy from Sri Lanka appeared at Mrauk-U requesting a contingent of monks in 1693 it was turned away empty-handed.<sup>61</sup> Although a second request three years later was successful, the political chaos that characterized the domestic scene in Arakan for most of the eighteenth century meant that formal religious connections with Sri Lanka were hereafter rarely as significant. Rather than viewing this decline in connectivity as a peculiarity of Buddhist political relationships, Charney understands these developments more broadly in terms of Arakan's increasing isolation from other zones of the Bay, including those that were part of the Dar-al-Islam. An "aggressively mercantilist" trade outlook combined with a willingness to collaborate with faithless Portuguese slavers meant that by the middle decades of the seventeenth century the extent of Arakanese influence in the Bay of Bengal had begun to sharply contract.

### Arakan and Maritime Trade

Trade was an important factor in the rise and subsequent decline of Arakan across the sixteenth and sev-

enteenth centuries. At the beginning of this period, Mrauk-U (along with Arakan more generally) does not appear to have been a major trading destination in the networks of the Indian Ocean or even within the Bay of Bengal. This situation appears to have changed considerably over the course of the first half of the seventeenth century as Arakan exerted greater influence over what effectively became its territorial waters. Indeed, control of the more active port cities of Chittagong to the north (which was acquired in a gradual series of maneuvers during the mid-to-late-sixteenth century) and Pegu (which was held briefly at the end of sixteenth century) were key motivating factors in Arakan's sixteenth-century territorial expansion.

Tome Pires, the Portuguese apothecary who was based at Malacca, is perhaps the earliest European source of information on Arakanese trade. He commented in the early sixteenth century that Arakan had a "good port on the sea, where the Peguans, the Bengalees and the Klings trade, but not much business."<sup>62</sup> Pires seems somewhat muddled on several points of geography, placing the riverine Arakanese capital of the interior on the coast, and nominating Ava (of Burma proper) as Arakan's chief city and the entrepot from which the region's rich supply of rubies were sourced. Mrauk-U, in fact sits some ten miles inland between the rivers Kaladan and LemRo, although it is true that scholars remain unclear as to the precise location of the city's port. Ava was of course not part of Arakan but the capital of upper Burma. In addition to rubies and musk, Pires identifies silver, several kinds of cotton cloth, and elephants as the main products for which merchants sent to Arakan.

A large component of Arakan's commercial activity then, consisted in participation in a transit-trade of Indian cloth from Bengal and the Deccan, and rubies sourced from central Burma. We know from Dutch sources later during the seventeenth century (though this would also hold for earlier periods as well), that Arakan profited from political turmoil in Burma such that whenever Ava lost access to its ports in the south, the only outlet for its rubies was across the Yoma mountains via Arakan.<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere in his account, Pires mentions that Arakanese traders were among those who paid a six percent levy to trade at Malacca, as opposed to those who settled, married locally and thus paid a discounted tax of three percent.<sup>64</sup> But although Arakanese merchants were involved in this transit-



trade linking the Coromandel Coast to ports further east in Southeast Asia, it would appear that they were not particularly important players, especially in comparison to the Persian and *Keling* (or Orissan, from Kalinga) traders who dominated these routes.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, volumes of trade between Arakan and the Sultanate of Golconda at Masulipatnam on the Coromandel Coast, while not insignificant, were greatly eclipsed by those of Aceh, Malacca and even Pegu.<sup>66</sup>

### *Elephants in the Bay of Bengal Trade*

All of these Southeast Asian trading polities competed with one another in supplying the Indian demand for elephants. The importance of elephants as symbols of status and power, and as a valuable trade commodity providing useful motive power, appears to have transcended regional and religious differences and was a common feature of lands bordering the Bay of Bengal of the early modern period. Mughal India's seemingly insatiable demand for elephants was one of the strands connecting the subcontinent with Southeast Asia, where elephants also figured heavily in Hindu and Buddhist cosmogonies and notions of imperial grandeur. In the pre-industrial era, even after the sixteenth century when heavy artillery had rendered their military value largely obsolete, elephants remained extremely useful working animals under a variety of environmental conditions.

We have seen how the ability of the Arakanese king to capture and tame wild elephants was considered of great import by the Arakanese chroniclers, if not by the Sultan of Bengal himself. Later, as Arakanese power burgeoned at the turn of the sixteenth century, King Raza-giri was particularly delighted to seize, among other spoils of victory in the successful siege of Pegu, a white elephant from Siam.<sup>67</sup> Possession of such a rare animal was considered one of the necessary attributes of the *cakravartin*, or universal ruler.<sup>68</sup>

In the seventeenth century, trade in elephants from many parts of Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal appears to have been particularly brisk. Between 1640 and 1663, elephants were the principal export from Aceh, averaging thirty per year.<sup>69</sup> In 1651 alone, over one hundred animals were exported from Tenasserim.<sup>70</sup> In 1627, a ship belonging to the King of Arakan arrived at Pulicat on the Coromandel Coast of India with thirteen elephants, (eight on the king's ac-

count, three on that of the *kotwal*—or civil administrator—of Arakan, and two under the expenses of the governor of Pulicat).<sup>71</sup>

### *Slaves and Rice*

The King's vessel also carried what by this time had become Arakan's two most important export commodities (neither of which appeared in the inventory prepared by Tome Pires in the early sixteenth century); rice and slaves. By the seventeenth century these exports had become core components of the Arakanese economy, integrating it into the larger economy of the Bay of Bengal world in both positive and negative ways. Arakan's climate and geography, with abundant and reliable rainfall and broad alluvial plains, made it ideal for rice production.<sup>72</sup> Surplus production of rice was exported across the bay to ports in both Bengal and the Coromandel Coast, as well as to Dutch settlements to the east.<sup>73</sup> A deficit of agricultural labor, on the other hand, and the need to produce further export commodities (beyond rice and elephants) in order to extract more wealth from the expanding commercial sphere of the Bay of Bengal/Indian Ocean, saw Arakan adopt slave raiding as a central component of its seventeenth-century economy. This combination of factors culminated in the formation of a unique type of polity, which Eaton describes as "a hybrid entity occupying a position somewhere between a truly 'agrarian state'... and a heavily commercialized 'trading sultanate.'"<sup>74</sup>

Key to Arakan's success in this transformation was what ultimately proved to be a Faustian pact: collaboration with Portuguese freebooters. Throughout the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Arakan launched a massive naval force of thousands of vessels of various designs, but consisting mostly (approximately 70-80%) of fast-moving, shallow-draft oar-propelled boats.<sup>75</sup> Writing in 1660s, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier observed,

It is a most surprising thing to see with what speed these galleys are propelled by oars. There are some so long that they have up to fifty oars on each side, but there are not more than two men to each oar. You see some which are much decorated, where the gold and azure have not been spared.<sup>76</sup>

Though generally slave-powered, these vessels were also capable of running under wind power, and were

crewed by both Arakanese sailors and Portuguese mercenaries.<sup>77</sup> Described in European sources variously as *jalia*, *jelyasse*, *gelia*, *galeasse* and *gallivant*,<sup>78</sup> these boats were capable of carrying hundreds of people including their crews, being generally between sixty to eighty feet in length, and were often mounted with up to six swivel guns.<sup>79</sup> They were perfectly adapted for operation in riverine and coastal conditions. Because of their identically shaped prow and stern they could be rowed forward or backward with equal facility, and thus could be made to reverse direction instantly. Their *feringhee* and *magh* crews utilized this maneuverability to stealthily prowl the watery mazes of the Bay of Bengal littoral, mounting surprise attacks on coastal and riparian settlements from eastern Bengal to Orissa and as far inland as Dacca, seizing portable wealth and carrying off the inhabitants to be kept or sold as slaves.

At the height of this trade, between the 1620s and 1640s, the Dutch often exported over one thousand slaves per year from the Arakanese ports of Chittagong and Dianga, while it was said that the King of Arakan himself could claim as many as ten thousand in a slaving season.<sup>80</sup> The fierce and cruel reputation of these slaving fleets is captured in the writings of a Mughal chronicle of the 1660s.

Arracan pirates, both Magh and Feringi, used constantly to [come] by the water-route and plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims, male and female, great and small, few and many, that they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands, passed thin cane through the holes, and threw them one above another under the deck of their ships. In the same manner as grain is flung to fowl, every morn and evening they threw down from above uncooked rice to the captives as food. On their return to their homes, they employed the few hard-lived captives that survived [this treatment], with great disgrace in tillage and other hard tasks, according to their power. Others were sold to the Dutch, the English, and French merchants at the ports of the Deccan.<sup>81</sup>

So intense was this predation that, according to our author, by the mid-seventeenth century, “not a householder was left on both sides of the rivers on their track from Dacca to Chatgaon [Chittagong].”<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, relations between the slave trade’s two largest players, the Kingdom of Arakan and the VOC, became tense during the middle seventeenth century as

supplies of this commodity became increasingly scarce. Although a figure of one thousand and forty-six slaves is recorded as being sent to Batavia from Arakan in 1647, by this time the average yearly output was far lower. In the ensuing fifteen years these totals rarely exceeded three hundred per year.<sup>83</sup> Exacerbating the situation from the Dutch perspective, were *farmans* (or declarations) issued by the King of Arakan insisting that no skilled workers or artisans should be sold to foreigners, and that no slaves already settled in Arakan should be allowed to leave the kingdom.<sup>84</sup> The traditional practice of raiding the Bengali coast in order to procure agricultural labor and expand the kingdom’s artisanal capacities, came into increasing conflict in the seventeenth century with the competing attraction to profit from the growing Dutch demand for slaves.

At the height of its powers in the early seventeenth century, Arakan was a far more important trade destination than it had been during the time of Tome Pires. Some indication of the range of countries with which Arakan had trade contacts in the seventeenth century can be gleaned from Friar Manrique’s description of the duty-free market that was held in celebration of the coronation of Thirithudhamma in 1624. He writes:

They came in numerous vessels loaded with every sort of merchandise, and hailed not merely from the neighbouring countries, such as Bengala, Pegu, and Martaban, but also from the empire of Siam, known as Sornau, and the kingdoms of Champa and Camboja. Ships had also come from various parts of India, as from the kingdoms of Musalipatam, Negapatam, and the Maldiv islands, attracted to this duty-free market. Nor had ships failed to come from the rich islands of Sumatra, such as the Greater and Lesser Java, Achem Macassar, and Bima.<sup>85</sup>

While Mrauk-U appears to have become something of a regional entrepot at this time, more important in Arakan’s emergence as a powerful entity in the early seventeenth century, were the profits and increased agricultural productivity generated by the slave trade. However, as the supply of slaves dwindled in the middle of the century, Arakan found itself increasingly isolated from other parts of the Bay. The duplicity of several of their Portuguese mercenaries in this period created serious problems for Arakanese rulers, which will be discussed below. Meanwhile, constant depredation upon Bengal had profoundly alienated Arakan from the expanding Mughal Empire, which, though

lacking the requisite naval resources to properly defend its eastern borders was inexorably extending its reach towards the vital port city of Chittagong. Although the Arakanese sought military alliances with their Dutch trading partners against their Burmese and Mughal neighbors, the Dutch were scarcely interested in becoming embroiled in such conflicts at the expense of their broader trade interests.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the Dutch had to be careful to avoid Mughal displeasure; during the 1650s they were repeatedly threatened with expulsion from their factories in India, were they to persist in purchasing Bengali slaves from Arakan.<sup>87</sup> Although they employed various strategies to circumvent the Mughal ban, by the latter part of the 1660s Dutch purchasing of slaves from the Bay of Bengal had all but ceased. On the eve of the Mughal invasion of Chittagong, the Dutch secretly decamped from their settlements at Mrauk-U in order to avoid sacrificing their relationship with Delhi. The loss of this valuable trading partner had effects in other sectors of the Arakanese economy, and coupled with the loss of Chittagong soon afterward, was a blow from which Arakan never recovered.<sup>88</sup>

Then too, Arakan's aggressively mercantilist policies in this century brought it into conflict with other port cities on the Bay. As part of this mercantilist approach, which also involved restrictive state monopolies on many products, Arakan began vigorously patrolling its waters with its powerful fleet in order to divert trade from neighbouring ports to Mrauk-U. In the 1630s, Dutch sources indicate that relations broke down between Arakan and both Aceh and Masulipatnam when a party of Acehnese traders were held hostage in the city of Mrauk-U, while the Sultanate of Golconda also harbored "grievances" against Arakan.<sup>89</sup> In 1642, these hostilities worsened when Arakanese *jalias* captured the trading vessel of Ismail Beg, a merchant of Masulipatnam, and forced it to trade at Mrauk-U instead of Pegu.<sup>90</sup> In the same year, the Arakanese slave-raiding armada captured an Armenian ship belonging to a Balasore-based merchant off the coast of Orissa in the vicinity of the Jaganath temple ("pagoda Jaggernado"), as it returned from trading in Aceh. The crew, which included several Portuguese and an English pilot, were taken to Arakan where they were put to work clearing forest or in the service of the court at Mrauk-U.<sup>91</sup> During the mid-seventeenth century it would appear that

no one in the Bay of Bengal was safe from the Magh marauders and their Portuguese pirates.

### *Portuguese Pirates*

Before concluding, it is worth further considering the role of these Portuguese "pirates" in the Bay of Bengal, since they were highly instrumental in the rise and fall of Arakanese fortunes. Piracy is, of course, a highly problematic term. An act that would otherwise be described as piratical might be sanctioned as 'corsairing' if this act of coercive redistribution was deemed to be consonant with a state interest within a larger context of conflict or war.<sup>92</sup> Had the Portuguese of Dianga<sup>93</sup> not so ruthlessly pursued the slave trade in the interests of their own purses, and broken their alliance to side with the Arakanese at the eleventh hour,<sup>94</sup> a case might be that the slave raids on Bengal of the sixteenth century in fact constituted an extension of the Iberian crusade against Islam, and were therefore a form of privateering rather than piracy. Indeed, it has been argued that Portuguese mercenaries such as Filipe de Brito and Sebastien Gonzales Tibau have been unfairly dealt with in historical literature as rogues and scoundrels.<sup>95</sup>

Filipe de Brito was so successful in leading Arakanese fleets on slaving raids of the Bengal littoral that he was promoted to captain of the royal guard at Mrauk-U before being made governor of the port of Syriam in lower Burma in 1599, a post which he immediately fortified and transformed into an independent polity in his own right. De Brito now turned to Goa, requesting Portuguese naval reinforcements from the Estado and secured an alliance with the Viceroy through marriage with his beautiful part-Javanese daughter. Had Goa been in a better position to supply the reinforcements that de Brito requested, it is quite possible that he may have succeeded in establishing a foothold for a possible Portuguese client state in lower Burma. As it happened, he was finally defeated by a reconstituted Toungoo dynasty in 1613 and publicly executed by impalement.

Sebastien Gonzales Tibau, too, briefly forged a kingdom of his own, and even attempted to invade Mrauk-U itself. The King of Arakan had responded to de Brito's treachery in 1607 by punishing those Portuguese at Dianga who might otherwise have allied themselves with Syriam. Tibau, having escaped the massacre in

which six hundred Portuguese were destroyed, made himself king of the nearby salt-producing Sandwip Island, “by exterminating the Afghan pirates who had made their nest there.”<sup>96</sup> Tibau antagonized Mrauk-U in various ways, accommodating a “refugee Arakanese prince,” before marrying his sister, goading him into rebellion and appropriating his treasure after his attempt failed.<sup>97</sup> Worse still, through trickery, he captured a sizable portion of the Arakanese navy by murdering its officers, and while the King’s forces were distracted by a conflict with Mughals forces in east Bengal, mounted an assault on the Arakanese coastline and some way up the Lemro River, destroying many buildings and vessels, even capturing the royal yacht.<sup>98</sup>

When Tibau requested reinforcements from Goa, a force of six galleons were sent and a naval assault on Mrauk-U itself was mounted. Though well armed, in this environment the Portuguese armada was no match for the more numerous and maneuverable river boats of the Arakanese, who also enjoyed some support from Dutch vessels present in the harbor. The Portuguese armada was thus repelled, and Tibau disappears from the historical record.

Although their behavior certainly seems piratical from our point view, Socarras argues that these adventurers should be understood in terms of the social context from which they emerged. In the somewhat fluid social hierarchy of renaissance and baroque Iberia, a poor *fidalgo* or the son of a family of lesser nobility could only hope to attain prominence and success by literally making a name for himself in the carrying out of acts of daring and bravery at the peripheries of the empire. Having thus acquired honor (*honra*) he might gain the favor of his monarch and reward in the form of titles and land. According to Socarras:

...a sixteenth-century Portuguese, was deeply imbued with a culture which produced men in whom the fundamental personal motivations which directed their drive toward achieving “honra e fazenda” were inextricably blended with a deep sense of loyalty and duty to their king and to their religion... In this respect it is unhistorical to regard Brito as a mere scoundrel. He is a man in line with other men of the Peninsular sixteenth century, such as Hernan Cortes and Francisco Pizarro, and others of the period.<sup>99</sup>

Seen in this light, though still cruelly calculating by modern standards, the monstrous reputation of these Portuguese rogues is perhaps somewhat mitigated.

Regardless of how we judge the behavior of these individuals, the Arakanese continued to rely on Portuguese mercenaries. Having crushed the settlement at Dianga in 1607, the King of Arakan soon relented and allowed the Portuguese to once more establish a colony across the river from Chittagong and collaborated with them once again in the burgeoning slave business over the coming decades. They continued to work together until the Portuguese abruptly abandoned the Arakanese during the combined approach of the Mughal land army and maritime force on Chittagong in 1666.

Nor were the Portuguese the only outsiders upon whom the Arakanese leaned for military service. When Manrique visited Mrauk-U in the 1620s, he discovered that the king’s bodyguard employed a number of Japanese Samurai who had converted to Christianity.<sup>100</sup> Peguans, Mughals and other South Asians also served in the military.<sup>101</sup> As we have seen, the highest offices in the land, including that of Lashkar Wazir, were occupied at certain periods by Muslims of South Asian descent. Charney has argued that this reliance on foreign military and professional expertise, though useful in forestalling internal rebellion, likely hampered the development of an indigenous capacity for the management of the types of administrative institutions that were necessary to sustain Arakan’s rapid territorial expansion.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

In the later decades of the seventeenth century, Arakan’s control over the western littoral of the Bay of Bengal continued to contract, even as political instability at the center of the kingdom steadily reduced the attractiveness of Mrauk-U in the eyes of traders from across the seas. The turn to a mercantilist strategy and an attempt to create a “territorial sea” had ultimately alienated Arakan from the types of connectivities that might otherwise have seen it continue to prosper. Increasingly, what remained of Arakan’s foreign trade was carried out overland with Burma across the Yoma mountain ranges. Throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century, the region was shaken by a series of earthquakes that seemed to be in keeping with the political chaos and conflict that had so unsettled the land.<sup>103</sup> In 1761, just twenty-four years before a Burmese invasion would finally bring an end to Arakanese

independence, a massive earthquake shook Arakan so hard that it raised the entire coastline by five feet.<sup>104</sup>

Nonetheless, the cosmopolitan influences brought on by over a century of participation in the Bay of Bengal world would continue to permeate the Arakanese social fabric. As we have seen, Arakan's participation in this world fostered a range of connections through which not only goods but ideas were shared. Not least, it brought about large-scale immigration from neighboring Bengal, as agricultural slaves, artisans and soldiers, but also the holders of high office, made new lives in this not entirely unfamiliar littoral society. Perhaps the presence of these people seems foreign when viewed through the contemporary prism of the nation-state and the reified categories of ethnicity and religion. On the other hand, the vibrancy and cosmopolitanism of this early modern polity can offer lessons for us today in how to imagine a world in which identities might be constructed without reliance on such divisive and antagonistic categories. This cosmopolitanism is perhaps best understood when the history of Arakan is viewed, not according to traditional historiographical modes such as the nation-state or even terrestrially conceived "areas" such as South or Southeast Asia, but from the perspective of the sea.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally written for Professor Leonard Andaya's seminar, "Seas in Southeast Asian History" at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2010. I am indebted to Professor Andaya and my fellow classmates for many of the ideas underpinning the historiographical orientation of this paper. Professor Ned Bertz' class on the history of the Indian Ocean World also informed my thinking on connectivities via the sea. Bryce Beemer generously made invaluable suggestions at various stages of the paper's conception and Ithi Sophonpanich graciously shared his research on the elephant trade. While any success achieved in this paper are in no small way due to those mentioned above, all errors are my own.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent example, see: Subhir Baumik, "Adrift on Cruel Waters," *Asia Times Online*, April 9, 2011. [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/MD09Ae04.htm](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/MD09Ae04.htm) 1 (accessed April 13, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Maung Tha Hla and Buddhist Rakhaing Cultural Association., *The Rakhaing* (N.Y.: Buddhist Rakhaing Cultural Association, 2004), 65-98.

<sup>4</sup> The term Rohingya is a contested one. Self-identifying Rohingya activists and historians appear to use the designation as something of a catch-all referring to all Arakanese of Muslim descent. For a critical, if pedantic, historical perspective of this usage, see: Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)," *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Pia Oberoi, *Exile and Belonging: Refugees and State Policy in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 171; Abdul Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture* (Chittagong, Bangladesh: Arakan Historical Society, 2000), 11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> A. P. Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. 13, No. 1 (1844): 36.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Suarez, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Periplus, 1999), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1999), 114.

<sup>10</sup> Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



- <sup>12</sup> Maurice Collis, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 15, No. 34-52 (1925): 40. N.B. Naramaikhlā is also occasionally given as Naramithla, or as Man Co Mwan, the latter being the name he adopted on return from exile.
- <sup>13</sup> Jacques Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 128.
- <sup>14</sup> Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," 45.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "And a River Runs through It: The Mrauk-U Kingdom and Its Bay of Bengal Context," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 111.
- <sup>17</sup> G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From Earliest Times to 10 March 1824, the Beginning of English Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, 1925).
- <sup>18</sup> Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 129.
- <sup>19</sup> Jacques Leider, "These Buddhist Kings with Muslim Names... A Discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period," in *Etudes Birmanes Eu Hommage a Denise Bernot*, ed. Pierre Richard and F. Robinne (Paris: EFEO, 1998).
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire : Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700* (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121.
- <sup>22</sup> Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, trans. Armando Cortesão (Nendeln and Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 94-95.
- <sup>23</sup> Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 47.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 19, 32. For further discussion of non-elite migrations from Bengal into Arakan during this period, see below.
- <sup>25</sup> Pamela Gutman, "Towards a History of the Architecture of Mrauk U," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 165.
- <sup>26</sup> Leider, "These Buddhist Kings with Muslim Names... A Discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period."
- <sup>27</sup> Richard C. Temple, "Buddermokan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 14, No. 4 (1924). See also: M. Siddiq Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1962).
- <sup>28</sup> Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," 31.
- <sup>29</sup> Temple, "Buddermokan," 5-11.
- <sup>30</sup> Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," 42.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 31.
- <sup>32</sup> Temple, "Buddermokan," 9.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," *Journal of Early Modern History* Vol. 1, No. 3 (1997).
- <sup>36</sup> Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 50-53.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., 83-85; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700," in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 78.
- <sup>38</sup> Swapna Bhattacharya, "Myth and History in Bengal Identity in Arakan," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002).
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 211.
- <sup>40</sup> This poem was an adaptation of the Awadhi *Padmavat*, by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, recounting the siege of Chitor by Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khilji in 1303 CE. In the *Padmavat*, the Sultan desires the wife of the King of Chitor, a beautiful Sri Lankan princess. For a discussion of the important place of Sri Lanka, and indeed Sri Lankan princesses in the Arakanese Bay of Bengal worldview, see below. For further summary of Alaol's *Padmavat*, see: Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992), 141-42.
- <sup>41</sup> Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 56-57. (emphasis added)
- <sup>42</sup> Sebastião Manrique, Charles Eckford Luard, and Henry Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643 : A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 2 vols., Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 2nd Ser., No. 59, 61 (Oxford: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1927), 144.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 81.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 199. In Maurice Collis' romantic twentieth-century narration of Manrique's travels it is assumed that this was no interpolation. "He spoke in Hindustani, and Thiri-thu-dhamma replied in the same language with a smile..." See: Maurice Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, A New Directions Paperbook, (New York: New Directions, 1959), 150.
- <sup>45</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice (London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977). Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700."
- <sup>46</sup> Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 74.
- <sup>47</sup> Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700," 55.
- <sup>48</sup> Catherine Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 91.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 92.
- <sup>50</sup> Richard M. Eaton, "Locating Arakan in Time, Space, and Historical Scholarship," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 230.
- <sup>51</sup> Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," 93.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 94.

- <sup>54</sup> Collis, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay," 41.
- <sup>55</sup> Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," 95.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>58</sup> Gutman, "Towards a History of the Architecture of Mrauk U," 182.
- <sup>59</sup> Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, 184-211.
- <sup>60</sup> Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 215.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.
- <sup>62</sup> Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, 94-94.
- <sup>63</sup> Wil O. Dijk, *Seventeenth-Century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 17.
- <sup>64</sup> Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, 272-73.
- <sup>65</sup> Stephan van Galen, "Arakan and Bengal: The Rise and Decline of the Mrauk U Kingdom (Burma) from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century A.D." (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2008). Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700*, 120.
- <sup>66</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "The Coromandel-Southeast Asia Trade 1650-174," *Journal of Asian History* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1984): 122; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Persians, Pilgrims and Portuguese: The Travails of Masulipatnam Shipping in the Indian Ocean, 1590-1665," *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 22, No. 3 (1988): 507.
- <sup>67</sup> Michael Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power in Lower Burma," *Journal of Asian History* Vol. 28, No. 1 (1994): 53.
- <sup>68</sup> Maurice Collis, *The Land of the Great Image: Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943), 154.
- <sup>69</sup> Anthony Reid, "Humans and Forests in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," *Environment and History* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1995): 105-07.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> Om Prakash, "Coastal Burma and the Trading World of the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1680," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacque Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 101.
- <sup>72</sup> Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 33-35. See also: Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, 218-19.
- <sup>73</sup> D.G.E. Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1936): 2,4. Hall quotes the English factor at Masulipatnam who in the late sixteenth century, in his *Relations of the Kingdom of Golconda*, wrote, "To Arracan they send store of tobacco, some iron, and a few sorts of painted clothes, and return from thence some gold and gumme lack, but most part rice..." The Dutch relied heavily on Arakanese rice imports, especially during their blockade of the Portuguese fortress at Malacca in 1633, and other "sundry minor struggles in the Spice Islands."
- <sup>74</sup> Eaton, "Locating Arakan in Time, Space, and Historical Scholarship," 225.
- <sup>75</sup> Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 139.
- <sup>76</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and V. Ball, *Travels in India*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1977), 129.
- <sup>77</sup> Michael Charney, "Shallow-Draft Boats, Guns, and the Aye-Ra-Wa-Ti," *Oriens Extremus* 40, no. 1 (1997).
- <sup>78</sup> Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 139.
- <sup>79</sup> Mughal navy Atul Chandra Roy, *A History of Mughal Navy and Naval Warfares* (Calcutta: World Press, 1972), 123.
- <sup>80</sup> S. Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," in *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History*, ed. K.S. Mathew (Delhi: Manohar, 1995). See also: Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 226.
- <sup>81</sup> Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon JASB Jadnuath Sarkar, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 A.D.," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3(1907): 422-23.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>83</sup> Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," 203.
- <sup>84</sup> Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 225-36.
- <sup>85</sup> Manrique, Luard, and Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643: A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 379.
- <sup>86</sup> Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," 2.
- <sup>87</sup> Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," 202.
- <sup>88</sup> Michael W. Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 2 (1998): 206.
- <sup>89</sup> Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 222.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 227-28.
- <sup>92</sup> Emily Sohmer Tai, "Marking Water: Piracy and Property in the Premodern West," in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen Jerry H. Bentley (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2007), 206.
- <sup>93</sup> Dianga was a Portuguese settlement across the river from Chittagong in what is today southeastern Bangladesh.
- <sup>94</sup> Roy, *A History of Mughal Navy and Naval Warfares*, 128. The Portuguese traitors who left Chittagong in 1665 were immediately in the Mughal navy at double their pay-rate under the Arakanese.
- <sup>95</sup> Cayetano J. Socarras, "The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe De Brito De Nicote," *Luso-Brazilian Review* Vol. 3, No. 2 (1966).
- <sup>96</sup> D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
- <sup>97</sup> Maurice Collis and San Shwe Bu, "Dom Martin 1606-1643, the First Burmese to Visit Europe," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 21, No. 1 (1926).

<sup>98</sup> Frederick C. Danvers, *The Portuguese in India: Being a History of the Rise and Decline of their Eastern Empire* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1894), 2:147.

<sup>99</sup> Socarras, "The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe De Brito De Nicote," 5-6.

<sup>100</sup> Manrique, Luard, and Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643 : A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 133.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>102</sup> Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power in Lower Burma," 47.

<sup>103</sup> Thant Myint-U, "River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma," (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 84.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*.

# The “History of Nation-Building” Series and Southeast Asian Historiography

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## Introduction

In 1996, at the fourteenth conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA) held in Bangkok, Thailand, Wang Gungwu, a leading historian from Southeast Asia, made an intriguing argument. He wanted historians to pay more attention to nation-building in Southeast Asia, a scholarly field dominated by political scientists, sociologists and other social scientists. Fifty years after the end of the Second World War and the emergence of independent Southeast Asian nation-states, Wang suggested that there was ample temporal distance and documentation for historians to contribute to the literature on nation-states and nationalism.<sup>1</sup> After the conference, Wang secured support from the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore and collaborated with five Southeast Asian historians to publish a “History of Nation-Building” (HNB) book series which examines the historical development as well as the origins of nation-building in the five founding members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations): Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.<sup>2</sup> Complementing this core series are two more publications, one which compiles Wang’s essays on *Nation and Civilisation in Asia* and another col-



lecting papers from the 2002 ISEAS conference on “Nation-building Histories: Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.”<sup>3</sup> At first glance, Wang’s suggestion seems divorced from pre-existing intellectual trends within Southeast Asian historiography. It apparently calls for a return to more “traditional” forms of history-writing, which emphasizes the perspectives of elites, politicians, and the nation-state, as opposed to histories of the region which adopt a “history-from-below” approach or a broader regional perspective. On the other hand, the HNB series could arguably be seen as a response to frequent calls for Southeast Asians to be more involved in the development of the history and historiography of their region.<sup>4</sup>

The nation-building histories also add to and expand Southeast Asian history and historiography, as the initiator and the five contributing historians are not only born and bred in Southeast Asia, but are considered “home scholars” who work and live in the region during the time of writing.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, all of the contributing historians were in some way involved in the nation-building efforts of their respective countries. Such a connected relationship to the nation-state not only provides a unique, possibly first-hand account of a particular aspect of Southeast Asian history, but also has implications for historiography in general.

This paper sets out to explore the scope of the HNB series and its implications for Southeast Asian histori-

ography. The first section briefly introduces the series, its origins, scope, development, and its position within the intellectual context of Southeast Asian historiography, as well as within the immediate context and outlook of the series' protagonist, Wang Gungwu. In examining the historians of the series, their individual histories and background, and how those could have influenced their respective historical accounts of nation-building, the following section suggests that the immediate physical and intellectual environment of the historian (or scholars in general) are essential considerations when attempting to understand the diversity of scholarship in the academic fields of Southeast Asian history and Southeast Asian studies. There is a discernible difference in what the Southeast Asian and non-Southeast Asian scholar is interested in, and this would affect his or her method and approach when attempting to understand the past. The final section of this paper explores the implications of the HNB series for Southeast Asian historiography in general. Even during a period of globalization and being at odds with prevailing intellectual trends within Southeast Asian historiography, the nation-state and its by-products clearly still demand scholarly attention within the region. If anything, the HNB series demonstrates the significance of paying more attention to the dynamics between scholarship and the immediate context of the scholar, and how the latter can and has influenced the questions asked of the region's past.

### The Scope and Context of the HNB Series

There are several objectives of the HNB series as indicated by Wang. First, the HNB series does not focus on the origins of the nation-state or how the five Southeast Asian countries attained independence in the aftermath of the Second World War. While the origins of the ideas and events contributing to the emergence of each nation-state were not disregarded, the focus of the five histories was more on the issues arising and the decisions made for nation-building from "Day One" of independence to tracing the historical paths taken by Southeast Asian leaders after attaining independence. This point is significant as it distinguishes the histories of the HNB series from so-called national or nationalistic histories. The latter are histories, which usually take a teleological perspective of the past in an attempt to provide a unifying historical

base to strengthen the nation-state. Hence, the objectives are different from the proposed nation-building histories, which attempt instead to focus more on the processes and complexities in constructing and imagining a nation.<sup>6</sup>

Even so, the late twentieth-century fascination with nation-building, and by extension, the nation-state and nationalism appears odd and even archaic. Such a pre-occupation seemingly runs counter to contemporary regionalisation and globalisation tendencies as well as prevailing intellectual trends within Southeast Asian history and historiography. The focus on the nation-state appears to be a reversal of historiographical trends, one which had moved away from historical studies of post-colonial (in the temporal sense) independent nation-states to more sub-regional or regional studies. Some of the more prominent publications include Anthony Reid's two-volume *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (published in 1988 and 1993), Oliver Wolters' *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (second edition published in 1999), and Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800-1830-Vol. 1, Integration on the Mainland* (published in 2003).<sup>7</sup> While not disregarding other historical studies on individual Southeast Asian countries, there is certainly a tendency within Southeast Asian historiography to move beyond national borders and focus more on the pre-independence period.

There are several reasons for this tendency. For a long while, and perhaps even until the present-day, history is only considered respectable if historians maintained some temporal and spatial distance from their subject matter so as to be objective in their observations. Within the field of Southeast Asian history, there is also an innate negative reaction towards "national" or "nationalistic" histories. John Smail's third way of "autonomous history" could be perceived as a compromised approach between the old colonial-type histories and the emerging nationalistic histories.<sup>8</sup> Harry Benda was wary about the "moral minuses of nationalist historiography."<sup>9</sup> Oliver Wolters, a mentor of many of the present-day historians of the region, warned a new Filipino graduate student not to write history like Teodoro Agoncillo's *A Short History of the Filipino Peoples*.<sup>10</sup> Another reason is the lack of access to archival sources to recent and contemporary events,

which although significant to nation-building are deemed too sensitive for general public consumption. This is in contrast to the availability and abundance of sources relating to the pre-nation-state period, such as the colonial archives, allowing for a relatively less frustrating research and writing project.

Another objective of the HNB series is to include the historian's perspective and methodological approach to on-going scholarship on nation-states in Southeast Asia. Wang observed that this particular scholarly field of Southeast Asia has been dominated by social scientists, such as political scientists Benedict Anderson and George Kahin.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, historians looking at Southeast Asian nation-states have tended to limit themselves to the pre-independence period, examining the origins of nationalism and nation-states rather than the issues confronting the leaders after independence. This tendency, Wang felt, was in direct contrast to the role historians and social scientists played in delineating European and Asian nationalism. Wang noted the prominent presence of historians in supporting the infrastructure of new nation-states such as France, the United States, Italy or Germany.<sup>12</sup> In China as well as Japan, historians had laid the groundwork for social scientists to develop their theories of nationalism. Wang notes that "the Chinese example demonstrates that nationalism has to be understood through a deep knowledge of history rather than through theories and typologies."<sup>13</sup>

The reverse is true for Southeast Asia as social scientists, not historians, lead the way in understanding nationalism, nation-state and nation-building in the region. Wang feared that without a historical framework, the theories and concepts drawn up by political scientists and sociologists would not be able to provide a full understanding of the issues each nation-state has to confront. This concern was realized to some extent in the regular meetings held with the five historians. In discussing the scope and direction of their proposed nation-building histories, and even though they were fully aware of the diversities in the five nation-states, the historians were struck by the essentially different historical paths that each nation-state took after inde-

pendence despite sharing common historical experiences such as colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Wang also noted that the different structures implemented by the various colonial administrations of the British, Dutch, French and Americans in Southeast Asia influenced the individual paths each former colony has taken since independence.<sup>15</sup> Hence, a historical perspective of nation-building, especially of the distinctive issues each independent nation-state had to confront, does not merely contribute to existing scholarship, but provides a platform for further comparative studies without undermining the individual historical experiences.



The personal outlook of Wang Gungwu is perhaps the driving force of the HNB series, shaping its scope and direction. Although he is primarily a historian of China and the Chinese community in Southeast Asia, Wang is very much part of Southeast Asia. He was born in the Dutch East Indies, in the Javanese city of Surabaya and was raised in Ipoh, Perak, in British Malaya. As part of the prominent overseas Chinese community, he "returned" to China, his perceived "home", to begin his university education in 1947. The Communist victory

in China forced him to return to Southeast Asia in 1949 to complete his undergraduate education as well as a Master of Arts at the University of Malaya (then in Singapore). As a promising Malayan in a rapidly decolonizing British Malaya, Wang went on to further his education in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, receiving a Ph.D. in 1957. He then returned to the University of Malaya to begin his academic career and in 1959, was part of the pioneering faculty which initiated the Kuala Lumpur branch of the University of Malaya.

Wang returned to a Southeast Asia undergoing fundamental change. The former colonial empires were disintegrating and from the ashes emerged new nation-states. By 1957, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar (then Burma) and the Federation of Malaya were independent nation-states, some having fought violent conflicts to attain that status. The former French Indochina states of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, though formally independent, were slowly but surely getting

caught up in the bi-polarity of the Cold War. The emergence of new nation-states could have only encouraged the interest of a historian who was also exposed to the various kinds of nationalism in Malaya, Southeast Asia and China.<sup>16</sup> Wang himself was particularly interested in the national development of Malaya (which in 1963 became Malaysia). He and several colleagues attempted very early on to make some sense of the nation-building issues Malaya had to confront, and Wang himself published several essays on Malayan nationalism and leadership.<sup>17</sup>

Wang's fascination with the nation-state and its connections with former colonial empires and world civilisations comes through clearly in his essays collected in *Bind Us In Time: Nation and Civilisation in Asia*. The book is divided into two parts. The first part represents what he termed as his "current and early phases of [his] education in nationhood".<sup>18</sup> The second group of essays focus on broader regional and global themes, demonstrating the ways in which a historian can contribute to scholarship on the nation-state, nation-building and nationalism. A historian has to negotiate his or her attention between getting right the minute details of daily occurrences and the "*longue duree* structures which give each change a larger significance."<sup>19</sup> Hence, a historian's trained eye for factual detail and recognition of their position within broader structures provides the necessary historical context and framework from which social scientists can deliberate on the shapes and forms of the different nationalism and nation-building paths each Southeast Asian nation-state took since independence. Wang also noted the dilemma the "modern historian" has in tracing the dual historical trajectories of nation-states and civilisations. Engaged as historians are in times past, their "respect for the time needed for the human race to create civilisations" is severely challenged by "nationalist time", a situation which "press[es] for a faster pace" of creation whether people were ready for it or not.<sup>20</sup>

The scope and outlook of the HNB series also have roots in contemporary time. Wang's personal motivations and interests were further piqued by the emergence and oft-time painful development of new nation-states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the aftermath of the Cold War and the break-up of the former Soviet Union. Indeed, this historical occurrence has

parallels to the post-Second World War decolonisation and nationalism process in Southeast Asia. Hence, the issues addressed and the broader questions asked by the HNB series – what happens after independence, nationhood path to choose and the considerations influencing that decision – are very relevant to emerging nation-states who similarly have to decide their future development.

There is then a contemporary relevance to the historical study of nation-states, via nation-building histories. Such an attempt and focus however does seem out-of-touch with present-day intellectual and institutional norms within Southeast Asian historiography. It would be negligently simple to suggest that this difference arises from having a Southeast Asian or non-Southeast Asian perspective. Although born and bred within Southeast Asia, Wang's education and career path have taken him to England, and later Australia and Hong Kong, with his primary research focused on the history of China. The Southeast Asian perspective is not easily separated from the Western structures Wang has been exposed to, and hence perhaps should not be the end-all objective of scholarship, for instance the call for autonomous Southeast Asian histories during the 1960s. Primarily, it was Wang's personal experiences and his contemporary outlook which have shaped his motivations and questions for the HNB series. The same could be argued for the five historians of the HNB series. Taking similar paths as Wang, their histories and approaches should not be judged merely by their place of origin or on an intellectual framework, which may not be relevant to them. Instead, an examination of the historical situations and contexts they have experienced would provide more insight to the types of nation-building histories they choose to write.

## The Histories and Historians of the HNB Series

To date, three of the five nation-building histories have been published: Malaysian historian Cheah Boon Kheng on Malaysia, Singaporean Edwin Lee on Singapore, and Indonesian Taufik Abdullah on Indonesia. At first glance, the nation-building histories offered by the three historians do share certain general similarities. As a result of the overarching questions asked, there is a heavy emphasis on the nation-state's leaders and the decisions they took after raising the new flags of each



nation-state. From this, the nation-building histories of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia follow a chronological and “top-down” perspective in an attempt to trace the nation-building issues confronting the newly independent leaders. As noted earlier, this focus and approach go against the intellectual grain of Southeast Asian historiography and indeed, even one of the historians’ personal preferences.

While the general direction is similar, the character and tone of each nation-building history follows the individual historical development of each nation-state as well as the individual questions of each historian. The three nation-building histories focus on very different themes, driven by the questions of their historians. Cheah Boon Kheng cautiously but forcefully highlights the centrality of ethnic relations and considerations in the decision-making of Malaysia’s four Prime Ministers as they try to balance the demands and historical baggage of the nation-state’s multi-ethnic population since 1957.<sup>21</sup> Edwin Lee provides a broad but stark buffet of the various nation-building issues – such as external and internal security for an island city-state, human security for a multi-ethnic population and the role of education in national development – thrust onto an unexpected nation-state after 1965.<sup>22</sup> Taufik Abdullah based his nation-building history on how the ideals of democracy and how concepts of equal representation acted as the glue for a group of archipelagic islands which consist of diverse peoples, languages, cultures and religion, and how succeeding Indonesian leaders attempted, some successfully and others less so, to remain true to those ideals.<sup>23</sup>

The tone and questions asked in each nation-building history were in no small way shaped by the personal outlook of each historian. As a Malaysian Chinese, Cheah is a member of a minority ethnic group and, as such, he has to navigate his way through a form of reversed affirmative action that protects the status of the Malays. It comes as no surprise then that he chose the issue of managing ethnic relations as the key nation-building issue the Malaysian Prime Ministers

had to face. He highlights and discusses the various decisions each Prime Minister made in maintaining a plural social order and a dominant Malay presence – briefly, Tunku Abdul Rahman’s “Bargain” with the other ethnic political groups, Tun Razak’s attempts at national unity in the aftermath of the tragic May 13 ethnic violence, Tun Hussein Onn’s management of the old and emerging social issues such as Islamic fundamentalism, and finally, Mahathir’s rather unsuccessful attempts to recognise the role of non-Malays as equal players in Malaysia’s national development. Cheah concludes that the role of the Prime Minister in balancing the demands of ethnicity and religion will continue to be crucial in Malaysia’s nation-building efforts.

Cheah’s nation-building history of Malaysia reflects his initial career as a journalist covering labor unrest during the 1950s and 1960s in volatile Singapore. His straightforward account follows a neat chronological framework as he tries to explain the decisions each Prime Minister made during their tenure especially concerning the main theme of managing a plural society. While the focus on political leaders diverges from Cheah’s earlier publications on the social histories of Malaya, his interest in politics and focus on ethnic issues actually do reflect the emphasis of those publications such as *The Masked Comrades: A Study of the Communist United Front in Malaya, 1945-48* – where he examined

the post-WWII left-wing movement, and *Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict during and after the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946* – a study of the ethnic violence which erupted between the Malays and Chinese during the brief interregnum when law and order broke down. His personal outlook was also influenced to a large extent by scholars such as Anthony Reid and David Marr, his PhD supervisors at the Australian National University, as well as his teachers and the intellectual climate at the University of Malaya, which encouraged a regional focus for scholarly research.<sup>24</sup>

Edwin Lee’s all-encompassing nation-building history of Singapore is slightly different. The twenty-two



chapters do not seem as focused or as tightly organized as Cheah's or Taufik's historical accounts. This is perhaps an unavoidable side-effect of an attempt to highlight the various political, social and economic forces, which demanded the attention of a government that was unprepared for an independent Singapore. The failure to stay within the Malayan Federation as a result of traumatic communal violence and political tensions only contributed to a sense of urgency to address those vulnerabilities in a pragmatic and orderly fashion. In a massive twenty-two chapter account, Lee highlights the various issues confronting the government of a small island from 1965 onwards: economic productivity, national defence, social services such as employment and housing, the harnessing of education towards national development, and the attempts at creating a "Singaporean" identity. Similar to Cheah, Lee places heavy emphasis on the decision-making process at the government level, focusing on the Singaporean Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers. However, Lee's approach is slightly different as the Prime and Chief Ministers were the only windows to the broader historical context Lee is interested in. He also begins Singapore's nation-building story not in 1965, but in 1819 when the British founded a trading settlement on the island, ostensibly because the present-day social and political structures had their roots in that period. Singapore's nation-building history also intertwines with that of Malaysia, having been part of it for two tumultuous years. Indeed, in Lee's perspective, the separation in 1965 was the defining and catalytic moment, which accentuated the social and political issues fermenting since 1819, forcing Singapore to adopt certain measures to ensure survival after independence.

The choice of Edwin Lee as the historian for Singapore's nation-building history is apt as well as interesting. He completed a PhD dissertation on how the British governed a multi-cultural Singapore, edited a volume on Singapore history and has supervised several theses and dissertations on Singapore history.<sup>25</sup> Unlike his colleagues in the HNB series, Lee is not as prolific in terms of publications and research and is the odd one out as he received his PhD locally (from the University of Singapore in the early 1980s). Although he has a MA from Cornell, his path and outlook were perhaps more directly influenced by the conditions in 1970s Singapore. The University of Singapore during the 1970s was unabashedly harnessed for national de-

velopment purposes, ensuring that the university produced graduates who would service the fledgling nation-state. The appointment of a cabinet minister as Vice-Chancellor of the university in 1969 was the most telling indication of the government's intentions to ensure university policies and curriculum met national objectives.

The intellectual and institutional situation in the university arguably affected Lee considerably as three chapters of his book were devoted to the discussion of the role of the university – of which Lee was an integral part of as a member of the Department of History – in Singapore's nation-building efforts. Just as Singapore attempted to steady itself on its nation-building path in the early years, the University of Singapore, staffed by a fair proportion of expatriates, particularly in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, was an ideological battleground between a government galvanized (traumatized?) by the events leading to sudden independence and an academic faculty whose teachings may not reflect the nation-building objectives of the government.<sup>26</sup> Lee himself was part of the nation-building process. He is the former Head of Department of History, has a presence (as most senior Singaporean scholars do) on various government and semi-government projects pertaining to heritage and history, published a book on the history of the National University of Singapore (NUS) and is currently working on the history of the Faculty of Engineering of NUS, which is perhaps the most important academic department and discipline for early nation-building efforts.

In contrast to Cheah and Lee's nation-building histories, there is a palpable romantic strain in Taufik Abdullah's *Indonesia: Towards Democracy*. Born in Bukittingi, West Sumatra, he attended Gadjah Mada University and received his MA and PhD from Cornell, the latter in 1970. After his PhD, he returned to Indonesia to teach in Gadjah Mada and has also held various positions in the Indonesian Institute of Science (or the *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*, LIPI). Taufik had personally experienced several of Indonesia's pivotal events in its history as well as its nation-building efforts. As a student, he witnessed the rise of Sukarno and the painful birth of the Indonesian nation-state as it fought its way out of Dutch colonialism by 1949 but into civil war during the 1950s as regional factionalism reared its head. He also witnessed first-hand Sukarno's

gradual fall from the years of “Guided Democracy” to the “night of terror” in 1965 and its bloody aftermath, and finally to 1967 when he handed power over to Soeharto. As a scholar, he worked under the New Order government of Soeharto and came close to losing his position at LIPI for voicing his dissatisfaction at the government. Taufik’s personal experiences come through clearly in his nation-building history. There is an element of regret whenever he writes about Sukarno, an element which is replaced by obvious disdain for the mechanisms of the “greedy state” exemplified by Soeharto’s New Order.

Taufik based his account of Indonesia’s nation-building efforts on the theme of democracy. The idea of equal representation and opportunity, particularly for an archipelagic entity, must have been very attractive for the budding Indonesian leaders trying to put together a viable post-Dutch political and social reality. After independence was achieved, the reality of governing and administering a country divided by politics, languages, religions and cultures forced the gradual erosion of those democratic ideals espoused in a much different revolutionary context. Similar to Cheah’s approach, Taufik’s organised and focused approach in his seven chapters masks a chaotic and oft-times violent process of nation-building.

Pivotal on the theme of how the ideals of democracy changed and evolved after Indonesian independence, Taufik aptly demonstrates how the initial idealistic intentions of revolutionary leaders can sometimes go awry when they become administrators. For instance, despite his early rhetoric, Sukarno found himself having to utilise “undemocratic” means to ensure Indonesia was held together. He almost unilaterally introduced a period of “guided democracy” after he failed to gain a consensus from the various political factions on the future direction of Indonesia. As Taufik discussed in a chapter entitled “Democracy and National Integration”, both elements do not always go hand-in-hand. However, in spite of certain set-backs, the commitment of succeeding Indonesian leaders and Taufik himself to the ideals of democracy, or at least to the rhetoric of democratic values, remained unblemished going into the twenty-first century. Taufik opened his nation-building account with a preamble on the first direct elections of the Indonesian President in 2004 and his conclusions are optimistic that Indonesia, as a

relatively young nation-state, can learn from past setbacks and inspirations.<sup>27</sup>

Taufik’s optimism may stem from his semi-revival after the fall of the Soeharto government, but could arguably also have roots in his close experiences with the birth of the Indonesian nation-state when he was a student in the 1950s when Sukarno fired the imagination of his countrymen-to-be with his speeches. Similarly, the nation-building histories of Cheah and Lee are affected by their first-hand experiences with their respective country’s nation-building efforts. As a Singaporean historian working at a university afflicted with government intervention for nation-building purposes, Edwin Lee’s nation-building history cannot help but closely follow the usual frameworks of Singaporean history, for instance, the founding of Singapore by the British in 1819 and the traumatic events of Separation in 1965. As a Malaysian Chinese working and living in a Malaysia dominated by Malays and pro-Malay policies – a political and social reality which could have also contributed to Wang Gungwu’s departure from the University of Malaya in 1968, Cheah’s account of nation-building through the eyes and policies of the Prime Ministers may seem cautious and non-incendiary to other historians.

Anthony Milner for instance does not appear convinced by Cheah’s nation-building account and argued that there are varieties of nation-building histories depending on the narrative and the historian. Having read a preliminary draft on the Philippines’ nation-building effort by Reynaldo Ileto – which focuses more directly on the role the historian or “historian-ideologues” plays in nation-building, Milner sees Cheah as one of many “historian-ideologues”, each with their own perception of how Malaysia’s history as a nation unfolds.<sup>28</sup> In examining various local historical narratives and identifying their salient characteristics such as the “historic bargain” between the Malays and non-Malays, the British role, treatment of ethnic issues, the position of Melaka and the monarchy, Milner argues for more attention to be paid to the relationship between such historians and the political leaders of their time.<sup>29</sup>

Milner’s observations are valid, particularly his call for more study of the historian’s context and relationship with the leaders of his or her society. What is more interesting are his initial concerns about a nation-

building project which seemed dated by intellectual standards presumably within Southeast Asian history.<sup>30</sup> A historian who has published on various political and social aspects of Malaysian history, Milner's arguments are perhaps representative not so much of his education from Cornell, but his physical position or situation. The question is whether he would be able or willing to present similar observations – the various perceptions of the Malaysian nation-state which openly discuss sensitive issues such as the monarchy or ethnicity – if he were in Cheah's shoes, that is as a scholar working and living in Malaysia. To be clear, this is not a criticism of Milner or other scholars with similar approaches, but more of an observation of how the immediate situation as well as the historical context of the scholar can affect the scope and direction of his or her scholarship, the questions they ask, and the arguments they put forth. Cheah himself was very aware of criticisms of his nation-building history. His position was that it was "impossible not to pay close attention to the ideas of political leaders" in a history of nation-building as not only were they elected into government, "their policies played a large part in determining the development and direction of the nation, and nation-state."<sup>31</sup>

There is no concrete evidence to link Cheah and Milner's arguments and observations to their personal backgrounds, education and career paths. But there have been recent studies on how the context of the scholar affects his or her scholarship. Geoff Eley, a historian of Europe, finds that his approach to history was less influenced by an irrelevant undergraduate curriculum and more by the vibrant (mostly left-wing) politics during the late 1960s. Although his approach is "necessarily partial and subjective", it is beneficial in uncovering the close yet understated relationship between the scholar (and scholarship) and his or her immediate surroundings.<sup>32</sup> Reynaldo Ileto, one of the five historians of the HNB series, has also explored the relationship between scholarship and their context. He contrasted the different approaches of his mentor Oliver Wolters and the Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo, and suggested their approaches to the past were coloured by their personal experiences. Formerly the student who Wolters warned not to write "nationalist history", Ileto suggests that Agoncillo's history cannot be reduced to the "essentialist and developmentalist formulations of what nationalist historiography was all

about."<sup>33</sup> In brief, to do so would be unhistorical, as it separates the processes of scholarship from the intellectual and institutional realities they are situated in.

In discussing the impact of several Southeast Asian scholars, including the late Syed Hussein Alatas, Zeus Salazar, Adrian Lapid and Charnvit Kasetsiri (the latter the remaining historian of the HNB series), Ileto noted how this group of scholars shared common experiences such as colonialism, decolonisation, nationalism and the violence which sometimes accompanied those processes.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, all the five historians of the HNB series, including the protagonist Wang Gungwu, were an integral part of their countries' nation-building efforts. They participated in similar ways, through the writing of textbooks, through the teaching of university students, through research and public commentaries on their respective country's affairs. More crucially perhaps, all of them witnessed their country's nation-building efforts directly as they physically resided in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand during the formative years, and at times to the potential detriment of their careers and even lives.<sup>35</sup> Their perspectives may be skewed or prejudiced by their experiences – as Cheah himself has admitted, but they are nonetheless valid representations of the past and should not be saddled with the negative connotations of "nationalistic" history.

## The Implications of the HNB Series

The academic baggage of "nationalistic" histories within Southeast Asian historiography comes from a very different time and context. The institutional bias against the teleological perspective of history originated during a time of rampant nationalism, when emerging nation-states needed to address the consequences of decolonised empires, such as rallying diverse peoples and cultures within a territorial space which may be illogical to a common cause. History is then the tool for such a task. Wang has also noted that this particular utilisation of history is not entirely new. The various kingdoms and states of Southeast Asia have previously used three main recording traditions to make sense of their contemporary situation: the Hindu-Buddhist chronicles, the Sino-Vietnamese annals, and the Perso-Arabic *tarikh* and *tawarikh*, and various *sejarah* and *hikayat*.<sup>36</sup> Wang suggest that

while such traditions are no longer in use in the region, nation-building histories can perhaps draw connections to those traditions as they all share the common trait of using the past to make sense of the present and the contemporary.

The significant difference is the introduction of professional standards expected of scholarship during and after the nineteenth century, with the establishment of a professional academic discipline. The idea of an objective history, supported by documentary evidence, undermined earlier Southeast Asian recording traditions, initially dismissing them as myths and legends but at the same time, perhaps misunderstanding the purpose and context of such traditions.<sup>37</sup> Such professional standards prompted scholars such as John Bastin, John Smail, Harry Benda and Oliver Wolters to decry “nationalistic” histories that were produced to justify the existence of new nation-states because they were unprofessional – by the standards of the professional discipline of history – in their use and representations of the past. For instance, the links to the classical Southeast Asian kingdoms of Melaka or Majapahit made by local historians and politicians of the nation-states of Malaysia and Indonesia are tenuous to say the least, if not downright unsubstantiated.

The HNB series on the other hand allows for a re-examination of how historians of Southeast Asia can understand and approach national history. The five historians plus Wang Gungwu are respected scholars in their individual fields locally and internationally, and cannot be easily lumped together with the “nationalistic” historians of the decolonisation and nationalism period. Historical scholarship on Southeast Asia has been dominated by certain approaches to the region’s past. At the risk of over-generalization, those approaches usually include, in response to earlier colonial scholarship, an emphasis on uncovering local Southeast Asian perspectives and thought. A premium is placed on learning local languages and using indigenous sources. Some bemusement could be detected in Milner and Craig Reynolds’ contributing chapters to *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories* regarding the Southeast Asian preoccupation with the nation-state. Reynolds for instance contrasted the Southeast Asian preoccupation with the South Asian disdain for the nation-state, although he did acknowledge the nation-state as a reality for the historians of the HNB series to confront.<sup>38</sup>

It is far too simplistic to suggest that this divide is due to a Southeast Asian or non-Southeast Asian perspective. The published nation-building histories are written in English and make use of a number of English (and other colonial) sources. Four of the five HNB historians – Taufik, Charnvit, Iletto and Lee – are in one way or another graduates of the Cornell Southeast Asian Studies programme. Cheah and Wang took their Ph.D.’s outside of the region in Australia and England respectively. So the “Southeast Asian” perspective is not easily discerned or distinguished. Hence, the focus should be on the context of the scholar and his or her scholarship, and not the scholar’s place of origin or academic credentials. Seen this way, the questions and issues raised by the HNB series offers an opportunity for Southeast Asian history and historiography to move beyond the norms and values which are representative of another time and context.

The HNB series not only expands scholarship and knowledge about one particular aspect of Southeast Asia’s past, but also makes several contributions to its evolving historiography. The five historians are tackling contemporary history and its problems, one of which is the availability and accessibility of sources. Edwin Lee’s nation-building history of Singapore is severely restricted to the use of newspapers and the relative absence of official Singapore government records, particularly to discuss decisions behind the various political, economic, and social policies. Taufik Abdullah chose to give a factual account of the events of September 30, 1965—including the actions committed and persons involved, commenting that is impossible to discover the reasons behind the actions, and hence pass judgement, without further evidence. Similarly, Cheah Boon Kheng did not dwell too long on the May 1969 communal violence, an event which fundamentally changed Malaysia’s nation-building path, choosing instead to focus on the aftermath of the riots.

Those incidents in Malaysia and Indonesia, and the various policies enacted by the Singaporean government, are arguably some of the main events in their respective nation-building histories. How then can the historian understand those events and issues with limited access to sources and documents, the lifeblood of any history? How can the historian work around this obstacle? Each of the historians have been personally involved in their country’s nation-building efforts, ostensibly going against the objective detachment of a

professional historian from his or her object of study. These are some of the historiographical questions raised by the HNB series and they are not limited to the field of Southeast Asian historiography, but to historiography in general.

In another paper contributed to the 2002 ISEAS seminar, Singaporean historian Albert Lau recounted his own experiences in researching the 1965 Separation of Singapore from Malaysia.<sup>39</sup> Acknowledging that his personal perspective and the availability of sources play a role in determining his representation, Lau suggests that in the end, all that the historian can do is maintain the basic principles of the historical discipline, which is to represent the past as accurately and objectively as possible. This is necessary even if accuracy and objectivity may be compromised by the lack of sources and the personal prejudices of the historian, both of which are unavoidable.<sup>40</sup> It would perhaps be a bigger loss to not even attempt to research and write or to wait for sources to be available at a later date, as fruitful debates and discussions can only occur over presented papers with substantial content.

Seen this way, the role of the historian becomes even more significant. One of the questions posed by Wang in his initial proposal for the HNB series is whether the historian should wait until more sources and materials become available, so as to present the past as accurately as possible. Wang and the five historians decided that enough time has passed for historians to look at nation-building histories, and as noted earlier in this paper, the nation-building histories offered by the HNB series are a crucial complement to the abundant existing social scientific literature on Southeast Asian nation-state and nationalism. Going by the collected papers presented at the 2002 ISEAS conference, the published and drafted histories offered by the HNB series have already provoked fruitful discussions over several historiographical questions concerning the nation-state, the role of the historian in nation-building, and the problems posed by contemporary history. The historian then does not merely exist to present some objective and detached perspective of the past, but to also actively push the boundaries of history and historiography as well as their respective fields of study by researching, writing and engaging with their audiences. The above discussion is admittedly limited and more can be done, especially with regards to the detailed studies of the connections between the intel-

lectual outlook and physical situations of the five HNB historians as well as Wang Gungwu. There are still two more volumes to be published, and it will be interesting to read how Charnvit and Iletto approach the nation-building efforts of Thailand and the Philippines.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, the available volumes of the HNB series represent an attempt by Southeast Asians to confront and address the reality of their immediate environment – that is, the Southeast Asian nation-state, which still demands scholarly attention despite current regionalisation and globalisation trends. In doing so, the historians and histories of the HNB series have expanded our knowledge of Southeast Asian history as well as its historiography. The historians of the HNB series have and are grappling with historiographical issues which go beyond the field of Southeast Asian history. In doing so, the questions and issues posed by the HNB series encourage present-day historians to rethink accepted norms within Southeast Asian history as well as history in general, particularly the role and purpose of the historian within the nation-state, and the relationship between the historian or scholar and his or her immediate situation.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wang Gungwu, "Nationalism and Its Historians," in *Bind Us In Time: Nation and Civilisation in Asia* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> The books published are Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002); Edwin Lee, *Singapore: The Unexpected Nation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); and Taufik Abdullah, *Indonesia: Towards Democracy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009). Charnvit Kasetsiri and Reynaldo Ileto are the historians responsible for Thailand and the Philippines respectively.

<sup>3</sup> *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See for instance O.W. Wolters, "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," *Indonesia* Vol. 58 (1994): 1-18.

<sup>5</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, "Writing at the Interstices: Southeast Asian Historians and Postnational Histories in Southeast Asia," in *New Terrains in Southeast Asian History*, ed. Abu Talib Ahmad and Tan Liok Ee (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), 6 and fn.12. I am tweaking Thongchai (and Hong Lysa's) definition of home scholar slightly. Thongchai defines the home scholar as "scholars (historians) of the home, by which [he] mean[s] those who study the country, region, or location they consider their home, and whose works are read, debated, and become, in a sustained manner, part of the scholarly discourse and cultural politics of their home society." I would suggest that the home scholar has the above characteristics and crucially, is also one who works and lives in the country they call home, hence subjected directly to the limitations and opportunities in said society.



- <sup>6</sup> Wang Gungwu, "Contemporary and National History," *Nation-building: five Southeast Asian histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 7-8.
- <sup>7</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680—Volume One: The Land below the Winds / Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988 and 1993); O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1982 [expanded edition: Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1999]); and Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800-1830—Vol. 1, Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- <sup>8</sup> John R.W. Smail, "On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1961): 72-102.
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- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>14</sup> Wang Gungwu, "Introduction," in Cheah, *Malaysia*, xiii.
- <sup>15</sup> Wang, "Nationalism and Its Historians," 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Wang Gungwu, "The Pull of Southeast Asia," in *Historians & Their Disciplines: The Call of Southeast Asian History*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2007), 161-174.
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- <sup>18</sup> Wang, *Bind Us In Time*, viii.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> The chapters are "1945-57: Malay Dominance and the Making of a Malay 'Nation-State'," "1957-2001: The 'Bargain' and Contesting Nationalisms," "1957-70: 'Pluralism' in Nation-Building during the Tunku's Administration," "1970-76: Malay Dominance, Economic Integration and National Unity under Tun Razak," "1976-81: National Unity and Islamic Fundamentalism under Hussein Onn," "1981-2001: The Changing Face of Mahathir's Nationalism and Nation-Building."
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- <sup>28</sup> Anthony Milner, "Historians Writing Nations: Malaysian Contests," in *Nation-Building*, 118-122.
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- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.
- <sup>31</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, 92.
- <sup>32</sup> Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line-From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), xi,xiii.
- <sup>33</sup> Ileto, "The 'Golden Age' of Southeast Asian Studies," 16-22.
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- <sup>36</sup> Wang Gungwu, "Contemporary and National History: A Double Challenge," in *Nation-Building*, 9-12.
- <sup>37</sup> A situation which arguably does not exist as more present-day historians of Southeast Asia continue a post-WWII trend to mine indigenous literary sources for information about the past.
- <sup>38</sup> Craig Reynolds, "Nation and State in Histories of Nation-Building, with Special Reference to Thailand," in *Nation-Building*, 21.
- <sup>39</sup> Albert Lau, "Nation-Building and the Singapore Story: Some Issues in the Study of Contemporary Singapore History," in *Nation-Building*, 221-252.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-244. Lau referred to Wong Lin Ken's book review of *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D.G.E. Hall*, ed. C.D. Cowan and O.W. Wolters, in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 8, No. 2 (1976): 236-237.
- <sup>41</sup> Charnvit Kasetsiri and Reynaldo Ileto are both graduates from Cornell in the early 1970s. Both has published and commented on their respective nation-state's histories. Charnvit is well-known for being one of the earliest Thai historians to question the teleology of Thai national history, while Ileto is known for using non-elite perspectives to look at key events in Filipino history.

# Paper Money in Phnom Penh:

## Beyond the Sino-Khmer Tradition

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### Introduction

This paper examines the practice of the paper money offering tradition in Cambodia, ostensibly a Chinese tradition, with a focus on how such practice is extended beyond the Chinese community in Phnom Penh. It describes various kinds of paper money commonly used in everyday offerings to dead relatives and spirits, how such offerings are performed, and what functions such practices serve, especially among non Sino-Khmer populace. This paper shows that beliefs in communicating with the spirits of deceased relatives and guardian spirits of the house are shared among both Sino-Khmer and non Sino-Khmer communities and paper money tradition is used to articulate such beliefs. The paper concludes that the practice of burning paper money is strong and vibrant in Phnom Penh and thus supports the existing findings that the Chinese cultural practice in Cambodia has been revived after the Khmer Rouge period (1975-1979) and the People's Republic of Kampuchea period (1979-1989). The paper hopes to contribute empirical knowledge to the almost absent literature on contemporary Chinese community in Cambodia.

Like in other countries in Southeast Asia, scholars have found a long historical presence of the Chinese in Cambodia. According to Willmott, the first Chinese contact with Cambodia was dated to the Funan Kingdom at about 100 A.D. (Willmott, 1967). Despite such early contact, evidence of Chinese settlement in Cam-

bodia might have not been recorded until the founding of the current capital, Phnom Penh, in the fifteenth century (*ibid*). The place of Chinese community in Cambodia's recent history has not always been auspicious. The Chinese population was not included in the public manifestation of the nation building process during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period (1953-70). Chinese schools and newspapers were shut down during the Lon Nol regime (1970-75). The Chinese were the target of execution during the Khmer Rouge era for both social and ethnic reasons (1975-79). Chinese cultural celebrations and teachings were oppressed during the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (1979-91) (Jelonek, 2004). Given such recent historical context, one would consider the Chinese influence might have been dramatically reduced in present day Cambodia. However, after the fall of socialist government and the opening up of Cambodia to the global expansion of capitalist economy following the signing of Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, the restrictions on ethnic Chinese' business operation, and cultural teachings and celebrations were eliminated (Ledgerwood 2002) and Chinese influence in Cambodia has gradually been in-



Figure 1.  
Items  
from  
Store A

creased. Since what Edwards and Sambath (1996) called the “massive renaissance of Chinese cultural identity” (82) during that period of time, the Chinese community in Cambodia has now become a vibrant and dynamic community and serves as a major influence in both economic and political spheres in the country.

## Chinese in Cambodia Recent History

Before we can examine the practice of burning paper money in Cambodia, it is important to first of all understand the place of Chinese people in Cambodia’s recent history. During the French colonial era, the resident ethnic Chinese in Cambodia assisted the colonial government in a number of ways. First, the colonial government saw the Chinese as “intermediaries and as purveyors for [the colonial government] forces” (Willmott 1967:69). The French used the Chinese as economic intermediaries in dealing with “distasteful matters [such as] to collect taxes in the markets, control prisoners and work the salt pits” (Jelonek 2004:28). However, they did collect a special tax from the Chinese and required them to belong to a *congregation* (ibid).<sup>1</sup> The *congregation* controlled the flow of Chinese immigrants, each of whom was required to carry a special ID card that notes which *congregation* they belonged to. Given the absence of proper legal definition of ethnic Chinese during that time, many of the Chinese immigrants claimed to be Cambodian subjects in order to avoid paying that special tax. Willmott also wrote that, as opposed to other ‘aliens’, the Chinese were allowed to pursue whatever occupations they desired, including publishing papers and running printing establishments, hotels, and bars (Willmott 1967:72). Despite such policies, the legal status of Chinese residents in Cambodia varied throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (ibid). Before the colonial government was established, the Khmer King, wanting to bring all the country’s residents under the rule of Cambodian law, formally announced that any Chinese with one Cambodian parent would be considered Cambodian if he or she abandoned Chinese dress and hairstyle. However, the French colonial government, pursuing policy that clearly distinguished the immigrants and the indigenous people, stipulated that it was only the case for children of Cambodian fathers. This policy left the children of Chinese fathers out of indigenous question. After gaining independence, the Cambodian government returned back to the incorpo-

rating and widening policy of defining Cambodian residents established in the pre-French period (Willmott, 1967:65). This foregoing discussion clearly shows that the legal status of Chinese nationals resident in Cambodia fluctuated before, during, and after the French colonial period.

An interesting point worth mentioning here is that Edwards and Sambath showed in their work that the Chinese had enjoyed better quality of life during the colonial rule (1996:19). Edwards and Sambath interviewed some first and second generation Chinese residents in their 70s and 80s and found that Chinese cultural celebrations were less restricted and that life had been easier during the colonial era. They also added that the tax on Chinese was lower in the period prior to independence (post 1953). However, during the *Sangkum* period (1953-1970) the Chinese were not treated propitiously, i.e. they were considered outsiders and were not included in the public manifestation of the nation building process (Edwards & Chan, 1996). This situation got worse with the fear that the post-colonial Cambodia might adopt anti-Chinese policies similar to those adopted by Cambodia’s neighbors. Such fear coupled with Mao’s promises of a unified China might have been a legitimate impetus for some resident Chinese in Cambodia to flee to China during that time (Edwards & Chan, 1996; Jelonek, 2004).

*Sangkum Reastr Niyum* or the Popular Socialist Era (1953-1970) revised its nationality policies moving towards “the older Cambodian principle of widening the circle of subjects” (Willmott 1967:79). The revised law in 1954 stated that anyone can be considered Cambodian if either one of the parents is Cambodian regardless of where the individual was born. This also applied to children born in Cambodia with either one of the parents born in Cambodia regardless of their nationality. This revised law, Willmott said, made the ethnic boundaries between Chinese and Khmer less clear because it allowed children born in Chinese family to be Cambodian nationals. Assimilation into Cambodian society was also encouraged by the policies from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In the mid 1950s, friendly relations between Cambodia and the PRC were developed which brought King Sihanouk to Peking and Chou En-lai to Cambodia. On his trip to Cambodia in December 1956, Chou En-lai gave a speech in Phnom Penh encouraging the Chinese residents in Cambodia to become good citizens of their

country of residence. This was in line with the shift of PRC's overseas Chinese policies as the PRC became more involved in Asian political arena (Willmott 1967:78-79). By this time, the Chinese did not have to belong to a *congregation* anymore (ibid). Despite such changes, the resident Chinese were usually excluded from the display of Cambodia's nation building process. However, on special occasions such as the welcoming of the honorary visits from PRC's leaders, the Chinese were mobilized for the demonstration of robust Sino-Khmer friendship (Edwards & Chan, 1996). Towards the end of the 1960's, the relationship between Cambodia and China went sour as a result of China's Cultural Revolution and the rise of pro-communist Chinese in Cambodia.

The situation of Chinese in Cambodia worsened after King Sihanouk was ousted in a coup d'état and Lon Nol came to power in 1970 creating the Republic of Kampuchea. After Lon Nol took office, the Republic of Kampuchea shut down Chinese schools and newspapers and accused them (and the Vietnamese) of contaminating Khmer customs and morals with their attempts to spread Communist propaganda (Jelonek, 2004). As the country went into civil war between Lon Nol's army and the faction that supported the King, the Chinese community in Cambodian landscape saw demise. Chinese schools and temples were destroyed and Chinese associations were abolished as the country fell deeper into chaos. Although a small number of the Chinese took advantage of the war through their business networks, many of them did not support the Lon Nol government (ibid). By this time, the faction that supported the King was firmly backed by China and this attracted many resident Chinese to leave the Lon Nol regime and join the revolution. "Whether out of allegiance to Sihanouk, commitment to Maoist ideals, or sentimental ties to China, many ethnic Chinese students from Phnom Penh ... moved to the liberated zones [areas not under Lon Nol's control] early on, while many Chinese in rural areas, responding to Sihanouk's call to take up arms, entered the forest and joined up with the Khmer Rouge-dominated and Sihanouk-led FUNK" (ibid: 34).<sup>2</sup> This serves as sufficient evidence to say that many Chinese had already joined the Khmer Rouge and left the Lon Nol government prior to 1975 when the Khmer Rouge won the battle against Republic of Kampuchea's army and marched into Phnom Penh. This is ironic given the fact

that many ethnic Chinese died during the Khmer Rouge period (1975-1979).

The Khmer Rouge (KR) period, during which almost 2 million people were killed, was known as the darkest days in Cambodia's recent history.<sup>3</sup> The ethnic Chinese, like other ethnic groups, was almost wiped out during this period. This ethnic killing could have been attributed to the Khmer Rouge's policies to purify Cambodia and to get rid of the economic bourgeois class, with which the Chinese were usually seen as associated (Becker, 1986; Chandler, 2007). Edwards and Sambath wrote that this is ironic in that Khieu Samphan, one of the Khmer Rouge leaders, once wrote in his dissertation that the Chinese played important economic role in Cambodia and had been well assimilated into Cambodian society. Yet when the Khmer Rouge took power, the Chinese were the targets of execution precisely on the ground of their economic roles (Edwards & Chan, 1996). Not everybody agreed that the high loss of Chinese life during the Khmer Rouge was a result of their capitalist association. The high loss of ethnic Chinese people could also be explained from the argument that many of them were urban dwellers who could not survive the hardship of working in the field after they were evacuated from the city in 1975 (Edwards & Sambath, 1996). Whether the Chinese were killed during the KR because of their social or ethnic attribution is still debatable as there is insufficient evidence to come to a definitive conclusion for either side of the argument. No matter what the argument is, most scholars agree that there was a great loss of Chinese life and those who survived had to either hide their true ethnicity or completely abandoned their Chinese identity.

The People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), the government put in place by the Vietnamese army after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, adopted policies toward ethnic Chinese similar to those of its Vietnamese backer. These policies were that anything associated with capitalism was a threat. After the fall of Khmer Rouge, Gottesman (2003) wrote that there were perhaps 40,000 Chinese in Cambodia who had survived and were scattered all across the countryside and the cities. "Because of their own character, the Chinese began to conduct business, to buy and sell, and to open stores and work as small merchants ..." (Gottesman 2003:182). The PRK government, although recognizing the ethnic differences in the coun-

try, was very cautious of the emergence of these Chinese people and their potential rise as a capitalist class. The government formulated policies to ensure that the possibility of rising Chinese business class is squashed (ibid). Circular 351, which was put in place in 1982 clearly showed this attitude of the PRK government. This circular “instructed state officials to inquire into Chinese people’s citizenship status, geographic origins, the amount of time they had lived in Cambodia, their families, overseas connections, language abilities, political leanings, and past affiliations...” (ibid: 183). This circular served as a legitimate base for discrimination against the Chinese throughout the rest of PRK regime. On the restrictions placed on the ethnic Chinese during the PRK, Ross (1987) wrote that it is unlikely that the Chinese community would reach its pre-revolutionary size in the near future given “the anti-Chinese stance of the Vietnamese government and of its officials in Phnom Penh.” Although the PRK had a firm stance against the Chinese, toward the end of its regime, such a discriminatory position started to deteriorate as a result of the failure of state institutions to deal with the economic problems facing the country (Gottesman, 2003). These repressive policies on Chinese in Cambodia started to change when the Vietnamese withdrew its army and technical support from Cambodia in 1989 and peace agreement between different factions that were still fighting in Cambodia at the time was signed in 1991. Since then, the restrictions on Chinese teachings and cultural appreciation and celebrations were lifted (Ledgerwood 2002) and Chinese influence in Cambodia greatly increased. Since what Edwards and Sambath (1996) called the “massive renaissance of Chinese cultural identity” (pg. 82) in the early 1990s, the Chinese community in Cambodia has now become a vibrant and dynamic community and serves as a major influence on both economic and political spheres in the country.

This brief introduction of the Chinese community in recent Cambodia’s history does not do justice to the complexity of the topic. However it does shed some light on where the Chinese have been placed in Cambodian society. This understanding of the relations between the ethnic Chinese and their Khmer compatriots definitely serves as a historical background for examining the Chinese cultural practice in Cambodia.

## The Paper Money Burning Tradition

Paper money offerings, a tradition believed to have originated in China, involves the act of burning items made in the forms of money and other objects. This is conducted with the belief that what was being burned would transform into some sort of commodity for Gods, ghosts or ancestors. The logic behind this tradition “derives from a belief in the important supernatural transactions between people and gods believed responsible for each person’s incarnation and fate” (Gates, 1987:267). The most important feature of this tradition is the burning part because through burning, it is believed that the items being burned are transmitted to the gods, ghosts and ancestors. Janet Scott explained that “people burn paper offerings to the gods to give thanks for blessings or to beg for assistance in times of need; to the ancestors and departed relatives to express love and devotion; and to the ghosts to ease the sufferings of these unknown and neglected dead” (Scott, 2007:21).<sup>4</sup> In this offering, it is believed that when people pass away, they still need to use money and other materials in the other world. Money and other accessories are also burned for the gods, but Scott (2007) explained that it is not because gods need these items, but it is believed that gods will reward the worshippers with whatever they offer to gods. Although burning is an important part of the offering, it should also be noted that not every item needs to be burned in order to serve its purpose (ibid). There are items, like the Golden Flowers shown below, whose purpose could be served by simply displaying, pasting, or hanging.

There are a big variety of names of the paper money items used in this tradition, and there is no “absolute or overarching typology recognized by both trade professionals and worshippers” (ibid: 23). Scott wrote that for trade professionals, there is a system of classifying paper money items according to how they are manufactured. For instance, the flat, foldable, soft pieces of paper money are called ‘non-pitched’ items, while the pieces which were bound together by frames made from bamboo strips are called ‘pitched’ items. Non pitched items include paper currency and other everyday items. Some of the non-pitched and non-currency everyday items are items believed to serve a particular purpose such as bringing luck to the people who burned them. The pitched items are more sophisticated and are harder to make because they are three

dimensional replicas of the actual items such as cars or houses. This system of typology is not necessarily shared by all practitioners who have their own understanding of different names of the items based on different standards and geographical areas. The system used by customers has different typology, but is parallel to the one used by trade professionals.

The detailed practice of what items to burn or offer varies according to the occasions and to the recipients. The most common time to burn paper money is on the holy days in the lunar calendar, which mostly fall in the beginning and the middle of the months (Scott, 2007). On everyday occasions, people can burn paper offerings to gods for luck and protection. On other occasions such as a funeral or the festival of the death, people burn paper offerings for more specific purposes. There is no unified procedure as to how the paper money should be burned. The worshippers are the ones who decide how to burn the paper offerings. Scott suggested that the important thing when burning paper money items is that each of them needs to be completely burned. This is not a problem for paper currency and other non-pitched items, but it could be troublesome for big pitched items as it is difficult to ensure that all parts of the items are actually burned. In Hong Kong, Scott said people burned such big items such as funeral objects “at the huge incinerators in the funeral parlor itself, or in large three-sided metal ovens rented from the paper offerings workshop or from funeral parlors” (pg. 36). In Phnom Penh, I have seen people burn such big funeral items right outside of the funeral tent set up on the curbside of the street. They would block off a portion or the entire street from traffic in order to make space on the street to set the items on fire. For smaller non-pitched items, they could be burned in a variety of containers appropriate for the space available. In Hong Kong, urban people use containers such as ‘cooking oil tins’ and in Phnom Penh, my family used to burn paper in an old metal bucket that we used to wash our clothe in. After the burning, we left the bucket to cool down and dumped the ash into the trash.

The description of paper money following Gates (1987) and Scott (2007) above is based on findings from Taiwan and Hong Kong respectively. I used these descriptions as a foundation for understanding paper money tradition in Cambodia as there is no such literature available yet. Although Gates’ and Scott’s work are

suggestive in representing the practice in Cambodia, there are no doubt nuances that are not accurately reflected in their works. The tradition of paper money offering entails substantial minute and oftentimes complicated rules such as whether the number of sheets should be even or odd, and whether to burn the paper offerings at a domestic location or at a temple. However, to summarize for now, the paper money tradition involves the burning of material items made in the forms of money or other objects with the belief that such material items will be transmitted to the gods, ghosts, and ancestors in the other world. The logic behind this tradition is the belief that there is a transaction in the other world between people and gods who is in charge of incarnation and fate. When people depart to the other world, they need money and materials in order to fulfill such transactions and that the living relatives are the ones responsible for sending those money and materials. In making offerings to the gods, the worshippers believed the gods would grant them the materials or wishes for burning the offerings to them. To what degree are Gate’s and Scott’s descriptions and findings, pertaining to this tradition in Cambodia, is an empirical question that this paper is tentatively attempting to answer.

## Paper Money in Phnom Penh

As previously mentioned, there was a huge loss of Chinese life during the Khmer Rouge period, reasons for which could be attributed to either their ethnicity or their social class. The paper money tradition is associated with the Chinese, so how did it survive the Khmer Rouge and how is it revived in the present? Informants interviewed for this research agreed that Chinese cultural practice was not allowed during the Khmer Rouge. A paper money vendor said “Khmer Rouge time was a communist time, nobody could practice this tradition. But it did not go away because there were some old people remaining from Khmer Rouge time, and they passed on the tradition to the later generations” (Interview Jan 11, 2010). It is interesting that with all the discrimination and oppression that the Chinese in Cambodia have experienced before, during, and after the Khmer Rouge, such a conspicuously Chinese tradition has always been preserved until present day. In this section of the paper, I will present a number of paper money items commonly used in everyday offerings in Phnom Penh and how the ritual is con-





Figure 2.  
Group 1



Figure 3. Group 1

ducted. I argue that this Chinese tradition has transcended beyond the Chinese community through intermarriage. I conclude that this tradition is widely manifested in every life in Phnom Penh which corresponds to the other scholar's conclusions that Chinese cultural identity has been resurged in Cambodia.

Given the size of Chinese population in Phnom Penh, it is fairly common to find Chinese people practice paper money rituals in Phnom Penh. I visited a market, *Oreussey* market, where paper money stores could be found. I talked to vendors from two stores, henceforth known as store A and B, and bought a number of paper money items, all of which are non-pitched items. From the first store I visited, store A, I bought some flat two-dimensional paper money items in different currency forms known as Hell Money,



Figure 4.  
Group 2

sheet gold, gold and silver coins, a trio of everyday offerings: Longevity Gold, Gold Paper and First Treasure Paper, circular Money to Live, clothes and accessories.<sup>5</sup> All these items in the picture cost a total of 6,500 Riel with one US dollar equals to roughly 4,000 Riel. These items are to be used for everyday offerings. The vendor said she did not know where exactly these papers were manufactured as they were brought to her by a middleman. After further inquiry, I found out that they were either made in local printing houses in Phnom Penh or imported from Vietnam. The vendor from another store told me that another place they could be imported from is Thailand. I also found out from both vendors that the location where the paper money is manufactured depends on the complexity and the quality of the print and pattern.

I divided these items into three groups for the purpose of description here. Group 1 (Figure 2 – 3) consists of different currency forms. The vendor told me there was no specific name for these items. They are simply known as 'money'. As it is obvious from the pictures (figure 2-3), the first item on top is a replica of the US dollar. The vendor told me the second from top is known as Hong Kong money and the fourth from top is known as Thai money. It was not clear whether they are known in such a way because of the origin of where they were made or because it is simply known that way. Group 2 (Figure 4 – 5) consists of items, which resemble what Scott described in her book as the trio of everyday offerings: Longevity Gold, Gold Paper, and First Treasure Paper. These three items are the two on top and the one on the lower left in pictures 4 and 5.

These three items, the vendor said, have their own name in Teo Chiu dialect. The first one on the top left is known as *sang tao kim*, the second one on the top right is *tor kim*, and the next one on the lower left is *siv kim*. The vendor said these three types of money were manufactured in either Vietnam or China, given its design and pattern. According to the vendor, *sang tao kim* is what you burn to your ancestors and *tor kim* and *siv kim* are what you burn to spirits. The vendor called the other two items in this group: Ancient Chinese



Money and Sheet Gold (the two items in the lower right of figure 4 – 5).

The last group from store A consists of (Figure 6 –7 from left to right, top to bottom): clothes, accessories, gold coins, silver coins, and the books of charm. The item of interest in this group is the book of charm, which is the name the vendor told me.<sup>6</sup>

Upon having a closer look at it, this item resembles what Scott calls “Circular Money to Live” in Hong Kong. In the illustrations of Scott’s book, there are pictures of items made in the actual shape of coin. Scott said these items were made from cardboard covered in gold and silver foil. I did not see the items Scott described at the store I visited. The items known as coins in the picture above (Figure 6 –7, bottom left and bottom center) are flat pieces of paper with rows of pattern of circular coins printed on them.



Figure 6. Group 3



Figure 5. Group 2 (back)



Figure 7. Group 3

The next day I visited a different store in the same market. I also asked for paper money, but I was shown different forms of paper money items. The items I was presented with this time were not flat pieces of paper, but were bigger pieces of paper folded into the shape of a boat. They came in a set of three boats, each with slightly different contents. However, the contents of all of them have two pieces each of *tor kim* and *siv kim* (Teo Chiu). These three items, I was told, are to be offered at three different domestic locations: in the kitchen for the God of the Kitchen, in the living room for the Guardian Spirit inside the house, and outside the house for the outside Guardian Spirit. The purpose of the one for the kitchen is to prevent any bad things or problems from happening in the kitchen.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the one for the inside shrine is to ask the spirit to take care of the people in the house and to bring in good fortune.<sup>8</sup> For the one outside of the house, she only mentioned it is offered for the spirits to take care of the house, but did not say anything about good fortune. But I suspect that the two share a similar purpose. When these items are offered, a variety of other paper money items are usually added inside



Figure 8. Paper offering folded into a boat shape

the containers. Other items that can be added along with these containers are coins and charms.

Besides this set of boat shaped paper offerings, I also collected two more items from store B. The first one is the travelling package (figure 10), contains paper replicas of a Hell & Paradise passport, Hell & Paradise Airlines tickets and boarding passes, Paradise Bank credit cards, and a bank pass book. This package is similar to the traveling package shown in Scott's book. An important point Scott noticed about these items, which is also apparent in the picture above (Figure 10), is that all items have the image of the King of Hell on them. The last item (Figure 11) I collected from store B is a pair of ornaments that Scott called Golden Flowers in her book. The vendor told me that this item is locally



Figure 11.  
A pair of  
Golden  
Flowers

known as *kim huy* (Teo Chiu dialect) and they are to be placed at the shrine of the Guardian Spirit inside the house. She further added that the purpose of *kim huy* is to ask the spirit to help the household prosper in business (in Khmer *rok si mien ban*). She further explained that this item comes in pairs because it is meant to represent a pair of mistresses sent to serve the Guardian spirit. *Kim huy* are not for burning and need to be replaced typically during Chinese New Year after being displayed at the shrine for a year. This pair of *kim huy* which were made in Vietnam are the most expensive items I purchased, costing about USD 1.00 each. The vendor said they are expensive because the feather is from India.

These items I collected from the two stores are the most common items for everyday offerings. The vendors at both stores agree that the business of selling paper money is very seasonal.

The peak season is around Chinese New Year which is usually in February. Like most other things, the price of this commodity increases when demand is high and the store owners said they make good business during the peak season. During non-peak season, one of the storeowner said she occasionally does good business when Chinese customers (referring to Chinese people from China), especially garment factory owners came to buy paper money from her store. Whenever these people come, they buy in big amounts and put them in big sacks (*baav* in Khmer).<sup>9</sup> The lady said those Chinese people burn paper money every day. The kind of paper money that those Chinese people burn is the one for spirits (*som-rab neak ta* in Khmer) implying that these business people need to burn paper money offerings to gods for protection of their business and bringing them fortune. Besides the peak period, people also come to buy paper money for celebrating the anniversaries of the death of their ancestors or relatives, or for funerals. She said the first three days after a person passes away, people believe that they have to burn *sang tao kim*, and *tor kim* non-stop, so as to make sure the person who is traveling to the other world will have enough money along her/his journey.

Having described the common paper money items, let's examine the procedure for burning as reported to me by the storeowners



Figure 9. Contents of one of the containers



Figure 10. Traveling package



and other people interviewed. Scott writes in her book that the process of burning paper money such as where to burn and what to do is mostly left to the discretion of the worshippers. The storeowners I talked to told me that there is a general rule for burning paper money: “The process of burning [paper money] is that first of all you need to burn some incense and think of those spirits and invite them to receive the money you are burning. And when the incense is burned out, you can burn the paper money afterwards.” This rule applies to the domestic worshipping as I have observed similar procedure practiced in my house. For example, on the first day of Chinese New Year, my family would cook a lot of food as offering to the gods, ancestors, and other spirits. When all the dishes are ready, they are placed on a table and a stick of incense is put into each dish. After the incense is burned out is when we start burning the paper money. After the paper money burning is done, the family could consume the offered food. In my family, during this offering ritual we usually play Chinese music or karaoke as background music throughout the ritual. What was explained to me about this practice was that during the offering, the gods, ancestors, and spirits are present in the house to enjoy the offerings. When they are there, the Chinese music would entertain them and make them feel at home.

Apart from occasions such as Chinese New Year, death anniversary or funeral, people can also practice paper money offering any time they want. The vendors told me that for everyday offering it is best to do it on Holy Days (*t'ngai sil* in Khmer) according to the Chinese calendar which is one day different from Khmer or Buddhist Holy Days. The examples from the calendar below show the differences. Figure 12 is an example of Khmer Holy Day as can be seen by looking at the small image of Buddha in red color on the top left area of the picture. The Chinese Holy Days can be noticed by the number 15 in the

middle left part of the example in Figure 13. I was told that when the number in this area is either 1 or 15, it is Chinese Holy Days. My mother also follows this type of calendar to find out when to make certain offerings. She said that if she was not sure about the dates, she can check with her Sino-Khmer neighbors who own the grocery store in the neighborhood. My mother explained that for everyday offerings, we can offer paper money sometimes together with fruit such as banana or oranges. I remember seeing her practicing that offering growing up, but most of the times for the *t'ngai sil* offering, there were only fruits and incense burning. It was only occasionally that I saw paper money placed on *t'ngai sil* offering. In short, the process of burning

paper money that I have learned of involves the burning of incense, calling the spirit to receive the offering which sometime includes food or fruit, and burning of paper money items afterwards. I have only observed this tradition in domestic worshipping and I am not sure if worshipping in a temple would be similar or involve a different process.

Skinner wrote in his 1957 book *Chinese Society in Thailand* that one of distinguishing feature between the Chinese and Thai is ancestor worship. The Chinese have a responsibility in a continuum of kin, and worshipping the ancestors has a place in determining the well being of the immediate family.

This is in contrast to the Thai

whose “immediate ancestors were honored by cremation and then usually forgotten...[with] no kin responsibility outside the immediate or extended family” (1957: 93). I believe that such distinction is also applicable to Cambodia. Thus we can understand that paper money burning as a form of ancestor worship is originally not a Khmer tradition. A form of Khmer reckoning of dead ancestors, as explained to me by my mother, involves the offering of materials to the Buddhist monks. The merit obtained from the offering can then be dedicated to the spirit of the ancestors. That



Figure 12. Example of Khmer Holy Day

practice can be said to be the Cambodian way of worshipping the ancestors. Cambodians practice the paper money tradition only as an imitation of what the Chinese do. One of the vendors at the market concurred with the observation saying that both the Khmer and Chinese practice paper money burning, but “Khmer imported this tradition from the Chinese. Khmer people don’t know the paper money burning tradition. They learned from the Chinese. Whatever they see the Chinese do, they do it also. Similar case is also with Thai people.”

Imitation through observation of the Chinese is the case for my mother who was born and raised in an ethnically Khmer family. She said she did not know anything about paper money growing up and she did not start practicing this tradition until she was married to my father who has Chinese ancestry in his family. She said practicing this Chinese tradition of paper money burning is seen as part of her obligations as a housewife who was taking care of the children and household chores. Worshipping the husband’s ancestors is a form of helping the husband, who is busy outside the house earning money, because worshipping the ancestors is asking them to take care of the family and to bring in good fortune. I remember my father telling me a story of his own father who was half Chinese but did

not believe in ancestor worship. Having been born in Cambodia, my grandfather wanted to be completely Khmer and did not want to practice ancestor worship. At one point in his life, he was sick for a long time. However, upon talking to a spirit healer and finding out that his ancestors were not happy with him, my grandfather started worshipping and his sickness disappeared. This example of practicing paper money burning as a form of ancestor worship reflects a pattern of transferring this Chinese tradition through intermarriage. I believe that what the vendor said about Cambodians imitating the Chinese tradition is somewhat

accurate. A case in point is the Chinese New year in Cambodia. Chinese New Year is not considered a national holiday in Cambodia but schools are closed because both teachers and students simply agree not to come to school during that time. The same goes for businesses. Thus, whether you have Chinese heritage in your family or not, everybody celebrates Chinese New Year in Phnom Penh in one-way or another. This Chinese New Year example poses a question of whether the Chinese have assimilated completely into Cambodian society, or they have influenced Cambodian society through their cultural practices such as the paper money tradition.

The paper burning practice is a Chinese tradition,

but as with any foreign influence, it gets adapted to the local context. The different kinds of Hell Money in Hong Kong that Scott mentioned in her book do not have a US dollar replica, but in Cambodia, there is (Figure 2 -3). This is evidence of local adaptation because US dollars are desirable in Cambodia where both US Dollars and Khmer Riel are accepted in everyday transactions. Since it is understood that we should burn what we believe the ancestors desire, US Dollar replicas are burned. This is also the case in Vietnam, but with a little twist. The deities who are used to traditional Hell Money are not necessarily satisfied with the US

Dollar replica (Kwon 2007). Kwon said that many people died during the Vietnam War and their spirits, including those of American soldiers are believed to desire US Dollar paper money. That is why US Dollar money replica exists in paper money burning practice there. In Cambodia, US Dollar replica money is burned because people desire them and view them as possessing higher status. Thus, we could say that worshippers want to burn USD as opposed to Khmer Riel in return. Another reason to support this statement is that there was not any Khmer Riel replica made into paper money at those stores I visited. This shows that



Figure 13. Example of Chinese Holy Day

although local Chinese practice paper money traditions similar to those in Taiwan and Hong Kong, they do adapt it to fit with local understandings and ways of giving meanings to them.

## Conclusion

Since the Khmer Rouge period ended in 1979, there has been a steady stream of academic attention on Cambodia, particularly on post-conflict nation building and reconstruction, revival of culture, promotion of democracy and development, state-society relations and the like. Despite receiving such overwhelming attention, little is known about the ethnic Chinese in Cambodia and their contribution to these processes, let alone their everyday cultural practices. A general survey of academic scholarship on Cambodia would be sufficient to support that claim. However, this does not mean that the presence of Chinese and their social significance in Cambodia have gone unacknowledged. In fact, the Chinese's parallel coexistence with their Khmer counterparts has always been reflected in everyday life in Cambodia. Everyday interactions and jargon as observed in other empirical studies of rural Cambodia do reflect the stereotype of the Chinese as grocery shopkeepers, money lenders, fertilizer sellers, and so on. However, there has been extremely little academic attention aimed at examining the discourse of modern Chinese identity in Cambodia head on.

This article has attempted to address this dearth of academic inquiry by showing that the Chinese custom of burning paper money is practiced by both Chinese and non-Chinese alike in the urban setting of Phnom Penh. Whether the non-Chinese who practice this tradition truly believe in and understand the practice or they do it simply as an act of imitation is still to be proven. The paper money custom is a Chinese tradition that has existed through social upheaval and turmoil in Cambodia. This goes to show that there is more than a sufficient degree of flexibility and adaptability embedded in this tradition allowing it to maintain a place in Cambodian society. The practice of this tradition is prevalent enough that the paper money items constitute commodities that are bought and sold in Cambodian markets. The fact that people spend money to purchase the paper money renders the otherwise worthless recycled paper as valuable. Appadurai (1988) said commodities could be provisionally defined as objects of economic value. Following Simmel (quoted

in Appadurai 1988), the value of an object is not the property of that object itself, but it is a judgment made about them. Paper money is made of used paper that would otherwise have no value. But once printed with certain patterns and colors, this paper obtains value again. Thus, whether the paper money custom has any meanings depends on how worshippers assign meanings to them. The question of whether the meanings given to paper money by the Chinese in Cambodia is similar to those given to them by Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland China is an interesting one that requires further research.

The well assimilation and integration of ethnic Chinese in countries like Cambodia through intermarriage and the adaptation of local culture and practice has been a well established fact (Skinner 1957; Willmott 1967). Such assimilation suggests a process by which customs and practices could be smoothly exchanged. This paper has shown evident to support such claim that the paper money tradition extends beyond the Sino-Khmer community. In addition, the recent increase of Chinese investors and businessmen immigrating to Cambodia further supports this conclusion. As more interactions between this new wave of immigrants take place in a community, there is no doubt that the importance of paper money in Cambodia is further strengthened. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has made Chinese culture, tradition and language increasingly popular. During my visit to Cambodia in December 2009, I noticed there are more private Chinese language classes in my downtown Phnom Penh neighborhood than in previous years. These classes, I believed, are designed to train Cambodians to work for the Chinese investors. When people interact more with the Chinese and learn more about them, their Chinese tradition and practices will undoubtedly be better understood. The practice of paper money tradition, together with this anecdotal observation, supports a possible conclusion that there is strong impetus on the ground for reviving Chinese cultural identity in Cambodia. This paper hopes to establish the point that the ostensibly Chinese tradition of burning paper money is present in Cambodia and is a common practice among both the Chinese and non-Chinese alike. What role this Chinese tradition plays in the Cambodian culture and ritual practice in general is a thought provoking question to pose in present day Cambodia.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> A French word that I think is the equivalence of ‘association.’

<sup>2</sup> *Front Uni Nationale de Kampuchea*.

<sup>3</sup> Democratic Kampuchea was the official name of the government at that time.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Lee Scott whose research was conducted in Hong Kong wrote her 2007 book describing this tradition in rather detail. The description of the paper money offering in this section is based on this book.

<sup>5</sup> All these technical names are based on Scott’s 2007 book. How these items are known locally is described further below.

<sup>6</sup> I was not completely sure of the local name of that particular item as by the time we were talking about that particular item, it was the teenage daughter of the store owner who was talking to me as the store owner was attending to other customer.

<sup>7</sup> In Khmer, *dot kom oy mien reung rav knong chong-kraan*.

<sup>8</sup> In Khmer *dot oy sok sa-bay* and *oy heng*.

<sup>9</sup> *Baav* is bigger bag, as opposed to *thong* which could be smaller bags such as shopping bag. *Baav* is commonly used in association with rice bag (*baav ang-ko*) that can weigh from 20kg to 50kg.

# The New Generation of Women Writers from the *Pesantren* Tradition in Indonesia

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## Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty first century, a new phenomenon occurred in the literature of Indonesia with the emergence of the *chick lit* and *teen lit* genres. There are many young writers, mostly women, who have written novels based on their own experiences. Some of these young female writers are from the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) tradition. These women are following in the footsteps of the previous generation of *pesantren* writers such as Abidah El-Khaligy. *Chick lit* and *teen lit* writers explore urban lifestyles using daily conversation and ordinary language; in similar fashion young women writers from the *pesantren* tradition explore their stories and personal experiences while studying and living in *pesantren*.

However, some critics claim that *chick lit* and *teen lit*, as the style of the new generation, cannot be compared with the work of the previous generation. They say that this genre is just following a trend, and that it will change in time. In this paper, I will argue that the new generation of women writers from the *pesantren* has become a significant group because they have acted as a bridge between those who are from *pesantren* and those who are outside of tradition, and because in the past Muslim women have rarely achieved any prominence in the literary world.

This paper attempts to provide a brief description of *pesantren* literature and how it developed, and the influences of the *chick lit* and *teen lit* genres, particularly in the emergence of the new generation of *pesantren* women writers. In analyzing the work of the old and the new generation of women writers from the *pesantren*, I will try to explain their significance for the *pesantren* tradition and for Indonesian literature in general. The first section provides a background from which this

genre of writing developed. The essay then goes on to examine several writers in depth, both from the first generation and from the new generation, providing evidence of similarities and differences based on their works. The essay then moves on to assess the significance of the new generation of women writers from the *pesantren* tradition.

## New Genres: *Chick Lit* and *Teen Lit*

Nowadays, Indonesian bookstores are stocked with thousands of copies of novels that fall in the categories of *chick lit* (chick literature) and *teen lit* (teen literature). These are genres of popular writing in the contemporary Indonesian literature scene. From 2003 the emergence of these genres has been influenced by the increase in translation and publication of Western *chick lit* and *teen lit* in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* published in Britain in 1999, was the first *chick lit* novel translated into Indonesian (Arimbi 2009, 83). In Bridget's diary the reader can see the thoughts and worries of a mature woman who is thirty-something years old. She worries about her love life, career, and bad habits such as smoking and drinking, and she struggles to keep her life on track (Webb 2009). This was followed in 2000 by the publication of Melissa Bank's book *The Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing* and *Being Single and Happy* which were part of a series and were translated into Indonesian as well (Arimbi 2009, 83).

The term *chick lit* refers to a genre, which uses a diary form as the pattern of writing. According to Whi-helen (2002), "One of the attractions of the diary format is that it provides a natural structure which Fielding strengthens by having a classic romance plot thread its way through the novel." Like a diary, this genre is writ-



ten using daily conversation and ordinary language; it is therefore easily read and accepted by readers. Usually the main problems in the novel concern what is going on in the main character's daily life. They typically reflect urban culture, and resemble popular drama series on television.

One other important characteristic of this new genre is that it is mostly written and read by women. However, men write in these genres as well, usually using a pen name in order for their writing to be accepted as *chick lit*. The main character is usually a woman between 25-40 years of age. She is often single, or a young mother who is energized, independent, and hardworking, even though she spends time at cafes and night clubs, and goes on dates with handsome men. The theme of sex is discussed openly, and humor is used to deal with topics throughout the stories. Normally, the story is written in the first person, so that the readers feel they are enjoying the diary of a real woman, and that she is talking to them as they read. This pattern is seen by some critics as an interesting way to attract readers. The appearance of these books is also intended to attract readership, since the covers are colorful, with illustrations showing women in various activities and poses (Rusdiarti 2007, 3).

*Teen lit* shares the same structure as *chick lit*, both in terms of writing style and in its exploration of urban lifestyles. However, *chick lit* mostly describes characters who are mature single woman, living independent cosmopolitan lifestyles. These women face modern problems in love and work. *Lajang Kota* (Urban Single, 2003) written by Fira Basuki and *Jodoh Monika* (Monika's Soulmate, 2004) by Alberthine Endah are good examples of *chick lit*. *Teen lit*, on the other hand, explores teenage characters, high school lifestyle in urban areas, and the sweetness and bitterness of love (Kurnia 2007). The focus of these stories is often on falling in love, dating, and experiencing heartache. Such issues resonant with the teen experience. One example is Esti Kinasih's *Fairish*. It is a story about a female teenager named Fairish and her love life and friendship with two boys, Deva and Alfa. The plot revolves around Fairish who builds relationships and solves problems relating to her love life and friendships (Kinasih 2004).

With the growth of this genre, a number of new writers have emerged, publishing their first novels and sharing their own experiences. Younger writers often

(perhaps mistakenly) assume that writing novels or fiction is easier than writing nonfiction, because authors convey what they are feeling, thinking and doing using their own language, and no more than 250 pages double-spaced are necessary in order for the story to be published and sold. Therefore readers only need to spend between 10,000 and 30,000 rupiahs or \$1-\$3 USD for each novel they buy. These novels are sold as fast as fried peanuts. For instance, Esti Kinasih's novel *Fairish* published by Gagas Media sold 29,000 copies in 2005. By contrast, other books published by Lingkar Pena Publishing House only sold 3000 copies in a year. Another novel, *Cintapuccino* by Icha Rahmanti, was printed three times in a single month and 11,000 copies were sold, while normally a book is printed once a year with a run of 3000 and will sell only 50 exemplars in a month. (Kurnia 2007; Lingkar Pena Publishing House 2010).

A variety of publishers benefit from the emergence of this new literature market, because they attract a large number of readers. Therefore, publishers encourage and promote young writers to produce novels by determining a certain benefit for the writer. For example, *Gagas Media*, one of the biggest publishers of *chick lit* and *teen lit* in Indonesia, applies a "progressive royalty" by giving 11% of the 20,000 exemplar novels sold whereas the standard figure is 10%, and 12% for more than 20,000 copies of novels sold. Not only have publishers institutionalized this trend, but the movie industry also produces films based on these novels, as in the case of *Fairish* and *Cintapuccino*. A publisher can produce a novel based on a film by asking for the novel in advance, as in the cases of *Dealova* and *Garasi*. This kind of collaboration has served to promote *chick lit* and *teen lit* in Indonesia (Tempo Online 2005).

At the same time, a number of young writers educated in the *pesantren* tradition have also begun writing stories, which in some ways resemble *chick lit* and *teen lit* material. The major difference is that they address issues relating to the lives of young Muslims in *pesantren*. According to Azra et al. (2007):

The *Pesantren* is a residential school dedicated to the transmission of the classical Islamic sciences, including study of the *Qur'an* and *hadith*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) Arabic grammar, mysticism (*tasawwuf*), and the Arabic sciences (*alat*) A typical *pesantren* complex consists of a mosque, study-rooms, dormitories, and *kyai's* [the Islamic scholar

who builds and leads the *pesantren* house) (p. 175).

On the one hand, *chick lit* and *teen lit* novels written by young urban writers talk about popular lifestyle issues such as dating, shopping at the mall, prom night, and the other ways to express feelings of love. They use urban slang words such as *gue* (I), *lo* (you), *tajir* (rich), *dodol* (stupid), and *pembokat* (housewife helper). On the other hand, young Muslim writers discuss living in a dormitory, sharing property with their dorm-mates, the challenge of Qur'anic recitation, and unique stories about the expression of love when individuals are faced with the limits placed on male-female interaction by *pesantren* regulations. They use not only urban slang words but also some terms that are generally used in the *pesantren* environment, such as *ta'zir* (punishment), *ro'an* (cleaning work) and *ghashab* (using other's property without permission). These kinds of works are known as *sastra pop pesantren* (pesantren pop literature).

*Sastra pop pesantren* is a new genre of *sastra pesantren* (*pesantren* literature) that is influenced by *chick lit* and *teen lit*. In general, *sastra pesantren* is regarded as literature dealing with the knowledge and traditions associated with the *pesantren* system, which contains themes concerning religious expression and feelings of love for God, esoteric religious experiences, concerns about human ethics, and praise for God's universe. In addition, Jamal D. Rahman offers three main definitions of *sastra pesantren*: first, it is a literature that lives and develops in *pesantren*, for example *syair* and *nazham* (poems in Arabic language); Second, *sastra pesantren* is literature written by people who are from the *pesantren* tradition, such as *kiai* and *santri* (the students of *pesantren*); third, it is a literature dealing with knowledge and traditions associated with the *pesantren* as mentioned above. In light of these three definitions, it seems there is a possibility of expanding *sastra pesantren* outside its original form and content (Rahman 2008).

According to Zawawi D. Imron, a well known Indonesian poet, the emergence of *sastra pesantren* started in the twentieth century, and was absorbed as a part of Indonesian literature. In the 1960s, Djamil Suherman, Syu'bah Asa, and Fudoli Zaini, representatives of *pesantren* alumni, wrote about the *pesantren* experience. For instance, the work *Umi Kulsum* written by Djamil

Suherman in 1963 was a compilation of short stories about daily life in *pesantren*. In the 1970s, Emha Ainun Nadjib, who studied in *Pesantren* Gontor gained some prominence through a volume of religious poems. Subsequent poets were K.H. Mustofa Bisri, Jamal D. Rahman, Acep Zamzam Noor, and Ahmad Syubbanuddin Alwy, who were acknowledged as part of the 1980s generation of *sastra pesantren* writers. Mathori A Elwa, Hamdi Salad, Nasruddin Anshory, Kuswaidi Syafi'ie, and Abidah El-Khaliq emerged in the 1990s (NU Online 2004). Their works always mention Islam and the worship of God. However, Abidah El-Khaliq was the only well-known women writer among these earlier generations.

*Sastra pop pesantren* emerged in 2005 when some *pesantren* alumni published their novels to become the new generation of writers from the *pesantren* tradition. However, they wrote about different themes and with a different style from the previous generation, as they were influenced by the new genres of *chick lit* and *teen lit*. Some names that represent this generation of writers are Mahbub Jamaluddin who wrote *Pangeran Bersarung* (A Prince Who wears a Sarong), Ma'rifatun Baroroh with a novel entitled *Santri Semelekete* (A Troublemaker), Pijer Sri Laswiji with *Kidung Cinta Puisi Pegon* (Love Song from Pegon Poem), and Zaki Zarung, who published a novel entitled *Santri Baru Gede* (Teen Student) (Munawar 2009).

Like *chick lit* and *teen lit* novels written by young urban writers, *sastra pop pesantren* novels have generated great appreciation among young readers to whom the novels are addressed. Some titles from the *pop pesantren* genre have been reprinted such as *Santri Semelekete* and *Coz Loving You Gus*, and the publisher has signed an agreement with a production house in order to adapt *Pangeran Bersarung* and *Santri Semelekete* for Film Television (FTV) (Maarif 2007). In other words, at the present time *sastra pop pesantren* has the potential to spread as widely as urban *chick lit* and *teen lit*.

## Women Writers from the Pesantren Tradition

Following the *chick lit* and *teen lit* trend, many young women writers from the *pesantren* tradition have emerged in Indonesian literature, such as Rida Fitria, Pijer Sri Laswiji, Maia Rosyida, Azri Dzakiyah, Jazimah

al-Muhyi, Khilma Anis, Camilla Chisni. They published their first novels or short stories using the new genre and shared stories that dealt with female teenagers and their problems, but they used the *pesantren* as the background. Although there are young men from this generation who have written *sastra pop pesantren*, the genre is dominated by women.

One reason for this might be that young women started honing their writing talents by writing a diary, like Maia Rosyida, who kept a diary from childhood (Rosyida 2010). This is the same style that many *chick lit* and *teen lit* novels use. Additionally, the diary pattern usually uses the first person as the storyteller, which provides an opportunity for a writer to express her individuality (Marching 2007, 2). Mentioning “I” in a story represents a “will to be heard” (Marching 2007, 1) like a letter, and the diary pattern or self writing is therefore close to personal experience. Some of the feelings, which emerge during the teenage years, especially for females, are shared by female writers in ways that differ from male teen writers. Writing about feelings is usually associated with women writers; male writers avoid this pattern. Of course, some men do keep diaries; for example, Soe Hok Gie’s *Catatan Seorang Demonstran* (*Note of a Demonstrator*) and Tan Malaka’s *Dari Penjara Ke Penjara I-III*. However, there is a general assumption in Indonesia that diaries about ordinary daily life and love are not written by men (Ihsan 2010). Indeed, this attitude is similar to the current furor in the United States, “The When a Dude Writes It, It’s a Serious Phenomenon” (North 2010). According to the best-selling author, Jennifer Weiner (called by some the Queen of Chick Lit):

I think it's a very old and deep-seated double standard that holds that when a man writes about family and feelings, it's literature with a capital L, but when a woman considers the same topics, it's romance, or a beach book - in short, it's something unworthy of a serious critic's attention” (Pinter 2010).

The contemporary emergence of young female writers from the *pesantren* is an interesting phenomenon because of the previous lack of female writers in the *pesantren* tradition that has been dominated by a patriarchal culture. Discussions about women and *pesantren* focus on how *pesantren* participants interpret Islamic texts about women, and this is important in a tradition that is dominated by male perspectives

(Arimbi 2009, 11). Therefore, producing written texts is significant for women who live within the *pesantren* tradition, in order to share their own experiences, and in order to better understand and solve their own problems in regard to Islam and its interpretation. For example, these texts can address issues surrounding gender inequality because situations where women are positioned as subordinate can be criticized and new perspectives can be offered in the course of publishing and writing.

To illustrate these general points, I will look in detail at three women writers from the *pesantren* tradition. One, Abidah El-Khaliqy, represents the first stage of the development of the genre of *sastra pesantren*; the other two women, Maia Rosyida and Azri Dzakiyah, represent young women who have followed the example Abidah has set, while introducing their own specific concerns. Both Maia and Azri have published more than two books, and in my opinion although they are still young, they have been able to criticize common preconceptions that have negative effects on women.

I will analyze the similarities and the differences between the old generation of female writers and the new generation through their novels and through information that I obtained from personal interviews. My aim is to demonstrate that the role played by the new generation is just as important as that of the previous generation, and to show that the emergence of this new generation is significant for preserving women’s ideas within the *pesantren* tradition. Abidah El-Khaliqy has done this with novels entitled *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (*Woman in the Arab Scarf*) and *Geni Jora* (*Fire of Jora*). I would also stress, however, that *Tarian Cinta* (*Love Dancing*) by Maia Rosyida, and Azri Dzakiyah’s *Twin Ning* (*The Kiai’s Twin Daughters*) have also made important contributions.

## The Old Generation

Abidah El-Khaliqy is the most famous female writer from the 1990s generation. She writes about and is herself a product of the *pesantren* tradition. She was known as a poet and prose writer in Indonesia in the mid-1990s. She was born on March 1, 1965 in Menturo Jombang East Java. Growing up in the big *santri* family in the capital of the *Pesantren* Jombang, she would have been exposed to religious lessons since her childhood, especially during her time in the Islamic elemen-

tary school. She studied in *Pesantren Putri* (pesantren for girls) administered by Persis (*Persatuan Islam/Unity of Islam*) in Bangil, East Java for six years, and she gained her bachelor's degree from the State Institute of Islamic Studies in Yogyakarta. During her college years, she was an active member in the *Eska* theatre community and *Lingkaran Penyair Yogyakarta* (The Yogyakarta Poet Circle). She was initially a feminist activist rather than a writer, stemming from her involvement with *Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat* (The Fatayat Welfare Foundation, YKF), an NGO, which sought to empower women. During that time, she wrote *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, which was published under the auspices of YKF and the Ford Foundation (Arimbi 2009, 95).

Abidah set her prose work against a *pesantren* background, in a world that she understood well, and her novels have a close relationship to her personal experiences. Her works are different from the writers from the popular and urban-centered *sastra wangi* (literally, fragrant literature) generation such as Ayu Utami, Fira Basuki, and Mahesa Ayu Djenar (Janssen 2003). Their novels explore cosmopolitan life-styles, whereas Abidah writes about life-styles that are assumed to be marginal. The perspective of women in rural *pesantren* is rarely written about by other writers, and for this reason she became known as a female writer from the *pesantren* tradition. Most Indonesians consider *pesantren* to be closed worlds, very conventional and traditional. As a *santri*, Abidah therefore wants to create a link between the *pesantren* and the ordinary Indonesian world, and between the imaginings of the general Indonesian public and the factual elements of life in the *pesantren* world through her writing. In other words, her writing can be a bridge to connect *pesantren* with outsiders (Arimbi 2009, 98).

However, Abidah has been challenged by orthodox interpretations of women's role and position from the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) in Indonesian society, particularly those associated with *pesantren*. For example, some of the *ulama* who were invited to a discussion of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* objected to her story line and argued that she should not discuss anything about *kiyai* nor write about women's reproductive issues, since this implies criticism of the *pesantren* tradition. *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* was a controversial novel when it was first published in 2001, especially for those who condemned Abidah's criticism of *Kitab*

*Kuning*, the text books used in *pesantren* schooling. She argued that *pesantren* participants mostly use *Kitab Kuning* as a primary reference, rather than using the Qur'an itself. This effects interpretations of how women should live, even though *Kitab Kuning* is a compilation of human ideas that are related to a particular social context. Therefore, *pesantren* culture tends to be repressive towards women, controlling their educational rights and freedom of choice in reproduction rights through arranged marriages and polygamy. For Abidah, her novels represent a crucial effort to promote a more balanced sociological analysis of the application of theological principles in society (Arimbi 2009, 98).

Abidah wrote several other novels, including *Ibuku Laut Berkobar* (My Mother, the Ocean of Fire) (1987), *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2000), *Menari di Atas Gunting* (Dancing on Scissors) (2001), *Atas Singgasana* (On the Throne) (2002), *Geni Jora* (Fire Jora) (2004), *Nirzona* (2007), and *Mahabbah Rindu* (Missing Love) (2010). In addition to *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, I will analyse *Geni Jora*, since both represent works influential in addressing women's issues and are set against a *pesantren* background. Women who rebel against their families and the unequal culture are the main characters in both novels.

Annisa is the name of the main character in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. She has an elder brother, Rizal, who has greater opportunities to obtain what he wants, such as permission to ride horses, something that Annisa really wants to do. Unfortunately, her father does not allow her to ride horses, which he says is a man's activity. During her adolescence, Annisa learns to read the Qur'an but she also learns to ride horses secretly, with Lek Khudhori's assistance. After some time, Nisa falls in love with Lek Khudhori, but she has to follow her father who has arranged a marriage for her with Syamsuddin, whom she has never met. She is still under twenty years old and had only graduated from elementary school at the time of the marriage. In fact, Nisa experiences violence and sexual harassment in her marriage because her husband is a sexual deviant; he is only aroused after physically abusing his wife and his love-making is sexually perverted. He also takes a second wife. Nisa feels traumatized, but finally she divorces Syamsuddin and begins a new life, gaining her right to study, and eventually marrying Lek Khudhori (El-Khaliqy 2008).

Similarly, in *Geni Jora*, Abidah's main character is a woman. Kejora was born into a patriarchal family. Her father marries two women, and Kejora's mother is his first wife. Her grandmother is one of the agents by which the patriarchic system is maintained. She keeps Jora inside the house and never allows her to play with others. With one elder sister and a younger brother, Jora lives surrounded by Arabic people, such as her step mother, her neighbors, her boyfriend, her best friend, even the *kiai* who leads the *pesantren* she attends. Jora goes to study in Morocco and travels around the countries of the Middle East. She dreams that she can prove that she has the power to be herself, and can rebel against violence and the patriarchal culture (El-Khaliqy 2004).

## The New Generation

At the same time, we see the emergence of Maia Rosyida and Azri Dzakiyah who are recognized as young writers from the *pesantren* tradition from which Abidah El-Khaliqy came. Maia was born on 29 November 1987 in Salatiga, Central Java. She published her first novel in 2007 entitled *Tarian Cinta* (Love Dancing), and she is recognized as a young writer from the *pesantren* tradition because she used the *pesantren* as a background for her story, as well as exploring *santri* lifestyles. Her interest in writing began when she was in her second year of elementary school, through reading the newspaper and children's magazines. "Reading and listening to music attracted me to writing," she said. In order to buy a diary which cost 250 rupiah (.25 USD), she saved her pocket money every day. Living in a *pesantren*, Maia became more skillful because she gained self-esteem from the many friends who appreciated her and gave her feedback on her writing. Moreover, when she became involved in *Qaryah Thayyibah*, an educational institution based on community participation, she improved not only her writing but also discovered talents for making movies and other multimedia presentations (Rosyida 2010).

Not only does Maia use the *pesantren* as a background in her work, but she also discusses rural areas. In another novel entitled *Sekolahku Bukan Sekolah* (My School is not a School), Maia wrote about how the community-schooling program known as *Qaryah Thayyibah* began and developed in her village. Even though she is a teenager, she does not prefer writing

about the urban teen lifestyles, which are popular with other young people. She has her own style, which she chooses to share her experiences. She explains:

I address my writing to young readers because I feel close to them and I hope Indonesian youth will become used to thinking and working since they are still young so that they will be a creative and productive generation instead of becoming simply consumers. (Rosyida 2010).

In terms of publication, Maia argues that writing and publishing is one way to deliver ideas to readers, and a way to interact with and influence them. She often writes stories based on current problems, which are occurring in her society and builds her own arguments supported by some knowledge she gained from the *pesantren*. *Tarian Cinta* is an example of this. "I wrote *Tarian Cinta* when the issue of erotic dancing (by *dangdut* Indonesian singers) was a hot topic in the national media," Maia said. She disagrees with some conservative Muslims who criticized her for her ideas, and who even claimed that women who take part in such activities are denizens of hell. She wrote the novel to challenge such conservative views, creating the characters of teenagers Dahlia and Mbah Jalaluddin Rumi, a wise Muslim preacher who dealt fairly with these issues. Even though she does not specifically focus on women's issues, she argues that "Islam recognizes and supports difference and freedom of choice." She makes this very clear in her novel (Wahid Institute 2007).

In *Tarian Cinta*, Dahlia is a teenager who has to dance with her friends to earn money for her family. She lives in a district where Mbah Jalaluddin Rumi heads his *pesantren*. He is a wise *kiai* who helps Dahlia when some conservative Muslims who live there condemn her. However, she does not study or become *santri* in his *pesantren*. The novel also introduces two young men, Bilal and Aiman, who both fall in love with Dahlia. Bilal is a gangster and street boy, whereas Aiman is Mbah Jalaludin's son. It is generally known in *pesantren* culture that the *kiai's* son is like a prince who will attract the attention of all the female *santris*. It is from the conflict facing the conservative Muslim characters and the necessity for Dahlia decide between Bilal and Aiman, that the plot of *Tarian Cinta* flows (Rosyida 2007).

Another young writer is Azri Dzakiyah who uses Dzakeeya Nist as her pen name. She was born on 19 March 1990 in Pasuruan East Java. Unlike Maia, Azri was born to a wealthy family. Her parents had sufficient wealth to provide her with books, magazines, and comics. “My father might teach me how to save money, but not for books,” she said. When she was in her fourth year of elementary school, a local newspaper published her story, and it made her father feel proud. As a gift, he bought Azri some electronic equipment, including a computer, a fax machine, and a printer. In order to sustain her writing, when she was studying in the *pesantren*, her father gave her a laptop, so she could finish writing her first novel which was entitled *Mawar Surga* (Rose of Heaven) and published in 2008 (Nist 2010). *Mawar Surga* was followed by *Alunan Vektor Allah* (Billowing Allah Vector) and *Twin Ning*.

Like Abidah, Azri mostly sets her prose work against a *pesantren* background. She said that *pesantren* contain a number of ideas, and she has experiences living and studying in the *pesantren* system. It made it easy for her to develop her ideas. Yet, in her novels she does critique some interpretations originating in *pesantren* that undermine women’s rights, such as support for polygamy and the tendency to overlook sexual harassment (Nist 2010). In this way, Azri and Maia write about different topics from other young writers, who are from urban cultures. They try to write not just *teen lit* novels but incorporate some issues of which young readers should be aware.

However, as a young writer who addresses her writing particularly towards young Muslims and *santri*, Azri takes themes of love and friendship as a primary consideration. Although she mentions women’s rights, she thinks that this topic should be subordinate to and combined with interesting ideas for the young reader. “In *Mawar Surga* I wrote about advice and ethics and how to build relationships between males and females, but I think it is not much more than entertainment,” she explains (Nist 2010).

*Twin Ning*, written by Azri Dzakiyah, tells the story of twins, Tazkirah Arfakhsyad and Tafkirah Arfakhsyad. Born as daughters of a *kiai*, Zikra and Fikra live in a wealthy and respected family. They have an elder brother named Fahad who makes their lives perfect. As usual, *ning* (the daughter of *kiai*) or *gus* (the son of a *kiai*) are like the prince and princess in a *pe-*

*santrén* community. Most people who live in *pesantren* would be curious about their lives. Similarly, Zikra and Fikra are well known among the *santri* and teachers. Physically, both of them look similar, but they have different characters. Zikra is known as tomboy and easy going, whereas Fikra is recognized as calm and cool (Nist 2009).

The story begins with an announcement from their father *Kiai* Arfakhsyad that Zikra and Fikra will be sent to another *pesantren* to study but with each twin going to a different *pesantren*. Zikra will study in traditional *pesantren*, while Fikra will learn in a modern *pesantren*. Following this story, each of them meets *Gus* in their own *pesantren*, and later they fall in love with him. During their studies, they face continuous problems, such as competition with new friends, sadness because Fahad (their elder brother) passes away, and an incident of sexual violence that happens to Hilal’s younger sister, as well as the drama of family bankruptcy, which impacts their financial security. However, Zikra and Fikra and their family are able to survive, and the story has a happy ending (Nist 2009).

## The Older and Newer Generations: Similarities and Differences

I found some similarities in comparison between the older generation and the newer generation of women writers from the *pesantren* tradition. First, Abidah El-Khaliqy, Maia Rosyida, and Azri Dzakiyah have the same family background. They grew up in religious and educated families who supported their reading and writing habits, and sent them to study in *pesantren* to gain an Islamic education. This family background is significant because it introduced and built strong reading and writing habits from childhood for these female writers. Some people argue that talent is the most significant element in becoming a successful writer. However, the careers of these three women demonstrate that the milieu in which they obtained support and through which they began their hobbies in reading and writing are also important. In terms of her introduction to reading and writing, Maia said:

I could read before I went to elementary school. My mom taught me to read when I was in my early childhood. Therefore, I did not need to go to kindergarten. Then I liked reading such things as newspapers and children’s magazines. When I was in fourth year of

elementary school, I read novels and teen's magazines. Therefore, I used to write as well. I had a cute diary, which was colorful and decorated with flowers, and I started writing articles, daily notes, opinion, poem, and short stories in my diary (Rosyida 2010).

Similarly, Azri began her writing from childhood and was similarly encouraged by her habit of reading. Since childhood, she never ate without holding a book. "I can't eat without reading an entertaining book such as a comic or something humorous. If I was not reading, I was eating while watching television. I got used to do that because my parents also do that," she explained. In order to motivate her, Azri's parents often showed her the achievements of other people. "It meant that I should develop my attainments, not stagnate, and feel satisfied only with this step," she explained. Therefore, since elementary school Azri has been active in displaying her poetry and short stories on the school noticeboard. "And finally, writing does not take time anymore because I am used to it, and now writing has become an enjoyable activity in my life," she concluded (Nist 2010).

Not only educational support, but also equal access to information and opportunity were important values in their families. Abidah El-Khaliqy, Maia Rosyida, and Azri Dzakiyah had the same opportunity as their brothers to obtain an education and develop their talents. "In my family, daughters and sons are not significantly different. My parents never differ in the way they behave with us," Maia said. Along these lines, Azri has her own explanation:

Sometimes I found differences, because normally a daughter has more work than a son has in regard to the household. Moreover, I am the first child in my family. Therefore, I spent a lot of time helping my parents instead of writing. However, I am also the first owner of some facilities provided by my parents such as a computer, a laptop, and a hand phone. They also taught me to use the internet, so that my younger brother did not have more privileges (Nist 2010).

After completing elementary school, Abidah also had the opportunity to go to *pesantren* even though she had already received a religious education from childhood, because she grew up in a big *santri* family. In the same way, Maia and Azri also gained their religious education in *pesantren*. For some families, it is a privilege to send their children to *pesantren* because of the cost of

attending such an institution. Also, people expect more of the *santri* in terms of being Islamic experts, and feel they should be able to answer questions regarding religious problems (Dhofier 1999, 32). Additionally, the three women obtained two benefits unique to those who have studied in modern *pesantren*. On one hand, they learned Islamic knowledge; on the other hand, this was combined with secular knowledge (Dhofier 1999, 22), including creative writing. All three of these writers studied in modern *pesantren*, namely *Pesantren* Puteri Bangil, *Pesantren* Al-Qalam Malang, and *Pesantren* Krapyak Yogyakarta. All of these *pesantren* are located in Java.

Second, the fact that Abidah El-Khaliqy, Maia Rosyida, and Azri Dzakiyah were educated in *pesantren* is significant in forming their talent for writing. They preserved their talents in the *pesantren* through involvement in activities related to creative writing like theater, notice board activities and magazine activities. Abidah's experience is an example. She started her profession when she was studying in the *pesantren*. She published short stories and children's stories in newspapers and magazines using her pseudonyms: Ida Arek Ronopati, Idasmara Prameswari, or Ida Bani Kadir (Arimbi 2009, 95).

In the experience of these writers, the *pesantren* milieu was beneficial for developing their talent. However, male students often have access to information because they are able to use the internet whenever they wanted to, while female students have to obtain permission. As mentioned by Maia, "I found it difficult to access the internet because the *pesantren* does not allow us (female *santri*) to use it; therefore some of us went out and did it secretly. However, I dealt with this situation by asking permission from Ibu Nyai (the *kiai's* wife) directly, and she allowed me to go out." (Rosyida 2010). Unlike Maia's situation, *pesantren* Al-Qalam Malang where Azri studied provides twenty-four hour internet connection for the *santri*, including the females (Nist 2010).

Another challenge that these writers faced in *pesantren* is that they had to manage their time to study, because they were required to attend classes in *pengajian* (the teaching of classical Islamic texts) and also go to the *madrasah* to obtain formal education. They also had to take on extracurricular activities both in *pesantren* and *madrasah* and accept responsibility for them-



selves because they were so far away from their parents. Their activities started from early prayers, and continued through attendance at *pengajian* and other activities according to an exact schedule determined by *pesantren* board that often finished at mid night. "It was difficult if I was still in the mood to write, but I had to attend a class, for example. Therefore, I often kept writing while listening to my teacher. I put my laptop under the table, but my teacher would get angry if he knew what I was doing." (Nist 2010). Similarly, trying to sustain her writing time, Maia would sit in the corner of the class in order to avoid her teacher's attention so that she could continue writing (Rosyida 2010).

Due to their strong motivation and firm determination, Maia and Azri become more talented writers. Even Maia could attract esteem while in the *pesantren*, getting friends to support her hobby by asking them to be proofreaders. Azri obtained full support from her school when she published her novel. "They were impressed to know that one of their students had written a novel, because this is a first experience for them. They bought 100 copies of my first novel and they invited a critic to deliver his evaluation of my novel during the launching ceremony," Azri said (Nist 2010). From this it seems that *pesantren* can not only play an important role in motivating students and building their determination to become writers, but also introduce them to Islamic knowledge. Such experiences of *pesantren* culture influence what they write in their novels.

Third, through poems and novels, Abidah El-Khaliqy, Maia and Azri use their works to tell the readers about *pesantren* and their concerns about women's rights and equality. They create female characters in their writings, and characterize them as independent women and agents of the women's movement. For example, Abidah describes Annisa in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and Kejora in *Geni Jora* as women who rebel and criticize male domination in their family. Even though each of these novels has its own distinct plot, Abidah wanted to emphasize, "There is some value in rebellion. There is nothing permanent about inequality. Rebels can be born in many types and forms." (El-Khaliqy 2004, 215).

Similarly, Maia also narrates her character's struggle as that of a woman, like the character Dahlia, who has to take care of her family because her father has passed away and her mother is suffering and in pain. She sometime describes women as housewives. "I think

being a housewife is an honorable job, because she is responsible for our next generation," she argues (Rosyida 2010). In *Tarian Cinta*, Maia describes Aiman's mother as a housewife who works in her store selling cookies. She has a close relationship with Aiman and his elder and younger sister. She is a patient caretaker, full of love, and a good listener:

*"Eh eh eh, begitu ya kalau nggak ada ayah, pada berantem nggak karuan. Didenger dari luar itu nggak pantes," Ummi yang baru pulang dari toko kuenya sejak pagi bekerja itu tiba-tiba muncul dari pintu belakang. "Ayi' tu, Mi, cari masalah." "Abisnya Mi, udah ngerti malem-malem." "Ayi', Ayi', udah, ngalah sedikit. Faza sama Lila juga sama saja. Tambah gede kok pada makin pinter berantem ya? Ayo, sekarang jelasin ke Ummi, masalahnya tadi apa?"*

#### Author's Translation:

"Eh eh eh, see if your father is gone, you fight each other. It is not good if people outside can hear," Ummi suddenly comes from the back door. She has just returned from her cake store. "Ayi' Mom, here is the trouble maker." "No, she does not realize, it's already night." "Ayi, Ayi, enough, be patient. Faza and Lila, both of you are the same. You are bigger and more of a fighter now, ya? Explain to Mom, what's going on?" (Rosyida 2007, 126)

This description shows the reader the way Maia is concerned about women, as in the following scene where she ponders the meaning of female beauty:

*"Cantik itu bukan dari wajah seseorang. Perempuan cantik adalah perempuan yang selalu ingin belajar tentang pengetahuan yang tak terbatas. Dan, itu yang aku suka dari kamu. Aku nggak pernah minta sama Tuhan atas perempuan yang sempurna. Tetapi, aku selalu memohon untuk dipertemukan dengan perempuan yang semangat belajarnya tinggi."*

#### Author's Translation:

"Beauty is not just because of the face. A beautiful woman is one who desires to learn unlimited knowledge. That is the way that I love you. I never asked God for a perfect woman, but I always asked that I could meet a woman who has a high motivation to learn." (Rosyida 2007, 192)

Azri, on the hand, explains her female characters in two different ways. Fikra and Zikra, their mother, and Hilal's mother represent these types. Zikra is a confi-

dent girl, rebellious, curious, smart, and a decision maker; whereas Fikra and the two other women are calm, mature, patient, and wise housewives. However, Azri characterizes all of them as women who love learning and studying. This is an example: “*Bu Nyai Kamalia sedang membaca buku biografi KH. Hasyim Asy’ari terbitan LKiS di ruang tengah ndalem yang terbelang mewah*”. (Bu Nyai Kamila is reading a biography of KH Hasyim Asyari published by LKiS in the luxurious family room) (Nist 2009, 43).

In discussing women’s issues, Azri repeatedly criticizes some classic interpretations regarding polygamy. According to her, in considering polygamy, the whole text of the Qur’an should be read and the *asbabun nuzul* (occasions of revelation) of the *ayat* (one sentence of the Qur’an) should be analyzed, in order to respect a woman who has feelings and rights. The purpose of *nikah* (marriage) is to build a family in peace, love, and a caring manner (*sakinah mawaddah warahmah*), and it is possible to ruin this through polygamy. She also uses the male character in her story to support her argument:

*Gus Hilal yang kalem, tak menyela sedikit pun apa-apa yang dikatakan Zikra. Dia memang sejak dulu selalu mengibarkan bendera monogami, bendera antipoligami. Ia mengingat ibundanya tercinta dan juga adiknya, Bahira.*

#### Author’s Translation:

Gus Hilal remains calm and does not interrupt anything that Zikra says. He has been raising the monogamy flag for long time. He always remembers his beloved mother and her young sister, Bahira (Nist 2009, 99)

In her novels, Azri often describes an ideal male character, in comparison with female characters, in order to create a model for men of how to behave and give respect to woman. One of these characters is Kiai Arfakhshad, who loves his wife very much; he even shows his feelings for her in front of his children. He is responsible for his family even though he has to be a bread vendor in order to deal with his bankruptcy. As a *kiai* he should not work by selling bread, but he does it anyway (Nist 2010).

In terms of stories about *pesantren*, Abidah, Maia, and Azri describe life in a *pesantren* in detail. Because every *pesantren* has its own characters that reflect the

personality and teachings of the *kiai* (Dhofier 1999: 17), their novels have different settings. Abidah describes a traditional *pesantren* in her book *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, where Annisa’s father is the leader and become a *kiai*. Annisa has not had the same opportunities as her brother. Abidah uses this description in order to show readers the culture of gender imbalance. Unlike Abidah, Maia and Azri tell their readers about modern *pesantren* where male and female students are described as having more equal positions; Zikra and Fikra, the twins in *Twin Ning*, even study outside their own *pesantren*.

The following is the comparison between *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *Twin Ning*:

*Jika saja, Lek Khudhori tidak membelaku mati-matian, bapak tidak pernah percaya bahwa kepergianku malam itu hanya ke pondok, ke kamar Mbak May. Rencana bapak akan menyekapku di kamar begitu menggebu merasuki semua prasangkanya terhadapku. Sedikit saja aku melakukan sesuatu yang membuatnya tidak berkenan, bapak akan menggeram dan memamerkan gemertak gigiginya di hadapanku.*

#### Author’s Translation:

If Lek Khudhori had not defended me, my father would not have believed that on that night I only went to Mbak Maya’s room. My father planned to imprison me in my room because he did not believe me. Even if I only did the smallest thing that went against his decision; he would growl and bare his teeth in my presence (El-Khaliq 2008, 53).

*Sebenarnya Abah juga berat. Tapi, sepertinya ini memang jalannya. Abah juga telah membicarakan hasil istikharah Abah dengan kiai-kiai teman. Abah juga Ummi. Kalian punya jalan sendiri-sendiri untuk mencari ilmu” ... “Kita coba ya, Nak,” Bu Nyai sudah tak bisa membendung lagi. Spontan, Zikra dan Fikra saling berpelukan. “Aku sayang kamu,” Zikra mengawali bicara ... Abahnya kembali bersikap santai. “Dan kalian harus bersiap-siap karena Abah akan mengirim kalian ke pesantren masing-masing minggu depan.*

#### Author’s Translation:

Actually, it is not easy. But, this is the way you gain your dream. You have your own way in learning. I have talked to some of *kiai* who are my friends and to your mother.” ... “Let’s try, my dear,” mother

said sadly. Zikra and Dzikra spontaneously hugged each other. "I love you," Zikra said ... Her father looked relaxed.. "And, each of you should prepare immediately because I plan to send you to your new *pesantren* next week." (Nist, 2009, 78).

Through such comparisons, the readers realize that *pesantren* are categorized in different types and models, depending on the leadership of the *kiai*. However, Abidah tends to emphasize that *pesantren* are run by a patriarchal system that is against women's rights, whereas Maia and Azri describe *pesantren* life from the teen perspective as simple, fun, and enjoyable, and as authors they write from an informed position. Therefore, the reader can conclude that living in *pesantren* is not as difficult and serious as Abidah depicted in *Perempuan Berkabung Sorban* and *Geni Jora*.

Another important similarity between the older and the newer generation of female writers from the *pesantren* tradition is that Abidah, Maia and Azri use the same terms related to *pesantren* and local culture as their male predecessors did. In their novels, there are some Arabic terms such as *qiyamul-lail* (night praying), *akhir sanah* (end of the year), *bazaar akbar* (big sale), *takzir* (punishment), *thalabul ilmi* (searching knowledge), *i'dad* (beginner), *tsaniyah* (intermediate), *'ulya* (advance), *muhasabah* (introspection), *su'uzhan* (negative thinking), and *muthala'ah* (review) all of which are generally used in *pesantren*.

Not only are Arabic terms used, but the writers also include other culturally specific words related to the environment where the story takes place. In *Geni Jora*, which is set in Morocco, Abidah uses *Ganbri* (Imulchil girls), *harira* (the name of a soup), *jellaba* (a wide dress), and *khal* (aunty) related to Moroccan culture. While in *Perempuan Berkabung Sorban*, she writes Javanese words such as *mudheng* (understand), *mboten* (no), and *ngelunjak* (to despise). Maia and Azri do this as well, with terms like *ngalap* (to take), *ndalem* (*kiai*'s house), *mbeling* (rebel), *ngendiko* (to say), and *teklek* (sandal made from wood). In addition, they use some specific terms used only in the *pesantren* such as *roan* (cleaning work), *diniyah* (school of *pesantren*), *kiai* (*pesantren* leader), *santri* (student of *pesantren*), *gus* (*kiai*'s son), and *ning* (*kiai*'s daughter). All of those words are included with translation in the glossary in order to help the readers understanding their meanings.

Abidah, Maia, and Azri are all involved in a wider literary community after graduating from the *pesantren*, where they developed their self esteem and literary skills. This is similar to the earlier generation of *pesantren* writers. According to Acep Zam Zam Noor (2009, 5), a literary community plays an important role in fighting for the existence and identity of writers and poets, and in sustaining their creative existence as writers. There are some literary communities in Indonesia created among the *pesantren*, and these communities serve as a source of esteem and support for the writers. For example, *Komunitas Malaikat* (angel community) was established by Ahmad Faisal Imron, who graduated from *Pesantren Baitul Arqom*, Ciparay. The members of this community are *pesantren* alumni who write expressive poetry that differs from the traditional poem pattern. They also create paintings, sculptures, installation art, and music.

Abidah was an active member of the ESKA Theater (Sunan Kalijaga Theater) during her time in college. ESKA is a student community that engaged in and established several literary activities involving writers and poets in Yogyakarta continuously from 1970. They were known as the Kelompok Sastra IAIN (Literary Community of State Institute for Islamic Studies) (Teater Eska 2007). Maia was active in the Qaryah Thayyibah community that assists teenage students in education and several community activities, such as writing and creating movies (Rosyida 2010). Similarly, Azri was involved in the Matapena Community in Yogyakarta, where she published her novel. She sustains writing by facilitating and assisting with writing training for Matapena's members (Nist 2010).

Finally, Abidah, Maia, and Azri are supported by the media and their publishers, which helps them gain recognition as women writers from the *pesantren* and which is especially important for the newer generation who are publishing their first novels. The current environment has provided them with good opportunities, because the promotion of *chick lit* and *teen lit* after 2003 meant that many publishers have sought out teen writers and *pesantren* novel scripts. Even though they have to fulfill some requirements from the publisher, a story about *santri* life and *pesantren* based on personal experiences is acknowledged as an appropriate and interesting topic. This is different from the earlier period when *santri* and *pesantren* were considered to be uninteresting topics and there were no publishers who

were interested in publishing novels about *pesantren*. Now the writers of the new generation can prove that their novels will be economically viable and attract young readers. For instance, Maia Rosyida has written twenty books since she was eighteen years old, but those books were printed for private use only (Umami Online 2010). Therefore, Maia was not recognized as a writer until 2007 when *Tarian Cinta* was published.

Several competitions, awards, and conferences have played an important role in promoting these young writers. Azri's *Alunan Vektor Allah* (Billowing Allah Vector) won a writing competition held by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion in 2008 (Nis 2010). She is often invited to present her novels and to facilitate creative writing training, which has allowed *pesantren* issues and traditions to be discussed by a broad range of people. Similarly, Abidah gave presentations as a representative of Indonesia in the ASEAN writer's conference in Manila in 1997. In 1998, she received a literary award from the regional government of Yogyakarta and her poem about women and abortion was translated into English and published by Australian poet Geoff Fox in a cyber album. She won second prize for the novel writing competition held by The Jakarta Arts Council in 2003 (Arimbi 2009, 95).

In addition to the similarities, I found differences between the old and new generation of women writers from the *pesantren* tradition. The way Abidah writes is different from Maia and Azri's writings. For example, the new generation uses everyday language in its writing, which is the language that is closest to their teenage readers. In contrast, Abidah uses more a sophisticated and serious form of language that is generally used in literature.

In this context, it is helpful to consider the comments by Welck (1977, 22), who notes that language is the material of literature created by the author and the surrounding culture, and literary language is different from scientific and everyday language. Furthermore, Welck points out: "Everyday language is not a uniform concept: it includes such wide variants as colloquial language, the language of commerce, official language, the language of religion, the slang of students" (1977, 23-24). Everyday language contains expressive functions in everyday verbal communication and it is filled by irrationalities and contextual changes.

Therefore, some critics argue that *chick lit* and *teen lit*, which uses popular language such as *sumpeh lho* (swear guys!), and *so what gitu lho* (so what?), is not literature, and even claim that such language will interrupt the pattern of Indonesian language development (Nurrohmat 2007). However, *chick lit* and *teen lit* addresses young people as readers. In order to connect the reader to the novel, *chick lit* and *teen lit* writers choose popular language that is generally used among young people. Nowadays it is not only spoken but also written. In *Geni Jora*, Abidah sometimes uses popular language as well as describing conversations between Kejora and her friend, and Kejora is a teenager. For instance, she uses *belagu* (boast), *ngomong-ngomong* (by the way), *ngacir* (run), *gopek* (one hundred), and *bejubun* (a lot), although she still preserves her writing style as serious literature by choosing a serious topic for conversation.

Following is a comparison between Abidah and Azri in the way they tell the reader about a light conversation in *pesantren*:

*Bersama Elya aku membicarakan kebijaksanaan pesantren dalam hal penerimaan santri baru. Seharusnya pesantren lebih selektif dan hati-hati, terutama terhadap sampah busuk yang hendak mencari nama harum citranya ... Aku senang saat mengetahui mudirul ma'had berkeputusan mengembalikan para santri baru yang telah kronis penyakit moralnya ke orang tua masing-masing dengan pertimbangan bahwa pesantren ini dikhususkan untuk tempat thalabul ilmi dan bukan tempat rehabilitasi.*

#### Author's Translation:

I am discussing the *pesantren* decision in regard to new student acceptance. The *pesantren* should be more selective in accepting a student who has social problems or just wants to get benefits from *pesantren*. It is happy to know that the *pesantren* board decided to send new students who are immoral back to their parents, considering that the *pesantren* is a place for searching for knowledge but it is not place for rehabilitation. (El-Khaliqy 2004, 57).

*Dhea memegang bahu Fikra. "Kamu pernah melihat anak manja?" Fikra diam. "Anak yang ... em, pandai sih tapi agak sok begitu. Pernah?" Fikra makin penasaran. "Kalau orang keras kepala yang kata-katanya menyakitkan?" Fikra mengangkat bahunya. "Yup. Jika ketiganya digabung, diberi tubuh dan diberi nyawa, itulah Gus Syafiq." Dhea*

melepaskan tangannya ketika Fikra menggeleng tak mengerti. Merinding juga. "Jangan memvonis gitu pada calon suamiku!" terdengar teriakan santri lain dari kejauhan. "Gantengnya itu loh ..." Para santri lain yang tak tahan, tanpa bicara lagi langsung melempari gadis jangkung yang sedang mencari-cari sandalnya itu dengan apa saja. Ada gelas aqua mereka lempar, kulit pisang bahkan sandal dan buku. Saking sebelnya sama anak ke-PD-an itu. "Canda! Kayak kalian nggak nge-fans aja sama dia."

### Author's Translation:

Dhea touches Fikra's shoulder. "Have you seen mama's boy?" Fikra is silent. "Emm, he is smart, but boastful. Have you?" Fikra becomes more curious. "How about a stubborn guy who says something hurtful?" Fikra shrugs. "If you find those three characteristics in one body and it has a soul, he is Gus Syafiq." Dhea removes her hand when Fikra shakes her head, not understanding. She feels goosebumps. "Hai, don't say that. He is my fiancé," another voice shouts loudly from the distance. "He is handsome." Without further discussion, other *santri* cannot restrain themselves from throwing anything they have at that thin girl who is looking for her sandal. They throw a bottle, banana skin, even a sandal, and a book at her because of their resentment. "I am just kidding. Aren't you guys interested in him?" (Nist 2009, 90).

Abidah clearly shows that she wants to emphasize women's rebellion as the main idea, while the theme of love and friendship are supporting ideas. Therefore, her story, although about teenagers, is serious reading and rigidly follows accepted literary patterns. In contrast, Azri and Maia define the theme of love and friendship as the main idea, supported by themes of rebellion, pluralism, and criticism of *pesantren*. They address these themes through popular language in order to make their books easily readable, entertaining, enjoyable, and more natural for the young people who are the main audience. In terms of plot, Abidah exercises considerable talent in using the technique of flash back, but Maia and Azri use a simple narrative structure from the beginning of the story until the end. Finally, the book cover can represent differences between the old and the new generation. Abidah's books use elegant paintings for their covers, whereas *novel pop pesantren* are colorful representations of the dynamic life of young people.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed three women writers from the *pesantren*, and in analyzing their backgrounds and writings I have shown that they have become significant in the following features, first, their novels are bridges to connect and interact the *pesantren* culture with the people who live outside the *pesantren*. This interaction shows that the *pesantren* is becoming familiar to people because its tradition, knowledge, and even some criticisms are openly discussed through literature.

Moreover, the emergence of young women writers influenced by *chick lit* and *teen-lit* generation contributes a new genre for *pesantren* literature, which is *pesantren pop literature*. The *pesantren* has become popular amongst older and younger readers. This genre signifies the beginning transformation of *pesantren* culture and the end of the alienation of *pesantren* from a modern lifestyle. This echoes the view of Rahman, who analyzes the emergence of *sastra pop pesantren* from two different points of views: "as a modern form of Indonesian literature and as a development of *pesantren* culture." (The Wahid Institute 2007).

Second, the new generation of women writers responds to the lack of women writers from the *pesantren* tradition in Indonesian literature. As mentioned before, women writers were not prominent in the past, especially those from the *pesantren* tradition. From the 1960s to 1990s, men writers such as Djamil Suherman, Syu'bah Asa, and Fudoli Zaini were representatives of *pesantren* alumni who wrote about *pesantren*, but Abidah El-Khaliqy was the only woman recognized as a writer from *pesantren* tradition. Now women writers play an important role in expressing the views of women concerned about Islamic interpretations of women's position. This is important, since the connection between women, gender, and Islam will always be challenged because of women's problematic position in relation to Islam. A number of interpretations of Islam have managed to define, locate, and perhaps entrap women in certain fixed categories.

In comparing the old and new generations, I have examined six similarities, which concern family background and education, as well as the literary community. The main difference I have found is that on one hand the old generation addresses their writing to older and more mature readers, while the new genera-

tion addresses their novel to young readers. Therefore, they have different ways of writing, including word choice, plots, and themes. Based on this conclusion, I argue that the *pesantren pop novel* is an embryo for *sastra pesantren* in which the older generation of women writers will be followed by a new generation, while young women writers can develop and improve their talents expressing their experiences using their own language. Therefore, the *pesantren pop novel* can provide a training ground for young writers to develop their writing skills and help promote the introduction of women writers in Indonesian literature.

More broadly, the confidence and ambition encouraged by the *pesantren* environment appears to support a range of studies that consistently demonstrate that girls are more likely to succeed academically if they are educated in an all-female school (Curtis 2009). The reason is because they share the same needs and ideas, so that they can provide each other with mutual support, as experienced by Maia Rosyida. Though a discussion of this complex and much debated topic is beyond the realm of the current essay, the biographies of the women writers I describe suggest that the single-sex education environment of the *pesantren*, where female *santri* are not in competition with male *santri*, may give them greater freedom to pursue the goals they have set for themselves and thus to become their own person.

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# Ilimo Campa:

Historical Memory in *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam*

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Previous scholarship on *Ilimo Campa*, or Cam culture, has stemmed from the research of Linguists, Anthropologists, Art Historians, and Archeologists. Very little historical analysis has been done on the subject of Cam history in and of itself. Part of this lack of attention derives from the tendency of historians of the region themselves to focus on the narratives within the “natural” bounds of existing nation-states. As Li Tana has argued Cam “lines of inquiry...do not fit with the national myth.” Nationalist historians are challenged in that “their view of the past ends at their present territorial borders,” leaving Cam questions “fragmented and...never [quite] seen as a whole with a historical integrity of its own.”<sup>2</sup> In this way the history of the Cam becomes a sub-heading under the histories of Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. However, more recent scholarship on Campa has been driven by an attempt to research the history of the Cam on their own terms. In this paper, I intend to examine the works of two under-researched Cam texts: *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam*. In doing so, I will approach these texts through three historical layers: first, the period during which the texts were translated into Vietnamese; second, the period during which the texts were first recorded in their written form; and, third, the actual period which the texts refer to as presented by their central theme of divergence. In each of these layers the preservation of the texts is represented with an attempt to overcome certain features of Cam history. In this way, I argue that these texts bridge across the historical experience of rupture and are key to the reconstruction of Cam systems of knowledge.

## On Translation: From Akhăr thrah to Tiếng Việt (Modern Vietnamese)

Akhăr thrah is a little-known written language used by the Cam population of coastal Việt Nam in the provinces of Bình Thuận and Ninh Thuận. It is a language, which corresponds to the spoken form of the eastern Cham dialect. The function, mode, and characteristics of Akhăr thrah have been a central aspect of the groundbreaking linguistic research published by Marc Brunelle of Ottawa University (1995, 2008, 2009, 2009). Brunelle’s paper makes no claim for advising the future policy decisions of communal leaders, but it does highlight the very real social concerns of the tenuous relationship between literacy and the preservation of culture for this minority population. In a recent essay, for example, presented in the *Journal of Language Preservation and Conservation* Brunelle concludes in response to the threat of linguistic assimilation:

Cham communities can either preserve the classical akhar thrah script as an ethnocultural symbol with limited practical purposes, or undertake an orthographic reform (or even more radically, a replacement of their script) aimed at fostering widespread literacy and at reviving written Eastern Cham.<sup>3</sup>

Calls for the cultural preservation of the Cam community have been the dominant focus of the scholarship of Inrasara (the Cam name for Phú Trăm), an ethnic Cam currently living and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Published as Văn Học Chăm (1994), the introduction written by GS. Nguyễn Tấn Đắc on the 10th of November, 1993 reads,

Đã có nhiều sách báo viết về lịch sử ngôn ngữ, văn hóa và xã hội nhưng hãy còn ít những công trình về

lịch sử văn học Chăm. Như vậy, thì một công trình về lịch sử văn học Chăm đang là điều chờ đợi của công chúng rộng rãi chừng như của giới chuyên môn.

Though there have been many works that review history and the contributions of literary culture, still few works have been written about the literary history of the Cham. Therefore, this work of Cham literary history has been composed for experts and the general public alike.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of Inrasara's work stands alone for the proliferation and the preservation of one of the only existing literary traditions of Vietnam's ethnic minorities. Not surprisingly, the opening comments of Nguyễn Tấn Đắc better reflect the call for Inrasara's analysis in all but one of the reviews of the Ariyas: *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam* are currently available online, while others tend to focus on the value of the literature and the scholarly merits of the translator.

For example, in July 2010, a posting on the blog website VănHóaĐộc.com (Cultural Reading) aimed at the promotion of literary culture through news, reviews, commentary, and analysis, introduces Inrasara's work and the concept of Cam literature to a Vietnamese audience. It clearly outlines different genres of literature that were produced in Akhār thrāh. It classifies the scholarship on the literary history of Champa through the last century as existing predominantly in French (and thus not Vietnamese), and sporadic at best, reducing the access of a Vietnamese readership. This review situates Inrasara's work with that of G. Moussay, the author who composed a Cham-Vietnamese-French Dictionary in 1971<sup>5</sup> and Nguyen Thi Thu Van who submitted a graduate thesis on a survey of Cham Folklore to the University of Pedagogy in Ho Chi Minh in 1995.<sup>6</sup> In the same year (1995), Claude Jacques produced a series of *Etudes sur le pays Epigraphiques Cham*, a portion of which has been translated into Vietnamese by Luong Ninh. However, this review also asserts that it was only with the establishment of the Cham Arts Foundation in 1994-5, that there began a systematic review of the literature of Champa.<sup>7</sup> In this review of Inrasara's work on the Ariyas we see that within the body of scholarship and awards, the social dimension has been, to a certain extent, displaced.

In December 2009 the online author Trần Đình Hoàn wrote a review of *Ariya Bini-Cam* for the website Đốt Chuối Non (Burning Bright Young), which covers a wide range of news, poetry, historical, and cultural studies pertaining specifically to Cam cultural zones of South Vietnam. The author described Inrasara's 1994 translation project as a "literary masterpiece," and the translator as a "poet" and "brilliant scholar."<sup>8</sup> One year later the same review was reprinted on the website PhanQuocAnh.com. Though the nature of these reviews does well to highlight the literary value of Inrasara's work, the scholarly value is left to stand on its own. While, we are provided a long list of Inrasara's achievements, there remains little connection to the existing scholarship on the Cam.<sup>9</sup>

Thus far, I have argued that in the examination of the meaning of the translation from Akhār thrāh into Vietnamese is an issue not discussed by the few websites that have chosen to engage with this literature. Essentially, the meaning of bringing these translations to an audience literate only in Vietnamese is not present, nor is the potential threat on the continued use of Akhār thrāh examined. Finally, the potential education value of the texts as a bilingual piece has been underwritten. As the texts exist in bilingual form, they serve as a window, a means of entry into the study of Akhār thrāh from Vietnamese. Having now examined the historical layer of the translation of the Ariyas, I will now examine the layer of the recording of the Ariyas in their written form.

## From the Orations of the Kathar to Akhār thrāh

In the previous section I argued that in the few available reviews of Inrasara's work on the Ariyas: *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam*, while the literary and scholarly value of the texts has been celebrated, their practical value in response to pressing social concerns for the preservation of Akhār thrāh has been overlooked. These Ariyas first appear in their written form in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> However, Inrasara's analysis stops short of telling us *why* the texts were moved into written form from an oral tradition. As such, in this section I will argue that the events surrounding the recording of these texts and their composition in Akhār thrāh is a response to the events encapsulated in the Ariyas: *Tuen Phaow* and *Glong Anak*, which marked the Tây

Son Rebellion and the final incorporation of *negara* Panduranga into the territory of the Việt-Kinh under the sovereignty of the Nguyễn Dynasty. In this context of conquest and rebellion, the recording of an oral tradition in written form becomes a direct response to the threat of annihilation, in connection with literary traditions established along networks of Islamic trade.

Nicholas Weber, formerly of Inalco in Paris, has the best analysis of *Ariya Tuen Phaow*. Though the text of his study is available online at Champaka.org in Vietnamese, and an English translation is available on the website hosted by Musa Porome, no print publication of this work seems to exist. In the narrative of *Ariya Tuen Phaow* we see the rise of an Islamic leader imported to Panduranga from Kelantan (Malaysia). He establishes his own palace outside the centers of the Cam Ppo (Kings) and leads an Islamic revolt specifically attempting to gain back territory lost during the expansion of the Việt-Kinh during the Nam Tiến, or *southern march*.<sup>11</sup> Although the revolt of Tuen Phaow ultimately fails, we cannot deny this movement its place within the greater narrative of the Tây Sơn, a rebellion with deeply rooted historical connections to Campa. The eldest brother of the Tây Sơn, Nguyễn Nhạc proclaimed himself “king of heaven” amongst the Cam ruins of *negara* Vijaya, or Chà Bàn. According to the analysis of the historian Li Tana, the term “king of heaven” appears to be a localization “attributed to the Nguyen by non-Vietnamese but [Nguyễn Nhạc] was using it to refer to his own subjects in the new kingdom he established in central southern Vietnam.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the Cam themselves were featured among the early supporters of the revolt, along with the Bahnar and other upland groups, including a “group of Cham from Phu Yen, isolated from the Cham vassal Ppo in Panduranga and led by a female chief called Thi Hoa.”<sup>13</sup> Although the Tây Sơn army was defeated by the Nguyễn in 1802, the Cam continued their legacy of opposition to Vietnamese cultural dominance when they twice revolted from *negara* Panduranga just thirty years later, a narrative covered by *Ariya Glong Anak*.

*Ariya Glong Anak* is an account of the events leading up to the last defeat of *negara* Panduranga in 1834–5. This *Ariya* is interpreted most extensively by Po Dharma’s 1987 seminal work, *Panduranga* (in two volumes). From the text, we learn that the two *last revolts* of the Cam against the Vietnamese were led by

two heavily Malay influenced Islamic leaders. In this sense the *Ariya Glong Anak* is representative of the continuation of the introduction of Islam as a means of cultural governance utilized to unify formalized military revolt as presented in *Ariya Tuen Phaow*. The first revolt from *negara* Panduranga (1833–1834) was led by the *katip* Sumat, a Muslim Cam from Cambodia who tried to propagate orthodox Islam among the Cam and their allies. After the failure of this revolt, a second movement (1834–1835) was led by Ja Thak Va, a follower of Cam syncretic Islam. The rebellion was crushed by the Vietnamese, who then forbade contact between Cam and Highlands groups. According to Marc Brunelle, in his 1995 work entitled *Eastern Cham Register* the Cam then disappear from historical documents until the establishment of a French protectorate in Annam (Central Vietnam) in 1883.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the most important analysis that we can draw from the conjunction of Brunelle’s study with Inrasara’s is that the written documents of the Cam themselves would not have disappeared during this period, and thus, while the outside world became more or less disinterested in Cam history, the historical memory of the Cam was preserved in its written form.

Thus, I have examined the period of the recording of the *Ariyas*: *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam*. While I have not engaged with Inrasara’s chronological assertions of their writing as occurring during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, I have argued that an examination of the historical context provided by the study of the events encapsulated in the *Ariyas*: *Ariya Tuen Phaow* and *Ariya Glong Anak* presents the readership with an increased knowledge of *why* these texts would have been recorded in direct response to endogenous and exogenous threats of annihilation. In conjunction, with the threat of Vietnamese assimilationism coupled with the increasing influence of cultural networks dominated by the print culture of Islam, the Cam voice, preserved in the texts of *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam*, speaks in response to these forces.

### Moving Separately as Boats on the Water: *Ariya Cam-Bini* and *Ariya Bini-Cam* (Historical Memories of 17<sup>th</sup> century *Bhumi Campa*)

In the first portion of this essay I argued for the contextualization of the translation of the *Ariyas* from

Akhār thrah to Tiếng Việt within the contemporary context of the threat of linguistic assimilation. In the second portion, I argued for the contextualization of the recording of these texts, and that their movement from oral to written source is productively framed as a response to historical forces, including: 1) the Vietnamese Nam Tiến, and 2) an increasing connection to cultural networks dominated by the print cultures of Islam. Keith Taylor (1999), Kenneth Hall (1999), William Southworth (2001), and Rie Nakamura (2003) have all shown that we must not imagine Cam polities as singular entities, despite the tendency of many scholars, including experts of Campa, to use the term *negara* Campa to refer to the whole.<sup>15</sup> Both Taylor and Hall have argued for an essential *Malayness* to Cam geography and bureaucracy, respectively. Therefore, it is my suggestion that if scholars continue to conceive of the Cam in terms of their *Malayness*, then we must also begin to think of elements of *Ilimo* Campa in their connection to the image of *perahus* (boat, ship, etc.), expanding and contracting over time, traveling up and down the coast of what is now Vietnam. The *Cam* polities would resemble the politics of the Malay states that dominated the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and be particularly reminiscent of the political centers found in the Tanimbar Islands of eastern Indonesia and central Flores, and quite similar to the basic organizational unit in Tagalog communal-political life, the *barangay* or boat.<sup>16</sup> It is against these commonalities that I will explore a selection of lines from the *Ariyas* in order to argue that the ways in which these texts are most useful relates to the increasing dispersal (displacement) and separation of the Cam population.

Upon first examination, *Ariya Cam-Bini* seems to be a simple tale of star-crossed lovers, involving a Cam Balamon (Hindu) man and a Cam Bini (Muslim) woman. Though they have sworn to keep their lives together, and remain promised to unite eternally through the practice of Sati, they are ostracized by their community. Parents and neighbors appear as disapproving figures who visit extremely violent beatings and render death threats upon the lovers. The lovers, in turn, find themselves regulated to digging potatoes from the dirt to prevent starvation, suffering repeated attacks, and wandering in tattered clothes in the street.<sup>17</sup> Four lines, in particular, hint at the greater implications of this narrative:

### Cam Latin Transliteration:

Kuw bai wok yuw ni baik ah  
Ka than drei ribbah dom thun muni  
Sa gah Cam sa gah Bini  
Hake bhian yuw ni tat toy sa drei

### Vietnamese Translation:

Ta bàn như vậy nhé  
Vê thân phận mình khô mây nam nay  
Một bên Cham, một bên Bani  
Đâu thương như thể ni, trôi giạt như thể này

### Author's Translation:

We must share, we must converse about our destiny like this  
Our situation is shared, it has been suffered for many years  
One side is Cham, and the other is Bini  
But we are not usually wandering separately as boats on the water

This portion of the *Ariya* reflects the immediate intention of two lovers, or, as I argue, two separate portions of the Cam people to come to the resolution of a shared fate. The image of the boat appears again in the reading of *Ariya Bini-Cam*.

### Cam Latin Transliteration:

Thok dong tanon thok rah  
Thok nau ganah hatai kulidong  
Riyak pauh taya đang rang  
Munung tamur pabah ikan, munung karom trun tathik  
Kou you urang lihik phik

### Vietnamese Translation:

Lang thang như thuyền nan trôi lạc  
Tình lênh đênh sóng giạt biển khơi  
Sóng xô tình vỡ bờ bờ  
Nửa vào miệng cá, nửa rơi biệt mù  
Ta như kẻ mất hồn lang bạt

### My English Translation:

Wandering, as small boats lost on the water  
 Wandering on top of the sea waves  
 The waves push and flap against the love, and the  
 love is broken  
 Half is in mouth of the fish, and the other half is  
 lost  
 And I am someone that has lost my spirit and then  
 left wandering

Stressed again are the images of wandering, separateness, and divergence. The importance of the image of water as a vessel, or rather *force* inflicting separation cannot be ignored. This sense of separation carries into the geographic origins of each lover as well.

### Cam Latin Transliteration:

Nai mai mung Mukah  
 Blauh takai nai doh Harok kah Harok Dhei  
 Nai nau tol Pajai  
 Mung lamngur Pajai nai jauh akuak song  
 Darak dih pur vang tol

### Vietnamese Translation:

Em đến từ La Mecca  
 Rồi em tạt qua Quang Binh  
 Em tới đất Ma Lâm  
 Rồi em lên tàu trở về xứ sở  
 Biển Đông trập trùng sóng vỗ

### Author's Translation:

And so I came from Mecca  
 As you passed through Harok Kah Harok Dhei  
 (Quang Binh)  
 And arrived at LamPaj (Ma Lâm)  
 Before returning home by sea with the great waves  
 of the South China Sea knocking on the side of  
 your boat

In the interpretation of *Ariya Bini-Cam*, a particular difficulty arises in the origin of the Muslim lover in Mecca. Given that the *Ariya* would have been sung around the period of the rise of Islam in Campa (17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries), it is quite possible that the lover is literally coming from Mecca to Campa, in order to

proselytize the Cam people and unify them against the forces of the Vietnamese. However, as Paul Mus suggested in his 1931 review *Deux légendes chames*, an analysis of two early-modern Cam texts, it is also possible that we could interpret the origin from Mecca as a poetic legitimization of the figure, rather than a historical reality.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is more or less unimportant whether or not the lover actually originates in the Middle East. The importance of this line is the symbolic weight of the image of Mecca and its cultural influence on a segment of the Cam population. Meanwhile, the move of the second lover from Quảng Binh, the northernmost territorial extent of Cam rule, to Ma Lâm, mimics the move of Hindu-Buddhist authority down the Cam coast, where the two meet. Here the role of geography grants authority. However, when we consider the allegiance to the geography of the country, or the homeland, against the allegiance to the lover, a new tension arises. Within the text, it becomes clear that a choice is being made between the allegiance to the homeland and an allegiance to the lover. As the lovers attempt to ease the tension between their obligation to each other and their obligation to the polity, crops are withering from site, old capitals and citadels are abandoned to moss, and a dark shadow has submerged the entire countryside:

### Cam Latin Transliteration:

Limun kanai dong sa gah  
 Asaih kou sa gah, ia tanuh lin tapin  
 Jaguk ba baul babblaung kalin  
 Cam tagok Murden, Bini tamur Caraih

### Vietnamese Translation:

Voi em đứng một bên, ngựa anh về một ngã  
 Đất nước ngập chìm trong tối tăm  
 Thừa cơ giặc mang quân xâm lăng  
 Cham lên Dilinh, Bini vào Phan Rí

### Author's Translation:

With you and your elephant going to one side and  
 me and my horse going to another  
 And the countryside is submerged in darkness  
 With an invading army taking advantage of this  
 conflict- this time  
 Cam go up to Mudren<sup>19</sup>, Bini on south Phan Ri

From the text, we learn that the Cam, a lowland people, chose or were forced to move to the highlands. Meanwhile, the Bini population moves toward the coast. This divergence marks a poignant historical moment, the event of separation coupled with the association with new geographies as a basis for identity. The movement of the Muslim population to a coastal location emphasizes a connection to more globalized networks of Islam, reaffirmed by the maritime circuits of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the countryside, submerged in 'darkness' is subject to the invading army of the Việt-Kinh and their march southwards.

## Conclusion

The separation of the Cam-Bini population, from the Cam-Balamon peoples moving to the Central Highlands is significant, not just as a divergence of the two Cam populations by religious orientation. The movement of the lowlanders into the highlands articulated specifically through the lines of the *Ariyas* echo key concepts found in James Scott's recent work, which has profoundly reshaped the way we conceive of the history of Southeast Asia, and perhaps even global trajectories of history as a whole. In his *Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Scott undertook the massive task of analyzing the hill peoples of Southeast-Asia, often including the Cam as an exemplar population.

While Scott was forgivably unable to include some of the complexities of Cam society, we do see that in contrast to preconceived notions of the value of civility, a persistence of certain practices; swidden agriculture, flexible social structure, religious heterodoxy, egalitarianism, and minimally literate or even non-literate traditions. In Scott's words, for example, we observe, "political adaptations of non-state peoples to a world of states that are, at once, attractive and threatening."<sup>20</sup> While Scott's analysis is provocative, even revolutionary for implying that there are new means of understanding agency outside of our traditional assumptions of sovereignty, if we are to include the Cam in Scott's *Zomia*, then perhaps we ought to think about this history, as I have argued in this essay on the terms of Cam voices, and sources. In doing so, we find that even our preconceived notions of Brunelle's linguistic *bilingualism* might be interpreted along different lines. Similarly, we might find that the art of translation bears

more than scholarly value, but also practical applications for the field of education. What is more, we might see that two texts, simply thought to be a traditional story of two lovers could indeed come alive with greater implications for our understanding of history. Therefore, as historians, if we are to continue to let concerns of the present shape the way that we view the past, it is my suggestion that we must also let diverse narratives of the past shape our understanding of the present.

Earlier in this essay it is possible that a reader could have perceived my description of reviews on the work of Inrasara as somewhat *surprised*. This is hardly the case because I was not surprised at all. Very soon the conception of the Cam as a diverse linguistic and culture tradition might disappear all together. If this were the case the *Ariyas* would be preserved only in the minds and writings of a handful of scholars who have dared to tread on the subject of a people who at one time rivaled the Vietnamese, and very nearly eliminated Đại Việt from every conceptually mapped notion of pre-colonial Southeast-Asia. At the same time, we have entered a brave new world of online authorship, and just a few of those related to the Cam have been presented in this paper.



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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> The final version of this piece has been produced as a result of the co-operation, edits, and advice of a great number of close colleagues and friends. I offer my most sincere thanks to Mohammed Bin Abdul Effendy, for his encouragement in working with Cam texts, and Anthony Medrano, for his all his editorial suggestions and work.

<sup>2</sup> Li Tana, "The Late 18th Century Mekong Delta and the World of the Water Frontier," in *Vietnam Borderless Histories*, ed. Anthony Reid and Nhung Tuyet Tran (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 148.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Brunelle, "Register in Eastern Cham: Phonological, Phonetic, and Sociolinguistic Approaches," 43. For other works by Brunelle on the same topic see: "Diglossia, Bilingualism, and the Revitalization of Written Eastern Cham," *Language Documentation and Conservation* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008): 28-46; "Contact-Induced Change? Register in Three Cham Dialects," *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2009): 1-21; and, "Diglossia and Monosyllabization in Eastern Cham: A Sociolinguistic Study," in *Variation in Indigenous Minority Languages*, ed. James Stanford and Dennis Preston (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Phú Trăm, Inrasara, *Văn Học Chăm I* (Nxb. VHDT, 1994), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Père Gerard Moussay, *Dictionnaire Căm-Vietnamien-Français*, 1971.

<sup>6</sup> Thị Thu Vân Nguyễn, "Bước Đầu Khảo Sát Truyện Cổ Chăm," Trường Đại học Sư phạm, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> DNH, "Văn Học Chăm," <http://www.vanhoadoc.com/2010/07/van-hoc-cham.html> (accessed January 13, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Trần Đình Hoàn, "Trường Ca Bini-Cham (Ariya Bini-Cam)," <http://dotchuoinon.com/2009/12/04/tr%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Dng-ca-bini-cham-ariya-bini-%E2%80%93cam/> (accessed January 13, 2011).

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<sup>10</sup> Inrasara Phú Trăm, *Văn Học Chăm I* (Nxb. VHDT, 1994), 161.

<sup>11</sup> Musa Porome, "A Revolution of Tuen Phaow in 1796-1797," <http://www.champaka.org/cgi-bin/viewitem.pl?452&lichsu> (accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa)*, 2 vols. (Paris: École Française D'Extrême- Orient, 1987). See also Marc Brunelle, "Register in Eastern Cham: Phonological, Phonetic, and Sociolinguistic Approaches," (PhD. diss., Cornell University, 1995), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Keith Taylor, "The Early Kingdoms," In *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Times to c. 1800*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also: Kenneth Hall, "Economic History of Early Southeast Asia," In *The History of Southeast Asia: From Early Times to c. 1800*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); William Southworth, "The Origins of Campa in Central Vietnam: A Preliminary Review," (PhD diss., University of London, 2001); Rie Nakamura, "Cham of Vietnam: The Dynamics of Ethnicity," (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999); Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa)*, 2 vols. (Paris: École Française D'Extrême- Orient, 1987); P.B. LaFont, "Les Grandes Dates De L'histoire Du Campa," In *Le Campa et Le Monde Malais: Actes de la Conférence Internationale sur le Campa et le Monde Malais* (Berkeley: Les Indes Savantes, 1991); and, P.B. LaFont, *Le Campa: Géographie-Population-Histoire* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, "Oceans Unbounded: Transversing Asia across 'Area Studies,'" *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 65, No. 4 (Nov. 2006): 678.

<sup>17</sup> For Inrasara's production of Ariya Cam-Bini and Ariya Bini-Cam See: Phú Trăm, Inrasara. Ariya Chăm: Trường Ca Chăm. TP Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam: Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Nghệ, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Mus, *Etudes Indiennes Et Indochinoises*, Vol. IV (Tome 31: Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 1931), 70.

<sup>19</sup> Di Linh a small town/city in tỉnh Lâm Đồng, the province best know for the tourist city of Da Lat, and its location in the Central Highlands.

<sup>20</sup> James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 9.

# Theravada Buddhism among the Shan:

## Transformations in the Shan Monastic Life Cycle and Shan Community

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### Introduction

Shan communities can be found in the Union of Myanmar as well as in Thailand. The Shan peoples are classified in the Tai ethnic group according to language and ethnicity. Most Shans believe in Buddhism, while some are animist and Christian. As we can see the map in Figure 1, the Shan state is the largest land area in the Union of Myanmar, and borders Thailand, Laos and China. In terms of tradition, Shan attempt to continue their culture and their identity in various ways. The Shan ordination and monastic life cycle are especially important for understanding the Shan community. It is generally said that the Buddhist monastery continues its traditions, such as monastic education, rituals, and ceremonies. However, some contents of monastic events are changed though monastic monks and lay believers, to some extent, still practice and perform in their traditional way. Therefore, this essay will argue that although Shan Buddhist traditions continue in ritual and in practice amongst the Shans, the modern ordination ritual for young novices and the monastic life cycle are losing their 'orthodoxy' in a social and political context. This transformation is understood as being due to the influence of degenerating social communication and oppression by the Myanmar government. In order to explore this change, this essay will analyse a novice ordination, namely *Poy Sang Long*, the monastic recitation, such as the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka* and the Shan monastic learning system as well as *Zare* culture.

### Basic information about the Shan Buddhist community

From the perspective of the Theravada Buddhist doctrine, monks pursue the highest level of realisation,

which is called *nibbana* (meaning enlightenment in Pali), through religious practices in the context of the monastic rules. These monks become mendicants or almspersons, who are called *bhikkus* in Pali (Swearer 2010, 51). Novice monks follow the five precepts and



Figure 1:  
Map of  
Union of  
Myanmar  
by Shan  
Cultural  
Association-  
UK

then eight precepts.<sup>1</sup> Higher monks have 227 precepts (Swearer 2010, 51). According to Milne (2001, 51), in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shan boys were taught to recite the Buddhist teachings in Pali and Shan. They memorized all the sacred passages, which was supplemented with teachings from higher monks. Additionally,

monks and boys often had a good teaching relationship. When boys grew up, they went to monks to receive advice and the children inevitably learned moral behaviour from monks (Milne 2001, 51-52). It is believed that this learning system formed the basis for a moral society.

### Shan Novice Ordination and Recitation Ceremony

A popular traditional religious event in the Shan state is called *Poy sang long*, which is a large novice ordination festival intended as a 'rite of passage' among Shans (Tannenbaum 2001, 128). This ceremony is usually held every five or six years as decided by the village. The age range of a boy who will participate in the ceremony is from ten or eleven to twenty. In Myanmar, however, the ceremony is usually held when the boy is four or five years old. The parents and son who participate must make a decision of a sponsor while planning the ordination. Parents may become sponsors and relatives may join with them. A non-relative may also be a sponsor. This is because the sponsoring of boys creates a 'parent-child relationship', and the boy they helped at the time of his novice ordination will assist sponsors at their own funerals (Tannenbaum 2001, 129). This relationship is still a crucial function for the family who has no child. Elderly people who have no child do not need to worry about their funerals as long as they sponsor boys. However, the plausible problem is that some people use this system not for religious beliefs, but for personal benefit, and their involvement depends on whether they have the capital to assist a novice ordination.

The Shan traditional novice ordination ceremony can be seen in northern Thailand, primarily in Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son. These northern Thai cities are located near the national boundary between Thai and Shan state of Burma so that a number of Shan immigrants have legally and illegally immigrated to these cities in order to avoid political suppression from the Myanmar government and to improve their educational and economic situation (Eberhardt 2009, 51). As in the Shan states, the *Poy Sang Long* ceremony is an annual event in these provinces and a large number of young boys participate and are ordained. It is usually held in the summer vacation between April and May. On the day before the ceremony, these boys have their hair

shaved by a monk. Then, in the middle of the day of the ceremony, as Prince *Siddārtha* in the palace before becoming a mendicant, these children are costumed in a similar way. The sponsors carry them on their shoulders, mimicking the way the prince rode a horse from the palace. Their feet do not touch the ground. After they are in 'royal mode' for three days, children change princely clothes to yellow robes and recite their ordination vows as novice monks. They stay in the monastery for a short period (Eberhardt 2009, 55-56).

This ceremony can be viewed as an ethnic festival to show Shan identity in spite of political oppression by the Myanmar government, and is especially commonplace amongst Shan migrants in Chiang Mai, Thailand. According to Eberhardt (2009, 57), the event in the city contains a social and political background. When Eberhardt researched Shan migrants in Chiang Mai (2006, 7), they were regarded as 'illegal aliens' and an 'exploitable labour force'. Their living there was seen as 'a political issue, a social problem' and 'a humanitarian crisis'. But for others it was viewed as an 'economic opportunity'. Additionally, as Eberhardt (2009, 58) argued, sponsorship has changed from individual supporters to 'organising committees'. This transformation indicates that the three-day ceremony is planned with professionalized skill. Based on this context, the novice ordination transformed a Buddhist rite of passage into an ethnic festival. Moreover, the *Poy Sang Long* ceremony is expressed for 'the hopes and aspirations of a community of politically marginalised Shan people' (*Ibid*). For example, young people play electric instruments, performing Shan pop songs, such as *Wan Tai Tay Loat Laew* or 'On Shan Day We will Be Free from domination,' in this particular event in order to show Shan identity (Ferguson 2009, 65).

### Monastic recitation: the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka*

The recitation of the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka* has two types of religious ceremonies associated with it; they are the *Tang-Tham-pa-pee-nee* and the *Tang-Tham-vean Long*. The former ceremony, the *Tang-Tham-pa-pee-nee*, is the annual recitation of the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka* at each monastery. This event takes place at a monastery with the novice's sponsors and lay people from the village or town, so that sponsors can make merit from the recitation. The

latter one, the *Tang-Tham-vesan Long*, is the occasional recitation, which is held for three days and three nights. It can be argued that the Shan popular monastic recitation of the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka* requires excessive expenses for offerings. The requestors have to prepare offerings of food for monks and participants, in addition to building a new preaching hall and offering gifts to monasteries (Pannawamsa 2009, 131).

This *Tang-Tham-vesan Long* recitation is very costly and brings the possibility of impoverishing families as a result it is believed that only experienced people have the levels of experience necessary for preparing the recitation ceremony. In total there are six stages: (1) ‘*Dan Song Sa Lark*, offering food and other requisites to monks by drawing a lottery system; (2) donating sets of robes either to the Buddha or monks; (3) *Dan Tham Nam aio*, offering *Tham* sugar cane juice; (4) *Tang-Tham kam nam*, donating a chosen *Tham* to enhance one’s fortune in life; (5) raising one’s son to become a novice or a monk; (6) *Tang-Tham-vesa-long* recitation, taking the sponsorship of the great recitation of the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka*. (Pannawamsa 2009, 128-129). Sponsors want to organise the final level of offering, the *Tang-Tham-vesa-long* recitation, to make more merit so that they satisfy the requirements as set forth by the first five levels. This way, they are able to perform the recital. Middle-class families do not perform the high cost ceremony, but rich families can perform all the steps. However, some families decide not to follow the graduated levels and perform every making-merit ceremony at once. As a result of this, they may become impoverished or even fall into debt (Pannawamsa 2009, 129).

This suggests, to some, the degeneration of social communication and the lack of knowledge of the six levels of merit making. Traditionally, people who want to perform the ceremony consulted with elder people in the community. The village elders asked them whether they had already passed each steps of the offering. Unless they fulfil the six steps, they had to follow the levels step by step. Senior members of society would sometimes suggest a villager “against sponsorship on the ground of excessive use” (Pannawamsa 2009, 129). The consulting system assisted villagers in terms of preventing over-offering, but in the present day the system has loosened considerably so that a village family may become impoverished.

There are two plausible reasons why the consulting system does not function well. One reason is that some families do not know or understand the levels of merit making. Another is that some families cannot foresee the financial consequences of becoming a sponsor, since this kind of offering requires long-term economic planning and investment. Otherwise, they seem to misunderstand the idea of merit. In short, the Shan popular monastic recitation of the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka* causes poverty in some families due to the degeneration of social communication and lack of knowledge of the six levels of merit making, though the activity plays a vital role to enhance communication between the monastic and lay communities

## Monastic Education among Shans

As for monastic education, it can be argued that the educational policy by the Myanmar government influences not only the Shan monastic education, but also serves to make Shan children literate. The Burmese government promotes a written examination-based education system in Burmese and *Pali* languages. This system has two examinations, such as *Paṭhamapyan* and *Dhammācariya*<sup>2</sup>. The examinations take over six days and entail embedding translation skills for three days and interpretation skills for three days. The interpretation exam allows the candidates to refer to texts, such as the *āḱā* (sub-commentaries) to the *attakathās*, the *Netippakaraṇa*, the *Paṭṭhāna* in the *Abhidhammapīṭaka*, the *Subodhālaṅkāra*, the *Vuttodaya*, the *Kaccāyana* *Pali* grammar, and the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (Dhammasami 2009, 42).

This education system seems to be a fascinating programme to acquire the Buddhist teachings as it includes the *Tipīṭaka*<sup>3</sup>, which the Shan monastic educationists wish to study in the Buddhist education. However, it also includes difficulties among the Shan students and is thought to endanger the Shan language. In the 1950s, showing non-Burman minority ethnic identity vis-a-vis the Burmese government became more possible, and the Shan people, along with the *Sangha* began to have ‘aspirations’ for Buddhist examinations in Kengtung and Mong Nang. In 1957, a board of Buddhist monastic examinations was established in Pang Long. This board designed the Shan monastic exami-

nation, namely *Pariyatti-saddhammapāla* (Dhammasami 2009, 41-42).

The Shan examination is based on the *Tiṇṇaka* and is very similar to governmental examinations, the *Paṭhamapyan* and the *Dhammācariya*. The Shan monasteries do not have the texts in Shan for the examination. Although there are Shan translations of the canonical works, there is no translated commentary in Shan. The Shan students have to learn the texts in Burmese but take the exam in Shan. It is difficult for them to sit the exam in a language in which they never learned the subjects, and compete for the same governmental degrees and scholarship opportunities as ethnic Burmese. Therefore, there is an increase in students taking the exam in Burmese and consequently the number of students learning Shan is reduced. In fact, some Shan monks have received the *Dhammācariya* degree in Burmese, but not in Shan. This influence, it is believed, could contribute to the extinction of the Shan language (Dhammasami 2009, 42).

While the Shan monastic examination should closely follow the government examination, the Shan learning system has to exclude the poetic style in Shan language, such as *jātaka* stories, and local folktales. This abandonment will impact monks and students as well as ordinary lay Buddhists. The de-emphasis on the Shan poetic style is unfortunate because the study of Shan Buddhist poetry is considered important to scholars, and traditionally appeals to an illiterate audience in the context of religious ceremonies (Dhammasami 2009, 42-43). Thus, as a consequence, the exclusion of the poetic style in the Shan monastic learning curriculum, may lead to a broader absence of knowledge about Buddhist teachings and traditional narratives among Shans.

### Lay Practice - Zare Recitation

As we turn our attention to the Shan lay tradition of Buddhist recitation, or the *lik long* tradition, it is appears that lay practices are less subject to outside influence while Buddhist monks' practices are most likely to be changed by political influences. The *lik long* tradition is one of the most important cultural practices on religious occasions and is comparable to ceremonies, such as temple-sleeping, inauguration of a new house, the New Year's celebration or during the build-

ing of a new temple. In these events, *Zare* performs the *lik long*. The *Zare* are the scholars who conserve and perform the Shan traditional Buddhist readings (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 1). The ideal *Zare* performance needs significant practice to acquire skills to recite poetry properly. This is because the *lik long* texts are complicated. Firstly, the texts, especially the *Mahāsatiṇṇapattāhānasuttanta*, were compiled many times. Secondly, the texts include various textual traditions, such as Buddhist teachings, their interpretation, tales, history and admiration. Thirdly, they consist of four different languages, such as Shan and other Tai languages, *Pali*, and Burmese. Besides, these languages are from different language families, giving them dissimilar phonemes and written script. Finally, the *lik long* tradition is poetic in style. It needs to rhyme and have a specific tone (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 3-4). Therefore, it is very difficult to acquire the skills for mastering the recitation of the poems.

It might be thought that highly educated monks perform this recitation. However, the *Zare* refers mostly lay followers; most of them are men, while some are women. As far as education of *Zare*, as Crosby and Khur-Yearn (2010, 6) argued, they require higher education. At first, *Zare* started learning the *lik long* tradition in the local monastery in the same way that other Theravada Buddhist communities had. These *Zare* were ordained at the age of eight or nine, as is usual, and often studied at a number of different monasteries. Although most of them finally finished the education, some continued long after having completed their education. Moreover, *Zare* education often continued outside the monastery. For instance, Zao Kang Suea, a famous *Zare*, had a number of students at his home after his marriage (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 6).

The monastic education is still vital function among Shan lay people who want to become *Zare*. This is because *Zare* require training in Shan script and it is only the monasteries along the Myanmar-Thai border that provide teachings of the Shan script. In addition, there are two steps of training *haw lik* (to read *lik long*). The first is learning the Shan script at a monastery from the head monks. After this, the trainee learns *haw lik* from a specific *Zare*. Men usually learned from more than one teacher to develop their ability and increase their repertoire by visiting different monasteries and study

with specific *Zare*. (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 7). However, this *Zare* education became in danger of disappearing during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with ‘the introduction of secular, often co-educational schools’ (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 6).

In addition to *Zare* education, when comparing the *Zare* and the monks in rituals, the *Zare* is freely allowed access to Theravada literary culture and to travel to different monasteries, whereas the monk commonly has restrictions on his activity. This is largely because the Burmese government controls the religious activity of the Shan Buddhist monks. Examples emerge in interviews with monks regarding the regulations for monks as set forth by the government. These are:

- To give a talk as a monk at another temple, you need permission from six levels: commander of the division; military intelligence; chief of police at division level; chief of police at township level; the civilian council also at both district and town level.
- To get the permission from these people, the first thing you need is a ‘green light’, a piece of paper/sponsor letter from the township *Sangha-nayaka*.
- To give one *dhamma* talk, the permit may cost the equivalent of GBP 4-500 (USD 6-820)
- After the talk a copy has to be sent to the military intelligence.
- At a *dhamma* talk, two or three military intelligence or police officers will usually be present.

The above-mentioned stipulations tell us that monks are assumed to be “potential political instruments or threats” by the Burmese government (Crosby and Khur-Yearn 2010, 6-7). As monks need to receive permission from government authorities to give talks, political oppression has the effects of inhibiting the healthy development of traditional Shan religious culture.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, as this essay has argued, although Shan Buddhist traditions, both in ritual and in practice, remain in the Shan community, the modern ordination ritual for young novices and the monastic life cycle are in danger of losing their ‘orthodoxy’ due to degeneration of social communication and political suppression.

As we have seen, the novice ordination, *Poy Sang Long* festival, has been transformed from a religious event to a celebration of ethnicity. This is especially true in northern Thailand where the Shan community attempts to demonstrate the Shan identity through this event. Shans living overseas also report this phenomenon. Moreover, the way of doing monastic recitation, the *Tham Vessantara-jātaka*, indicates that social communication has degraded in the Shan community. Additionally, the transformation of the Shan monastic education tells us that in the current political context, monks have to replace their usage of Shan language with Burmese in religious education. Similarly, the training of the *Zare* culture shows the necessity of monastic education to protect Shan culture. Some might say that the transformation of the religious events and practice is an inevitable phenomenon as one of the fundamental Buddhist teachings is impermanence in all things. However, in the case of Shan ordination and monastic life, Shan monks and lay people are suffering as social upheaval and political suppression are changing their traditional culture. As such, Shan communities warrant concern and deserve protection.



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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> A Buddhist monk protects precepts in a monastery. The five precepts are (1) not taking life, (2) not taking what is not given, (3) no sexual misconduct, (4) no lying, (5) no consumption of intoxicants. The eight precepts are the five precepts with other three precepts: (6) not eating solid food after midday, (7) not adorning themselves or watching entertainment, (8) not using luxurious beds.

<sup>2</sup> The *Dhammācariya* includes the study of *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and its commentary *Atthasālinī*; the *Sīlakkhandhavagga-Pāli* and its commentary the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*; the *Parājikakaṇḍa-Pāli* and its commentary the *Samantapāsādikā*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Tipiṭaka* literally means 'Three Baskets'. This includes monastic codes, (Vinaya pitaka), discourses (*Suttapitaka*) and higher doctrine (*Abhidhammapitaka*).

# Of Cyclones and Constitutions:

Notes from the Field\*

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## Author Biography

Dominic J. Nardi, Jr. is a Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan. He earned a J.D. from Georgetown Law and an M.A. in Southeast Asian Studies from Johns Hopkins SAIS.

The trips described here occurred in May 2008 and June 2010.

*\*I have omitted all names and affiliations in order to protect my correspondents. Likewise, I have paraphrased all actual conversations.*

I looked at my audience of perhaps one hundred, one hundred fifty people. The conference room managed to be both large and crowded, with rows of plastic chairs covering most of the floor space. Fortunately for my PowerPoint presentation, this was also one of the few places in town with a reliable power source.

I'd given similar presentations about comparative constitutional law to lawyers in the Philippines and Indonesia. I had a few jokes (making fun of legalese usually elicits polite laughter) and a list of key messages I hoped to impart. Yet, this time felt different.

This time, I was in Myanmar, the perennial black sheep of Southeast Asia.

This time, my audience was a group of young pro-democracy activists and politicians.

This time, if I said anything inappropriate, I could put either my audience or myself at risk...

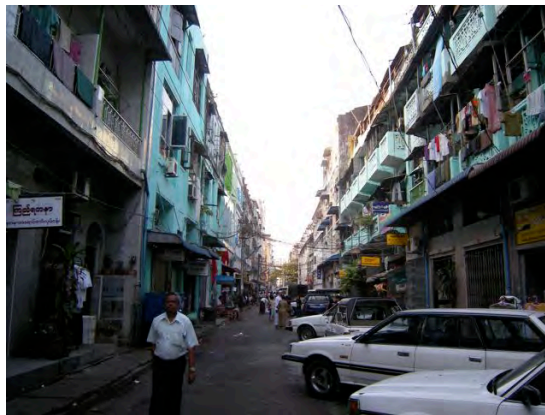
\* \* \*

On its face, Myanmar seems like the last country one would want to give a presentation on constitutional law. Except perhaps for North Korea or Somalia. Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) had not had a written constitution since 1988, when the current junta seized power. Moreover, the constitution it suspended was no exemplar of liberal democracy.

Sadly, this was not always the case.

Upon independence, Burma's 1947 Constitution was perhaps the most progressive in Southeast Asia. The Supreme Court regularly upheld habeas corpus and freed political prisoners who had been wrongfully detained. Judicial review was alive and well even as ethnic divisions tore the country apart.

In 1962, General Ne Win launched a coup that overthrew parliament and abolished the Supreme Court. Ne Win had regularly lambasted the judiciary for impeding the counterinsur-



Downtown Yangon

gency effort. In its place, he established a hierarchy of military tribunals.

In 1974, the regime promulgated a new constitution that enshrined its socialist ideology. It also formalized the judiciary's deterioration. The constitution established "people's courts," with a judge, military officer, and layperson presiding over each case. At the top of the judicial hierarchy lay the Council of People's Justices, mostly comprised of former generals. While it could theoretically enforce constitutional rights, it never did.

The system proved so irredeemable that when the military seized direct control to thwart student protests in 1988, it abolished the people's courts and suspended the 1974 Constitution. Officially, Myanmar reverted to the pre-1962 judiciary. However, the modern Supreme Court lacks the spirit of its predecessor. The junta vets all judicial candidates and has dismissed judges without formal impeachment proceedings. Corruption and procedural irregularities plague the court system.

However, the nascent junta faced larger challenges than judicial reform. The opposition National League for Democracy, led by Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, won elections held in 1990. Decisively.

The military announced that, rather than form a parliament, election winners would hold a convention to draft a new constitution. Furthermore, to ensure that the draft reflected its vision, the military also appointed "representatives" for intellectuals, peasants, workers, and ethnic minorities. When the National Convention began in 1993, less than a quarter of delegates had been actually elected.

Sure enough, the draft constitution drafted called for a "discipline-flourishing democracy" (this phrase actually appears in the text). The constitution guarantees the military a quarter of the seats in the legislature, as well as exclusive purview over management of the armed forces affairs.

When formally unveiled fourteen years later, the constitution was condemned by Burmese dissidents, Western governments, and human rights organizations. One constitutional law scholar went so far as to call it the worst in the world.

In May 2008, I returned to Myanmar in the hopes of learning more about this notorious yet fascinating document.

\* \* \*

Coincidentally, the same month I planned to visit, Myanmar planned to hold a referendum to approve – there was no doubt as to the outcome – the new constitution.

Coincidentally, the night of May 2 a category five cyclone struck southern Myanmar. Over the next few weeks, the toll from Cyclone Nargis reached 140,000 dead and over a million homeless.

In most countries, it would have been needless to say the government responded promptly and postponed referendum. But Myanmar's junta at first seemed to ignore the crisis. After days of indecision, it postponed the referendum in areas hit by the cyclone – by just two weeks.

Fortunately, I had heard the news before leaving the U.S., so I packed medicines and dry foods to distribute.

Unfortunately, at the time the military refused to allow foreigners (i.e., Westerners) into the Irrawaddy Delta to bring aid. As such, I could only deliver my supplies – which seemed trivial in the face of such a disaster – to friends and hope they managed to deliver it to those in need.

\* \* \*

Upon arriving in Yangon, the trees startled me. Or really the lack of trees.

Yangon had previously been known as the garden city because of its abundant greenery, yet the storm had knocked over almost every tree in sight. This marred the landscape and made the 95-degree heat even more unbearable than usual.

Fearing that attempting to assist cyclone victims would only cause more trouble, I spent much of that week observing the mood of the city.

I remember seeing one boy who must have been about 10 – but looked much younger – as he scurried across the roof of a two-story house fixing tiles. Curious, I asked somebody nearby if this wasn't a bit dangerous.

"Oh no," he said, "He's like a little monkey; he's good at fixing things." After talking with the man further, he explained that the boy was from a Wa village, one of the many ethnic minorities in Myanmar. After his father was recruited into the local ethnic insurgent

militia, his parents sent him to Yangon to get a better education. He stays with a host family, who provides his food, lodging, and other necessities. In return, the boy assists with chores around the house.

Apparently, this practice is quite common amongst the Yangon middle class. The lawyer in me screamed “child labor!” Yet, I had become familiar enough with Burmese Buddhism to realize that this was first and foremost viewed as an act of charity. A way for the host family to earn merit for nirvana.

In its own way, the incident reminded me that the legal standards of international human rights conventions and constitutional law did not always mesh well with the nuances of modern Burmese culture.

I just silently prayed the boy didn’t fall.

\* \* \*

One thing struck me upon talking with residents: they openly criticized the government. Although not in the form of public protests. After all, it was only the prior September that the military cracked down on Buddhist monks – revered in this devoutly Buddhist country – for protesting against the regime.

Rather, I sensed citizens could no longer contain their frustration with the regime’s incompetence. As I visited one friend, his neighbor – whom I had never met – shouted in passable English, “These guys” – obviously referring to the ruling generals – “are so stupid. We hate them!”

If my friend had been an informer for Military Intelligence, his neighbor would probably have been arrested later that night.

In fact, during one of my few interviews that week, I worried a minder was watching me. I had requested a



Left:  
Military  
nationalism  
in a  
government  
assembly  
hall mural

meeting with a lawyer to hear his thoughts on the constitution. We stepped into his office, when I noticed a fairly plump gentleman seated in a reclining chair. He didn’t introduce himself, my host didn’t introduce him, and I didn’t ask. He listened to our conversation without comment.

Even in retrospect, I realize he may well have been an informant, but if so certainly one of the oddest on the payroll. During a lull in the conversation, this large man gathered his sarong and asked me:

“So, what do you think about Obama?”

While Obamamania was then raging in the U.S., I had not expected it to infiltrate Myanmar. I later learned that the government

newspaper, *The New Light of Myanmar*, criticized John McCain for his support of sanctions. However, I also got the sense that many Burmese latched onto Obama’s message of hope and change in the hopes that change would come to Myanmar.

Needless to say, I did not accomplish much research that trip. Too many phone lines and generators were down for efficient communication. Besides, Cyclone Nargis had rewritten the meaning of the constitution and how Burmese interpreted it.

\* \* \*

By the time I returned in June 2010, Myanmar’s new constitution replaced cyclones and Obama as the topic of conversation.

The government had announced elections later that year for a new parliament. However, the National League for Democracy announced a boycott because the military had placed Suu Kyi under house arrest. Despite this, several prodemocracy activists split off to form their own parties and contest the election.

My first meeting was with one of these activists. He was optimistic about the elections. Perhaps unduly optimistic, given what I'd heard in the news. But I enjoyed hearing his thoughts because, unlike so many in Myanmar, he viewed the constitution not as a straight-jacket, but as a law to be interpreted and analyzed.

As he spoke, one hand held a cigarette, while the other shook with excitement.

"Look, this constitution, it has three branches of government: a president, two houses of the legislature, and a judiciary. It's got separation of powers, just like yours."

Comparing Myanmar's "discipline-flourishing" constitution to Madison's masterpiece seemed like a stretch. However, upon further reflection, I had to admit he had a point.

Constitutional structures come in all shapes and sizes. Many former British colonies established parliaments that combined executive and legislative power, but permitted independent courts. By contrast, most countries with a continental European legal system place their courts under the ministry of justice.

Surprisingly few have adopted the American combination of a presidential executive, bicameral legislature, and common law judiciary. The list is short: the Philippines, Liberia...

And now Myanmar.

In subsequent meetings, I asked friends how they construed this "convergent evolution." Quite a few speculated that the constitution was in fact an elaborate retirement plan.

Nearing 80, the senior general and head of the junta, Than Shwe, wanted to oversee a political transition that would promote his cronies and protect his family after he retires. Of all men, he knows the dangers of early retirement; after consolidating his own power, Than Shwe arrested two of his predecessors.

"By creating separation of powers, he ensures nobody becomes powerful enough to challenge him," another activist explained. "Divide and conquer."

Ironically, the U.S. Founding Fathers also sought to prevent the rise of a tyrant by separating the branches of government. Only, in Myanmar, it was the tyrant himself who sought to hide behind the constitution.

\* \* \*

My next meeting was with a retired lawyer and former political activist. While critical of the regime, my host also disapproved of Suu Kyi and her party.

"While she's fine, but she's surrounding by communists," he exclaimed. Repeating a joke I had heard before, he continued, "When the NLD registered for the 1990 elections and submitted its list of candidates, Ne Win looked it over and said, 'Why so red?'" Red was the label for the Communist Party of Burma, the largest outside any communist nation until the party's collapse in 1989.

When I tried to direct the discussion back to the constitution, he stated that the real problem is not laws, but the lack of trust. "We have very few people whom both the military and the ethnic minorities trust." According to some estimates, Myanmar has 135 ethnic minorities, several of which have waged a decades-long insurgency against the central government. "We need a leader whom everybody can accept. Otherwise, there will be war."

For a lawyer, he did not seem to place much faith in the law.

He ended his discourse by revealing his involvement in the formation of a new political party, the Democratic Party (Myanmar). The party's central executive committee would include daughters of Burma's first prime minister, sons of former cabinet members, and other prominent offspring.

Given what I knew about the importance of family legacies in Southeast Asian politics, I was duly impressed. It was as if the Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Clintons decided to campaign on a single ticket.

However, when I mentioned this to a friend over dinner later that night, he laughed and said, "You know, he sounds quite overconfident. I don't think people will vote for them just because of their family histories."

His skepticism turned out to be prescient: on November 7, the party placed 15th and won just three seats.

\* \* \*

On November 6, 2005, Myanmar's junta shocked the world and its own people by announcing that all government ministries must move from Yangon to a location 200 miles north in the middle of a jungle.

That morning, at 6:37 a.m.



The site, eventually dubbed Naypyitaw (“abode of kings”) has since been held up as an exemplar of the military’s callous attitude towards its people. Some Burmese note dryly that penguins in the new Naypyitaw zoo had air-conditioning, a luxury beyond the reach of all but a few citizens.

Yet, in person, Naypyitaw seemed much less sinister. If anything, it seemed empty.

While Myanmar’s constitution might bear some resemblance to America’s, its capital couldn’t be more different from Washington, D.C.

For one thing, Naypyitaw has none of the Parisian-style avenues that so enthralled Pierre Charles L’Enfant. Instead, it has an eight-lane highway system, with buildings few and far between. The city itself is segregated into residential, government, embassy, and hotel districts. If you are unfortunate enough to live here without a car, a bus comes to a select few stops every half hour. The result looks more like a suburban office complex in northern Virginia than a national capital.

According to Myanmar analysts, the military designed the city not for ease of living or national pride, but rather to thwart potential protests, such as those that occurred in 1988 and 2007 in Yangon.

“Naypyitaw’s not a city, it’s a bunker,” one expert proclaimed to me.

Driving along the highway, in the middle of a vast plain, to my right I caught a glimpse of a sprawling complex. I was probably still over two kilometers away, but already it had become the dominant feature of the landscape.

It was Myanmar’s new legislative building, the Hluttaw.

Built in a classical Burmese style, with plain white walls and red tiled roofs. Each building was at least five stories tall, although they looked even taller from afar.

“Can we get any closer? I’d love to get a tour,” I hinted wistfully to my host.

“Well, it’s not really finished,” she said. “My friend has gone in. There’s nothing really there yet. I heard

it’s about eighty percent complete.” I never got any closer.

Like D.C.’s Capitol rotunda, this leviathan will probably become the symbol of Myanmar’s new constitutional order. I can only imagine how it will seem to the new legislators, as they take their seats later this month. Will its facade be a source of pride or intimidation?

\* \* \*

After all these experiences, I knew intuitively that Myanmar was both the least expected and most appropriate venue for a discussion of comparative constitutional law. Behind the official news reports of gloom and despair, I sensed a vibrancy and thirst for knowledge.

The main portion of my lecture described the consti-



Left:  
Street side  
vegetable  
market  
downtown  
Yangon

tutional systems of the U.S., Philippines, Japan, China, and Iran. I chose these countries because they demonstrate the diversity of constitutional systems. More importantly, I wanted to share experiences relevant to Myanmar’s political transition.

While I tried to avoid legalese, given the language barrier, I could never be sure if the audience understood anything I had said.

However, as is often the case, their questions revealed both comprehension and insight.

One gentleman, somewhat older than the rest, asked in a gravelly voice and halting English:

"In Myanmar, we sometimes receive visits from Hu Jintao, sometimes from Wen Jiabao. My question is, who is superior under the Chinese constitution?"

Tough question, especially because real power in China derives not from constitutional offices but rather one's rank in the Communist Party. I responded by emphasizing that a constitution can only explain a fraction of the power dynamics in any given country.

While I did not say so explicitly, my audience understood the inference that Snr. General Than Shwe might still retain his power even if he does not hold any formal office after the elections.

A young woman with long, back hair speculated aloud, "It seems that even though Japan is a democracy, it doesn't have much checks and balances. Is that correct?"

"Great insight. Yes." For me, this was the moment when I dared to hope that, despite the language barrier and my occasionally inartful explanations, these young leaders had begun to appreciate the subtle distinction between constitutionalism and democracy.

Of course, trivia concerning foreign constitutions would also be of limited value to these young activists and politicians. While I merely wanted to publish articles, they wanted to change a country.

"So," one young man asked, a smile beaming on his face, "what do you think of our new constitution?"

I refused to be drawn into direct criticism of the constitution or the regime. Part of this stemmed from a conviction that, as an aspiring political scientist, I had to draw a line between analysis and involvement.

With an eye towards the dozen or so tape recorders and iPods recording my talk, I also worried that anything I said might wind up in Military Intelligence the following morning.

So, I dodged.

"Well, for obvious reasons, I'm not going to comment too much." Everyone knowingly laughed. "But it is important to remember that Myanmar's constitution isn't the best in the world, but it's also not the worst."

Despite the caustic criticism directed towards Myanmar's constitution, I thought that a fair assessment. "For example, as we saw, China's constitution does not even allow for any elections or enforcement of constitutional rights."

I also reiterated my general argument about how the meaning of a constitution provision depends as much on the judges interpreting it as on the text itself. "In other words, your constitution might change and adapt over time – if you appoint the right people to the Constitutional Tribunal."

"Next question."

"So, given all of your knowledge about these different constitutions, can you give us any advice on using the constitution to bring about change?"

"Didn't I just address this question?"

Laughter erupted throughout the room.

"My goal today was to expose you to other constitutions and allow you to draw your own lessons." With that, I also recounted the importance of forging political alliances, using the example of Anwar Ibrahim's near-success in Malaysia's 2008 general elections.

The final question was so simple yet seemed to tie together everything I had witnessed in this country.

"Do you have any hope that this constitution will bring political change?"

Hope. Change. "I don't really know; I'm not an astrologer." More laughter. Astrology is a national obsession in Myanmar.

My response seemed like another dodge, yet it was also fundamentally true. I could only draw lessons from history and political science. Who was I to make predictions?

Later that afternoon, I stopped by the conference organizer's office and caught him lounging in a chair reading yet another book about political transitions. I recounted the audience's questions and asked for his thoughts on the prospects for change after the elections.

"Well," he said, peering through his narrow glasses, "that's up to them to decide."



# The Unkindest Cut

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Children overcome the primal fear that a first haircut strikes in their hearts. It's a rite of passage, the moment when a total stranger wields sharp objects in that frightening space next to your ear but outside your field of vision. If you're lucky, a mother or father stands a close vigil, assuring you that this strange ritual is harmless and will all be over soon. Perhaps a calming voice from a skilled practitioner—someone who has escorted hundreds of three-year olds through their first shearing—also helps you through the ordeal.

Still, as soon as the drape falls over your neck, your pulse quickens and the nape of your neck flushes red. Each snip of the scissors elicits a shudder. You survive, of course, but you never really forget the dread it in-

spired. And last summer, a good thirty years removed from my childhood, I learned that the barber's chair in a foreign land can be the site of fear and trembling for reasons that have nothing to do with scissors.

It was May, and I was traveling with my wife Danielle in Yogyakarta, a city of 450,000 on the Indonesian island of Java. She was conducting interviews with Indonesians for her dissertation, which left me plenty of time to explore a country where I'd never been and where my vocabulary was limited to less than 100 words.

Those 100 words were courtesy of my daily one-on-one intensive language training sessions at Wisma Bahasa, the county's best private language school. It



Left:  
Downtown  
Yogyakarta

has a track record of converting even us resiliently monolingual Anglophones into people who can speak Indonesian, at least haltingly. But I was finding that spending hours surrounded by an unfamiliar language scrambles the senses. Flash cards flipped over at rapid succession, and the forms folded one into another. A familiar feline figure becomes not a cat, exactly, but something at the edge of your consciousness and almost at the tip of your tongue.

Add the equatorial heat of Java to the equation, and all normal cognitive function evaporates. As the noon hour approaches and the mercury climbs to the highest Celsius register, even “My name is John—*Nama saya John*” might leave me in knots. I started doubting instincts I’d learned to trust over the course of a lifetime. I knew the red light in the center of the road means “stop” in any language, but what would happen when I started speaking Indonesian and “go” came out instead?

Of course, I elicit little sympathy in a world where English is the linguistic coin of the realm. I elicit even less sympathy since Indonesian is considered a very easy language to learn. It’s a recent innovation, formalized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a nationalist project to unite the Dutch East Indies—a collection of hundreds of ethnic groups on more than 1,000 islands. It has its origins in the Malay trade language that has permeated the Indonesian archipelago for centuries of maritime commerce.

Finding a linguistic vehicle to bring together such a disparate population in the modern era requires a commitment to simplicity. People won’t give up their own languages unless you make it worth their while, so you can’t hold on to archaic conventions and quirky rules solely for the sake of posterity. The new language must be sensible, convenient, and above all rational—the linguistic equivalent of the metric system.

Making it easier for the linguistic newcomer, Indonesian uses the same alphabet as English—a benefit that most American travelers to Asia can only dream of. Those 26 Roman characters create a comforting sense of familiarity from the outset, whereas Chinese, Japanese and Korean pictograms seem deliberately designed to disorient the uninitiated.

A novice should also be comforted by the fact that Indonesian verbs don’t have tenses and never need to be conjugated, so there’s no endless series of “*amo,*

*amas, amat*” exercises for the beginning student. If you, I, he or we love someone—even if we ever loved someone—“*cinta*” will do. That may seem confusing at first, but you learn to pick up the meaning from pronouns and context. And do you have trouble remembering when the rules of English require you to use “good” and when you are supposed to use “well”? No such problem exists in Indonesian, since adjectives and adverbs are usually the same word.

Like most aspects of Indonesian life, the national language incorporates foreign influences when they’re found to be suitable. In addition to the language’s Malay roots, there’s a sprinkling of Dutch words. No reason to reject the colonial language out of hand when it’s found to be useful. There’s a light Portuguese linguistic footprint as well, owing to these Europeans’ presence in Indonesia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (they stayed in East Timor until the 1970s). Throw in a few words from the Islamic language of Arabic, some Sanskrit terms from Indonesia’s Hindu forbearers, and you’re in business.

Unless, like me, you’ve lived in an English-only bubble for most of your life and struggled through high-school Spanish. In that case, each session of Indonesian class becomes a test of willpower and endurance. The heat, the unfamiliar sounds, the forced repetition, the teachers’ intent gazes. At the end of each class, I was ready to confess to a major crime.

You wouldn’t know it from this melodramatic description, but 90 percent of my Indonesian language training sessions actually took place in English. My instructors speak my native language better than I do, so much so that I’m surprised when they ask after the meaning of some American idiom I’ve employed. (“So you’d say ‘dinner’ instead of ‘supper’ in this case?” asks Lillis, a woman from the Islamic University who jazzes up her more traditional Muslim attire with a tiger-striped headscarf.) My language lessons aren’t the prisoner-of-war situation I make them out to be in my head, where I’m caught far behind enemy lines. There’s always a ready escape hatch of English, an escape hatch I readily employed on many occasions with little shame.

Still, these Indonesian lessons were the first time in a while I’d been on the receiving end of the inherent power relationship embedded within language. In a world where everyone learns English as a second lan-

guage, I usually wield the whip hand, whether I realize it or not. I try to remember this when I'm caught in line in the United States behind someone struggling a bit with an English idiom.

Back in Yogyakarta, however, my four-hour language sessions had me at the breaking point. A neurologist could probably diagnose exactly why there's dispiritingly small space left in the adult brain to acquire language. I really wasn't looking for a diagnosis, however. I just knew something had to give, so I asked (or had my wife translate my request) to reduce my sessions to two hours a day. Mercifully, the school agreed.

I celebrated the first day of my newfound freedom—two hours each day in the late morning—with a trip to the barber. I've surely learned enough Indonesian, I thought, to handle this basic task. I usually cut my own flat-topped hair with clippers, but an unfortunate accident with a wattage converter had rendered my electric shears useless and threatened to start a small appliance fire. Still, with my close-cropped hair, it wasn't like much could go wrong with a trip to the barber. Or so I thought.

I wanted to get my hair cut at Yogyakarta's "Obama" barbershop. Indonesians feel a special connection to the 44th president owing to the four childhood years he spent in Jakarta. It's not uncommon for the Indonesians who start conversations with me on the street to approvingly shout "Obama!" when they find out I'm from the United States.

I never made it to the Obama barbershop, however. The intense late morning heat—and my comically misguided attempts to ask for directions—had me detour instead to a nearby salon that billed itself as "styling for women and men." When I stepped through the front door, the stylists looked at me a bit quizzically. Does this guy want a perm or something?

A few seconds of halting dialogue between us, and they quickly realized that my Indonesian wasn't sophisticated enough to articulate or comprehend such advanced hairstyling concepts as "layers" or "highlights." And with my hair, it's not like Rapunzel just walked in. At a loss for the right Indonesian words, I drew my hand over my short locks, pantomiming what I envisioned as the universal sign for a Johnny Unitas flat-top.

My stylist nodded in what seemed like agreement, but somehow I ended up being escorted over to the

sink. Before I knew it, there was shampoo in my hair. This was a bit more than I bargained for, but with the exchange rate in Indonesia, it was all going to come out to less than \$3 anyway, so I figured I might as well smile and enjoy it.

Once I was back in the stylist's chair, he proved a bit more fastidious with the clippers than I was expecting. To my mind, there's only so many ways to style a flat-top, but I appreciated his sense of professional dedication. Maybe fifteen minutes later, I was back at the shampoo station, having my hair rinsed. Shouldn't be long and I'll be out of here, I thought.

At that point, however, I was handed off to what I presumed was another stylist. She showed me the haircut in the mirror and asked a question, which in my haste assumed to be Indonesian for the international stylist's standard, "Do you like it?" question. Ready to leave the salon, I nodded yes and enthusiastically proclaimed "*Bagus*," which I had learned as the all-purpose Indonesian version for "It's good."

Having expressed my satisfaction, I expected this new stylist to pull off my smock and bring me over to the cash register. Instead, she started anointing my scalp with oil. This was pleasant enough, but it seemed curious. Wasn't the haircut finished? When I said, "*Bagus*," had I fully understood the question?

She continued running her fingers over my scalp and down my neck. By the time she reached my shoulder, I realized, to my horror, that she must have asked, "Would you like a massage?" And I, in deploying the little Indonesian I knew, had nodded my head resolutely and said, to her ear anyway, "Sounds good! Sure!"

Before long, I was having my shoulders poked, my back prodded, and the space between my fingers probed for their pressure points. The stylist—or perhaps she actually was the salon's in-house masseuse, what did I know?—wasn't shy about putting her hands down the back of my shirt to get those treacherous knots that were only tensing up more as my shock increased. It's usually relaxing to have a massage, but I was desperate to find a way to call for this relaxation to come to an end.

But how would I do that? I had just learned that using "*bagus*"—"it's good"—would only bring on another round of potentially more compromising contortions. *Bagus* apparently means "Yes, please, more!" in this

context. In the Indonesian language unit on bargaining, I'd learned the phrase you are supposed to use when you wanted to bring the haggling to a close. What was it?

The massage continued, and continued to become more personal. As my fingers were being bent in every direction, vocabulary lessons flashed before my eyes. I started imaging my wife calling the U.S. consulate. ("My husband left for a haircut this afternoon. And I haven't heard from him since. I'm getting a little worried.")

Back in the chair, I flipped through my mental Indonesian flash cards with the hopes of finding the linguistic equivalent of a ripcord. I could say "rice." "Clock." Probably "airplane" if I really thought about it. But what message would that send? They'd probably be harmless nonsequiturs, and they certainly wouldn't help me out of my predicament. Worse yet, by saying "airplane," would I unwittingly be calling for some more complex and potentially permanently damaging chiropractic maneuver?

My brain, at the breaking point as the masseuse's fingers grasped at my scapula, finally alighted on "*Tidak apa lagi*," or, "No, nothing more." After all my complaints about language immersion, I was suddenly painfully aware of the merits of intensive classes. As the massage continued, I bided my time, confident that the next time the stylist *cum* masseuse spoke, I could pull the plug on the whole thing.

"*Tidak apa lagi*," I said a few minutes later, and with that, deliverance. At that moment, they were the three most beautiful words in the Indonesian language.

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# Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures:

## Reminiscences of my Fieldwork Experiences in Cambodia and Vietnam

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When I arrived in Cambodia in April 2010 for my fieldwork, I was quite nervous as I have never been to the country. I was particularly scared because I did not know Khmer, a Pali-based language that is nothing close to the Romanized languages that I know. “How could I even start to communicate with local Cambodians and ask for help?” I thought.

In contrast to my fieldwork experiences in Vietnam, the challenges of fieldwork in Cambodia have less to do with obtaining official permission for research than with cultural immersion. Whereas I had to go through many levels of bureaucracy in order to receive permission for my entrance into my field sites as a “researcher” in Vietnam, I did not have to go through the

same lengthy official procedure in Cambodia. Here, I was allowed to conduct my research as long as I did not present a danger to Cambodian society. In contrast, in Vietnam the sensitive nature of my research topic on religion ultimately forced me to conduct my fieldwork as a “tourist” in order to avoid cumbersome paperwork and many roadblocks in my tight research schedule.

The experiences of cultural immersion in Cambodia were exciting as I was learning about an unfamiliar cultural, social, and political landscape, but they also could have slowed down my research if I had not been more prepared. Most importantly, I learned that establishing ties with local people as soon as possible was essential for not only facilitating the progress of my



Left:  
Street scene  
downtown  
Phnom  
Penh

fieldwork but also my enjoyment with local life. I was fortunate that I was able to make logistical living arrangements with a local colleague who happened to be conducting his dissertation work in Phnom Penh. Through him, I was able to secure additional local contacts within not only the expat community but also amongst local Cambodians. From these contacts, I began to develop a sense of connection to my new home and establish a set of regular activities, such as meditation at Wat Lanka and visits to popular cultural art scenes such as the Meta House.

In particular, I believe that making conscious efforts to connect to other scholars are essential for making research progress and maintaining focus on one's study. This is particularly important in Cambodia since the academic community is quite loose and dispersed. As far as I know, the Human Sciences Happy Hour Phnom Penh (HSHHPP) is one of the few semi-institutionalized scholarly communities that meet about once a month for a member's presentation. I was fortunate to learn about it through a local NGO-worker and had joined its listserv before my departure from the U.S. When I attended my first HSHHPP meeting, I was almost overblown by the enthusiasm and support among the attendees. The other community of scholars is the Center of Khmer Studies, where I was a Ph.D. Research Fellow. I recently re-connected with several CKS fellows and affiliated scholars at the 2011 Association for Asian Studies Conference in Hawai'i.

Moreover, establishing a close, trusting relationship with at least one local Cambodian was important for guiding me into local life. I was fortunate to meet my "younger sister" through the first Summer Khmer Language Program (organized by the Center for Khmer Studies in conjunction with the Advanced Study of Khmer in 2010), during which I experienced a homestay at her family's home in the countryside. Although she was younger than me, she was a mature young person who was willing to guide me through the cultural landscape of Cambodia and was patient to correct my ignorance. We continued to learn from each other after we returned to Phnom Penh (she worked in the city) and even to this day, after my return to the U.S., through Facebook.



## Review

*Thơ Kể: Tuyển Tập Thơ Tân Hình Thức Ấn Bản Song Ngữ (Poetry Narrates: An Anthology of Vietnamese New Formalism Poetry)*. By Tho Ke. Edited by Khe Iem. Garden Grove, CA.: Tan Hinh Thuc Publishing Club, 2010.

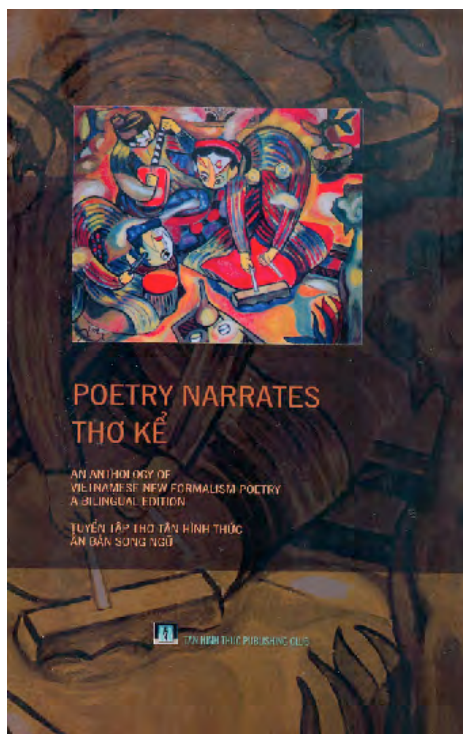
WILLIAM NOSEWORTHY

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*Thơ Kể* (Poetry Narrates) *Tuyển Tập Thơ Tân Hình Thức Ấn Bản Song Ngữ* (An Anthology of Vietnamese New Formalism Poetry A Bilingual Edition) edited by Khế Iêm (2009) proposes to unfold pages upon pages of New Formalist poetry in Tiến Việt and English. In comparison to the American movement from which it draws its name, the rather successful *Thơ Tân Hình Thức* arose out of a distinct need to identify the concept of belonging to an increasingly complex community under the umbrella of Vietnamese-ness in order to address the issue of belonging. Rather than give a traditional outline of the text, or the movement, that readers could just as easily find in the first few pages of the collection, this review argues in favor of the collections relevance to students, while also exploring some of the key images of the poems.

Students of Southeast-Asia, Vietnam, and literature will be impressed with the ease of exploration evoked by the free verse of English sections, while readers and students of Tiến Việt will be impressed with the very nearly *trường ca*, or lyrical style relayed and made easy to access. This is not to say that the poems are composed as traditional *trường ca*, but

rather that their style is generally metered and can be very nearly sung when recited in a mellifluous fashion. Lower levels of Vietnamese readers may find it useful to read the English translations first, before immersing themselves in the Vietnamese text. Meanwhile higher level readers would still be happy to have the English translations ready for reference.



Scenes related to the readers are dominated by memories of the Saigon street life, reminiscent of the experience of any *người ba lô* (backpacker) who has the need to *đi phượt* (travel by motorcycle while sleeping in the open air) in order to go see the *Quỳnh* (blooming cactus) of the night (163, 205). In this sense we are seeing an emergent identity of the poetic community that stems from the successes, the trials, tribulations, and triumphant failures of life in the dust lanes of modern Vietnam. Here there are a certain number of ties that are being explored, beyond the narratives

of the *người tau* (boat people). Rural Vietnamese-ness, urban depressionism, and international ghosts are the inquirers of these verses. Questions of Bolsa, the Vietnamese capital of Westminster Country in California, where silence is a dominating theme evoked by the



conception that poets are relating the voice of the voiceless, are rarely answered, but rather left to hang in between the lines. In silence there is a world of imagery; of death, of mothers, of tears, of life, of *ciet* (small cases used for carrying books popularly used by school children from the small towns in rural sections of the *tỉnh* (provinces)) and holier things (29, 129). It is in these translations of images that students begin to feign an understanding of Vietnamese culture at the margins.

The Phan Khế translations of the *thơ Inrasara*, such as in the poem Poisonous Dreams (131) place the visceral experience of the lives of the *người dân tộc* (minorities) particularly associated with the Central Highlands, into a context that is contemporaneous with images of the karmic cycle; “Do It Again!” where the intricacies of things Not Belonging-to-Us and those which Belong-to-Us perhaps retain a sense of Us in the Belonging since they are Not-Us, and we are told to “Seek” them out (65). In reflection, readers might wonder which *them* or its we are trying to seek. By remembering that this collection heralds poets like the recluse *Trần Vũ Khang* (145) we might see that we are simply looking a cross section of authors who view the world through a particularly unique lens. This lens has a particularly profound interest in promoting the understanding of life in more complex terms, perfectly happy to take a very realistic interpretation of a romantic world in this *Sau khi ngày 11 tháng 9 năm 2001* environment.

## Review

*For Better or For Worse: Vietnamese International Marriages in the New Global Economy.* By Hung Cam Thai. Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008.

THIEN-HUONG NINH

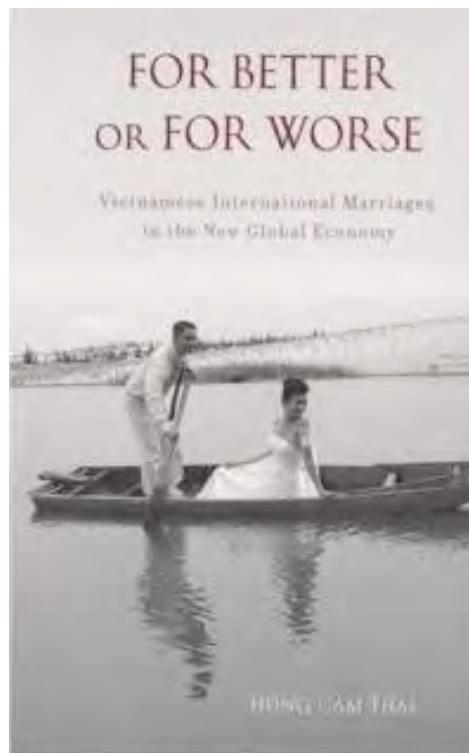
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This pioneering work traces the emerging trend of transnational marriages between Vietnamese men in the U.S. and women in Vietnam. Thai's examination of marital ties grounds the personal, familial, and intimate dimensions of globalization. He also shifts away from the refugee model of overseas Vietnamese by highlighting their complex lives. He reveals the cultural struggles and material contradictions that accompany kin expectations, class differences, and gender negotiation in across-border family formation.

This is an engaging and clearly written book. In the first two chapters, Thai contextualizes the historical forces and kin networks that surround contemporary Vietnamese transnational marriages and the convertibility of capital across oceans. In each of the following three chapters, the author focuses on a theme and presents an exemplary story for detailed analysis. He navigates through matters concerning gender, socio-economic status, and matchmaking. In the following two chapters, Thai presents two contrasting cases of the "unmarriageables" (a low-wage man who marries a highly educated woman) and the "highly marriageables" (a highly educated man who marries a less educated woman).

Thai reveals that 55% the couples in his sample are the "unmarriageables." He devotes most of the book to examining them. He emphasizes that the brides and grooms tend to have clashing expectations of each other. Most Vietnamese women seek an overseas partner because they assume that it is a passage to "modernity" – egalitarian gender relations and freedom from cultural norms. Their views are often shaped by higher education, exposure to foreign influences, and personal and family wealth. In contrast, most Vietnamese American men want a marriage that would maintain traditional household arrangements, patriarchal dominance, and socio-economic stability. Because of this marital view, along with their low income and education, they are unable to find and attract a suitable partner in their local surrounding. With advice from a close friend or family member, they decided to enter the marriage market in Vietnam.

Despite these discrepancies, Thai argues that an international marriage remains attractive. By going global, Viet Kieu men and Vietnamese women are able to convert their expectations and personal assets into a glimmer of hope for maintaining personal self-worth.



Thai's creative and strategic method of inquiry deserves attention. (He details his reflections on methodology in Appendix A.) After a summer of initial fieldwork, he interviewed 129 brides, grooms, and their family members during the course of approximately a year. He intentionally selected couples who are still in the "migration waiting period" (when they have not been united) because this is the time when they "were just beginning to form expectations and opinions of each other and about what marriage might mean to them" (12-13). Unlike most transnational studies that begin with the overseas informants, Thai used contacts from the "community of origin" (mainly, Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta) for guidance and direction to connecting with grooms in the U.S.

The contextual history of politics and the flight of Vietnamese out of their country are briefly mentioned in the introduction but not in the following chapters. This is probably one of book's greatest oversights. Thai falls short of seriously examining the politics that embed relations between the overseas community and their homeland. Nevertheless, traces of political history reveal itself in a number of cases, such as the "refugee buddies" (33) in Chapter 1, and underpins the possibility and motivation of creating intimacy between Viet Kieu men and women from their distant ancestral homeland. This analytical consideration could possibly explain why overseas Vietnamese men are disproportionately less likely than Vietnamese women to pursue an international marriage despite their needs, motivations, and expectations. (Only 55% of the grooms in the sample, as opposed to 27% of the brides, reported that they were hesitant to pursue an international marriage until they encouraged or suggested by their close friend or family member.)

Despite this drawback, this is a major contribution to literatures on migration, marriage, masculinity, and Vietnamese Studies. Thai's commitment to his research is admirable.

With his cultural sensitivity and networks in Vietnam, he is also in a good position to examine the emerging and growing trend of international marriages between overseas Vietnamese men and Vietnamese women.