"Authentic" architecture, Indonesia's bloody fiction, Thai new wave cinema, two Burmese refugee tales, and Thai/American temple art

Thai train station at 4am | Anthony Medrano

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Dear readers –

Welcome to a new chapter in the genesis of the EXPLORATIONS graduate student journal of Southeast Asian studies. This year, the editorial staff has made a foray into new forms of expression, broadening the journal's format from scholarly papers and book reviews to include photo essays, film reviews and expository pieces we like to think of as "notes from the field." The move to encompass a wider range of materials in the journal allows us to capture a variety of new perspectives as they emerge in the vital, fast-paced and exciting region of Southeast Asia. Our new format hopes to reflect the diversity of the region while invigorating the discipline through innovative modes of scholarship.

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"Natural" Traditions:

Constructing Tropical Architecture in Transnational Malaysia and Singapore

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SYNOPSIS

This paper seeks to understand the resurgence of tropical architecture in Malaysia and Singapore by examining the discursive constructions and practices of tropical architecture in Malaysia and Singapore during the 1980s-1990s. Although tropical architecture is often hailed as "natural," I argue in this paper that "nature" is inextricably also "political" in its entanglement with the larger politics of globalization, postcolonial development and cultural identity. The arguments in this paper are made through a close study of three built exemplars of tropical architecture in Malaysia– The Datai Resort, The Tanjong Jara Hotel, and The Salinger House.

The Resurgence of Tropical Architecture

The 1980s saw a resurgence of tropical architecture in Malaysia and Singapore's architectural discourses. From key regional academic publications such as Tay Kheng Soon's Megacity in the Tropics (1989) and Ken Yeang's Tropical Urban Regionalism (1987) to popular picture books such as Robert Powell's Tropical Asian House (1996) and Tan Hock Beng's Tropical Architecture and Interiors (1994), numerous publications propagated tropical architecture and urbanism. This resurgence of tropical architecture came after decades of invisibility, when it hardly featured in architectural discourses. The last time tropical architecture featured prominently in architectural discourse in Malaysia and Singapore was in the 1950s and 1960s, during the period of decolonization and nation-building. Tropical architecture then referred to the International Style modern tropical architecture, as popularized in Maxwell Fry's and Jane Drew's seminal book Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone (1956). Modern tropical architecture was preceded by Colonial tropical architecture, as exemplified by the British Colonial Bunga-

low in India. There exists the notion that "tropical architecture" was a colonial invention[1] and one may argue that the resurgence of tropical architecture in the 1980s would inevitably be entangled with this colonial and neo-colonial history of tropical architecture but that is not within the scope of this paper.[2] The recent resurgence of tropical architecture brought about diverging tendencies in architectural designs, from ecological tropical architecture to neo-traditional tropical architecture to modern tropical architecture,[3] and became a highly contested domain;[4] one of the perceptible differences with its modern and colonial predecessors is the emergence of a type of architecture that appears traditional. This type of architecture appears to be traditional because it bears certain formal resemblances to traditional vernacular architecture and it is often constructed out of similar local construction material such as tropical hardwood employing traditional building crafts. However, this type of architecture that resembles traditional architecture needs to be differentiated from the traditional architecture in that they are produced in contemporary conditions under current social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Moreover, the contemporary architect chooses

to produce this type of architecture as a conscious decision, selecting from a wide array of aesthetic choices presented to him. This emergence of an architecture that appears traditional is especially apparent if we look at the award winners of Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) in Malaysia. Three of the four AKAA winners in Malaysia – Tanjong Jara Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitors' Center, Salinger Residence, and Datai Resort – fall under this category of tropical architecture. Interestingly, although these three AKAA winners appear traditional, their referents are not explicitly any type of particular traditional architecture per se, despite apparently bearing certain formal resemblance to particular traditional architecture. Instead, they are considered primarily as tropical architecture, with the referent being directed towards the primacy of tropical "nature" with the associated abstract notions such as environment, climate and ecology.

What led to the resurgence of tropical architecture in Malaysia and Singapore during the 1980s? Why was "nature" valorized and reference to specific "tradition" suppressed in this recent resurgence of tropical architecture? What are the larger socio-cultural, political and economic contexts underlying the production of the type of tropical architecture that appears traditional? What are the repercussions of this type of architecture and how could it be understood in relation to its predecessor of modern tropical architecture? I attempt to answer the above questions by examining the global, regional and national architectural discourses surrounding the production of tropical architecture in the 1980s, focusing specifically on discourses produced by institutions such as AKAA, Malaysia and Singapore Institutes of Architects. I situate this resurgence of tropical architecture in relation to the complex interactions (entailing confluence, conflation, disjunction and contradiction) within and between the following themes:

• Architecture and the politics of development: AKAA is an enterprise that seeks to promote alternative paradigms of development in response to the perceived failure (by the developing countries in general and the Islamic countries in particular) of the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigm of development. Intrinsic to this enterprise is the quest for alternatives to International Style modern architecture, which is synonymous with failed development. This AKAA-initiated quest for alternatives reclaimed

"traditional" architecture and reconstituted it as both "natural" and "sensuous," contributing to the resurgence of tropical architecture that appears traditional in Malaysia and Singapore. Tanjong Jara Hotel and Datai Resorts will be used as case studies to illustrate the issues raised in this section.

• Globalization and the politics of architectural identity: Appearing traditional is a way of articulating architectural identity through the assertion of difference in the purported homogeneity of the globalized world. It was an outcome of the negotiations and contestations between Malaysia's state imposition of ethno-religious symbols in architecture as "visible politics," the local architectural fraternity's assertion of the profession's creative autonomy, and their appropriation of the discourses of critical regionalism (disseminating from the West and through AKAA) and Austronesian regionalism (as revealed by linguistic and archaeological research into the prehistory of Southeast Asia). The discussion in this section will be illuminated by the case study of Salinger Residence.

I will argue that both "nature" and "tradition" are valorized in the resurgence of tropical architecture and deployed for an array of purposes within the above-mentioned themes– to validate and revive subjugated traditional architecture in the quest for alternative paradigms of development; to deflect the questions of problematic traditions in a multicultural, multiracial nation; to unify diverse traditions in a vaguely defined region; and to differentiate and thematize places in order to encourage new modes of consumption. However, despite all these different strategies of deploying "nature" and "tradition" by different agents, they are, inevitably, also very much structured by the hegemonic logic of capital accumulation. Instead of understanding "nature" and "tradition" as timeless and immutable entities, I argue that "nature" and "tradition" are continuously constructed and re-constructed, valued and de-valued according to the various strategies outlined above, and complicit with the capitalist modes of production and reproduction.

Natural Nature: Tropical Architecture and Constructing Nature

In many discourses, tropical architecture tends to be presented as "natural," or as self-evident for the "na-

ture" of the tropics. As Jimmy C. S. Lim, the architect of the Salinger Residence and one of the foremost practitioners of tropical architecture in Malaysia, puts it:

> We have plenty of sun, so I keep the sun out. We have a lot of rain, so I attempt to keep the rain out. We need a lot of shade, so I provide it by having a lot of trees. With a lot of leaves we should not have any gutters as blocked gutters are useless. Because we are living in a hot climate, we should have cross ventilation and as much space as we can.[5]

But what is "nature" and when is it "natural?" Donna Haraway reminds us that "nature cannot pre-exist its construction." Instead of assuming "nature" to be self-apparent, many scholars have posited "nature" as a situated knowledge,[6] one that is materially constructed and socially produced. However, one needs to qualify that by saying, that "nature" is constructed and produced does not equate to some kind of ontological relativism or saying that "nature" is untrue because one is not free to construct nature in any manner one wishes. Rather, understanding "nature" as construction(s) will lead us to ask: who speaks about which aspect(s) of "nature" for what purpose(s)?

What is the nature of "nature?" Raymond Williams notes that "nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language."[7] Williams distinguishes three specific intertwined meanings of the word:[8]

a) The ontological essence or essential quality of something

b) The inherent force which either directs the world or human being or both

c) The external material world itself

In Lim's statement about "tropical architecture" cited above, the assumptions are that the ontological essence of architecture is to provide shelter against the elements of "nature" (in the sense of meaning a) therefore tropical architecture is the "natural" response in that it is shaped by both the inherent force (in the sense of meaning b) of tropical "nature" (heat, humidity and heavy rainfall) and the external material world (the flora and fauna) of tropical "nature" (in the sense of meaning c). The three inter-related meanings of "nature" are collapsed in Lim's statement about tropical architecture, justifying the underlying ideology of environmental determinism. What is interesting about such an

ideological statement lies as much in what is left unspoken as what is said.

Interestingly, such a "naturalization" of tropical architecture has a colonial precedent. When the concept of tropical architecture was first invented and presented in a paper to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1868, the author of the paper T. Roger Smith rationalized the built form of British India Colonial bungalow as determined by the responses to the harsh Indian climate.[9] Under Smith's environmentally deterministic formulation, the significance of the dominance of the colonizers and their socio-cultural practices in producing the bungalow was concealed. As Anthony King noted:

> The anodyne phrase "tropical architecture" masks a cluster of controversial facts. Its emergence as a sphere of (European) knowledge marks the expansion of Europe into areas where Europeans had not previously lived. It elides or skims over the fact that "tropical architecture" was for people of alien cultures exercising colonial power. The application of its principles, whether concerning design, construction, materials, sanitation, lay-out or technology, first to colonial and then to "native" populations was inseparable from the total economic, social and political restructuring of the culture being controlled.[10]

In the discourse of colonial tropical architecture, nature, in this case climate, was given primacy in the determination of architectural forms and mobilized to "naturalize" colonization and conceal the unsavory aspects of colonialism.

Besides masking controversial fact in the process of naturalization, what is left unspoken in the construction of nature could also be located in what is deemed "unnatural." As David Demeritt noted, "these interrelated meanings of 'nature' depend upon linguistic (and conceptual) oppositions [my emphasis] to that which is said to be cultural, artificial, or otherwise human in origin... Since the cultural references by which what is not nature and the natural are defined change over space and time, so too must ideas of what nature is."[11]

Developing Traditions: "Unnatural" Development and AKAA's "Natural" Traditions

> "We were gifted with the word liberty, but were made slaves."[12]

-AKAA conference participant from India

For countries from the developing world, questions surrounding development are important issues in the production of architecture. In these countries, AKAA is an important institution because, unlike other architectural awards such as the Pritzker Prize, AKAA is not just concerned with architecture as an autonomous discipline and architectural excellence per se but also gives due consideration to the larger questions of development. AKAA, a triennial award, was established in 1977 to "address contemporary issues [of development] and sustain a dialogue with the best Islamic architectural achievements of the past."[13] The late seventies was a time when the Eurocentric paradigm of development with the West as the singular measure was being interrogated.[14] Under the Eurocentric paradigm of development, the non-West was regarded as backward and underdeveloped with the perpetual need to "catch-up" in order to achieve emancipation from poverty and attain "progress." Although development was premised upon the promise that "things are getting better all the time," its prolonged failure to deliver led instead to the perception that the paradigm of development was producing and sustaining the underdevelopment of the "Third World." Hence, development theories and the underlying Eurocentric modernist discursive formations were seen as a form of neo-colonial geopolitics that enabled the continual hegemony of the West through the use of "developmental language of emancipation to create systems of power in a modernized world."[15]

In the discourses of AKAA, the spread and dissemination of the architectural aesthetics of the International Style from the West to the developing world was interpreted as being complicit with neo-colonial project of development. The architectural aesthetics of International Style, produced under specific industrial conditions in the West that were lacking in the developing world, was seen as legitimizing the concomitant importation of modern (Western) building construction technology and industrialized building materials by the developing countries under the guise of "progress." The spread and dissemination of International Style was seen as precipitating the developing countries' reliance on foreign professional building expertise.[16] As such, deeply entrenched ideologies in modern architectural aesthetics and paradigms in architectural development only contributed to the pervasive underdevelopment of local building expertise, local building industry and local resource base in most of the developing world. The perceived failure of the development paradigm brought about widespread reevaluation and revival of that which has previously been rendered regressive (by the supposedly progressive International Style) and repressed- traditional architectural forms, techniques and practices. AKAA plays a pivotal role in this reevaluation and revival of traditional architecture of the developing world. This larger concern with issues of development explains why the title of the magazine that AKAA publishes is called Mimar: Architecture in Development,[17] why various Kampung (which is the Indonesian equivalent for village) Improvement Projects in Indonesia were awarded AKAA despite the "absence of notable physical architectural achievement;"[18] and why Soedjatmoko, a development specialist, was appointed as the chairman of the Master Jury for the third cycle of AKAA (1983-1986).

Issues of development are deeply entwined with questions of modernity and inevitably, one of the recurring themes in AKAA's discourse is that of "the dichotomy between 'modernity' (al-hadatha) and 'tradition' (al-turath)."[19] With the "chaotic and unsettling present"[20] in much of the developing world, which is largely attributed to the failed attempts at development and modernization, it is perhaps not surprising that AKAA turned away from a future-oriented notion of progress implicit in development and became inclined towards privileging the traditions of the historical past. Hence, one of AKAA's stated objectives is to "reawaken the cultural consciousness of Muslims and to sensitize those who would build in the Muslim world to the unique heritage of Muslim art and architecture"[21] by reclaiming traditions that are on the verge of vanishing. This is evident when one examines the list of AKAA award winners, where approximately half of the 76 winners (until 2001) are either heritage conservation projects or projects related to (re)interpretation and continuation of traditional building typologies, crafts and materials.[22] Another important indication is that two of the three recipients of the prestigious Chairman's award, presented to an individual architect in recognition of his/her lifetime achievement, are exponents of "neo-traditional" architecture– Hassan Fathy (1980) and Geoffrey Bawa (2001). Hassan Fathy was awarded to promote the architect's role as a "decoder

of a past legacy" and in recognition of the importance of "learning from vernacular architecture."[23] Geoffrey Bawa was credited with "raising both the formal and popular indigenous traditions from the degraded status assigned to them in the colonial era."[24] With these awards, AKAA "was recognized as championing indigenous architecture."[25] The extent of AKAA's reverence for tradition was such that it was accused of having "a romantic bias towards traditionalism, historicism and the vernacular"[26] by a dissenting member of the grand jury.

The justification for the "bias" is that traditional architecture is perceived to be in harmony with nature through place-specific design that is shaped by the intrinsic forces of the environment and utilizes local crafts and resources, while the International Style modern architecture uses modern technology that dominates over nature and brings about homogenized condition of placelessness and alienation by disturbing the supposed harmony between man and nature.[27] Hence, it is not surprising that "traditional" and "vernacular" are used in interchangeable manners whereby traditional is equated with that which is indigenous to the region while the vernacular architecture is assumed to be traditional and timeless. This romantic view of traditional architecture is evident in Hassan Fathy's remark:

> Before the advent of the industrial era and mechanization, man depended on natural sources of energy and available local materials in forming his habitat according to his physiological needs. Over many centuries, people everywhere appear to have learned to interact with their climate. Climate shapes the rhythm of their lives as well as their habitat and clothes. Thus they built houses that are more or less satisfactory at providing them with the microclimate that they need.[28]

Such a formulation is not dissimilar to the environmentalists' criticism of the techno-centricity and the domination over nature of modern industrialization, and their harking back to pre-industrial ideas about nature and man's harmonious relationship with nature through the reiteration of "demised" non-Western traditions.[29] This alignment between the traditional and the natural/ecological is noted and celebrated by Charles Correa:

> If we look at all the fashionable concerns of environmentalists today: balanced eco-systems, recycling of waste products, appropriate life-styles,

indigenous technology, etc., we find that people in the Third World *already have it all*.[30] [my emphasis]

In contrast to "unnatural" development and modern architecture that alienates man from his "natural" environment, traditional architecture is constructed as "natural" in that it returns man to his pre-industrial ontological essence of "dwelling" in harmony with nature. Compared to the "sterile" environment of the technocentric International Style modern architecture that supposedly impoverished the senses, traditional architecture in harmony with nature would apparently accentuate the sensorial experience of living in harmony with tropical nature creating "a heady cocktail of hedonistic delights, a kaleidoscope of emotions."[31]

Tanjong Jara Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitor Center

Tanjong Jara Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitor Center (Figure 1), completed in 1980 and awarded AKAA in 1983 during the second three-year-cycle of the award, is the earliest of the three case studies to be awarded the AKAA award. The complex[32] is the first major tourist facility in the underdeveloped east coast of peninsular Malaysia, which has "lagged behind in Malaysia's drive for modernization."[33] The complex was originally proposed in a 1971 tourism study commissioned by the Tourism Development Corporation of the Malaysian Government to transform the "culturally rich and physically beautiful but economically depressed east coast of Malaysia"[34] into a major tourist destination, providing an impetus to economic development in the region (Figure 2). The complex was planned to be sited in the State of Trengganu, specifically the Dungan area because an iron mine that was the traditional job provider there had closed and new employment opportunities were desperately needed there.[35]

In the AKAA Master Jury's citation, the architect and the developer of the complex were hailed for their "courage to search out and successfully adapt and develop an otherwise rapidly disappearing traditional architecture and craft" and that "the project has revived a number of building-material industries, crafts, and traditional constructional skills" producing "an architecture that is in keeping with traditional values and aesthetics, and of an excellence that matches the
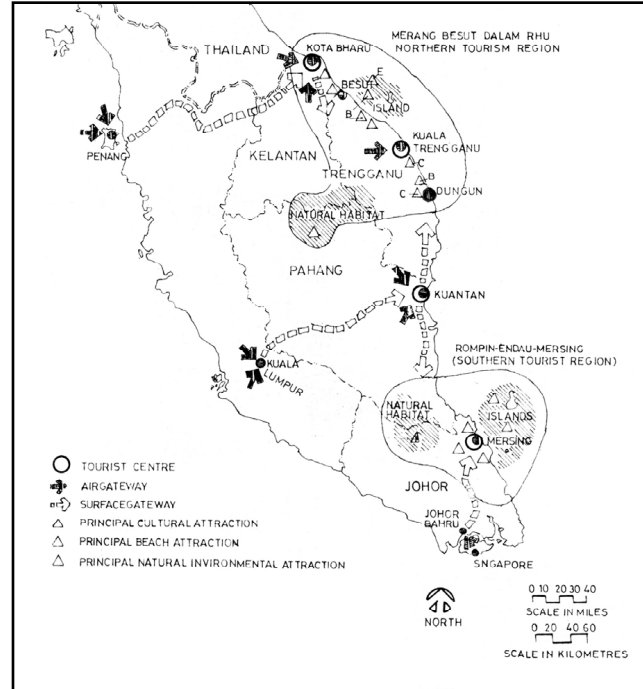
Left: Figure 1. Tanjong Jara Hotel exterior view: coconut trees, white sandy beach, drift log and "traditional" timber houses. (Source: Mimar). Right: Figure 2. Tourism Development Concept Map of Malaysia (Source: AKAA Technical Review)

best surviving examples."[36] The complex was also commended for not just only pursuing economic development but for following the "broader strategy for the development of local architecture and the economy."[37]

The design for Tanjong Jara Hotel follows AKAA's ideological alignment of "tradition" and "nature." Together with Peter Muller's works in Bali[38] and Geoffrey Bawa's works in Sri Lanka, Tanjong Jara Hotel is one of the earliest neo-traditional resorts/hotels in the region. It represents a new typology of boutique hotel that seeks to avoid the environmental and socio-cultural problems brought about by earlier tourism boom and hotel constructions[39] by proclaiming to be more sensitive to the ecologies of the natural environment and socio-cultural context. Tanjong Jara Hotel was designed by the Hawaiian architectural firm of Wimberley, Whisenand, Alison, Tong and Goo (WWATG)[40] based on the design brief of creating a project that would appear as "a natural, inevitable outgrowth of local elements– the land, sea, mountains and people who live and work there and their existing art and architecture."[41] Prior to commissioning WWATG in 1976, a modernist design scheme by Architects Team

3[42] was rejected because the modernist design "did not reflect anything Malaysian"[43] and was not sensitive to the fragile natural ecology of the site.

In search of the elusive "natural Malayness" desired by the developer, Tourism Development Corporation of Malaysia, WWATG researched extensively on traditional architecture of the east coast states of Malaysia and chose the traditional timber architecture of the Istana, royal palace of Malay Sultans, as the inspiration for their design. However, there were no discussions on the spatial structure of the buildings or the patterns and symbolism of the timber carvings, from which the inspirations would be drawn. Instead, the focus was on (re)presenting the "traditional" architecture as "natural," on how the Istana "blends in with the local environment and is ideally suited to local weather conditions."[44] The architectural features of the Istana, such as the porous walls, "open-sided rooms, lattice soffits, steep pitched roof with gable grilles"[45] are rationalized as environmental features that facilitate natural ventilation and help in achieving thermal comfort in the hot and humid tropics. Accordingly, it was claimed that these environmental features would eliminate the need for air-conditioning and achieve substantial savings in

construction cost and energy consumption. The environmental performance of the "traditional" architecture was presented in contrast to the energy profligacy of the modern building, which "often seems an aberration in the environment."[46]

Another feature of "traditional" architecture– that of being elevated on stilts– was used for Rantau Abang Visitor Center (RAVC) so as to minimize disturbance to the ecologically sensitive ground on the site. The beach at the site was one of the few remaining breeding grounds in the world for leather-back turtles, a species that that is facing the threats of extinction. Hence, "traditional" architecture is not only "natural" in its appropriateness to the climatic conditions of the tropics but also the fragile ecological conditions of the site. Moreover, for Tanjong Jara Hotel, drawing inspiration from Istana and incorporating "traditional" architectural elements entailed the use of local materials, such as the tropical hard and softwoods chengal, kapor and nyatoh; hand-made red Trengganu tiles kilned in nearby villages; and the employment of local timber craftsman to produce "authentic" traditional wood-carvings. According to the architects, to which the Master Jury of AKAA concurred, such utilization of "traditional methods in a honorable way" will help the local to preserve their heritage and prevent them from "losing their 'roots.'"[47] The "traditional" architecture of Tanjong Jara Hotel was thus not only "natural" in the environmental and ecological sense, but also in the social and cultural sense.

With traditions "naturalized," the architects were able to exercise their creativity to "mix-and-match" different "traditions" to achieve the desired effects for a "resort of international standards."[48] The grandeur of the architecture of Istana was combined with the "causal rambling" layout of a "Trengganu fishing village" to produce "picturesque vistas" that avoided any sense of "monolithicness."[49](Figure 3) Such a historical and socio-cultural incongruity of combining the royalty of the palatial architecture of the Istana, built for the Sultan (a ruler of Malay state), with the laity of the architecture of

the kampung (village), built for the Sultan's subject, could only be realized in a contemporary context, where the social hierarchy between the rulers and his subjects could be disregarded. In place of the feudal order, new social differentiation is defined according to different consumption capacities– whether one could afford to stay at Tanjong Jara Hotel and enjoy the "unmistakably Malay" blend of grandeur and picturesque (starting at US$200 a night for a basic room).[50] However, instead of an "unmistakably Malay" authenticity, Tanjong Jara Hotel is, what Jean Baudrillard calls, a simulation of hyperreal "traditions," one which supplants the origin.[51]

Datai Resort

Datai Resort (Figure 4) was completed in 1993 and awarded AKAA in 2001 during the eighth cycle of the award. Datai resort is built on Peninsular Malaysia's West Coast island of Pulau Langkawi. The Malaysian Government has been developing tourism on this heavily wooded and sparsely populated island that possesses "some of the country's finest coastal scenery"[52] since the 1980s. Datai Resort, completed in 1993, is located in an undeveloped part of the island, on a fragile coastal ecological site, at the intersection of the rainforest with the sea, encompassing highly sensitive eco-systems. The design of Datai Resort attempts to address the ecological and socio-cultural contexts in a

Figure 3. Site Plan of Tanjong Jara Hotel (Source: AKAA Technical Review)
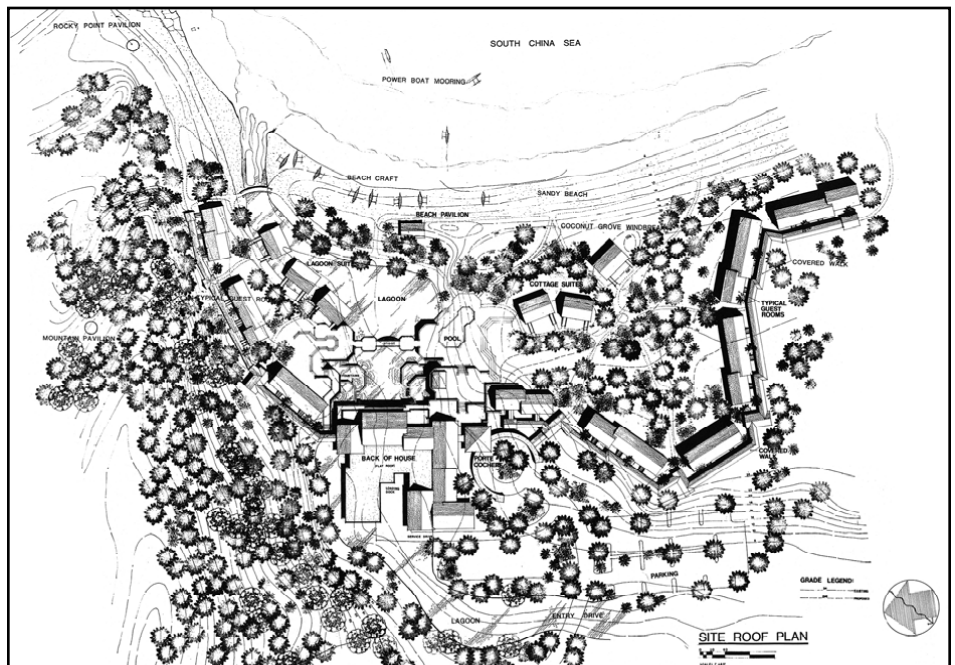
sensitive manner. The Singapore-based Australian architect, Kerry Hill, who was involved in the master-planning and the selection of the site from the onset, chose to locate the resort away from the sea to minimize visual disturbance to waterfront view. By situating the building away from the waterfront, Hill claimed that "the impact on a very fragile ecosystem containing swamps, freshwater streams, flora and fauna immediately adjacent to the beach has been minimised."[53] The resort was instead sited behind, on a ridge that descends through a steep slope to the waterfront. The visual bulk of the building was reduced through breaking down the massing of the resort into smaller buildings and distributing these buildings across the site in a manner that reduced tree felling. With the assistance of the consultants from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, measures taken to minimize disturbance to the surrounding rainforest included the provision of recycling plants, localized soak pits and septic tanks that allow filtered seepage of water back into the forest. Moreover, the resort bored its own wells and harvests some rainwater for its own water supply and efforts were taken to allow the original catchments and flow patterns to be maintained by minimizing disruption on the local topography and storm-water

drainage system. In the felling of the trees, trained elephants rather than bulldozers were used because they could penetrate the forest with minimum damage. After the felling of the trees, the 'festering wound' effect created by the exposure of the perimeter species to harmful ultraviolet rays was mitigated by careful replanting.[54] To further enhance what the architect considered as "communion with nature,"[55] trees felled during the clearing of the rainforest were reused. Some of the "tree trunks [were] left in their original form, with only the rough edges finished, so the visitors could experience the colonnaded area as extensions of the forest."[56] (Figure 5) Besides local timber, the other main construction material, granite, was also quarried locally on the island. Timber and granite were left to weather and age naturally and leave behind the patina of age. After the resort was opened, its operation included an education program where an in-house horticulturalist takes guest on tours to see the local flora and fauna. This activity is supplemented by resort-sponsored publications to educate the occupants about the diversity and richness of plants and wildlife in the forest. The resort even sponsors an experiment to compare the productivity of forest with agricultural land and "[t]he hotel and its horticulturalist are confi-

Left: Figure 4. Datai Resort in the middle of a tropical rainforest. (Source: Frampton, Correa and Robson eds., Modernity and Community)

Right: Figure 5. Some of the felled tree trunks were left in their original form giving the impression that the colonnaded area was an extension of the forest (Source: Architect's submission to AKAA)

dent they will prove that tropical forest can be as productive in economic terms as agricultural land."[57]

The alternative mode of development pursued in Datai Resort, just as the case of Tanjong Jara Hotel, could be seen as adopting the ideology of "sustainable development," as popularized by the 1987 Brundtland Report Our Common Future.[58] "Sustainable development" is an approach where previously irreconcilable dichotomies of economic growth (which would dominate over nature and exploit nature as resources) and the protection of the environment (which would thwart economic development) could be reconciled. The reconciliation could supposedly be achieved through the management of global environmental problems at a planetary scale. However, without any significant adjustments to the market systems, "the management of nature [would only] entails its capitalization, its treatment as commodity."[59] Is "sustainable development" not another guise under which the capitalist logic of developmentalism is reproduced?[60] Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that the resorts are designed first and foremost as "marketable products" central to which is the production of "exotic nature," for the consumption of "rich tourists from all over the world."[61] Even Kenneth Frampton has to confess that the Datai is but "a hedonistic complex catering to the high end of the elite global market."[62] Moreover, some facets of these developments were suppressed in order to present an image of environmentally friendliness. For example, the environmental impact of the construction of a 30km access road through the forest in the development of Datai and the provision of an 18-hole Championship golf course as part of the recreational facilities of the Resort were not taken into account when claiming that the Datai Resort is a sustainable development.

Besides presenting environmental and ecological sensitivity, the Datai resort was presented as a unique sensorial experience. In the words of the architect:

> We believe that hotels play a social role in which they offer a range of guest experience that transcends the norm of everyday life and hence, through a sequence of unfolding spatial experiences, the design of Datai seeks to promote a journey of discovery and ultimately, a sense of occasion.[63]

Raul Mehrotra, the technical reviewer of Datai for AKAA and himself a renown architect in India, com-

Figure 6. An advertisement of the original Tanjong Jara Hotel (Source: Mimar)

mented, "users enjoy not only a great sense of ceremony– like transversing a large stage set– but also well-lit and ventilated spaces."[64] As a commentator noted, "good design may be capable of eliciting strong emotional reactions"[65] and in the case of the Datai Resort, good design is indeed mobilized to create an illusory sense of occasion for the consumption of those who could afford it.

Both Tanjong Jara Hotel and Datai Resort are very successful resorts commercially. Datai especially has garnered an impressive list of 17 international awards.[66] The "naturalization" of traditions of Tanjong Jara Hotel and the heightening of sensorial experiences in Datai should not be understood outside the logic of product differentiation for "niche marketing" in a highly segmented tourism market (Figure 6). Even though AKAA considered them as more sensitive modes of alternative development attentive to local socio-cultural practices and the environmental implications, nowadays often couched in the language of sustainability, it should also be noted that these new modes of development are still primarily aligned to the logic of capital accumulation. Both Tanjong Jara Hotel and Datai Resort are in fact, what Ellen Dunham-Jones

theorized elsewhere as, highly customized architectural products in post-fordist mode of production.[67] Traditions and nature, instead of being "preserved" as constructed by the AKAA discourse, are being rarified and commodified as symbolic capital.[68] When tropical sensuality "infiltrates the intellect of the tropics and influence reasoning," instead of producing new emancipatory subjectivity as envisioned by Stagno's formulation of "I feel, therefore I am;"[69] it produces the delusory sense of subjectivity of "I consume, therefore I am." As Arjun Appadurai puts it:

> These images of agency are increasingly distortions of a world of merchandising so subtle that the consumer is increasingly helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser.[70]

(Re)locating Malaysia's Architectural Traditions: Regionalism and "Multicultural" Nature as Alibi for Problematic National Traditions

A key impetus behind the resurgence of tropical architecture in the 1980s was the state-initiated search for Malaysian architectural identity at that time. In 1981, there was a Seminar on National Identity in Art and Architecture, organized by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports[71] where the politicians made an official call for a Malaysian identity in architecture. The seminar was followed by a series of articles addressing the question of a Malaysian identity in architecture in Majallah Akitek,[72] public seminars such as the first "PAM Annual Discourse on Design"[73] organized by the Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) in 1983, the Malaysia Institute of Architects, and the 1983 AKAA regional seminar on "Architecture and Identity"[74] co-organized by AKAA, University of Technology in Malaysia and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

This search for a Malaysian identity in architecture arose from the confluence of a number of diverse factors. Firstly, it was about Mahathir Mohammad, Prime Minister of Malaysia who came to power in 1981, exploiting architecture's potential for the "visible politics"[75] of expressing Malay/Islamic nationalism under his peculiar brand of "authoritarian populism."[76] For "visible politics" to work, immediately recognizable exterior forms using ethnic and religious "symbols" were especially appealing to the politicians.[77] Mahathir

was quoted as saying: "There should be no reason why a skyscraper should not have a roof which reflects our national identity. Many elements of Malaysian art can be incorporated into any modern building."[78] Secondly, the phenomenal regional economic growth starting in the 1980s, has led to increasing self-confidence and rising self-awareness of Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. With the economists predicting the 21st century as the "Asia-Pacific Century," rapid economic expansion provided Southeast Asian countries an impetus to assert difference from the hegemonic "West," which could be seen as representing "a wished-for resistance to modernity and modernism and a peculiarly colonial and post-colonial form of redemption."[79] Thirdly, as discussed earlier, there was pervasive disenchantment with the paradigm of development and the associated International style modern architecture.

One of the earliest manifestations of Mahathir's "visible politics" is the Bumiputra Bank completed in 1980 by Kumpulan Akitek. It was "hailed as a pioneer in the emerging postmodern search for a Malaysian identity in the 1980s."[80] In this project, a high-rise International Style office tower is juxtaposed with a low-rise banking hall, articulated as a blown-up version of "traditional" Malay house (Figure 7). The Putra World Trade Center, completed in 1985 and designed by the same architect, is another project with similar awkward juxtaposition of an over-sized "traditional" Malay house with an International Style office tower. (Figure 8) Both simulations of "traditional" Malay architecture are based on superficial similarity in exterior form, ignoring the difference in tectonics.[81] Besides the reference to ethnic traditional architecture, the other tendency of "visible politics" is to appropriate religious references. Dayabumi Complex (Figure 9) completed in 1984 by MAA and BEP Akitek and Tubang Haji Building completed in 1986 by Hijjas Kasturi Associates are two early examples of high-rise buildings with Islamic references.[82] For the Dayabumi complex, the sun-shading grilles and the plan of the office tower are derived from Islamic geometrical motifs,[83] while the five massive columns[84] on the exterior of the Tubang Haji building allude to the five pillars of faith in Islam.[85] The latest manifestations of Mahathir's "visible politics," albeit on a much grander scale, such as the mega-projects of Petronas Towers and Putrajaya (Figure 10), perhaps show the ascendancy of the mobi-

Left: Figure 7. Exterior view of Bumiputra Bank. The "traditional" styled building is the banking hall while the International-style high rise behind is the office tower (Source: Author's photograph) Right: Figure 8. Exterior view of the conference Hall of Putra World Trade Centre. (Source: Author's photograph)

lization of "Islamic forms" over that of the use of "ethnic symbols" in the representation of Malaysian identity in architecture.

Be it the use of "ethnic symbols" or the application of "Islamic forms," the types of architecture produced under Mahathir's "visible politics" are considered by modernist architectural critics, such as Kenneth Frampton, as forms of "Populism... [that] function as a communicative or instrumental sign."[86] Frampton's "Populism" refers to architectural "Postmodernism"[87] that has pervaded global architectural production, including those in Southeast Asian cities, since the 1980s. According to Mohammed Arkoun, the chief ideologue of AKAA discourses, "Postmodernism" has reduced traditional religious and ethnic symbols to "mere signals...[that] have lost all their old symbolic value in the contemporary design environment."[88] Thus, the onslaught of "Postmodernism" led a critic to describe a Southeast Asian city as becoming the "playground... for pastichers, those who are producing wholesale imitations of Western [and local traditional] architectural styles for public consumption."[89] Underneath these criticisms was the perception that "Postmodernism" was countering certain deeply entrenched tenets of design in modernism, such as the honesty of architectural expression in function, structure and construction; and abstract language of architectural expression, devoid of explicit ornamentation. Hence, "Postmodernism" was deemed superficial and skin-deep because it produced scenographic effects instead of tectonics innovation,[90] and it was based on imitation

of ornamental "traditional" forms (pastiches) instead of interpretation of spatial and formal principles.[91] Similar perceptions were shared by many Malaysian architects[92] and some of them derided the architects practicing "Postmodernism" as "tarting up" their designs.[93]

Moreover, the Malaysian architects felt that the autonomy of their profession, especially with regard to their design expertise, often idealized as a creative act

Figure 9. Exterior view of Dayabumi Complex. (Source: Author's photograph)

Figure 10. Alignment of State and Religion: View of power center in Putrajaya with the Prime Minister's Office to the right (with Green Dome) and the Putra Mosque to the left (with Pink Dome) (Source: Author's photograph)

unfettered by politics, was threatened by Mahathir's "visible politics" and the possible imposition of a particular style of architecture as Malaysian identity. In his status paper presented at the Seminar on National Identity in Art and Architecture, the president of PAM was emphatic that:

> an architect is an individualist in his mental and creative thinking which needs to be flexible to meet the conflicting demands. Therefore, the pre-determined concepts of planning, or form styles or shapes are totally inappropriate to his nature, training and make-up and he cannot be dictated to create pre-conceived national styles and still come up with good architecture.[94]

It is therefore not surprising that one of the responses of PAM to the politicians' call for Malaysian architectural identity was to initiate an Annual Discourse on Design from 1983. The pronounced purpose of organizing a public forum for discussing Design was to reinvigorate Design with a capital 'D'– the "raison d'etre... [and] the very basis of [the] profession"[95] of architects– so that the Malaysian architect could "attempt to improve the quality of architecture and be less so dictated by whatever powers that be (Dollars and Politics)."[96]

Other than threatening the tenets of modernist design and the autonomy of the profession, the application of ethnic and religious specific signs and the underlying Malay/Islamic nationalism of Mahathir's "visible politics" was perceived to be inappropriate for the multi-racial, multi-cultural society of Malaysia. For the profession of architecture, within which many architects are Chinese, the "implied ethnic [and religious] sectarianism" is "dangerous because it inadvertently exacerbates ethnic cleavages that lie just below

the surface of new-state cultures."[97] Even if the problems of Mahathir's ethnic politics in multi-racial Malaysia are disregarded, another problematic aspect of the expression of Malaysian identity in architecture would surface– should the identity be ethnic-based (through the use of "ethnic symbols") or religion-based (through the use of "Pan-Islamic clichés")? This is not an easily resolved question because "Malayness rests on three arches referred to locally as agama, bahasa dan rajah, literally religion/Islam, language/Malay and royalty/sultans."[98] Even if this question could be resolved, there are further complications, such as "What exactly constitutes an Islamic architecture?" and the relevance of "Islamic forms" to Malaysia. A writer noted, "an Uzbek muqarna or an Iranian iwan do not spell 'Malaysian' any more than a deconstructivist LRT station or a pseudo-Egyptian shopping mall."[99] He has perhaps noted the use of different Islamic motifs is not unrelated to the logic of "postmodernism" and the proliferation of different architectural styles in late-capitalism. The problematic "traditions" implicit in Mahathir's visible politics contributed to the shift in locating identity from within the national context to that of the broader regional context of "tropical Asian countries."[100] Instead of referring to problematic ethnic and religious "traditions," the regional identity would be based on the "more intrinsic design agenda... [of] the environment itself."[101] Hence, the regional identity would be located in "tropical architecture," one which is derived from the environment of the redefined imaginary boundaries of the tropics.

Regionalism

Besides the aforementioned problems of appropriating "traditions" and imposing selective ethnic and

religious identities in Malaysia's context, the shift from locating identity in the national context to the broader regional context should also be attributed to the dissemination of the discourses of regionalism in AKAA contexts. Following the 1983 AKAA regional seminar on "Architecture and Identity" held in Kuala Lumpur was the 1985 AKAA regional seminar on "Regionalism in Architecture" held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In Suha Özkan's introduction to the 1985 seminar, he noted, "[I]t is very difficult to talk about identity without going into regionalism. A geographical region defines many aspects of society both culturally and environmentally."[102] By associating the problems of identity formation in the developing world with the regionalism discourse disseminating from the West, Özkan inadvertently weakens the socio-political dimensions of the debate of modernization and quest for identity in the developing world with a discourse formulated for the developed world and responding to its own particular set of problems.[103] The discourse of critical regionalism, as expounded by historians/theorists from the West such as Kenneth Frampton and William Curtis (both of whom were participants at the 1985 seminar) is purportedly a form of resistance against both the superficial historicism of architectural postmodernism and the placeless homogenizing tendencies of International Style architecture, with an underlying objective to resuscitate modern architecture from its supposed bankruptcy. As such, the discourses of critical regionalism emphasize the search for "deeper lessons of order,"[104] privileging "indigenous archetypes" against "national stereotypes," "tectonics" against "scenography," "transformation" against "transfer,"... etc.

However, as Curtis admitted, "'Region' is at best a hazy notion. It may refer to the distribution of racial or ethnic groups; to common geographical or climatic features; to political boundaries de-limiting a tribe or some other federation..."[105] Hence, the discourses of critical regionalism cannot but be general and abstract, resorting to vague statements and familiar categories such as "regionalism is a restorative philosophy in favour of supposed harmony between people, their artifacts and nature."[106] It also appears that the discourses of regionalism seek to overplay the role of geography in determining architecture and underplay other complex religious and political forces. For instance, Curtis insisted that regionalism in Islamic countries "identifies many of the most relevant patterns for dealing with climate, local material and geography in epochs before the arrival of Islam."[my emphasis][107] In the quest for "deeper" order, certain patterns are idealized and imbued with timeless qualities while others are rendered as inhibitive obstacles that should be discarded.

As one of the most abstract qualities, "nature" would emerge to serve as the common denominator for diverse "traditions" within the rather undefined region. "Nature" is also adequately vague to accommodate a variety of different approaches and conceal larger ignorance about the socio-cultural and political specificities of a locale. Hence, the loaded symbolism of Charles Correa's later works, which are infused with "Indian" mysticism, was simply construed by Curtis as the modernist "form-follows-climate" approach, and:

> is based on the consistent strategies directed at the outdoor room, the ambiguous edge, the shaded platform, the meandering route and so on. In other words he has tried to work out a viable modern language that draws upon the past eras without mimicking them. More than that Correa had to adapt his solutions to the wide range of Indian climate, from the dry heat of the north to the damp tropical conditions of the south.[108]

Similarly, when Geoffrey Bawa was presented the AKAA's prestigious "Chairman's Award" in 2001, he was singled out particularly for being an exponent of "an architecture that is environmentally in harmony with tropical contexts... [and] in creating an architectural language that is fully integrated with its site and place."[109] "Nature," in the form of climate, local resources and site conditions, gains prominence in the discourses of regionalism.

Based on abstractions and board generalizations, the region in the discourse of regionalism has fluid boundaries that could be easily be configured and reconfigured to serve different constellations of alliances as it is not difficult to locate some level of commonalities even between very dissimilar entities. This fluidity of regional boundaries has been mobilized by Malaysia and Singapore architects, such as Tay Kheng Soon and Ken Yeang, to (re)imagine a regional tropical architecture and city. As Abidin Kusno noted elsewhere, this tropical imagining is "an abstraction of 'people,' 'Asian' and 'independent identity' and a reference to a translocal pan-Asian environment that is deprived of

any localized cultural categories."[110] Recently, tropical regionalism was again reconfigured by Alexander Tzonis, the historian/theorist who first coined the term "critical regionalism," to include "representatives as varied as possible from the subregions of overall tropical regions."[111] Although Tzonis claimed tropical critical regionalism as an emancipatory form of architectural identity that resists the hegemony of the International style modern architecture, he actually evoked the colonial hegemonic construction of the tropics, citing Anthony King's work on the British colonial bungalow while remaining silent on the fact that the bungalow was a product of socio-cultural and political practices of colonialism, which embedded the asymmetrical power-relations between the colonizer and the colonized. When I raised the problem of "the tropics" as being too diverse and heterogeneous and overly undefined to be useful in the articulation of any form of common identity with Jimmy Lim and Tay Kheng Soon, prominent architects in Singapore and Malaysia, they acknowledged that problem and in turn counter-proposed modified, but in my opinion equally problematic, regional formulations. One proposed "Asian tropical architecture" while the other suggested "equatorial architecture."[112] It appears to me that they are primarily interested in going beyond the confines of the modern nation-state, and its concomitant politics, by formulating a supranational identity, but they are not too concerned with the validity of their regional configuration.
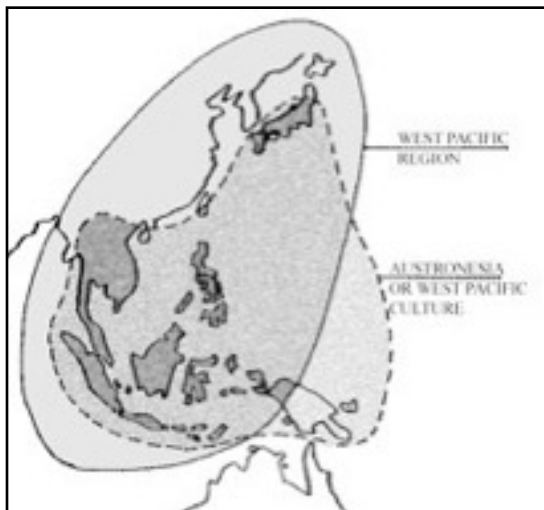
Austronesian Architecture

Other than the discourse of (critical) regionalism, a n-

Figure 11. Sumet Jumsai's sketch of Austronesia and West Pacific (Source: Sumet Jumsai, "The West Pacific Region versus Punk Architecture." Redrawn by author)

other

key influence in the imaginings of a transnational region in Southeast Asia during the 1980s is the discourse of Austronesia. Based on linguistic reconstruction and archaeological evidence, scholars have been able to trace the Austronesian seafaring migration that might have started as early as 5,000-6,000 years ago from coastal south China via Taiwan. Austronesia refers to the broad region that stretches from island Southeast Asia, such as present day Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, to places further afield, such as the Pacific islands and even Madagascar, which came to share common biological, linguistic and cultural characteristics because of maritime migration.[113] Architectural historians and theorists were undoubtedly influenced by this discourse. Accordingly, some of them argue that architecturally, the houses in the Austronesian region share certain common characteristics.[114] One of them, Thai architect Sumet Jumsai, presented his version of Austronesian culture and architecture that is loosely based on the linguistic and archaeological scholarship.[115] Jumsai sees Southeast Asia as belonging to the larger region of Austronesia, or what he calls, "West Pacific." (Figure. 11) Jumsai argues that underlying Austronesia is an Austronesian culture that has ancient origin that precedes even the beginnings of the two cultural mainstreams in Asia – India and China. Jumsai sees Austronesian culture as constituting the oft-ignored third cultural mainstream that should rightfully coexist with those of India and China.[116] By suggesting the greater continuity from prehistoric antecedents to modern Southeast Asia, Jumsai's construction of Austronesian culture helps elevate Southeast Asia from the shadows of the two major civilizations of China and India that purportedly shaped its civilization. Not only is Southeast Asia no longer a backward appendage to the more advanced cultures of India and China, Jumsai's construction also provides a unifying historical origin to the culturally diverse, vaguely defined and only recently invented Southeast Asia[117] and accordingly, the basis for a new regional imagining for architects in Southeast Asia.

The prehistoric unifying origin of Austronesia could be located in "nature" and geography. For Sumet Jumsai, the Austronesian culture is a water-based culture as shaped by the geography of the coastlines, islands and archipelagos of the Austronesian region. Similarly, the aquatic and

semi-aquatic architecture of the "house on stilts"[118] that characterized the Austronesian region is deemed to be a natural outcome of environmental factors. According to Jumsai, this geographical instinct of the water-based culture is transcendental,

> In West Pacific, particularly in Southeast Asia, we are linked by this instinct, which *transcends the later religious and cultural cross-currents*, an instinct which originates from that point in time when our habitats were water-bound. [my emphasis][119]

On hearing Jumsai's presentation at an AKAA conference in Malaysia, prominent Singapore architect, Tay Kheng Soon remarked "[a]s we are more and more exposed to this kind of research we begin to understand that we are not national entities as such, but are a common people in Southeast Asia; we have a certain distinct tradition with a distinct underlying area of subconscious."[120] For Tay, the architectural identity of Southeast Asia is to be located in "geography and prehistory, but not history as history is corrupted by politics."[my emphasis][121] Tay explained that "geography is the wisdom of the inhabited earth."[122] By emphasizing the "instinct" inherited from the prehistoric past, the "subconscious" that lies within and "wisdom of the inhabited earth," are Jumsai and Tay not also urging the Southeast Asian architect to search deep within his/her self for his/her creative identity? By alluding that the genius of place is to be found within the genius of the (architect's) self, are Jumsai and Tay not also attempting to carve out an autonomous space for the modern Southeast Asian architect where he/she could exercise his/her creativity without restraint? Other than providing a new regional imagining that propels Southeast Asia into the future as Kusno claims,[123] could it be that the discourse of Austronesia, with its emphasis on the primacy of "nature" and geography, is also an attempt to delineate for architecture an autonomous sphere of activity, and for the architect a continual professional relevance and

creative autonomy in the contemporary world?

Salinger Residence[124]

The Salinger Residence (Figure 12), completed in 1992, was awarded AKAA in 1998 during the seventh award cycle. The house was designed for Dr. Haji Rudin Salinger, an American citizen of French and German descent. He first came to Malaysia as a Peace Corps volunteer, fell in love with the place and chose to return years later, converted to Islam, married and settled down. Dr. Salinger is a connoisseur of Malaysian culture, having written papers on Malaysia traditional crafts such as timber woodcarving and handmade clay roof tiles, and Malaysian cooking and culture.[125] According to the architect, Dr. Salinger desired a "distinctively Malaysian house"[126] that would serve as a cultural center, where he could conduct orientation classes for expatriates where visitors would spend a whole day in his house learning "[stereo]typical Malaysian activities such as batik making, rice grinding, etc."[127] Hence, the architect, Jimmy C. S. Lim's declared intention was to reinterpret the "traditional" Malay house typology in order to produce a "uniquely Malaysian vernacular."[128]

Although the spatial conception of Salinger Residence is unmistakably modern, with the juxtaposition of two equilateral triangles on plan and the asymmetrical interlocking angular spaces in section,[129](Figure 13) traditional Malay architecture is evoked through the association of the spaces in Salinger with traditional building components and the quest for "authenticity"

Figure 12. Exterior view of Salinger House (Source: Robert Powell, Tropical Asian House)

Figure 13. Plans and Section of Salinger House (Source: Robert Powell, Tropical Asian House)
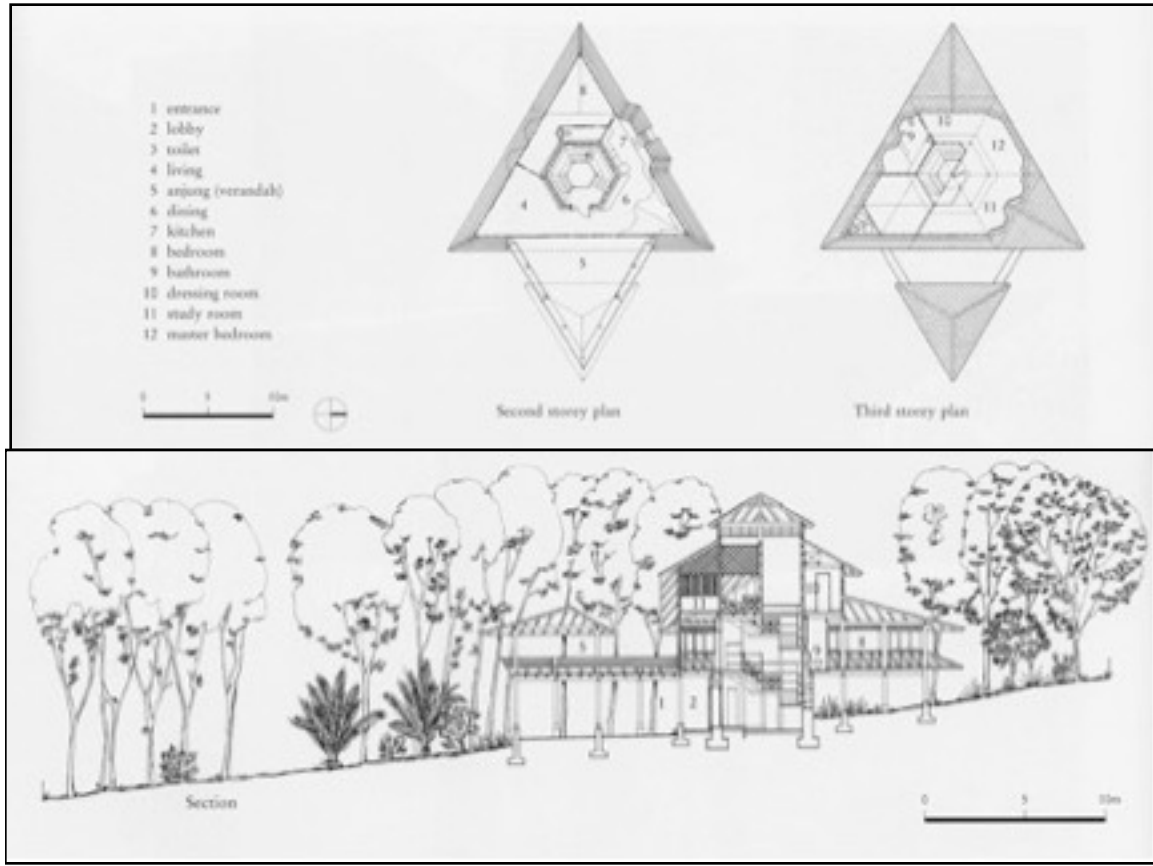
through the faithful use of traditional crafts and the strict adherence to traditional rituals. For example, the verandah is associated with the traditional Malay House's anjung (entry porch) and the roof over the verandah is related to the waqaf, which is "a gift of money that is translated into a physical structure to provide shade for men working in the rice fields."[130] The constructional method and process is especially unusual in contemporary suburban Malaysia in its faithful compliance with vanishing traditional techniques and rituals. In contrast to the standard industry practice of employing contractors using low-cost, unskilled and young laborers, a team of craftsmen from the Malay heartland of east coast Malaysia, all of whom were over 60 years of age, was employed by the client to build Salinger Residence. The team was led by Ibrahim Adam, whose physical disabilities of being blinded in one eye and having no right hand actually emphasized his ingenuity. They employed laborious traditional building techniques, where timber members are held together by traditional joinery and wooden pegs (tebuk pasak) without the use of nails or bolts. The original details by the architect which were designed using metal fittings were changed to suit the traditional construction techniques, in consultation with the craftsmen.[131] The conveniences of modern machinery were irrelevant as a portable cement mixer was the only machinery employed and all the timber members were lifted into place by a system of pulleys and hoists. Traditional building customs of a bygone era were observed, for example, the timber used for the construction of the house came from trees personally selected by the craftsmen from the east coast states of Trengganu and Kelantan; the clay roof tiles were hand-made by craftsman from the east coast; and at the raising of the Tiang Seri (first column), Surat Yassine from the heart of the Qur'an and Doa'a Salamat were read by a religious teacher. These different factors perhaps account for the unusually lengthy period (by Malaysian standards) of six and a half years taken to complete the construction.

Despite the apparent reverence for tradition, Jimmy Lim chose to (re)present the basis of his reinterpretation of the elements of traditional Malay House using the justificatory structure of "ecologically sustainable

principles," claiming that building with "minimum impact upon the environment" was "one of the driving forces in designing."[132] Hence, the elevation of the house on stilts and its location on the highest point of the site was rationalized as to take advantage of the prevailing winds for cross ventilation and natural cooling, and reduce water run-off during the monsoon seasons. Like the previous example of Tanjong Jara Hotel, architectural features such as the porous walls and the deep overhangs were rationalized in terms of facilitating ventilation and providing shade and protection from the heavy tropical monsoon rain. The choice of tropical hardwood as the main construction material was cited as a "renewable resource," a fact not uncontroversial,[133] and considered as an ecological building material that has lower embodied energy than other common construction materials such as concrete and steel by the technical reviewer.[134] However, there is no mention or discussion as to what constitutes a "uniquely Malaysian vernacular" and how the Salinger Residence is a "distinctively Malaysian House" as Lim claimed in his submission for the award. Instead, when the question of a Malaysian architectural identity was raised during my interview with Lim, he deflected the question with vague notions about how he managed to "rediscover" himself and "understand ourselves" through shutting himself off from overseas influences when he first returned to Malaysia in 1972 after spending more than a decade in Australia.[135] This emphasis on self is not different from the earlier emphasis on "instinct," "subconsciouness" and "wisdom of the inhabited earth" in the Austronesia discourse. Through the conflation of the two selves – himself (Lim) and ourselves (the citizens of Malaysia) – Lim draws a parallel between his own self-discovery and the search for Malaysian architectural identity. By re-centering the role of the creative architect and the individual genius in the question of a Malaysian architectural identity, Lim could afford to avoid any discussion of ethnicity and nationalism in spite of his desire to create a "Malaysian vernacular." Instead, Lim emphasized on the need to "reinterpret these elements [of traditional Malaysian architecture] in the modern context"[136] and designing according to the "ecological sustain-

able principles." Even though the craftsmen, their techniques and the building material originated from the Malay heartland of east coast Malaysia, Lim's "Malaysian" architecture (not "Malay" architecture) is an abstract, unbounded notion, part of the "wisdom of the inhabited earth" gleaned from the larger regional geographical imaginings of the "tropics" and "Austronesia."

(De)valuing Nature: Traditions, Nature and the Stigmata of Capitalism

During my visit to Trengganu in 2000, I discovered that Rantau Abang Visitor Center had closed down, the structures had been abandoned and "nature" had reclaimed the ruinous structures. The so-called Ecotourism there proved to be unsustainable. The numbers of leatherback turtles in Rantau Abang Beach have declined to an extent of near extinction and tourist numbers too have dwindled.[137] Tanjong Jara Hotel too has changed. The management has changed hands and the hotel was extensively refurbished. It appeared that the timber structures, especially those at the base in contact with the ground and water, might have deteriorated badly as the new structures were designed with masonry bases (Figure 14). Similarly, when I visited Jimmy Lim in August 2004, I was told that the Salingers had sold their residence and it is no longer serving as a "Malay cultural center." When I asked Lim for directions to visit the Salinger Residence, he was

Figure 14. View of the New Tanjong Jara Hotel (Source: Tanjong Jara Hotel official website)

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Figure 15. 2002 view of Salinger Residence (Source: Janita Han)

claim-

ing that the neighborhood had changed beyond even his recognition and dissuaded me from going there. Instead, Lim drove me around Kuala Lumpur to view other well-maintained houses he designed. I subsequently found out from a former student of mine who visited the Salinger Residence in 2002 that the house has weathered badly and was in a dire condition – the timber structures were decolorized and stained with algae and many of them have hairline cracks (Figure 15).[138]

One might argue that the fates of the case studies are merely isolated instances and not representative of any larger phenomenon. However, I argue that their fates are not unrelated to the manner in which "nature" and "traditions" were constructed and valued. Although the case studies were all exquisitely designed and crafted architectural objects, their "traditions" were not traditional and their "nature" was not natural but constructed by and complicit with the hegemonic logic of the capital. In these projects, both "traditions" and "nature" were valued on monetary terms and constructed as commodities for consumption. Sustainable development only serves as another guise for the reproduction of capitalist logic of development. Hence, these commodified hyperreal "traditions" and "natures" are subjected to the ever-updating fashion of consumption trends, and the constant "creative" destruction of the capitalist mode of (re)production. When the commodities outlive their "shelf life" or need to be re-thematized to extend their "shelf life" in the marketplace, "nature" and "tradition" would necessarily have to be re/de-constructed re/de-valued.

End Notes

[1] See Anthony King, *The Bungalow, The Production of a Global Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984)

[2] For a (post)colonial history of tropical architecture in Southeast Asia, see Jiat-Hwee Chang, "Hybrid Modernities and Tropical Architecture in Southeast Asia" *DOCOMOMO* 29, (2003): 76-81.

[3] The three admittedly reductive categories of "tropical architecture" in Singapore and Malaysia here refer to the common labels of the works of the three arguably most renowned practitioners in Singapore and Malaysia – Ken Yeang, Jimmy C. S. Lim and Tay Kheng Soon. The labels serve more as an indication of the diversity of approaches to "tropical architecture" than as precise descriptive categories.

[4] See, for example, the recent debate between Tay Kheng Soon and Chan Soo Khian in *Singapore Architect* Journal. Tay, Kheng Soon, "Neo-Tropicality or Neo-Colonialism" in *Singapore Architect* 211 (2001): 21 and Chan, Soo Khian, "Who is afraid of the Neo-Tropical" in *Singapore Architect* 212 (2001): 24-25.

[5] Cited in Robert Powell, "Introduction" *The Tropical Asian House* (Singapore: Select Books, 1996), 13.

[6] I am referring to the work of a group of geographers and the field of political ecology. For the work of the geographers, see, for example, the essays in Noel Castree and Bruce Braun eds., *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). For political ecology, see, for example, Michael Watts and Richard Peet eds., *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 1996 [1st ed.]).

[7] Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 219.

[8] In the following summary and extrapolation of William's meanings of nature, I rely on David Dereritt's insightful interpretations in his "Being Constructive about Nature" in Castree and Braun eds., *Social Nature*, 22-40.

[9] King, *The Bungalow,* 46.

[10] Ibid., 259.

[11] Demeritt, "Being Constructive about Nature," 32

[12] Mulk Raj Anand, "Background: A Vision of Harmony, of Hands and Green Grass" in Robert Powell ed., *Regionalism in Architecture* (Geneva and Singapore: AKAA and Concept Media, 1985), 41.

[13] Renata Holod, "Looking Back, Looking Forward: The Award in Perspective" in Cynthia Davidson and Ismail Serageldin eds., *Architecture Beyond Architecture* (London: Academic Editions, 1996), 160.

[14] For a brief introduction to the genealogy of development and development discourses, see Watts and Peet, "Liberation Ecology: Development, Sustainability, and the Environment in an Age of Market Triumphantism" in *Liberation Ecologies,* 13-27.

[15] Ibid., 17.

[16] See, for example, Shanti Jayewardene, "Reflections on Design in the context of Development," *Mimar* 27 (1988): 70-75.

[17] Published from 1981 to 1992. Ceased publication in 1992.

[18] Ismail Serageldin, *Space for Freedom: The Search for Architectural Excellence in Muslim Societies* (Geneva and London: AKAA and Butterworth Architecture, 1989), 18.

[19] This dichotomy persists despite the fact its inadequacy has always been raised. Ibid., 28.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Although officially the AKAA is a program for Muslims, AKAA is a much more inclusive program that deals with the developing world at large, especially those countries in Asia and Africa. Many non-Muslim projects have also been awarded. See Serageldin, *Space for Freedom,* 16.

[22] A large proportion of the rest of the projects are public housing and infrastructure related projects, including self-help housing improvement and the renowned Grameen Bank Housing Program. Only a very small number of projects awarded could be considered "modern," at least aesthetically. For a recent overview of the projects awarded under AKAA, see Suha Özkan, "Cultivating Architecture" in Kenneth Frampton, Charles Correa and David Robson eds., *Modernity and Community: Architecture in the Islamic World* (London and Geneva: Thames and Hudson and AKAA, 2001), 161-170.

[23] Serageldin, *Space for Freedom*, 24.

[24] Shanti Jayewardene, "Bawa: A Contribution to Cultural Regeneration" *Mimar* 19 (1986): 49.

[25] Serageldin, *Space for Freedom*, 26.

[26] Mehmet Douruk Pamir, "Dissenting Reports" in Serageldin ed.," *Space for Freedom*, p. 75. He was protesting the 1986 (third cycle) grand jury's decision to leave out modern works such as SOM's National Commercial Bank in Jeddah, Henning Larsen's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh and especially Louis Kahn's modern masterpiece of Sher-E-Bangla-Nagar Parliament Building in Dhaka.

[27] This view is not only commonly expressed in AKAA discourses but has a history in the architectural discourse in the West from Amos Rapoport to Bernard Rudofsky, see Susan Ubbelohde, "Ecological Vernacular" *Design Book Review*, 20 (1991): 27-29. For discourses related to AKAA, see, for example, Mulk Raj Anand, "Background: A Vision of Harmony, of Hands and Green Grass," Uttam C. Jain, "Regionalism – Resources for Identity" and Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "A Case for Indigenous Development" in Powell ed., *Regionalism in Architecture*, 40-57.

[28] Hassan Fathy, *Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture: Principles and Examples with Reference to the Hot Arid Climates*, Walter Shearer and Abd-El-Rahman Ahmed Sultan eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7.

[29] See David Pepper, *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[30] Charles Correa, "Scanning the Options" in Serageldin ed., *Space for Freedom*, 272.

[31] Powell, "Introduction," 13.

[32] Although the Tanjong Jara Hotel and the Rantau Abang Visitors' Centre are located 10 kilometers apart, they were designed by the same architects, developed and managed by the same people (Tourism Development Corporation of Malaysia) and conceived as a single scheme. As such, I consider them as one complex and use the term Tanjong Jara Hotel to refer to both of them.

[33] Sherban Cantacuzino, "Tanjong Jara Beach Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitors' Centre" in Sherban Cantacuzino ed., *Architecture in Continuity* (New York: Aperture, 1985), 141.

[34] Syed Zaighah S. Jaffery, "AKAA Technical Review Summary" 1983, available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 15 July 2004.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Cantacuzino, "Tanjong Jara Beach Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitors' Centre," 141.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Peter Muller is the architect of Kayu Aya Hotel (later Bali Oberoi) and Amandari in Bali. He is considered the pioneer of Balinese Style tropical architecture. See Philip Goad and Patrick Bingham-Hall, *Architecture Bali: Architecture of Welcome* (Sydney: Pesaro Publishing, 2000)

[39] For example, in Maldives, the hotels' consumption of large quantity of water and careless disposal of sewage have brought about the salination and pollution of ground water, culminating in the 1978 Cholera epidemic. In Bali, the construction of the International style multi-storey Hotel Bali Beach was regarded as a socio-cultural intrusion which breached the "sacred landscape" of *Gunung Agung* through its tall "alien silhouette." See Goad and Bingham-Hall, *Architecture Bali* and Romi Khosla, "Lead Us Not…" *Mimar* 36 (1990): 22-23.

[40] The official website of WWATG, now known as WATG after George Wimberly passed away in 1995, boasts that they are the "world's number one hospitality, leisure and entertainment design firm…creating the world's most successful destinations." Besides designing boutique hotels and destination resorts, WATG is also the architect for the Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas. See http://www.watg.com/, last accessed 4 November 2004.

[41] Said Zaighah S. Jaffery, "1983 AKAA Technical Review Summary" available on www.archnet.org, last accessed 14 July 2004

[42] Architects Team 3 is a leading architectural firm in Malaysia and Singapore with Datuk Lim Chong Keat at helm. Lim Chong Keat was the former partner of Malayan Architects Co-partnership, the practice that designed some of the most acclaimed modern architecture in Singapore and Malaysia during the 1960s.

[43] Jaffery, "AKAA Technical Review Summary"

[44] Cantacuzino, "Tanjong Jara Beach Hotel and Rantau Abang Visitors' Centre," 142

[45] Jaffery, "AKAA Technical Review Summary"

[46] Ibid.

[47] Wimberly, Whisenand, Allison, Tong & Goo, "1983 Architects' Record" unpaged. Available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 14 July 2004.

[48] This need for Tanjong Jara Hotel to be a resort of "international standards" was repeatedly stressed in the different literature.

[49] Jaffery, "AKAA Technical Review Summary"

[50] "Unmistakably Malay" is the new marketing slogan of Tanjong Jara Hotel. Current room rate ranges from US$200 a night for a basic room to U$1600 a night for a suite, see official website of Tanjong Jara Hotel, http://www2.tanjong-jararesort.com/rates.htm, last viewed 5 December 2004.

[51] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Sheila Faria Glaser transl., (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[52] Kerry Hill, "AKAA Architect's Record" available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 15 July 2004.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Master Jury, "Statement of the Award Master Jury" in Frampton, Correa and Robson eds., *Modernity and Community*, 150-152.

[55] Hill, "AKAA Architect's Record."

[56] Rahul Mehrotra, "2001 AKAA Technical Review Summary" available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 15 July 2004.

[57] Mehrotra, "AKAA Technical Review Summary."

[58] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

[59] Arturo Escobar, "Constructing Nature: Elements for a poststructural political ecology" in Watts and Peet eds., *Liberation Ecologies,* 1996 (1st ed.), 49.

[60] See James Steele, "A Contradiction in Terms" in *Sustainable Architecture: Principles, Paradigms, and Case Studies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 19-58.

[61] Mehrotra, "AKAA Technical Review Summary."

[62] Kenneth Frampton, "Modernization and Local Culture" in Frampton, Correa and Robson eds., *Modernity and Community*, 13.

[63] Hill, "AKAA Architect's Record."

[64] Mehrotra, "AKAA Technical Review Summary."

[65] Brian Brace Taylor, "The Displaced Moment: Intangible Qualities of Hotel Environments" *Mimar* 25 (1987): 19.

[66] See the official website of Datai Resort at http://www.thedatai.com/awards/index.html, last viewed 13 August 2004.

[67] Ellen Dunham-Jones, "Stars, Swatches, Sweets" in *Thresholds* 15 (Fall 1997): 16-21,

[68] For symbolic capital, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 171-183.

[69] Bruno Stagno, "Tropicality" in Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre and Bruno Stagno eds., *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (West Sussex: Wiley Academy, 2001)*, 65.*

[70] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 42.

[71] See Cheong Kok Cheow, Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) president, paper at that seminar in "Status Paper" *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1981): 18

[72] PAM, Malaysia Institute of Architects' journal.

[73] For proceedings of the seminar, see *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1983). The event was organized by Ken Yeang, who was to be an important figure in the revival of "tropical architecture." The event involves prominent international figures such as Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa and the Chair of Architectural Association then Alvin Boyarsky.

[74] For proceedings of the seminar, see Robert Powell ed., *Architecture and Identity* (Singapore and Geneva: Concept Media and AKAA, 1983).

[75] Sibel Bozdoğan's term for another context, See her *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002)

[76] John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition* (London: Zed Books, 2001). Mahathir's role in initiating this search for Malaysia identity in architecture was further affirmed in an interview with Tay Kheng Soon, 29 July 2004.

[77] Mohamad Arkoun would considered them signals as they are symbols without symbolic values. Tay Kheng Soon, *Mega-cities in the Tropics: Towards an Architecture Agenda for the Future* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asia Studies, 1989), 8-11.

[78] Quoted in Udo Kultermann, "Architecture in South-East Asia 4; Malaysia" in *Mimar* 26 (1987): 68. This is confirmed in an interview with Tay Kheng Soon, 29 July 2004.

[79] Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 170.

[80] *Bumiputra* is the Malay word for "son of the soil" with implication of his entitlement to special privileges in economic life in the postcolonial Malaysian state. As such the architecture of the Bumiputra Bank is symbolically loaded. For the socio-economic and political constructions of Bumiputra, see T. N. Harper, "The Advent of the 'Bumiputera'" in *The End of Empire and the Making of Modern Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 228-273 and Lillian Tay and Ngiom eds., *80 years of Architecture in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia, 2000), 115.

[81] "Tectonics" is the constructional craft of architecture, with emphasis on the structural and constructional modes. See Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1995).

[82] It should be noted that these are buildings housing important public institutions. Dayabumi Complex houses the General Post Office, the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange and Commodity Exchange. Tubang Haji refers to the "the hajj fund" that was established to help rural Malays perform the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca. Putra World Trade Center comprises of a convention center and the headquarters for UMNO (United Malays National Organization), Malaysia's ruling party since independence.

[83] "Dayabumi: A Project Review" in *Majallah Akitek* 3 (1983): 35.

[84] These columns, which appear to be structural or service core are in fact hollow on the inside.

[85] Zainuddin Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000),131-133. Tay and Ngiom eds., *80 years of Architecture in Malaysia,* 126.

[86] Quoted in Bruce Brace Taylor, "Perspectives and Limits on Regionalism and Architectural Identity" *Mimar 19* (1986).

[87] Architectural "Postmodernism" is to be differentiated from postmodernism in other cultural and artistic fields. For postmodernism at large, see Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)

[88] Mohammed Arkoun, "The Aga Khan Award as a Process of Thinking" in Cynthia C. Davidson ed., *Legacies for Future: Contemporary Architecture in Islamic Societies* (London and Geneva: Thames and Hudson and AKAA, 1998), 153.

[89] Taylor, "Perspectives and Limits on Regionalism and Architectural Identity," 20.

[90] This is a commonly used opposition by Kenneth Frampton, see especially his "The Owl of Minerva: An Epilogue" in *Studies of Tectonic Culture*, 377-387.

[91] See William J. R. Curtis, "Towards an Authentic Regionalism" *Mimar* 19 (1986): 24-31.

[92] See, for example the functionalist critique of Bank Bumiputra in terms of its lack of structural honesty and its excessive decorative expenditure in W. Y. Chin, "Towards a National Identity in Architecture" *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1981): 19-22.

[93] See Jimmy Lim's comments in "A Chat on Design Trends in Malaysia" *Majallah Akitek* 4 (1981): 29.

[94] Cheang, Kok Cheow, "Status Paper" *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1981): 18.

[95] Tan, Eng Keong, "Introductory Speech" by President of PAM, *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1983): 17.

[96] Steven Onn, "Discordant Notes in the Discourse," *Majallah Akitek* 1 (1983): 72.

[97] Tay, *Mega-Cities in the Tropics*, 10.

[98] Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*, 132.

[99] Ahmad Nizam Radzi, "New Directions" in Tay and Ngiom eds., *80 years of Architecture in Malaysia*, 47.

[100] Tay's term in *Mega-Cities in the Tropics*, 11.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Suha Özkan, "Introduction: Regionalism within Modernism" in Powell ed., *Regionalism in Architecture*, 8.

[103] For a critique of the regionalism expounded in the seminar "Regionalism and Identity," see Shanti Jayewardene, "Review of Regionalism in Architecture" *Mimar* 25 (1987), 78-80. For a detailed critique of regionalism, which is not within the scope of this paper, see Keith L. Eggener, "Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism" *JAE* 55, no. 4 (2002): 228-237.

[104] William Curtis, "Towards an Authentic Regionalism" *Mimar* 19 (1986): 25. It should be noted that Curtis' presentation at the 1985 seminar is largely quoted from the cited article in *Mimar*.

[105] Ibid., 25.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., 24.

[108] William Curtis, "Regionalism in Architecture" in Robert Powell ed., *Regionalism in Architecture,* 76.

[109] Özkan, "Cultivating Architecture," 167.

[110] Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political cultures in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 199.

[111] Tzonis, Lefaivre and Stagno eds., *Tropical Architecture,* 1.

[112] Interview with Tay Kheng Soon, 29 July 2004 and interview with Jimmy C. S. Lim, 15 August 2004.

[113] See, for example, Peter Bellwood, "Southeast Asia Before History," in Nicholas Tarling ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume 1, Part 1: From Early Times to c. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55-136.

[114] James J. Fox ed., *Inside Austronesian Houses: Perspectives on Domestic Designs for Living* (Canberra: Australia National University, 1993)

[115] Jumsai includes Japan as part of Austronesia, which is not consistent with the archaelogical and linguistic scholarship. Sumet Jumsai, *Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988)

[116] Sumet Jumsai, "The West Pacific Region versus Punk Architecture" *Mimar* 19 (1986): 22-23.

[117] Southeast Asia is a World-War-II invention arising out of military strategic needs. For the origin of Southeast Asia, see Benedict Anderson, "Introduction" in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), 1-28.

[118] Sumet Jumsai, "Case Study 4 – Thailand: House on Stilts, Pointer to South East Asia Cultural Origins" in Powell ed., *Architecture and Identity*, 55-61.

[119] Ibid., 61.

[120] Tay Kheng Soon's remark in "Panel Discussion 4" in Powell ed., *Architecture and Identity*, 86.

[121] Interview with Tay Kheng Soon, 29 July 2004.

[122] Rudolph de Koninck's phrase, cited by Tay Kheng Soon during interview on 29 July 2004.

[123] Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture*, 190-205.

[124] The house is also known as Rudinara, coined from the Dr Salinger and his wife's name. See Rudin Salinger, *Rudinara: The Story of the Handmade House* (Malaysia: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2007)

[125] Hana Alamuddin, "1998 Technical Review Summary, " available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 15 July 2004

[126] Jimmy C. S. Lim, "AKAA 1998 Architect's Record" available on www.archnet.org, last accessed on 14 July 2004.

[127] Alamuddin, "1998 Technical Review Summary." For a description of the activities, see http://www.magiccarpetjournals.com/rudinara.htm, last accessed on 22 January 2007.

[128] Lim, "AKAA 1998 Architect's Record."

[129] Interestingly enough, the triangles were rumored to be well-received by Zaha Hadid, a jury member for the 1998 AKAA. Michael Sorkin wrote that "… the house by Jimmy C. S. Lim in Malaysia, a fine but less than extraordinary work that continues the award's long-standing tradition of recognizing vaguely folkloric houses for the better classes. One of my sources tells me that Zaha, who apparently saw shades of a Proun in the plan juxtaposition of two triangles, was a strong advocate for this project." in "The Borders of Islamic Architecture" in *Metropolis* (December 1998). available at http://www.metropolismag.com/html/content_1298/de98bor.htm, last viewed 5 December 2004.

[130] Alamuddin, "1998 Technical Review Summary."

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[131] In fact, this is the only building designed by Jimmy C. S. Lim that uses such traditional techniques.

[132] Lim, "AKAA 1998 Architect's Record."

[133] The claims that Malaysia has a systematic forest management that would ensure that timber remains a sustainable resource have been contested. See, for example, PAM brush with UIA over the use of tropical hardwood as documented in Jimmy C. S. Lim, "Foreign Architects must support Malaysia's Timber Policy" in *Berita Akitek: PAM Newsletter*, 1992: 10, 1-2.

[134] Alamuddin, "1998 Technical Review Summary."

[135] Interview with Jimmy C. S. Lim, 15 August 2004.

[136] Lim, "AKAA 1998 Architect's Record."

[137] Hillary Chiew, "Leatherback Turtle- Decline of the giants" in *The Star*, 1 July 2003.

[138] Conversations with Janita Han, undergraduate student at National University of Singapore, in 2002.

"I can still hear them weeping":

20th Century Fiction as a Source for Indonesian Conceptualizations
of the 1965-66 Mass Killings

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SYNOPSIS

Changes in Indonesia following the downfall of Suharto's New Order era have resulted in increased openness about the mass killings of avowed and alleged Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members during the years 1965-66. Yet our knowledge of this topic remains limited. As such, fictional accounts of the violence are valuable sources for increased understanding of these events. An early way Indonesians were conceptualizing the killings in writing and literary works bespeak attempts to interpret the violence and lay culpability for its occurrence in light of the involvement of wider factors. In voicing negotiations of identity and of personal and psychological struggle, Indonesian fiction dealing with 1965-66 enables us to move beyond the polarized notion of binaries created in theorizations of this historical moment. An analysis of six Indonesian works of fiction written between 1966 and 1985 will show how literature, drawn together with existing analytical and theoretical frameworks, acts to enhance our understanding of the 1965-66 violence.

Introduction[1]

With increasing frequency, accounts of the detentions, torture, and mass killings of communists and presumed Communist Party members in Indonesia both during 1965-66 and beyond have emerged to provide insight into the violent events that birthed the New Order regime. With diverse interpretations, numerous scholars (among them Anderson and McVey 1971; Kahin and Kahin 1995; Robinson 1995; Cribb 1990; Roosa 2006) have contributed to our historical and sociopolitical understanding of these events in works that detail the "30th September Movement" coup attempt and the human rights violations that resulted from it. This scholarship has attempted to concretize details such as the figures or organizations involved, where and when the violence took place, and the num-

ber of suspected and actual Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members killed. These analyses furthermore have tried to address the roles and manifestations of violence in Indonesian culture as related to this case. Consequently, we are able to establish a strong analytical and theoretical approach to the series of events that took place in 1965-66 and the mass violence that occurred therein.

Yet in spite of the thorough work of these scholars, there nonetheless remain gaps in what we know. For political and other reasons, our knowledge of the violence of this period is limited. For example, the majority of Indonesians affected were, until very recently, unable or unwilling to discuss their experiences due the realities of persecution under Suharto's New Order government. The relatives and descendants of the ac-

cused have lived with similar fears. It is primarily for these reasons that much of the personal element is absent from the analytical works. Thus if we compare what we know about these killings with what we know of other mass killings and genocides, there are far fewer individual accounts of the violent events of 1965-66 from which to draw, and this makes for a less fully-formed picture of what actually occurred.

Therefore, it would be reasonable to turn to alternative sources of information such as literature. Literary works, I will argue, serve as a useful and helpful vantage point from which to create an increasingly well-rounded grasp of this period in Indonesian history, primarily through writers' conceptualizations of the psychological and emotional forces that propelled the violence in 1965-1966. I open with a discussion on the potential of fiction as historical source material. Following this is a brief historical contextualization of the events informing my analysis of six Indonesian fictional works written between 1966 and 1985. I also demonstrate the possible insights to be taken from these sources. The paper provides concrete examples of some overarching themes discernible in these works about the conflicts beneath the violence, which are represented by the individual personal and psychological struggle below the collective action. In conclusion, I show how these insights might be drawn together to join the existing knowledge provided in the analytical and theoretical analyses, thereby enhancing our conceptualization of the "30th September Movement" and its violent aftermath.

The Case for using Literature

When used carefully and critically, works of fiction, together with historical sources, can augment our understanding of a given historical topic. Literary sources allow us to move beyond our own viewpoint of an event to view another's interpretation of what took place. Such interpretations, however, must take into account the creativity and imagination of an author. A fictional work is thereby not an objectively verifiable document, and it should not be thought of as a mirror of actual fact. Rather, fiction can be used as a means to acquire an awareness of what is culturally meaningful to Indonesian authors writing about this period as well as a means of demonstrating underlying tensions which are often not discernible in non-fictional works.[2] In the field of Southeast Asian history, several scholars (An-

derson and Mendiones 1985; Foulcher 1990; Taylor 1996; Foulcher and Day 2002; Hoadley 2005) have expressed their viewpoints and provided insights about the use of fiction in historical analyses. Benedict Anderson and Ruchira Mendiones (1985) employed Thai short stories as a source of evidence to conceptualize the sociopolitical transformation of one generation in Thailand during the American Era of the 1960s and 1970s. Anderson and Mendiones demonstrate the stories to be valuable sources for understanding the contradictions of this era from the point of view of people who experienced them. In doing so, Anderson makes a strong case that fiction can "parallel, complement, and perhaps confront" perspectives found in academic writing (Anderson and Mendiones 1985: 11).

Keith Foulcher and Tony Day (2002) have posed their own suggestions as to how fiction might be used as a source to enhance historical claims or to raise new problems related to them. In considering the use of literature in critical approaches to Indonesian post-colonialism, Foulcher and Day recognize the important contribution of Indonesian literary works to form an enhanced understanding of postcolonial society. They then call attention to the position of the writer within this context. As a result, Foulcher and Day argue, we gain insight into the contexts in which authors produce their literary works and we understand more about conceptualizations such as language use and identity. Yet these scholars are also careful to note that when working with translations we are seeing the works of but a small elite whose writings have been deemed "readable" for the Western audience (Foulcher and Day 2002: 5). This is an important point since the works profiled here are all translations. Yet, as I will show, even these few select voices have inarguable value as source material.

In further testament to the role literature can play Jean Gelman Taylor (1996) has made a strong case for the use of the novel and film in academic analyses. According to Taylor, these genres serve as vehicles that "carry a community's heritage, give shape to its concerns, and may consciously convey messages urging a recasting of behavior... [to] suggest what we ought to be investigating using all the sources available to the historian" (Taylor 1996: 225-226). Finally, Foulcher (1990) and Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley (2005) have directly addressed the value of Indonesian literature as source material in analyses of the coup attempt and its

aftermath. Foulcher states that various Indonesian authors, especially in the 1970s, have employed popular literature "as a means of communicating to other young Indonesians issues they felt to be of serious social concern" (Foulcher 1990: 102).[3] Most recently, Hoadley has claimed that New Order-era fiction written about 1965-66 challenges the "official" narrative of the post-coup violence which is promoted by the Indonesian state.[4] Consequently, per Hoadley, the issue of social concern that authors of such fiction have attempted to address is the violence carried out by the state toward its citizens (Hoadley 2005: 115).[5]

For the following reasons Indonesian fiction can be proven to enhance our grasp of the political and social upheaval that occurred in 1965-66.[6] Due to the climate of repression and fear under the New Order regime, it was not possible for Indonesians to write about the events of 1965-66 in many forms other than fiction. Therefore fiction represented by the variety of works featured here can first give us a sense of Indonesian conceptualizations of those events. Second, as literary sources containing social, political, and historical commentary, these stories can inform our understanding of not only the events themselves but of some Indonesian critiques of these events. Included here would be their creation of different realities as possible rejections of "official" versions of 1965-66. The writers profiled here labor to "write the unwritable, speak the unspeakable, and dramatize or fictionalize realities that many Indonesians do not want to face" (McGlynn 2000: 43).[7] This can be understood as the authors' attempt to communicate with their audience meaningful issues that they perceive as worthy of social concern. Third, these works may reveal themes or insights that, because they are not discernable from the analytical or theoretical scholarship, add new levels of introspection or even suggest new dilemmas to enhance future approaches to this topic. As mentioned, Indonesian fiction not only reveals the psychological and emotional forces beneath the violence but it further provides an understanding of these forces.

Situating The Violence of 1965-66

Such an understanding however, first requires an explanation of the historical moment in question. Therefore, before examining the stories themselves a brief review of the events that played out from October 1965 to the early months of 1966 is warranted. The prelude to the violence has been commonly referred to as the Untung Coup and, as used above, the "30th September Movement" (*Gerakan Tigapuluh September:* GESTAPU, or G-30-S). As I will show, the interpretations are as varied as the nomenclature. The mass deaths themselves, sometimes called the massacre or genocide in other literature are referred to here as "the killings." I also use the broader term of "violence" to describe the bodily and emotional torture inflicted upon alleged PKI members.

Since its occurrence, the specifics of G-30-S and the reasons behind the mass violence that followed continue to be open to debate. Some facts are uncontested; the "where" and "when" of this event have been addressed quite thoroughly. But, the "who," the "why," and even "how" of this event are still being contested. Most recently Roosa (2readable006) has provided a comprehensive analysis of G-30-S, focusing on the Indonesian armed forces as the "who" behind the organization of the killings. Roosa's explanation of "why" is that the detention and assassination of the generals was a pretext for an already-formulated military plot to take over state power (Roosa 2006: 225). Aside from Roosa's work, it is arguable that no definitive account of this event exists. To best summarize the contesting views, this paper references the work of two scholars, Robert Cribb (1990, 2001, 2002) and Mary Zurbuchen (2002).

In a recent review, Cribb (2002) proposed four feasible paradigmatic explanations of what took place. His analysis covers the areas of military agency, extreme political tension, local political and social tensions, and the existence of a culture of violence. Zurbuchen has subsequently suggested that the literature also shows five scenarios of these events adding to Cribb's framework.[8] According to Zurbuchen, the first scenario is that G-3O-S was carried out by the PKI. The second is that it resulted from an internal struggle in the armed forces. In the third, Suharto is portrayed as the instigator while in the fourth, the country's president at the time, Sukarno, was involved. In Zurbuchen's fifth and final scenario, foreign intelligence played a key role (Zurbuchen 2002: 566).

Two related points warrant further examination to better inform the present analysis of fictional accounts that recall G-30-S and its aftermath. The first of these points as Cribb and Zurbuchen both discuss, concerns the military's key role in the event. Namely, with the

assistance of foreign intelligence, Indonesia's military leaders who were aligned with Suharto initiated a "'kill or be killed' atmosphere" (Cribb 2002: 552). According to these scholars and others (Scott 1985; Crouch 1988; Kahin and Kahin 1995; Robinson 1995), this atmosphere was accomplished through the spread of anti-PKI propaganda.[9] As to the second of the two points, it is argued that a series of wider elements were at work, which contributed to the violent aftermath of G-30-S.[10] Scholars estimate that across Indonesia death totals ranged between 78,000 and two million[11] killed during this period (with the heaviest concentration of deaths in Central Java, East Java, and Bali). However, any total far below 500,000 seems unreasonably conservative. The elements behind these mass-killings were varied. Economic decline, the unsteady nature of Sukarno's promotion of NASAKOM,[12] tensions arising as a result of land reform policies, intensified political affiliations and the escalation of local antagonisms likely all contributed to the massive scale of bloodshed.[13]

Taking into consideration the above points and what we now can accept as true from the current scholarship summarized above, a basic understanding of the coup attempt and its aftermath is possible. In the early morning hours of October 1, 1965, numerous conspirators affiliated with the Indonesian armed forces conducted raids at the homes of seven generals who were men not known as strong supporters of the Sukarno regime. One of these conspirators, Lieutenant Colonel Untung, the head of the presidential bodyguard regiment, acted to inform and protect Sukarno from a long awaited attempt against him by these generals backed by the CIA. (Anderson and McVey 1971: 9). Untung supposedly convinced Sukarno to publicly back his group in exchange for thwarting this alleged attempt at national security. Meanwhile, Untung's co-conspirators oversaw the murders of three remaining generals of the six that had been successfully detained at an area of the Halim airbase known as *Lubang Buaya*, the crocodile hole (Anderson and McVey 1971: 12). Almost immediately, then-General Suharto took control of the armed forces as the leader of the Strategic Reserve Command of the Army (KOSTRAD).

With the provisions and backing of foreign interests, the stage was set to position the PKI as the enemy. To help incite public anger and initiate reprisals against the PKI, positioning communists as the immoral Other was central to the propaganda that was spread therein. Such a trope was particularly though not exclusively applied to members of the PKI-affiliated Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, or Gerwani).[14] As a result of the propaganda, popular uprising against these purported evildoers was encouraged. Supported by internal and external forces, these uprisings, led by civilian gangs, militia groups, and armed forces units, would gain momentum resulting in the detention, torture, and mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of avowed and alleged PKI members.

Literary Representations of the Violence of 1965-66

With the above historical reference in mind, the subsequent discussion will address the ways that the featured Indonesian authors conceptualize and negotiate the events behind their fictionalized accounts of the period following the attempted coup. Six works of Indonesian fiction have been selected for this analysis. Five are short stories, which were written in the period directly following the violence. These were originally published between 1966-1970 in the Indonesian literary magazines *Horizon* and *Sastra*, and then were translated and complied in the anthology *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup of 30th September 1965* (Aveling 1975). They are: "A Woman and her Children" by Gerson Poyk, "Death" by Mohammad Sjoekoer, "Star of Death" by Kipandjikusmin, "The Climax" by Satyagraha Hoerip, and "War and Humanity" by Usamah. The sixth, "Village Dancer" by Ahmad Tohari (2000), is an excerpt from *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, a 1985 novel that was the second work in a trilogy originally serialized in the Indonesian national daily, *Kompas*. The excerpt, which includes previously omitted sections,[15] was translated and published in *Silenced Voices: New Writings from Indonesia*, a volume of the journal *Manoa*. All of the works were chosen both for their individual depth and their collective breadth in representing aspects of G-30-S and its aftermath. Each also show evidence of pervasive thematic elements throughout.

All of the plots save for one are situated in Java with two specifically taking place in Central Java; the remaining story takes place predominantly in Bali. These locations represent the sites that experienced the most killings.[16] The settings most often are small towns or

villages. While not all the storylines occur in named locations, some of the authors do situate the events in specific places. Settings are as concrete as the actual Central Javanese town of Solo, as vague as an unnamed small harbor town, or as narrow as the fictional Dukuh Paruk, a remote Javanese hamlet. Some of the stories unfold in one location while others ask the reader to follow the characters as they travel from rural to urban spheres or from one island in the archipelago to another. In all of the works save for one, we experience the points of view of those who played a participatory role in the violence, which included the torture and killings of those known and unknown to them. Conversely in the 1966 short story "Star of Death," the reader sees events through the eyes of Ktut Geria, a Balinese communist fleeing from Java only to be exposed and hunted to his end by his own people. Five of the six authors featured are Javanese while one, Gerson Poyk, is from Maluku. All of these authors are male. Fiction as well as non-fiction concerning G-30-S and its aftermath written by female authors are few, which is a revealing fact in its own right.[17]

The paper's subsequent focus is a discussion of the information to be gleaned from an evaluation of these stories. As above for "Star of Death," provided below are the briefest synopses of the five other chosen works in order to coherently draw out their insights. In Poyk's "A Woman and her Children" also written in 1966, A, a civil servant who had been slandered by K, a PKI leader, and sent to prison, seeks out Hadijah, his former lover and K's widow. Hadijah, near starvation and living in poverty with her five children begs A to help her. Embittered by the death of his own child, A struggles between his emotions and his sense of duty to Hadijah, whom he ultimately decides to help in spite of the lingering public fear and suspicion that surrounds her.

A young man recruited to participate in the execution of suspected PKI members narrates "Death," written by Mohammed Sjoekoer in 1969. Through the unnamed protagonist's account of his participation in one night of terror, Sjoekoer illustrates that the positions of those who carried out the killings of 1965-66 were not simply black and white. In "The Climax," written by Satyagraha Hoerip in 1966, Soesetio, the story's narrator must decide what path to take when confronted with a serious ideological dilemma. As a community leader, should he murder his brother-in-law, a PKI

district leader, and leave his sister a widow, or betray his community by failing to punish the enemy?

"Village Dancer" was excerpted from the 1985 novel *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari* (A Falling Star at Dawn), the second novel in the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy authored by Tohari. The focus of this trilogy is on the principle character, the dancer Srintil. Yet in this particular piece, Tohari turns his attentions to the experiences and dilemmas of Srintil's childhood friend Rasus, a man who is torn between his duty as a private in the national army and the pleas of the hamlet to save Srintil who has been imprisoned as a PKI conspirator.[18]

Lastly, Usamah, the narrator of the 1969 story "War and Humanity," tells of his role as a prison camp interrogator of alleged PKI members. Responsible for ordering the torture of friends and acquaintances and ultimately calling them out to be executed, Usamah's narration discloses the agony of the individuals faced with forsaking old relationships to uphold a new political order.

The Conflicts beneath the Violence: What Literature Reveals

Satyagraha Hoerip has written that the short story in particular, "entails conflict of one sort or another and, invariably says something about the universal problems that its character or characters experience" (Hoerip 1991: viii). Accordingly, several underlying but pervasive elements of conflict emerge in these stories to help us see how some Indonesians conceptualized the events of 1965-66, including the factors that propelled the violence. This section presents some elements within themes of inner conflict and competing claims on an individual's sense of duty. Inner conflict manifests in different ways throughout these stories. It is based upon the concept that individuals do not self-identify in an unchanging solitary way but rather through multiple modes of identification resulting in multiple allegiances. These works of fiction show how an individual's multiple identities take shape and even vie with one another. This conflict and multiplicity of identities is further linked to the struggle caused by contradicting senses of duty. Whether the struggle results from the decision to fulfill duty to oneself or to one's community at the expense of others, these literary representations of such struggles highlight the complexity and ambivalence that most certainly oc-

curred within many who participated in the mass violence.

As will be shown, a means to negotiate the complexity and ambivalence of the situation is to transform the enemy into the Other. Authors take pains to highlight the factors that created the climate for this Othering while reminding their readers of the underlying humanity of the perpetrators. Through discreet references to propaganda with its effect on shaping the enemy as Other, especially in regard to the role of Gerwani members, the authors of these works reference actual events in their attempts to write the unwritable. These conflicts, struggles and sociopolitical commentary provide insight into the Indonesian conceptualizations of 1965-66 in ways that compliment the existing analytical literature.

I begin with the thematic element of inner conflict, which is demonstrated by two characters that struggle with duty toward self versus that toward others. They are Rasus, and Soesetio from the respective stories, "Village Dancer" and "The Climax." These characters each feel pressured to preserve their own (and their community's) sense of self or duty by not being perceived as sympathetic to the PKI, which would carry a great personal risk. Ahmad Tohari captures this desire for self-preservation by portraying Rasus's awareness of the dilemma upon being entreated to use his position as a private in the national army to save Srintil, the dancer imprisoned for her alleged ties to the PKI:

> He thought about his promise to find Srintil and bring her home. Such a task, he knew was akin to levering the weight of history with a palm leaf. Not only would it be difficult, but the risk to himself and his career would be great. To be accused of aiding or sympathizing with the Communists' attempted coup was enough to stigmatize a person for life (Tohari 2000: 19).

These thoughts illustrate Rasus's recognition that honoring the wishes of those in the hamlet would require that he forsake his sense of duty to self and put himself at risk. Rasus's dilemma is real because he has multiple allegiances and identities: he is at once a soldier, a lifelong member of Dukuh Paruk and a friend and one-time lover of Srintil. As the situation forces these identities to collide, he in turn is forced to choose between them.

Soesetio of "The Climax" wages a similar war within himself caused by being placed in a position to choose between duty toward self and toward others. As a community leader he is required to take an active role in hunting down his brother-in-law Kuslan. Upon showing reticence to do so, not only is his sense of duty challenged but so is his sense of character. It is at this moment that Soesetio recognizes the difficult position he is in as he observes his friend Wimbadi's reaction:

> 'I'm sorry,' he spat out. 'I didn't realize that our great and mighty cultural leader was a coward.'… He was angry; his face was dark red. The veins in his arms were tightly knotted. Without a word to my wife or myself, he left. I ran after him. At the guava tree, he promised to come back again after the evening prayer hour. His face showed how much he loathed me. I knew what that could mean these days. Anything was possible (Aveling 1975: 40-41).

Fear propels Soesetio toward a climactic decision. As the story reaches its own climax, Satyagraha Hoerip repeatedly represents Soesetio's fear of being thought a coward and of possible accusations of sympathy to the PKI due to his refusal to participate in the murder of Kuslan. These and other characters' struggles between self and others often manifests as self-preservation amplifying Cribb's aforementioned reference to the "kill or be killed" atmosphere of 1965-66. Again, anti-PKI factions manufactured this state through the spread of propaganda. Seen in the struggle of identities enacted by these characters, there emerges a sense of literal self-preservation from the ramification of supposed association with the PKI. As will be further shown, a figurative sense of preservation from the alleged moral corruption of the PKI also makes an appearance.

Rasus and Soesetio are presented as individuals whose sense of duty toward community wars with duty toward those for whom each man cares. As such, these two characters must additionally deal with competing claims on their duty by their communities and those with whom they share a personal relationship. In the case of Rasus, his role as a member of the military community has become his predominant identity, but he realizes that he is still very much tied to his Dukuh Paruk neighbors and is deeply concerned for their welfare in the growing anti-PKI climate. Faced with this dilemma, he tries to negotiate between these identities, his sense of duty to those back home, and his duty as a member of the military. "Yes, he was a son of Paruk," Tohari writes, "and, as such, was sympathetic to his

people. But he was also a soldier and therefore required to see things beyond the narrow perspective of his village" (Tohari 2000: 16). Ultimately Rasus bends to the weight of this role as soldier, and though he is driven to challenge his army superior over Srintil, the story ends with his acceptance of the situation's futility. Through Rasus's return to protocol, depicted in the delivery of a salute, Tohari makes clear his reassertion of the role he must play as a member of the military engaged in suppressing the PKI. Yet in illustrating the competing claims upon him and his conflict of identity therein, Tohari moreover concretely shows in this excerpt from his novel that Rasus can hardly be considered a one-dimensional figure.

In "The Climax," Soesetio is portrayed as being at war with himself throughout his narration. While he attempts to come across as someone callously able to put duty before love of family, he is unconvincing throughout the story. In such a depiction, Hoerip illustrates a situation representative of one many Indonesians might have similarly faced. Through such an illustration Hoerip requires that the audience recognize the multiple identities within an individual and the inner conflict that occurred because of their competing presence. Furthermore, he asserts that his readers reject the notion that all perpetrators of the violence were cold-blooded killers without consciences carrying out a role as a member of a culture of violence. In the very act of the fierce struggle that defines this story, Soesetio is shown not to be a one-dimensional seeker of revenge. Rather, he is portrayed as a man of multiple dimensions and identities who is faced both with the pressure of acting in the public interest and with murdering his sister's husband. While his fear of self-preservation is strong, Soesetio never emphatically accepts nor commits to the decision to murder Kuslan. Even at the end, when he resolves to meet Wimbadi and the others pursuing Kuslan at his sister's house, Hoerip in no way indicates that Soesetio will then follow through with the murder. In Soesetio, Hoerip has created a character that perfectly embodies the very real emotional issues behind the violence when individuals' multiple identities were forced to collide.

Like Rasus and Soesetio, A, the protagonist in Gerson Poyk's "A Woman and her Children," and both the unnamed protagonist of "Death" and Usamah of "War and Humanity," equally emerge as characters that embody the inner conflict within the individual in the midst of collective action against the PKI. The character A struggles between doing what he determines to be right in aiding Hadijah and her children versus adhering to public opinion and leaving them to starve. Forsaking hostile public opinion, A does decide to help Hadijah but encounters others who are far less willing to do so. Upon turning to several old acquaintances to ask if they will adopt the children, he is rebuffed because they fear the consequences of taking in children of ex-PKI members. Ultimately, A is arrested on suspicion of colluding with Hadijah, but prevails in the end by successfully saving the children who have by the story's conclusion been orphaned.

The young man in "Death" is depicted as a very uneasy participant in the execution and disposal of suspected PKI members in his region. Unlike other characters, he is faced with witnessing violence against those unknown to him. Yet he similarly must vie between his identity as a member of his community and that as a person sympathetic to other human beings. His fear and anxiety involves being recruited to a position where he must witness the possibly unjustified execution of others, something that physically sickens and exhausts him. His narration demonstrates this distress at the act he and his friends are required to commit in a particularly moving scene when, out of pity, he hides from a victim the truth of his impending execution.

While Mohammed Sjoekoer portrays emotional angst experienced by a protagonist who does not know his victims, in "War and Humanity," Usamah suffers such emotions to an equal if not greater degree. As a prison camp interrogator, he is confronted with betraying acquaintances and friends. Usamah quickly becomes aware through self-reflection that he has wholly accepted the anti-PKI propaganda and has become bent on crushing the Party. Yet his co-membership with those from his past and his role as their friend or acquaintance means that these two sets of identities are now forced to confront each other. In interrogating and condemning individuals such as a university classmate and his former family doctor, he realizes that his old ties and feelings are still present. Usamah's pain at calling out their names and sending them to their deaths becomes palpable to the reader. Unable to order more executions and unwilling to betray any further friends from his past, Usamah abandons his post on the interrogation team to return to his village. The title of

"War and Humanity" references his conflict between sense of duty to self and sense of duty to community during what he perceives as a time of war. "It was war," justifies Usamah, "and had the PKI won, what happened to [them] might have happened to me" (Aveling 1975: 21).

The words chosen as the title of this essay are Usamah's. Though formerly experienced as a member of the interrogation team, his present-tense expression of victims' weeping in his head memorializes these men and women and bespeaks his guilt. Though initially swept up in the propaganda against the PKI, Usamah shows that he has ultimately reasserted his multiple identities through his rejection of violence. He will no longer be used to carry out harm against others.

Within these inner conflicts of identity and competing claims on duty, many stories demonstrate how the protagonists utilize Othering when faced with the torture or killing of another human being. Through this illustration of Othering, some authors show the ways that an individual might have justified his or her participation in the violence. At multiple points in these stories, the protagonists reason, verbalize, or are told of the inhuman and immoral character of the PKI as filth and animals, as Godless beings less than human, something to be exterminated. The both the nameless young man recruited in "Death" to assist with the extermination of local PKI members and the character Soesetio exemplify individuals who attempt to use or listen to others' use of Othering as a tool to help them understand and even justify violence.

Othering also emerges in these stories in the form of the authors' historical awareness of and commentary on the external factors that propelled the violence of 1965-66. In "Star of Death," the narrator Ktut Geria, captures the climate of these times with the following words: "A communist was the lowest form of human filth, fit only for extermination. It was proclaimed throughout the land that those who did not believe in God should die" (Aveling 1975: 27). As "Star of Death" and "War and Humanity" illustrate, the act of Othering by the characters suggests the authors' recognition of the dehumanizing propaganda used to promote PKI extermination.

Among the more prominent targets of the Othering propaganda directed against the PKI were the members of Gerwani. Their role and participation, especial-

ly in the events at Lubang Buaya, are still controversial topics in Indonesian conceptualizations of G-30-S. As Saskia Wieringa (2003) has shown, Gerwani women were sexualized in an attempt to portray the immoral and dangerous Other. Such Othering thus positioned them as the embodiment of the very elements that would destroy Indonesian society should the PKI triumph. In "A Woman and her Children," Hadijah is positioned in the eyes of her enemies as both a sexual being and as a body to be sexually abused as revenge on the PKI. Once free of the burden of her children, she will then, it is reasoned, fall back on her true nature as a "first-class slut" who does what "most of the Gerwani who aren't in prison are doing now" (Aveling 1975: 66). Hadijah is not without agency however, since she embraces through her death the knowledge that A will save her children and she asserts that she does not accept society's ascription of her. She will not fulfill their hatred-fueled fantasies of seeing her body made available for sexual consumption.

In "Star of Death," Ktut Geria speculates about the deaths of his Gerwani friends whom he had sent home "six months ago... for refusing to indulge in free love after the night parades at Lubang Buaya [as] they were still dominated by bourgeois moral principles and not completely revolutionary in outlook" (Aveling 1975: 30). This reference both situates and counters the rumor of Gerwani members as the instigators of sexual abandonment at the site of the generals' murders.[19]

Kipandjikusmin's take on a communist leader's use of Gerwani members and the way that these women are positioned as sexual (if unwilling) bodies is both valuable as well as significant. In positioning Gerwani associates as sexualized bodies, these women's portrayal as the immoral Other is made clear. Conversely, in their rejection of Geria's attempt to offer them up for consumption, like Hadijah in "A Woman and her Children," they assert their agency over their bodies. In this way Kipandjikusmin appears to reject the rumors by establishing these women as unworthy of such invective due to their sense of morality.

As quoted in the introduction to *Gestapu*, "What is important is that true, or only partially true, or false, [the propaganda was] believed by millions of people and the army [leading to] one of the major causes of revulsion against the PKI" (Aveling 1975: iii). The thoughts and words of the characters and their interlocutors in these fictional pieces offer a representation

of the anti-PKI propaganda that spurred the violence. By reproducing its discourse and the characters' reaction to it, the authors of these works try to recreate the psychological and emotional climate in which the killings took place in order to present this picture for the audience's consumption. It very well might be that attempting to speak the unspeakable by recognizing and publicizing the persons and elements behind the anti-PKI surge presents the authors' individual perceptions of G-30-S in defiance of New Order prohibitions against addressing this topic. Moreover, through writing they might be implicating Suharto or other figures and factors by showing that the mass killings of 1965-66 happened for concrete government instigated reasons and not "just because."

As shown above, carrying out acts of violence in the "kill or be killed" atmosphere established a type of group membership motivated by preservation of self or community. In many cases however, assertion of anti-PKI group membership forced a social collision with co-membership between perpetrator and victim when the victim was known. Thus, in the climate of preservation against the moral or physical threat allegedly posed by the PKI, individuals in these stories and in historical fact enacted an Othering of the enemy that appeared to have two dimensions. On a large scale, many accepted as true the anti-PKI propaganda swirling about them, which motivated the resulting violent action to ensure their self-preservation. Yet on a more personal level, individuals might have adopted the strategy of Othering their alleged enemy to justify their participation in the violence. Othering also might have facilitated their attempt to cope with the dilemma of having to act against others including those with whom they had shared a prior history, which was often the case.

Foulcher (1990) interprets the short stories above as attempts to expunge the guilt of the authors or characters. Yet with this paper I argue in favor of the authors' attempts to bespeak a national guilt for the horrors of 1965-66 through their stories. All of the writers profiled here are attempting to show the existence of the personal element in the face of such abhorrent acts to overcome the unspeakable. Foulcher's reading assumes that the characters, authors, or even the actual perpetrators of the violence of 1965-66 possessed but one identity, that of the ruthless killer bent on revenge no matter what the outcome. However, I believe that

these authors attempt a different point of view; that even within the "kill or be killed" climate, other factors played into the resultant mass violence. While many Indonesians became killers, and some among them certainly felt no qualms about this role, not all are necessarily killers by nature or culture. The multi-dimensionality of these characters and their actions are a subtle rejection of this perception and show that individuals do not merely possess one identity or another. In voicing negotiations of identity and of personal and psychological struggle, these fictional works hopefully enable us to move beyond and ideally release altogether the polarized notion of being either pro-PKI or anti-communist,[20] solider or neighbor, leader or follower, enemy or friend.

Conclusion

The changes of the post-Suharto era have given rise to what has been identified as a discussion providing additional insight as to what was "previously no more than speculation about the way in which contemporary Indonesians conceived of the killings" (Cribb 2002: 551). Without doubt, the current atmosphere has resulted in increased openness about the killings on behalf of Indonesian scholars and subjects alike. Yet as is noted here, fictional accounts of the violence of 1965-66 produced since its occurrence were, in fact, one of the earliest ways that contemporary Indonesians were publicly conceptualizing the killings. Despite the above quote, Cribb recognized this fact in an earlier work (1990) saying several of the very stories profiled here do enlighten us to the meaning of the violence as expressed by many Indonesians. He also argued that "their literary form and the political circumstances of their composition make them no more than a partial mirror of the events concerned" (Cribb 1990: 5). This point is certainly a valid one. Yet the main reason for a review of fiction is not to look upon these works as mirrors of what really occurred. Rather fiction is a valuable tool for examining the way some Indonesians were conceiving of, depicting, trying to interpret, and possibly even placing responsibility for the violence in light of the involvement of the wider factors and issues above. In this way, it acts to add to what we already know, not to replace it.

Taken as a valid source, works of fiction can compliment and challenge as well as augment the existing literature in a number of ways. First, until recently,

fiction was one of the sole ways Indonesians were able to publicly discuss the killings. Secondly, themes outside of the analytical and theoretical frameworks of other academic disciplines arise in the literary works profiled above and might help us understand what the authors believed to be culturally meaningful information about the killings. Thirdly, the act of writing the unwritable might further show us these authors' attempts to get at the reasons behind the events of 1965-66. Fourth, by trying to confront and memorialize an exceedingly traumatic moment from their recent history these authors can be seen as acting to reject and defy the version of these events as portrayed by Suharto's New Order. Fifth, these works reject the supposition that this violence can only be expressed as the brutality of one group against another driven by a violent culture and uncomplicated by other factors.

These stories cannot help us further determine certain things, such as the involvement of foreign intelligence, the actual role of Suharto, or the experiences of women who participated in carrying out the anti-PKI violence. The former two areas are far better addressed by looking at primary sources and historical analyses. The latter has to my knowledge not yet been comprehensively broached either in existing scholarship or in the oral histories that are now emerging. There is certainly more to be learned about these events.

However, in stories such as "Village Dancer" and "War and Humanity," we see the role of the Indonesian military and its relationship to local militias in the detention and execution of suspected PKI members. From "Death" and "The Climax" we observe the role and function of community leaders and what their responsibilities entailed during the communist purge. From "Star of Death" and "A Woman and her Children," we are granted deeper insight into issues of gender and the way gendered and sexualized identities of Gerwani women were strategically employed by PKI leaders. Finally, from several of these stories, we come to more clearly see the role of outside sources such as propaganda in inciting mass violence. In these and other ways, fiction integrated with existing analytical literature can strengthen our understanding of the forces that led to the killings of 1965-66, one of the more complicated and tragic series of events in modern Indonesian history.

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End Notes

[1] The quote in the title is taken from one of the short stories to be subsequently profiled. See Usamah. "War and Humanity" in *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup on 30th September 1965*, Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper No. 6, Ed. and trans.Harry Aveling (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1975) p. 20.

[2] Harry Aveling, ed. and trans. *Gestapu: Indonesian Short Stories on the Abortive Communist Coup on 30th September 1965*, Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper No. 6. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1975 p. i. Richard Hoggart states that literature serves to bear cultural meanings in that it "helps to recreate what it felt like to believe those things, to assume that experience carried and demanded those kinds of value. It dramatizes how it feels on the pulses to live out those kinds of value and, in particular, what stresses and tensions come from that living out"

[3] I would suggest that such motivations are equally applicable to the authors profiled here.

[4] Anna-Greta Nilsson Hoadley, *Indonesian Literature vs. New Order Orthodoxy: The Aftermath of 1965-1966*, NIAS Monograph No. 101. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2005. p. 124. Hoadley's specific claim is that Indonesian literature dealing with this period "performs a negating role in refuting the official version of the events of 1965." Care must be exercised however, not to assume that the alternate interpretations offered in literary works are thereby "true" versions of events mirroring events as they historically occurred.

[5] In her analysis, while Hoadley does include the works of Ahmad Tohari, one of the authors discussed here, she dismisses the short stories profiled in this paper for being outside of her study's framework due to their lack of "an identifiable thesis" (Hoadley, *Indonesian Literature*, p. 4). As I will show however, their thematic elements do make them highly valuable and worthy of inclusion in any analysis of Indonesian fiction dealing with the events of 1965-66.

[6] Robert Cribb, ed. *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21. Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 1990. p. 111. While there are several strong fictional works at our disposal, before continuing a note of recognition should be sounded that not all works of Indonesian fiction about 1965-66 are potentially valuable across the board. The same can also be said for works that distort events to the point of fictionalizing them. One particularly noteworthy example is the 1984 docudrama *The Treason of the PKI 30 September Movement*, produced by the Indonesian government and shown to schoolchildren about the events at Lubang Buaya and the subsequent crackdown upon the PKI.

[7] John H. McGlynn, "Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions: Indonesian Literature Today" in *Silenced Voices: New Writings from Indonesia*. Edited by Frank Steward. *Manoa,* 12 (1), 2000. p. 43. While taken from John McGlynn's description of the undertakings of other Indonesian writers and artists, this is nonetheless an equally apt description of what these writers have attempted as well.

[8] The reader should note that both of these scholars stress that these explanations and scenarios are non-exclusive and can and have been employed in various combinations to reconstruct what happened. For more details on the four paradigmatic explanations see Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966." *Asian Survey* 42 (4) (2002), p. 551-557.

[9] For more on the Indonesian military's involvement in the creation of this atmosphere see Chapter 5 of Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, revised ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.) See also Peter Dale Scott, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967." *Pacific Affairs* (Summer 1985): 239-64. http://www.jstor.org. The United States' growing concerns about the PKI and Sukarno as begun during the Eisenhower administration are traced in Audrey R. Kahin, and Kahin, George McT. *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*. (New York: The New Press, 1995.) In Scott's piece referenced above, he further shows the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency, a fact that is also noted by Robert Cribb, "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-66." *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3(2001): 219-39., And by Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali*, paperback ed. Asia East by South. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995. p. 283-286.

[10] Scholars of 1965-66 have not always recognized these wider elements. See for example Leslie Palmier, "The 30 September Movement in Indonesia." *Modern Asian Studies,* 5 (1) (1971). p. 11. available at http://www.jstor.org. Palmier situates the violence as the "settlement of old scores by PNI [Indonesian Nationalist Party] and Muslim partisans against alleged PKI members in Java and Bali." Palmier's argument does not provide further analysis or elaboration including acknowledgement of wider issues such as the roles that the early-1960s land reform legislation and class played in political polarization. Robinson, Chapter 10 presents a greater analysis of this political economy of violence as it played out in Bali. For an early analysis of these issues in Java, see W.F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and after the Untung Coup." *Pacific Affairs* 39 nos. 1/2 (1966): 115-27. available at http://www.jstor.org.

[11] Robert Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings,* p. 12 provides this range of estimates in chart form.

[12] An acronym symbolizing the uniting of nationalism, religion and communism.

[13] Elizabeth Fuller Collins, "Indonesia: A Violent Culture?" *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 582-605. These multiple factors point away from the 'culture of violence' argument, which is inherently weak. Collins presents a far more compelling analysis in stating that the culture of violence claim is at heart a political one used by Indonesian military or social elites. Such a claim allows them to validate a need for their authoritarian leadership of people who are set up as unable to self-govern and in so doing protect their own interests.

[14] This has been comprehensively shown recently by Saskia Wieringa "The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism." *Journal of Women's History,* 15 (1) (2003), p. 70. available at http://proquest.umi.com.

[15] Deemed critical of the New Order and sympathetic to the memory of the PKI, fearing government reprisals the series' publisher omitted parts of the novels, including as mentioned, material from *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*. See John H. McGlynn, *Silenced Voices*, p. 42.

[16] As Sumatra was another major site of the mass killings I would have liked to include a story from that location but was unable to find one.

[17] This fact has implications of Wieringa's assertion of the marginalization of women and the female voice in Indonesia under the patriarchal New Order. See Saskia Wieringa, *The Birth of the New Order*. The sole works of fiction by a female author of which I am aware are the 1989 novel *Jalan Bandungan* and the 1988 short story "Petilan Kehidupan" both written by Nh. Dini. As for non-fiction, Ibu Marni (1989) provides a valuable first-person account of the experiences of a former Gerwani member who survived the violence of 1965-66. Another Gerwani member also has detailed her experience as a survivor under the pseudonym Bu Yeti (See Anton Lukas, trans. "Survival: Bu Yeti's Story" in *The Indonesian Killings 1965-1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, No. 21. Edited by Robert Cribb Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, (1990): 101-119.

[18] For a particularly helpful analysis of this series in which to situate the excerpt see Nancy Cooper, "Tohari's Trilogy."

[19] As the rumor went, the scene at Lubang Buaya culminated in their "abandoning themselves in a lustful orgy with senior communists and air force officers" after torturing and mutilating the generals (Robert Cribb, "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-1966," 232.).

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[20] A strong condemnation against the propensity to create binaries such as being PKI or not may be found in an essay written by an Indonesian survivor of 1965-66 who was both a victim of and participant-observer in the events (Pipit Rochijat, "Am I PKI or Non-PKI?!" Translated by Benedict Anderson. *Indonesia* 40 (October 1985): 37-56. available http://www.muse.jhu.edu.

The Politics of Aesthetics and the Contemporary Thai Art Film

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SYNOPSIS

The film movement often termed the "Thai New Wave" provides new ways of approaching the Thai demographic through a rupture in conventional regimes of political, social, and cultural representation, which I refer to, following Jacques Ranciere (2004), as the politics of aesthetics. I suggest that this particular film movement derives, in form, from previous ruptures in representation in the history of 20th century film made possible through its associations to the broader literary and political impetus of stylized communities beneath the radar, and in contradistinction to, the identity of an otherwise monolithic state image. I provide below a brief outline of the films we might include in this New Wave, it's associations to similar movements outside Thailand, the implications it offers for cross-disciplinary studies, and an overview of the structural and infrastructural conditions and relationships that facilitate it. I conclude by suggesting a reorganized methodology in the study of Thai spaces through the channeling of an expanded Thai interpretive community.

Since the emergence of Wisit Sasanatieng's Tears of the Black Tiger (2000), film in Thailand has arrived at a new 'stylistic' juncture between art and entertainment. Wisit's first two films, Tears of the Black Tiger and Citizen Dog (2004), employ accentuated color schemes, eccentric character personalities, and are interspersed with moments of comical dialogue. By contrast, fellow Thai auteur, Pen-ek Ratanaruang's Last Life in the Universe (2003) is dreamy but tragic, linguistically disjunct but visually affective, and, musically and cinematographically assisted. The combined effect slows the pace of Bangkok; a city that operates at light-speed. Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Mysterious Object at Noon (2000), Blissfully Yours (2002), and Tropical Malady (2004), explore the geographic diversity of the Thai landscape against the backdrop of everyday life. With all three of these Thai directors, we lose our sense of an ideal film world and are drawn instead to a world of more authentic exigencies and everyday dilemmas; and yet these filmmakers foreground their ability to manipulate multiple film worlds through innovative technical means. This is to say they assert a constructive genius behind the camera to decorate a world that is only contextually, but not formulaically, similar to our own. Objects float at midday, multiple times conjoin, skies rain motorcycle helmets, radios report a hitherto concealed history, and stuffed animals smoke cigarettes. It is in this sense that the new emerging art film in Thailand has become both entertaining and engaging.

In the attempt to briefly review the horizon of the Thai New Wave, I would like to explicitly position the intent of my interest and the possibilities this move-

ment offers for new methodological directions in interdisciplinary studies. In 2001, I experienced an initial fascination with the architecture and infrastructure of foreign film consumption in Thailand and, in particular, how it differed from the viewing experience I was accustomed to in my previous home, New York City. One of the largest outdoor bazaars in Asia, known as the Jatuchak Market, housed a small booth in which fascinated film connoisseurs dropped by each Saturday to purchase Thai-subtitled VHS "art" features like Jean-Luc Godard's Breathless (1962), Francios Truffaut's The 400 Blows (1958), or Federico Fellini's 8 1/2 (1963). The stock of art film seemed limited to foreign "classics" but, to its credit, the shop contested other productions from the West, namely Hollywood's hegemonic position at the Thai cineplex. The French New Wave cinema showcased at Jatuchak was itself a break from clichéd Hollywood formulas and the predictable American style of the late 1950s and continues to inspire viewers today in nearly every corner of the globe, including Thailand. But it seemed that these sort of movements had to be sought out by the savvy film connoisseur and was not available to the mainstream Thai movie-goer.

Below, I will discuss some of the political implications of recent Thai films and the way they contest dominant representations, as well as their usefulness to research in political science, social theory, and film studies against the backdrop of Southeast Asian studies. Around September of 2002, I remember stumbling across a VCD version of Apichatpong's Blissfully Yours (2002), and admiring the way that the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the Thai demographic could be filmed in a new and imaginative way. When I returned two years later to conduct research on the politics of the Thai/Burma border in 2004, I re-explored that film, along with Apichatpong's older work Mysterious Afternoon at Noon (2000), to find a vision of Thailand that foregrounds Thai intersections within the Burmese diaspora. Apichatpong's lens seemed to challenge simplified notions of Thailand and khwaam pen Thai (being Thai) that was isolated from its extra-national associations.

These films touched precisely on the subject matter that I had overlooked. What is it, especially in an Area Studies perspective, that we miss in a study that only engages a particular area? And how do cinematic projections of the national landscape contribute to this

through the range of images they evoke? A New Wave for Thai film means simply, a new way of seeing. Movie theaters like Bangkok's Lido, House, or Siam Theater in Bangkok, film foundations, libraries, and film archives, or the variety of other places where films are distributed to the masses (sites of cinematic consumption throughout Thailand), provide an infrastructure for the presentation of the art film to Thai and expatriate audiences. It is through experiencing Thai art films in these places that one can realize the originality and creative depth that had, until this point, been largely overlooked by the global film audience. Reflecting back to several film history and theory courses I attended at Indiana University in Bloomington, in which the critical measure of a film derived from a handful of Western classics, it is my hope that New Waves in new places can work to broaden our understanding of global cinema. Furthermore, it seemed as though emerging Thai viewpoints are missed in other non-visual disciplines, like Southeast Asian Studies, because academic texts fail to measure the new and innovative cinematic images of contemporary life in Thailand. While recent Thai art films, such as Tropical Malady (2004), and Invisible Waves (2006), received only limited domestic runs in Thailand, the infrastructure for the creation and stylization of a more pluralistic image of Thailand is expanding. This article suggests that the film and its importance is often enveloped in a movement, and that the process of making, viewing, and citing the movement, is an empirical process. Below I draw links between some of the social, political, and cultural implications of the movement many have called the Thai New Wave.

Film, Social Theory, and Area Studies

Since Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 18th century essay On the Origin of Languages and more recently with French social theorist Jacques Ranciere's (2004) writings on film, explanations regarding the production of meaning have been closely allied with a politics of aesthetics.[1] Departing from the over-theorized way in which we associate how people communicate with consensus-oriented objectives to arrive at a common ground (for example Jurgen Habermas[2]), one is now more free to look to the domain of form through which different "aesthetic" communities operate and, ultimately, differ while remaining connected. This community-oriented constellation (i.e. an explosive array

of images, a multi-contextual frame, a way in which we sense and derive new things previously invisible, through art and a multiplicity of non-vocal forms of expression like movies) subverts, implants, produces, and as a result, gives form to meaning. Instead of interpreting what "Thailand" means, by coding or decoding rigid place-based hypotheses, we might attempt to provide a description of "how" they mean in aesthetic terms relating to these new images. How was it that a multiplicity of groups, of the variety depicted in new Thai films, could ever have been crunched into a deracinated visual identity that has for so long been projected as "Thai?" How do new cinematic projections contest the old notion of representation? How do we create a taxonomy of terms related to a particular phenomenon in film that criss-cross multiple fields of understanding: the auteur, academic disciplines, the film audience, the citizen or immigrant, the represented, etc?

Here, the film and its creator escape tired tropes overflowing with repetition that render and reinforce conventional notions of Thai space. Film, literature, and other mediums of aesthetic production can repartition space through diverging and/or departing from the normative practices of description. It is a matter of restoring the varieties of space that have been assigned to a unity through nominal codes and categorization. Simplified, one should, when inquiring about Thai space, be receptive to a variety of answers. In this way, the renowned Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul suggests:

> Everything is related to films. Architecture has its own stories, it is just another way to tell stories. It is characterized by how a person experiences art by using space and time. It is walking from one point to another, which is very similar to cinema. Lighting, shadow, and space are about the story of emotions and of the mind. Some places do not make the person who enters feel that this place was constructed for so and so purpose, and it is able to take the visitor to the activities in that location, which are all prepared in such a way that we do them naturally. Just like humans- each person has a story. People will have different reactions in a relationship. *Going to places will give us different feelings or atmospheres, and we will have different reactions to each space. When I first began, I had to try*

> *to understand this media form (film) and know what it could do.* I created a new structure, so it stands out in structural terms.

--Apichatpong Weerasethakul[3]

Apichatpong realized the potentialities of space through a departure from conventional film form. Thai film has, through Apichatpong and others with similar aesthetic experimentations, begun to multiply and re-envision the depth of Thai space.

Movements throughout the twentieth century, and specifically the late-1950s early-1960s, Paris-based film movement known as the French New Wave, from which I derive my conjecture, have drawn upon the strength and creativity of their aesthetic community. Images change. The changes produced in the social domain, and the connections underlying the production of meaning, suggest that scholars should turn toward a re-imagined area studies capable of examining the production and perpetuation of aesthetic communities that are linked across and beyond academically conceived and imposed boundaries. Geographically and culturally diverse artists are participating in literary and cinematic projects that can be seen as united by globalized aesthetic linkages. These linkages, like film festivals and market venues that capitalize on a unified notion like "Thai New Wave," assist in the broader recognition of non-conventional filmmakers. The internationalization of film has the potential to liberate the filmmaker from localized conventions mandated by the expectations of a national audience, and the narrative of national identity that is often a key ingredient in successful domestic box office performances. I invoke contemporary Thai filmmakers participating in this sort of aesthetic community because it illuminates the way that traditional approaches inhibit important avenues for interpretation. It is not adequate to interpret these films only within the context of Southeast Asian Studies, or only in terms of Thai politics or Thai aesthetics. Instead these films point to a larger picture of associations between different times and distant places. In other words, to understand the questions implied in new Thai art films is to understand how the question has been framed in the history of cinema broadly construed. For this reason I've chosen to denote "the new" in Thai art cinema as the "Thai New Wave," in order to draw affinities between these selected films and the canonical New Waves of cinema past. Fruitful analysis of Thai cinema requires a famil-

iarity with the global history of cinema and an approach that is unfixed in both time and space.

Taking the Thai art film outside the context of Southeast Asian Studies offers several liberties. First, we come to realize that a contribution or innovation inherent in the Thai film is a contribution to the entire film canon, from which it has hitherto been excluded (for proof of this exclusion one need only do a quick search through the Western-centric selection of Criterion Collection Films). Second, instead of a study bound to a single social group and place-based context (the bread and butter of Area Studies) we are freed to look at the globalized links between infrastructure and form. For example, in the years 1958-1962 the French art films of Godard and Resnais, to name two widely recognized film auteurs, departed from regularized mainstream film aesthetics by adapting new, more literary narrative styles. Techniques like the jump-cut, in which conventional match-on-action time-compression shots were disrupted by visual "jumps" in the narrative, revolutionized French cinema. Alain Resnais's reorganization of time, based on the empathic experiences of its two protagonists in Hiroshima Mon Amour, nodded to literary changes in French literature by novelists such as Alain Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras. All these transitions took place amid the backdrop of a modern fluid style disrupted by the plurality of human conditions in the post-war West. We will assess below the formulaic similarities between the conjecture I've just outlined and recent Thai art films.

Positioning a new Thai Cinema: New Auteurs, New Stories

> If you ask me whether Wisit [Sasanatieng] makes "Thai" films, I'd say they don't seem "Thai" at all. Many parts are more akin to Finnish films, and Japanese films as well. But why should you care since Wisit's movies are "Wisit" movies through and through? That's where I'd place importance. I'm excited every time one of his movies comes out because both his vision and identity are specifically his. I'm excited more about these things than whether it's Thai or not. I'm not so concerned about those things and don't think we should give too much critical attention to it.
>
> --Pen-ek Ratanaruang[4]

Turning back to the form and style of recent Thai films, and whether they should be seen as conceived by a "Thai" or "auteur," we can focus on what I would describe as the extravagant volume of tone versus the play of melody in the art film. But our reflections on the broader history of alternative cinema, New Wave cinema, helps to clarify the breaks, shifts, and historic affinities, in new Thai films. In this way we can more easily extract key features and influences on Aphichatpong Weerasethakul's films. Like the films of Jean Luc Godard, such as Une Femme est Une Femme (1961) or In Praise of Love (2001), Apichatpong's characters are not as central to the film story so much as their associations are central to the way they, and we, perceive the world they inhabit. As such, the narrative, or story line if you prefer, opens up to numerous points of arrival and departure. Without conventional beginnings, middles, and endings, the audience traverses the film's landscape from multiple points of view. In terms of genre, in which particular rules stabilize the expectations of the audience (e.g., horror, musical, action, drama, or comedy), the structure of the story purposefully blends and confuses the elements.

If we continued along the lines of an Apichatpong/ Godard comparison, which would situate certain affinities between a French New Wave of 1958-1961 and a present Thai New Wave, many other aspects of Apichatpong's five feature films convey genealogical linkages. In The Adventures of Iron Pussy (2003), in which the hero is a 7-11 clerk by day and a drag queen/ secret agent by night, characters break from comical dialogue into the conversational idiom of a Thai folk musical. This film is unlike any of Apichatpong's other work, likely due to the collaboration with the conceptual artist and lead actor Michael Shaowanasai. This project's attempt to utilize the musical genre as a means of questioning normative gender roles imposed on Thai society is very much akin to the stylistic and musically-infused narrative composition of Godard's Une Femme est Une Femme.

Blissfully Yours (2002) and Tropical Malady (2004), Apichatpong's 2nd and 4th feature films, are more difficult to apprehend with any predetermined analytical or interpretive frame. The films differ in narrative style but again we can locate them within a personal approach to film-making that creates certain similarities between two otherwise disjunctive films. In Blissfully Yours we can identify an immediate political context, the plight of the Burmese illegal immigrant, Min, who must remain silent because he lacks a voice in the

broader sphere of Thai citizenship.⁵ But the film chooses to demonstrate this relationship in other ways. First, Min suffers from a rash which two Thai characters attempt to treat with a cream of their own concoction. Though the sun may indeed irritate the rash it also provides moments of happiness into which Min and his Thai girlfriend, Roong, can escape. A long drive from town and into the countryside culminates in a picnic on a scenic cliff somewhere on the edge of the jungle where Min and Roong evade, if only briefly, the difficulties of their daily routines. Nearby they swim in a stream and comment on their lives. But their happiness and escape is interrupted, at several junctures, by the irritation of Min's rash. Here Apichatpong puts oppression and momentary bliss into conflict such that neither has the power to cancel out the other, and, ultimately, reflecting on the opening scene in a doctor's office, the realities of a structural oppression are difficult to treat permanently. Apichatpong has noted that a personal experience inspired this dissection of structural inequality in the global order. In 1998, Apichatpong witnessed Thai police handcuffing several illegal Burmese immigrants, apparently apprehended while trying to enjoy the day at a Thai zoo.

It should be stated that Blissfully Yours utilized several stylistic devices that reappear in Tropical Malady. One is that the opening credits don't appear until several scenes have taken place. Based on several clues (including the directors commentary to Tropical Malady, the understanding of which must be called a "clue" based on my own deficiencies with the Thai language) the opening credits appear only after the theme of the movie crystallizes, which in both cases was a process-oriented relationship embedded in the practice of life. For example, in Blissfully Yours the relationships between multiple oppressions, the light of day, and an escape to the jungle where the characters arrive at moments of bliss, are clarified in-transit, i.e., at a moving moment between the foregrounding of their daily routines and the departure from routine into the jungle. Almost halfway through the film, as they are driving along a two-lane road, away from town and toward the mountainous jungle, the music starts to play and the opening credits begin to roll. Life doesn't unfold as stories, but only becomes so as we select elements to form a particular narrative. Thus, Apichatpong allows the opening credits to roll only as he foregrounds the consciousness of a particular selection of images and

stories. This same delayed opening takes place far into Tropical Malady as two men seemingly infatuated with one another, Keng and Tong, ride a motorcycle in darkness along a country road. Elements of a story have been told and a new story is about to begin. As such, Tropical Malady is a movie in two parts and the opening credits begin at the point of division.

Apichatpong's first feature film, Mysterious Object at Noon (2000), has revolutionized the way Thailand could be "seen" through multiple frames and methods. Shot during the late-90s economic downturn in Thailand, discussed in depth by several academics,⁶ Apichatpong's film represents resistance to any single narrative by employing the surrealist technique of Exquisite Corpse to traverse the multiplicity of the Thai landscape. [Note: Exquisite Corpse is a technique by which objects, images, or story parts are collectively assembled through either rule-following or by supplementing the most recent segment.] Applying this method in cinematic form meant beginning a part of a story in one geographic locale and continuing where it left off in another. The voice of an unknown interviewer (out of the view of the camera) opens the film in Bangkok with the words "could you tell us a story" after which a women's voice begins the fictional story of a young boy named "Dogfahr" [meaning: "high-class woman"]. As the film moves across a variety of Thai provinces, and cultural and economic landscapes, the attention is aligned more with how the story is told than a coherent narrative structure. The form of the story is both implicit and explicit, in that it takes on different styles contingent with the place and group of people who must pick up where the other storyteller left off. The dimensions of the disjunctive story are fused with contemporary rural realities, such as being sold to a go-go bar. Narrative disjunctures pile-up as contemporary fiction is adjoined with historiographic details related to Thai-Japanese relations during World War II; rural northern folk traditions are employed to convey a soap opera melodrama to dramatize the story of Dogfahr; while Thai school children in a southern province use Japanese manga (comic book) references to facilitate Dogfahr's ultimate demise. Though the story seems complete, for another 10 minutes the film continues to capture the everyday lives of potential storytellers. This choice foregrounds the fact that all the film's details were captured by the camera in a particular place and at a particular time. Who would've

guessed that Mysterious Object at Noon would be distributed to the world by the same distributor, Plexi-Film, that compiled the concert DVDs of my favorite two bands: Galaxie 500 and Low. Like any musical adventure, Mysterious Object at Noon creates a new melodic journey by disturbing the harmony of old notes.

Though I hesitate to position fellow-Thai film directors like Pen-ek Ratanaruang and Wisit Sasanatieng into a comparative lens with Apichatpong since they are very likely attempting to do different things, and since Pen-ek and Wisit are likely to generate a broader appeal to mainstream audiences (a point amply demonstrated during my summer course in the Politics of Film at the University of Hawai'i), there is something new in their separate styles which contributes to the constellation of a new Thai aesthetic. Pen-ek's Last Life in the Universe (2003) represents one such New Wave film. The primary characters are not uniquely "Thai" nor or they the prototypical identifications of any particular national stereotype. Instead they, like renown film theorist David Bordwell's list of art film commonalities [e.g., alienation, psychologically-complex characters, open-ended narratives, disjointed temporalities, etc.7] represent psychologically complex characters aloof from, yet tied to, the complex processes of globalization. In the backdrop, Noi, an unemployed and eccentric Thai chain-smoker suffering from her recent sister's death, meets Kenji, a tidy Japanese expatriate librarian alienated by life and in search of the appropriate suicide technique. The film begins in Bangkok, where Kenji eventually finds peace, and ends in Osaka, where Noi finds employment. Throughout the film different languages are spoken, cultures are oddly juxtaposed, while national identity is cleverly downplayed but not disguised. In interior spaces the speed of the film is slowed down in opposition to the speed at which the world outside operates, an effect achieved through extended camera shots and dream-like landscape visuals where, in key frames, multiple times operate. In Pen-ek's more recent film, Invisible Waves (2006), a disjunctive narrative unfolds in Hong Kong, Macau, and post-tsunami Phuket, Thailand amongst Thai, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean actors. Again, the languages spoken within the film's soundtrack include Thai, Japanese, and English. Primary characters flow across supposedly stringent national boundaries that also demarcate the borderlines for so-

called "national cinemas". Obviously this point makes it increasingly difficult to use the terms "new Thai cinema," "the Thai New Wave," or "the Thai art film," and so on. Perhaps this is a wider phenomenon happening in many places beyond these so-called Thai art films, as directors seek to be relevant to international market, transnational identities, and globally integrated social spaces. The market has opened up this space such that film narratives need not be constrained to simple national representations of identity.

Yet, outside market parameters, other sorts of associations and alignments work into the ultimate film product. This process of association is part of a broader plurality in which the institutions of society collaborate in a community of aesthetic production. This community of mediums can be described as a site of association whereby different sorts of illustration collide through an intersection of social practices (e.g., in capturing scenes of life in film and literary writing) which are then accessible in an interactive form (e.g., by watching a film or reading the work). Consider the triangular relationship between film auteur Pen-ek Ratanaruang; the musician, contemporary fiction and essay writer Prabda Yoon; and the observers of their respective work (which might include movie audiences, readership, newspaper or magazine reviewers, academic interpreters, and others). Each element of this stylistic constellation takes part in the form and reception of the actual work. I first became aware of how this community of style could be framed through an article printed in the Bangkok-based newspaper The Nation (August 24, 2002) following the announcement that up-and-coming fiction writer, Prabda Yoon, had become "one of the youngest writers ever to win the SeaWrite Award," one of the most prestigious awards in Southeast Asian literature. The article suggested that his "unconventional style" was destined to be a major magnet of criticism. Only days earlier another Thai newspaper, Siam Rath, declared Prabda's victory the "tragedy of the SeaWrite Award," and also raised another critic's claim that Prabda was the centerpiece for a generation of "inexperienced young writers." Veteran writer Sujit Wongthes responded in support of so-called New Wave writers like Prabda arguing that they should be welcomed into Thai literary circles. Other critics seemed to sidestep the quality of Prabda's writing to invoke personal injunctions against the author such as "his choice of a seemingly Bohemi-

an lifestyle and his image as an avant garde thinker." These mundane elements also seemed to draw the ire of the old guard of the Thai literati.

Pen-ek Ratanaruang, who had become familiar with Prabda's work through a collection of essays on film called Unstill Pictures (2001), began collaborating on the story for Last Life in the Universe (2003). Their association merged their distinct styles while maintaining key differences. As an avid film aficionado and avante-modern fiction writer, Prabda Yoon's screen-writing roles in both of Pen-ek's recent films, Last Life in the Universe (2003) and Invisible Waves (2006) break with the conventions of adaptation. Instead of collaborating on the individual parts of the story, as it progressed, Pen-ek relayed the conception to Prabda in one sitting. After a few months without contact, Prabda relayed, in written form, a rough draft of a story called I Am Home that later became Last Life. Obviously, between any two artists (painters, writers, auteurs, etc.) there will exist points of disagreement, without which they could not be called artists because they would create the same thing. The interesting aspect in the case of the Last Life project is that both Prabda and Pen-ek had a deep respect for each other's work which, ultimately, led to a sort of freedom for each to pursue the end-product with some sense of personal direction. With Pen-ek, the film respected the story to some extent but departed from it at several junctures. In the case of Prabda, the story was released later as a short fiction work by the same name, but with different plot developments, descriptions, and endings.

I think it might be hasty to suggest that their isn't something culturally Thai about a particular film captured in a Thai social space, especially if we consider Wittgenstein's injunction that language frames a particular world and context. Many Southeast Asianists will surely jump to critique the idea that I even invoke a French history four decades past as a useful conjecture from which to gauge modern film phenomenon as it is unfolding in the space of the Thai nation. Because of certain marked similarities, or even cultural affinities practiced more regularly in a regional proximity, there is something to be said for an area studies view of film. In this way I can share the deep reverence I hold for Pen-ek, Apichatphong, and Wisit with the likes of Eric Khoo or Wong Kar Wai, both of whom position their films in the context of a particular place (i.e., Singa-

pore and Hong Kong respectively). But to partition the cinematic phenomenon off from a canonical film history is to focus solely on social context without regard for formal innovation and technical similarity, which, in turn, produces that very social context. The way in which technique fruitfully intersects with social realities to produce something new and different is very much a part of the artistic and political process I am attempting to illustrate here.

The New Thai Critical Voice

The key development in the emergence of modern publics was the appearance of newsletters and other temporally structured forms oriented to their own circulation: not just controversial pamphlets, but regular and dated papers, magazines, almanacs, annuals, and essay serials. They developed reflexivity about their circulation through reviews, reprintings, citation, controversy. These forms single out circulation both through their sense of temporality and through the way they allow discourse to move in different directions. I don't speak just to you; I speak to the public in a way that enters a cross-citational field of many other people speaking to the public. (Warner 2003:66)

For an academic focusing Thai film, an occasional scavenger hunt through the larger and larger sections of Thai-language critical materials available from Bangkok-based bookstores suggests something promising. As a Hawai'i-based academic doing research related to Thai film, I must first consider how to organize these materials into a useful methodology while also entering into a productive conversation (critical or otherwise) surrounding what it is I'm researching. Chetana Nagavajara (2003), has underscored the way in which the creative process and its interpreters must move outside of the oral tradition common to the Thai cultural context and into a written, accessible form. He presents something of a treatise on how the textual conversation can bring literary and visual arts into a broader engagement with the Thai public. As one makes their way through the gargantuan Japanese-exported Kinokinaya Bookstore in the fashionable Bangkok-based shopping mall known as Siam Paragon, or several magazine stands in the hipster-frequented area of Bangkok known as Siam Square, or in the nooks and crannies of Thai suburbs where one accidentally stumbles upon a translation of Dostoyevsky, one notes the growing body of written work

which is beginning to treat the phenomenon of film unfolding against the backdrop of the Thai national imagination.

In this regard the recent printing of user-friendly guides to interpreting and understanding various Thai film projects should be received with great interest to those attentive to a so-called Thai New Wave. Bioscope, a monthly Thai-language film magazine which has brought new auteurs to the Thai film public (which may not have immediate access to them otherwise), has recently printed The Making of Invisible Waves (Roongrun 2006). Apart from your average film project summary, this particularly interesting text contains interviews with people involved along with descriptions of the roles they undertook in the composition of the film. Bioscope's undertaking, along with Navarat Roongaroon's excellent interviews and textual composition, emphasizes the film through it's systematic process and production. In contrast, books like Pry Pansang's As Films Go By (2002) focus on the subjective magic of the viewing experience. A recent collection of interviews between Waraphoj Phanthupong and Pen-ek Ratanaruang (Phanthupong 2006) grants the film historian access to the development of an innovative Thai auteur. Even a comparison between the textual contributions of Prabda Yoon's Last Life in the Universe (2003) and Pen-ek's cinematic adaptation allow for a critical analysis of the differences between literary and cinematic diegesis (i.e. the internal worlds of the work).

With the potential of critical analysis in mind, one should remain attentive to academics like Kamjohn Louiyaphong (2005). Kamjohn's analysis suggests that Thai ghost films, previously overlooked as B movies without theoretical weight, are instrumental in understanding a broader social and political context in Thailand due to their accessibility. In light of this popular genre Wisit's latest film Pen Chu Gap Phi (Love Affair with a Ghost), still unreleased at the time of writing, appears to be responding to a particular context within which film worlds in Thailand are increasingly finding representation. Wisit, an auteur who seemed largely focused on comical and mundane issues of content, and stylistic issues of color, is probably the least likely of directors to enter the ghost world. In conversation with several Thai film fans I've received the same response to Wisit's film: usually something like "the title seems impossible." And the sentence *"Pen chu gap phi"* does seem impossible. But film is, thankfully, not forced to sustain the normative rules of the so-called "real world." In this way new films seem to be representative of a New Wave and the interpretive community seems to be taking note.

There is something to be said for the availability of print materials related to new Thai films and film auteurs, the combination of which can be said to underpin what Michael Warner calls, in the above epigraph, a "public." I've attempted to suggest that such publics are stylized communities by virtue of the content, style, and form they pursue. This aesthetic constellation becomes political in so far as it imposes or, alternatively, proposes a way of sensing the world. As one works from new points of view, through the sort of epistemological shift that could be offered through the structures of the film world, one is likely drawn away from the disciplinary frames of area studies, or political studies, or social studies, or Thai studies. Instead one is forced to closely examine the community influx beneath the categories previously assigned to them.

There is a likely bias in the way I've decided to pursue this relationship between film and, to a lesser extent, print as a way of enveloping a community of mediums and aesthetic production. The French New Wave is known for such a relationship, between the emergence of new magazines (Elle, Paris-Match, L'Express), journals (Cahiers du cinema, Positif), the New Novel/nouveau roman (Alain Robbe-Grillet, Natalie Sarraute, Claude Simone), and new forms of film production and technologies (Neupert 2002). Falling in love with the French cinema at a young age likely influenced my recent obsession with new Thai films. With new Thai fiction authors like Prabda Yoon, auteurs like Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Pen-ek Ratanaruang, and Wisit Sasanatieng, all of whom have been called New Wave, an evident constellation of stylistic diversity is emerging from a particular geography. Whether it can be sustained is altogether another question, and likely irrelevant, as the movements converge, diverge, and role into the next modern tide. Locating movements, always on the rise, and locating connections between them, contemporaneously and historically, is a political question of importance.

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End Notes

[1] See—Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; and Ranciere, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 2004. There are two points I'd like to make about Rousseau. First, Rousseau demonstrates that the way we approach the study of language, as a tool of communication and operation, is largely misconstrued. Language is not a relationship between "speaker" and "hearer" (as goes the conversation of much analytic philosophy), but between conveyor and the subject(s) toward whom something has been conveyed (transmitted, manifested, etc.). This broadens the scope of politics within which language becomes a central ground of analysis. Examples of the conveyor, within a contemporary scope, might include the musician, the film-maker, the "voice" of community radio, the discourse of a particular political debate, the discourse surrounding a particular politician, etc. In this way context and language use are central: "if only he has some means of contact with his fellow men, by means of which one can act and another can sense, he will finally succeed in communicating whatever ideas he might have (10)." Elsewhere Rousseau states, "[i]nstead of inspirational inflections, our tongues allow only for cries of diabolic possession (50)."

[2] Habermas, Jurgen. *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Boston: MIT, 1998.

[3] My emphasis. See- Thunska Pansittivorakul. "A Conversation With Apichatpong Weerasethakul." *Criticine*. http://www.criticine.com/interview_article.php?id=24. Posted 29 April 2006.

[4] Waraphoj Phanthupong. *Yaang Noi Thee Sut: Prawat lae thasana nai wainum khong Pen-ek Ratanaruang* [The Smallest Things: History and Perspective in the Youth of Pen-ek Ratanaruang]. Bangkok: Typhoon Books, 2006.

[5] In Abdelmalek Sayad's *The Suffering of the Immigrant* (2004) there is a stark similarity between Min's experience in the opening scene of *Blissfully Yours* and Sayad's diagnoses of the structural conditions delimiting the body of the immigrant. In Sayad's chapter entitled "Illness, Suffering and the Body," he suggests that "Illness (or accidents) and its aftermath…provide us with the best insight into the contradictions that constitute the immigrant condition itself (179)." Accordingly we note that Min possesses a type of illness, a rash, but also that he is oppressed by the structural conditions of being an illegal immigrant in Thailand. Sayad continutes, "[a]ll that an immigrant who is uncertain of his status can actually do is to take refuge in his illness and 'settle into it', just as he once settled into his immigrant condition (181)."

[6] For example see sections in: Warr, Peter. Ed. *Thailand Beyond the Crisis*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005; and Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker. *Thailand, Economy and Politics*. Oxford and New York: Oxford Press, 2002.

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Mu Hine with Brass Rings

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Six-year old Mu Hine sat on a red and yellow bamboo mat in the middle of the sun-blasted dirt road. A small bead of sweat left a glistening trail down her temple and along the side of her cheek. She sat ramrod straight with an unwaveringly serious face. She rested her hands on her skinny legs which were crossed in front of her. She was dressed the way most of the women in her village do: a short black sarong with pink trim and white tunic and, except for the short bangs that ran across her forehead, her hair pulled up in pink, yellow, and green scarves. An old woman stood over her, bent almost in half at the waist, her strong hands tugging and prying at a thin brass coil around Mu Hine's neck. She was unwinding the coil, using her wiry fingers and hands to loosen it until she could pull it over the girl's head. A man stood nearby, a hefty video camera on his shoulder aimed at Mu Hine and the old lady while an American TV journalist angled for the best view. The girl mostly ignored them; she was used to foreigners watching her and recording her image on high-tech devices. Once the coil was removed Mu Hine tentatively moved her neck side to side and forwards and back. "I feel light!" she declared, flashing her dimpled smile and revealing slightly crooked teeth. The dirt road in which Mu Hine was sitting runs through the middle of her village, known to visitors as Ban Noy Soi Longneck Village, in the province of Mae Hong Son in northern Thailand about 4 kilometers from the

Burmese border. Mu Hine's village is like many other small, remote villages in Thailand. The houses are simple ones, constructed of bamboo and wood with a few corrugated roofs between the mostly leaf and straw roofed houses. Pigs and chickens grunt and cluck from their pens and along the dirt paths. There is a small dirt-floor elementary school with smaller classrooms separated only by thin bamboo partitions and a few shops. The village is situated in a narrow valley between two short but steep hills and, unlike most Thai villages, there are no rice fields nearby, only a few small family gardens. The people in Mu Hine's village are not allowed to earn money farming fragrant Jasmine rice like their Thai neighbors do; they earn their living from another generations-old tradition. Tourists from around the world come to villages like Ban Nay Soi to look at the women and girls like Mu Hine whose necks are wrapped in brass coils that compress their shoulders and rib cage, making their necks appear unusually long.

The complications begin with the most basic facts about this group of people. In English, Mu Hine's ethnic group is usually called "Longneck Karen," but each of the linguistic groups in the forest of languages that surrounds Mu Hine's people use a different name. The Burmese call them the Padaung. In Thai, they're Kariang Kaw Yaw. Their neighboring "hill-tribe," the Kayah, call them Lya Kher, which roughly translates as

"the top of the river," where Mu Hine's people are known to live in their homeland Karenni State. In their own language, they refer to themselves as Kayan or, simply, people.

The name of her village is equally complicated. It is sometimes called Ban Nay Soi and appears to be only a few square acres of land off of a dirt road. But her village is only the most visible section of a large refugee camp, Karenni Refugee Camp #1. Thousands of refugees, like Mu Hine and her family, have sought shelter in these camps in Thailand. Their homeland, Karenni State, a Connecticut-sized area of Southeast Asia, has been under Burmese occupation since 1948.

Karenni people, led mostly by the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), began resisting the occupation almost immediately after it began. The KNPP claims that prior to Burmese occupation, Karenni State was comprised of five sovereign states, each with its own *Sawbwa*, or prince, none of who answered to any nearby powers; neither the Burmese, the Thais, nor the British. Today, of the total population of 200,000, about 50,000 Karenni people, called Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are said to be living and hiding from the Burmese Army in the mountainous jungles of their homeland. About 20,000 have sought refuge in the camps in Thailand. The refugees have fled forced relocation and labor, arbitrary arrest, torture and execution, and theft and destruction of their crops, livestock and villages at the hands of the Burmese to the relative safety of the refugee camps. In short, the Burmese are destroying the already sparsely populated and remote Karenni State.

Most of the refugees are supported by international NGO's who provide basic food rations, building materials, health care, and education. But the people who live in Mu Hine's section and other two similar villages that are located further from the refugee camp are in the unique position of being able to earn money. Tourists who visit Section 19 pay a fee of about US$7. In exchange, they are allowed to wander through the village, look at, talk to and photograph the women who wear the brass rings on their necks. Some Kayan women also have brass rings on their legs just below the knee, navy blue pieces of cotton covering their shins, and aluminum bracelets that clack when they move their arms. The tourists can also buy the items that the women sell at their stalls: brightly-colored hand-woven scarves that hang from bamboo poles,

postcards and carvings of "long-neck" women, silver bracelets, wooden frogs that chirp, chirp, chirp when you rub a stick against their backs, and pencils with small long-neck dolls sticking out from the eraser end. On a few tables are a set of the rings that they wear so that tourists can feel their heft (up to 5 kilograms) and see how the word "rings" is a misnomer. The women actually wear one continuous coil that is tightened so that it only appears to be one ring stacked on top of the next.

In addition to the money that they earn from selling their wares, the women who wear the brass earn a monthly salary from the fee tourists pay to enter the village. Little girls like Mu Hine earn about US$14 a month, or the same amount that a new teacher earns in the refugee camps. Adult women earn about three-times that. It is unclear what happens to the rest of the money that is collected at the entrance. Some people say that it goes to local Thai businesspeople. Some claim that part of the money goes to fund the resistance in Karenni State. There is more money beyond what is distributed to the women, but whoever gets it doesn't leave a paper trail.

Perhaps as confusing as what happens to the money is the question of why the women wear the rings in the first place. One might as well ask a young American why she pierces her lip, her nose, her chin, or her eyebrow. When asked, the answer that most of the Kayan women give is a single, unexplained word: "tradition." Some people believe that the women started to wear the rings in order to emulate their mythical dragon forebears. Others say that the rings were meant to protect the women from being attacked by tigers or to make them less attractive to surrounding tribes that might want to carry the women off for themselves or to sell into slavery.

Some people claim that it used to be that only certain girls, born on certain days, wore the rings, but today that is no longer the case. Today it is up to the girl and her family. Mu Hine, for example, explained that even though her mother didn't wear the rings, she wanted to because all of her friends and the other women in the village had them. Her mother had put them on her neck when Mu Hine was five years old, the typical age for a girl's first set of rings, but she hadn't done it properly and so rather than laying one loop smoothly on top of the next, there were unattractive gaps and spaces between each level. This is why they'd asked the old

woman to put on a new set of rings. The camera crew and the American journalist were conveniently shooting that day and wanted to watch and record the replacement of the rings, a process that typically happens once every few years in a girl's life until her original coil of about 5 rings reaches a height of 20 rings or more.

The little girl sat patiently while the old woman removed the rings and the journalist and the cameraman scrutinized and commented in English. Her mother sat some distance away, off camera, on a wooden bench in front of a nearby shop watching her daughter. Ringless, Mu Hine said it felt strange to have them off and she became dizzy. One of the myths often told about the Kayan is that the women's neck muscles grow weak with disuse and that the rings cannot be removed. If they are, the myth claims, the woman's head will flop over and she'll suffocate. As Mu Hine touched the soft skin of her neck and moved her head up and down and side to side, in movements that are otherwise restricted by the rings, it was obvious that she was in no danger of suffocating. According to observers, however, when older women take off their rings, they can't walk in a straight line. The rings, which hold their heads firmly in place, can affect their sense of balance so that when the rings are removed, the women wobble and sway back and forth when they walk.

Mu Hine's neck didn't look especially long with the rings off. In fact, she may have been too young for any physical changes to be apparent to the naked eye. "Long neck" is not only an overly simple identifier, but an inaccurate one as well. The women's necks aren't elongated. Rather, the weight of the brass, which can total thirty to forty pounds or fifty to sixty including the rings on their legs, pushes down their clavicles, vertebrae, and ribs so that their necks appear long above their sloping shoulders. X-rays taken at Mae Hong Son hospital (and explained on fliers around town titled "The Secret of the Giraffe Women Revealed!") show that the spaces between the vertebrae in their necks are no greater than in non-ring wearers.

Their changed appearance does nothing to detract from their beauty in the minds of Kayan men or Karenni men from other ethnic groups. Some foreigners do not agree. In "Sketch of Wild Karen Tribes," a pamphlet compiled in 1895 for and by Baptist missionaries, the un-named author writes, "The appearance of a Padaung woman is most peculiar, her small head, the long brass bound neck, sloping shoulders, and sacklike appearance of the *thindaing* [shirt] suggesting a champagne bottle, and those who, acting under the advice of the village pastors, had discarded the brass work coiled around their necks and legs looked like a young cockerel extending his neck to the utmost when learning to crow."

Mu Hine, still sitting in the hot sunshine so that the cameraman could get the best possible light, looked more like a little girl than a young cockerel. The brass had stained the skin on her neck black and red, stains that all of the women get and which outsiders and tourists often confuse with bruising. Other than the dizziness, Mu Hine didn't complain of any pain during the removal and replacement of her rings. She sat and waited patiently as the old woman warmed the new brass coil in the sun and with the friction of her hands in order to make it soft enough to manipulate. Older women wear thicker brass coils and those ones have to be warmed in a fire or coals. Once the ring was wide and soft, the old woman started at the bottom and slowly tightened the coil around the little girl's neck. Her skilled hands carefully curved the metal so that it was smooth and even, tight enough to Mu Hine's neck so that it didn't move too much, and yet lose enough that the girl was comfortable. There were no more gaps and spaces between each loop of the new stack. The task completed, Mu Hine's fingers climbed up the stack from one level to the next, like it was a staircase. She mouthed the numbers to herself. "Nine!" she exclaimed when her fingers reached the top. It was two more coils than she had been wearing before. She started to run off back to school, but her mother, still seated on the bench in front of the store, called her back. She needed to fix the brass around the lower part of the girl's legs. School would have to wait.

Missing an afternoon of first grade might not seem like much of a sacrifice in the life of a young girl especially one who, presumably, has years of learning and education in front of her. But in a refugee camp where educational limitations are only further compounded by the fact that a young girl who wears the rings is supporting her parents and family, missing one day or afternoon of school can sometimes descend down a slippery slope of dropping out of school altogether.

Because the Kayan families supplement the girls' monthly allotments with the money that the tourists spend on trinkets and hand-made crafts, Kayan girls

who wear the rings are often caught between the desire for higher education and their families' economic security. Parents know that tourists are more likely to spend money at stalls where actual ring-wearing girls sell the wares. In order to make more money, some parents have their daughters stay at home to greet the tourists rather than go to school. As a result, few of the girls who wear the rings make it to the upper levels of high school that are available in the camps.

By comparison, Kayan girls who don't wear the rings have more educational opportunities available to them. Annabelle was one such girl. As an adult, she was a serious woman with a sense of authority that belied her small, just under five foot stature. Her voice was soft and high, but full of a sense of conviction. As both the daughter of the headman in one of the Longneck villages and as the liaison between foreign visitors and Karenni organizations at the Karenni Foreign Office, conviction as well as charm were necessary traits. Annabelle had both in spades.

In the early 1980s, when Annabelle was about seven, her parents tried to put the rings on her. At that point, Annabelle and her family were living on the Karenni side of the Thai-Karenni border. Although there were no formal refugee camps or "long-neck" villages, a handful of foreigners would come to visit the Kayan and Annabelle's parents had the foresight to see that there would be some economic benefit to wearing the rings.

But Annabelle didn't want to wear them. In a photograph from that time, she is ankle-deep in a stream and her aunt is standing behind and bent over her. Annabelle is wearing a dark orange sarong and a short stack of rings. Black and red stained water runs down the front of her bare chest. Her aunt is scrubbing the rings with a small, yellow sponge. Annabelle looks exhausted. Her full lips sit expressionless between her fat, round cheeks. She is staring down and to her right at some unseen spot. Her hair is messy and there is sweat on her temples; she looks like she's been fighting. Her left hand is clenched into a first.

Annabelle wore the rings for three days and cried the entire time. Finally, her parents agreed to remove them. Even at seven, Annabelle knew that the rings would keep her from getting an education. "I had never seen a person who wore the rings finish high school," she explained. As a result of the determination and ambition that she exhibited even as a seven year old, Annabelle became the first girl from her village to finish high school. She also attended Post Ten (the equivalent of college prep) in Camp #3 and went to Chiang Mai, the closest major Thai city, for Foreign Affairs Training, a one-year program for ethnic minorities. Her education has allowed her to do internships in both the Philippines and in England. After her internships, she returned to Mae Hong Son to work in the Karenni Foreign Office and with the Karenni Student Union. Unlike most refugees, she carries a Thai ID card and is able to move relatively freely between the town of Mae Hong Son, the camps, and her village of Huay Sua Tao. Had she worn the rings, Annabelle would not have had these opportunities.

Local Thai authorities largely require that the women like Annabelle's mother, cousins, and the other women around her who wear the rings stay in their own villages; if the milk is free, one might say, why buy the cow? It's difficult for any refugees to move easily in Thailand outside of their camps. Most people who legally live on Thai soil carry an identification card, but not all forms of ID are equal. In a system not unlike apartheid, the different cards allow the bearer different levels of freedom of movement. The white card means its owner is a full Thai citizen who can move freely within the country, get a passport to travel abroad, and buy land, houses, cars, and motorbikes, a right not given to non-Thais in Thailand. The other two cards, the green and the blue, grants their possessor the same freedom of movement (within his/her own district), but the blue card indicates that he/she is one step closer to the white card. The green card is therefore considered the card that provided the least mobility and was often called the "hill tribe" ID. Refugees carry no ID and are unable to legally leave the camps. Because of their unique situation as a tourist attraction and the desire on the part of the local Thai authorities to keep them at least somewhat placated, some Kayan people, men and women both, carry a green ID card. Even though they can, therefore, technically go outside of their village, their movement is limited. The women are unlikely to go unnoticed if they go far from their villages. Indeed, one of the few groups of ring-wearing women to ever leave Southeast Asia were taken to England to be a part of the circus there; it is easy to see how they would cause commotion wherever they go outside of their villages. Thai authorities forbid women with

the rings to drive a motorbike, the most common form of transportation in rural Thailand. They claim it's for the women's own safety, but the women understand that it's one more way to prevent them from being seen out in public. Everyone makes more money if the women stay in their place. With their tenuous hold on basic freedoms and safety, the Kayan, and the other refugees, are in a position where it is easy for others to take advantage of them.

"I feel so sad when I see the tourists come and take pictures of our people who wear the rings. Our Kayan have very little education and knowledge," Annabelle said. "They don't even know their rights. They are exploited by some people but never know about it. I feel so frustrated about this. I would like to help my people to understand their situation and their lives. I also encourage their parents to send their children to school, even those who wear the rings. I educate their parents not to force their children to put the rings on. Regarding the rings, the girls must decide on their own."

Young Mu Hine decided to wear the rings because all of her friends and other women were doing it. Can a six year old make a smart decision about something that will affect her for the rest of her life? Did Mu Hine understand the consequences of her decision? And, in spite of Annabelle's fears that the rings are holding the women back and allowing her people to be exploited, is it possible for the women and the Kayan to use the rings to their own advantage? Because slowly, it seems, the once set-in-stone fate of the women with the brass rings is beginning to change.

There are perhaps new opportunities for the next generation of ring-wearers like Mu Ra and Zable, two young women who live in Mu Hine's village. Mu Ra was tall and thin with a long, narrow face. She and Zable were inseparable. Zable was shorter. She was also thin, but her face was round with plump cheeks. In appearance and temperament, Zable was a gregarious Ernie to Mu Ra's more reserved Bert. The two were often together and often entertaining in one of their homes. They seemed to be perpetually inviting people to come stop in for a cup of tea or a glass of water. And with guests present, Zable would slice a pineapple or other fresh fruit; both were always the consummate hostesses.

The girls were bright – they were often at the top of their classes and were the first girls with rings to attend high school in the camp. Their parents had been supportive of them continuing their education. They were both worried, however, about whether or not they would be able to go on to Post Ten, the best educational option in the camps beyond high school. Only a handful of students are accepted into Post Ten each year. The application process involves an entrance exam and an interview in English. In addition to their own worries, people in the larger community had their eyes on the two girls, hoping that they would succeed.

Karenni leadership, even as far up as a Major General in the Karenni Army, was watching Mu Ra and Zable. The Major General would on occasion ask about the girls, specifically about their education. He hoped that the two girls would be able to attend college in Chiang Mai. He thought that because the girls were bright and had Thai hill tribe ID cards, special arrangements could be made with Thai authorities to allow them to move to Chiang Mai. The Major General's interest in Mu Ra and Zable seemed curious and random. Behind his benign concern, however, it is likely that the Major General wanted the girls to go to Chiang Mai University because they, the Kayan and their flashy brass rings, were one of the few ways in which the Karenni and the military conflict got any attention from the outside world or from international media. The Major General was not shy about using the women and their rings in this way. When he talked about the reasons why the women wear the rings, he brushed away suggestions about mythical dragons or tigers or to avoid slavery. The women wear the rings, he explained, to identify them as Karenni. The tradition of wearing the rings started long before there even was a Karenni State or the idea of a Karenni identity, but the Major General was willing to look beyond that history to find a way to use the women and their international notoriety.

Inside Karenni State, the tradition appears to be dying. It is said that only two villages still practice the ring-wearing tradition. In the meantime, outside of Karenni State, the Karenni, the Kayan, the Thais, even the women themselves and their parents, are driven by a different motivation towards the same futile task. They are grasping at the dying tradition.

Even Annabelle is confounded by the situation: "Now I can see some of Kayan ladies who put the rings on are able to attend Grade 9. I am so happy for them. I

don't want to [lose] my traditions. If a person understands their rights, has education, and is free to make decisions, they can wear the rings if they are willing. But they must think seriously. I think I am free without having the rings, but still I am burdened when I think about my people. Unless my people are free, I won't say that I am free."

It is true that Mu Ra and Zable might have more educational opportunities available to them than women of ring-less Annabelle's generation. Perhaps the little girl, Mu Hine, when her stack of coils grows to twenty or more, will be able to go to college or work in a professional field. For the time being, however, girls like Mu Ra and Zable are both liberated and constrained by a decision that their parents made for them when they were little girls.

On the one hand, Mu Ra and Zable have greater financial stability than any of the other refugees. They have a steady monthly income and, as long as the tourists keep coming, will continue to have money. Many of the Kayan women also have Thai hill tribe ID cards. Compared to other refugees, Mu Ra and Zable are also exposed to more of the world outside their own refugee camps. On a daily basis there are tourists from all over the world visiting them and the ones who stop for a moment often talk about their home countries.

At one of the stalls in the village one day, a group of French tourists were walking toward a stall where one of the ring-wearing women was posted. As the tourists approached, the young woman called to them, "Bonjour!" Enticed, the tourists came to look at her wares.

"Ç'est combien?" one of the men asked.

"Deux cent baht," the Kayan woman answered.

"Tu parles vraiment bien le français. Ils pesent beaucoup tes bagues?"

"7 kilos."

"Ç'est beaucoup. Ça fait mal?"

"Non. J'ai l'habitude."

"Est-ce-que je peut prendre ta photo?"

"Oui. Pourquoi pas?"

The man and his wife sat down on either side of the woman for the photo. The Kayan woman spoke French with French mannerisms: her lips pressed forward, she occasionally blew puffs of air out from her inflated cheeks and tilted her head and shrugged her shoulder in a nonchalant way. Though the French tourists were impressed, the linguistic feat is commonplace amongst the Kayan women who live in touristed villages. Other women speak bits and pieces of other tourist languages: Japanese, German, Spanish, Chinese, and English. The walls inside some of the homes are lined with pictures and postcards from far away places: reverse souvenirs sent by tourists who paused long enough to exchange addresses. But for the women, it is a catch-22. It is their rings that draw the tourists to this otherwise remote region of the world. Through the tourists the Kayan women learn about these places and they learn about the world, but in all likelihood, because they wear the rings and because they are stateless, they will never be able to travel there.

Amongst the many foreigners who visit Mu Hine's village, a British journalist and his wife once passed through. The women with the brass rings inspired a conversation that quickly devolved into an argument. The wife wanted to buy some of the brass coils.

"It's artwork," she said.

"It's not artwork," the husband replied, growing frustrated with her simplistic take on the rings. "It's bondage." The rings are made to hold the women back, to constrain and confine them, he argued. Neither side of their argument is accurate. As a piece of "art" as the journalists's wife was describing it, the rings belong on a dusty museum shelf, catalogued forever as a relic of a lost culture, but Kayan culture isn't lost-- at least not yet. Also, if the women have more freedom and opportunities than their non-ring wearing Karenni counterparts, is it their rings or the fact that they are members of a persecuted ethnic minority group that constrains them?

These women live in the middle of the classic tension between belonging to practicing a traditional culture and the forward progress of minority groups, specifically women in this case, within that culture. Then add money to this tension; the fact that outsiders are willing to pay for this culture to hold on to its tradition. Add to this the fact that the culture is being destroyed by another group of outsiders, the Burmese. Add to this the way in which people within the culture are clinging to the last vestiges of their dying traditions in order to resist their complete destruction. It's no wonder Mu Hine became dizzy.

Some refugees talk a lot about "home," about Karenni State. They seem always to be thinking about when they are going to be able to go back. Even those who are too young to have anything but a few memories of the place thought about it almost constantly, imagining and re-imagining their memories over and over until they were worn thin. They long for a time and a place of freedom.

Returning to Karenni State isn't so inevitable for the Kayan women. Some say that yes, eventually, they want to go back. Other say yes, for a visit and then come back to Thailand. The women are still practicing one part of Karenni culture and tradition, but they are practicing it in a new time and place, and in that new time and place that culture is changing. These women, who are oftentimes the only face of the resistance in Karenni State that the rest of the world sees, no longer seem to know and remember Karenni State as intimately as other refugees do. They are from the same mountains, but having tasted some prosperity, they are reluctant to return to the poverty of their homeland. And so, perhaps, the traditions of Karenni State really are dying. Perhaps the Burmese army is successful in its attempts to eradicate Karenni culture.

Sitting at her family's stall one afternoon, eating longans, Mu Hine offered her clear-eyed and unconfused idea of who she is and where she belongs. "I am this!" she said, pointing to her body, her rings, her clothes. "I am Kayan," she said. She denied being Karenni, but said the name of a Karenni village, Daw Bay, when a visitor asked where her parents were from.

"Do you want to go there?" the woman asked.

"Yes," Mu Hine replied.

"To visit or to live?"

"To visit. I want to live here," she pointed her finger down, at the ground of Section 19.

"Why don't you go to visit your mother and father's village now?" The woman inquired. Did the little girl know about the war in Karenni State?

Mu Hine laughed at such a silly suggestion. "I can't go now. I don't have time. I have to go to school."

Undefeated Spartacus

HAMILTON WALTERS

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY
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Introduction

It is a cool, muggy morning in the Thai border town of Suan Phung. Dogs sleeping in the middle of the road do not raise their heads as we pass by; they continue their deep sleep. As I cling to the back of the motorbike while my Karen friend drives, the steamy tropical mist wipes away my morning grogginess, and slowly, I feel a renewed sense of importance in my life. I am exploring the world again, but, more importantly, I am looking for gold. I find this gold in an unexpected and overlooked locale, a refugee camp on the Thai side of the Thai-Burma border.

Just to the west, tucked away in the green mountains that make Suan Phung's backdrop, is the Karen refugee camp known as Tham Hin. The gold I seek comes in the form of documenting the life experiences of a handful of aged male and female Karen refugees. I will work with two Karen teachers in the camp on this project. They will conduct interviews in their spare time and write late into the night under the light of sardine can kerosene lamps.

I have been a friend of the Karen for seven years, and I have visited numerous refugee camps and revolutionary villages. I have felt the frustrations and despair of refugee camp life; I have seen the war harvest of amputees and mutilated bodies; I have seen eyes that cannot cry anymore, and I have witnessed the fracturing of an entire people: the Karen of Burma.

The war in Karen State is quite different from the struggles that I read about in history textbooks, have seen in movies, or anything that I witnessed or heard of while I served in the Persian Gulf. This is a war in which rape, murder, torture, and forced labor are integral weapons in the Burmese Army's arsenal to dominate the Karen people. Through a policy of persecution against civilians, the Burmese military dictatorship is attempting to break the Karen's will to stand up for their basic human rights. The Karen people, as well as other peoples of Burma, have suffered in obscurity for decades. Perhaps this is my strongest motivation for participating in this study, for I cannot allow history to stroll past the plight of the Karen people.

The life stories chronicled in this program hold relevance and value, not only for future generations of Karen, but for all peoples. In addition, we, the researchers, hope our endeavor celebrates and recog-

nizes these subjects in their own time. We hope as well that this project proves to the camp population that Karen lives matter. These Karen elders, many of them career educators, have experienced life at its lowest common denominator, yet they have maintained their dignity and an unwavering sense of service to their communities. After decades of resisting the Burmese military dictatorship, these subjects now live in a refugee camp where conditions are so miserable that a former United Nations High Commission on Refugees official referred to it as "shocking."[1] Each elder was presented with a gift of his or her choosing after the completion of the interviews. Their selections of gifts were perhaps indicative of the conditions of the camp: multi-vitamins, condensed milk, antibiotics, arthritis ointment, socks, beans, and canned meat and fruit.

An octogenarian named Spartacus[2] is the focus of this essay: "Undefeated Spartacus."

UNDEFEATED SPARTACUS

Spartacus was born in 1921 in Burma's Irrawaddy Delta. He is proud of the name his parents gave him, for Spartacus, he states, "freed people from moral and physical slavery." Life became difficult for him very early on; at the age of thirteen, after the death of his father, he helped his mother raise his five younger brothers and sisters. Although young Spartacus's responsibilities were immense, his memories of the period of British colonization were ones of prosperity, abundant food, and stability. At age nineteen, Spartacus attended Judson College in Rangoon, but he was a student only for a short time before his education was disrupted by the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942. Soon afterwards, he found himself alongside his Karen people working in various forced labor camps for the Japanese Army. As a forced laborer, he cleared jungles, leveled ground, and constructed airfields. He described how some laborers died painful deaths from contact with the sap of the *thuu tee* tree, which causes boils and blisters all over the body. Forced laborers were expected to supply their own provisions including food and water (this practice, unfortunately, did not end with the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, but continues to the present; the Burmese Army's use of Karen as well as other peoples of Burma for forced labor is widespread and well documented). When asked if he had seen many Karen forced laborers die, he responded that many died of exhaustion after returning to their villages. He was once forced to serve as guide for a group of Japanese soldiers. As is typical for Spartacus, he was unafraid, and even conversed with them in English, stating, "They asked me what I would do after the war."

After the war, he graduated from an agricultural college at Allahabad, India. One of the highlights of his stay in India was visiting Naga villages in the remote Assam region with a Naga classmate. He recalled seeing rows of skulls in the dwellings of the Naga, who had once been fierce headhunters in the region. He then served as an agricultural expert with an American missionary team in Shan State. After completing a three-year contract with the team, Spartacus journeyed to Tavoy in southern Burma to join the 150th Karen Baptist anniversary celebrations. He then worked as a teacher in an agricultural school in the Irrawaddy Delta. He made his first contacts with Karen revolutionaries while working in the delta. He recalled how life in Burma deteriorated after the military seized control of the government in 1962. At first, his school had difficulty obtaining materials, and then it had to shut down. Spartacus states, "The school was dismantled. The government took over the schools."

Afterwards, he found employment as a proctor at a Karen boys' boarding school, and then later he became a black marketeer. The black market goods smuggled from Thailand that Spartacus sold were not guns or drugs, but everyday innocuous items like vitamin B tablets, clothing, and ajinomoto (Monosodium Glutamate). The military dictatorship followed a policy of economic isolationism, which deprived Burma's masses of basic consumer goods. It was during his years as a black market trader that he furthered his contacts with revolutionaries of the Karen National Union (KNU), who controlled many of the black market trade routes along the Thai-Burma border. In 1974, he joined the Karen revolution. "I was educated, and so they recruited me. I wanted to help my people," states Spartacus.

In the revolutionary area, he taught English, history, geography, and agriculture to Karen high-school students. After a few years, Spartacus aspired to create the first college in the Karen revolutionary area. His proposal to build a center for higher learning was rejected by high-level KNU administrators, but nevertheless was approved by local education leaders. Spartacus and a few others moved forward with the plan, and subsequently he was taken into custody and placed under

house arrest for seven years by the president of the KNU, General Bo Mya. The KNU was strict about following the proper channels and would not tolerate anything perceived as insubordination. Also, General Bo Mya, known for his hot temper, was certainly not a man to be crossed. But when Spartacus appeared before the general about the matter, he did not mince words. "I spoke directly to General Mya. He was so mad that he was slapping the walls," claims Spartacus. He was placed under house arrest at a boy's training barracks located on General Mya's coffee plantation. During his confinement, he instructed students in academics as well as military drill, and he also raised goats. General Mya once again became furious with him after his goats ate some of the general's coffee plants. When asked if he had ever participated in armed struggle while he was a military instructor, Spartacus laughs and claims that he once shot his M-16 in the air to scare away some Burmese troops but states, "I never killed anyone."

In 1989, he moved south to Mulah village in a KNU administered area in Tenasserim district. Still going strong at age sixty-eight, he not only served as a teacher in Mulah but helped build the school there. "I learned masonry and carpentry in agricultural school," he claims. He maintains that building the Mulah school was one of the happiest moments of his life. It is indeed a shame that this school and Mulah village are now abandoned and in ruins, yet another testament to the brutality of the Burmese military dictatorship and a symbol of hopelessness in the nation of Burma.

In February 1997, the Burmese Army launched a massive offensive against a string of KNU administered villages on the eastern side of the Tenasserim River. Mulah was one of those villages (over thirty in all that were destroyed by the Burmese Army in the area). As thousands of Burmese troops, noted for their brutality against Karen civilians, swarmed into the area, the villagers had little time to flee. Yet to the surprise of his neighbors, Spartacus not only released his mature chickens and ducks into the jungle, but euthanized his chicks and ducklings. With the sounds of heavy fighting in the distance, he even took the time to neatly and respectfully bury them. "He did not want to see any of his animals suffer or be neglected after he was gone," states Nathaniel, a close friend of his.

It was in Mulah village in 1996 that I first met Spartacus, at that time in his mid-seventies. He was chopping the ground with a hoe. He was wearing rubber boots and had on a black knit cap. As soon as he saw me, a foreigner, walking through his village, he beckoned me to come over and chat. I was astonished to find myself conversing with an old man in a remote Karen revolution village who spoke perfect English and was very knowledgeable of international current events.

Today, I look into the deep lines in Spartacus's face. His voice garbles a bit because he has a cold. Yet again we engage in conversation, but this time it is in a bamboo schoolhouse in a refugee camp. Even though Spartacus, now age eighty-three, has spent more than five years within the confines of Tham Hin, he is still Spartacus.

Two weeks ago, while I was walking behind him through the narrow clay trails in the camp and discussing the plight of the Karen people with a few young Karen men, he said to us over his shoulder, "don't say anything to me about this federal union nonsense!" The KNU has been fighting successive Burmese governments since 1947 for more autonomy under a proposed federal union structure. Spartacus, on the other hand, has long been an anomaly among the Karen because of his uncompromising pro-independence stance. He states: "My heroes are the Kayan (Karenni) people. They stick to their principles. They fight for independence." Spartacus sees the Karen nation's participation in a federal union as ultimately submitting to Burman rule. After enduring decades of oppression and abuse at the hands of the Burman ethnic majority, it is almost inconceivable that many Karen will ever view the Burman majority without great suspicion and anger. As one Karen elder informed me, "forgive the Burmese? Yes, it is easy for you say. When you find Karen girls raped and tied to trees– yes, I have seen many– and villages burned, you see, it's not so easy to forgive." Such images of brutality are burned into the psyches of many Karen and perhaps can never be erased, even with the passing of generations. Also, the Karen and successive Burmese governments have been fighting since 1947, and there appears to be no end in sight. So why not go all the way? "Why didn't East Timor enter a federal union with Indonesia? No, they fought for independence and the United Nations helped them. Now they are independent," claims Spartacus.

Spartacus is an uncompromising man, and he has a reputation for being difficult to work with. But when

people in the refugee camp refer to his obduracy, there is always a tone of respect in their voices and usually a smile afterwards. Spartacus's rigidity signals something much deeper; he is a principled man. "We must have a strong will. We must never surrender. No deals! We will never go under Burmese rule. We will never be their prisoners."

Spartacus has never married. He lives alone and insists on taking care of himself. Spartacus, the indefatigable and stubborn loner, is in many ways representative of the decades-long Karen struggle. And his will to resist is just as resolute as that of the Karen guerrillas just over the border from the camp, who go into combat with worn-out rifles and only fifty rounds of ammunition. Somehow, he has managed to survive for eighty-three years in one of the most violent and impoverished regions on earth. When asked about the prospect of retirement he says, "I have no time to retire."

Spartacus still teaches. He still raises chickens and ducks. He still cleans his yard and chops firewood. He even takes an accounting class in the camp. Yes, he still makes propositions and arguments that make others uncomfortable. He still is devoted to his people and the revolution. Spartacus still loves God. Spartacus is still unafraid.

In fact, Spartacus is still undefeated.

End Notes

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[1] Marukatat, Saritdet. "Karen Camp Disappoints Ogata." *Bangkok Post,* 18 October 2000, A5.

2 This name has been changed to protect the identity of the informant.

Photo Essay:

The Vessantara Murals of Wat Monkolratanaram, an American Thai Temple

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SYNOPSIS

This article examines the interplay of tradition and adaptation evident in the architectural space and mural paintings of Wat Mongkolratanaram, a Thai Buddhist temple in Berkeley, California. In Thailand, Buddhist temples occupy buildings that are specifically constructed for religious use. They are large, open, heavily ornamented spaces that no one could confuse with domestic architecture. When establishing a temple in a foreign country, often funds are insufficient to build from the ground up, so existing structures must be adapted for the purpose. Wat Mongkolratanaram is an example of how an American residential house may be converted into a site suitable for the practice of Thai Buddhism. The article initially examines the idiosyncrasies of the architectural space, then follows this up with a close examination of the mural paintings in the worship hall.

Introduction

On Sunday mornings in Berkeley, people from all walks of life congregate on the patio of a distinctive house on Russell Street for brunch. The house stands out from its neighbors: porch and gable gleam with gilt arabesques, dazzling the eye with the unaccustomed hue of gold. Visitors file around to the back, where the air is spiced with the fragrance of pungent curries, and long tables invite groups to mix together in an informal repast. Street money must be exchanged for broad silvery tokens before one can partake of the feast. On each ersatz coin is stamped a holy symbol and the name "Wat Mongolratanaram." The large, highly decorated house is actually a Thai Buddhist temple, offering sustenance for the spirit as well as the stomach.

Wat Mongkolratanaram was established at its present location in Berkeley, California in 1980, and it has developed and expanded continuously. During the 1980s and '90s, three more buildings adjacent to the

Figure 1. Portico of Wat Monkolrata naram.

locals simply as "the Thai Temple," it provides cultural services to the community in the form of lessons in Thai language and classical dance, as well as the ever-popular Sunday brunch.

From the perspective of an art historian, one of the most distinctive traits of Wat Mongkol-ratanaram is its ad hoc architectural quality. In Thailand, nearly all temples occupy structures built specifically for religious use, and there is a high degree of consistency in their general features. A typical ubosoth has a spacious, open interior, sometimes supported by columns. The altar supporting the main Buddha image is usually on the far side of the room from the main entrance. Windows may line the side walls, fitted with wooden shutters that can be opened to let in light and air. When the interior is painted with murals, the most common arrangement is to have scenes from one or more of the thosachat (the collective term for last ten Jatakas) on the side walls, a scene depicting the traditional cosmology behind the Buddha image, and a representation of the manwichai (victory over Mara) episode from the Buddha's life over the entranceway (Boisselier 1976: 32). Wat Mongkol-ratanaram is an unusual example of a temple that has adapted existing structures to its needs: the ubosoth is a building that was once a residential home. The white clap-board facade now supports a Thai-style porti-

Figure 3. Gable and bay on the front wall.

co complete with chaofa and hanghong finials, sheltering a naga staircase (Figures 1 and 2). A pre-existing gable on the upper roof of the building has been decorated in green and gold with a motif representing the Buddha's first lecture in the deer park in Sarnath (Figure 3).

The temple interior is one large room that has been made as open as possible by the removal of inside walls. A staircase protrudes into the room, discreetly shielded by carved wooden panels, and a broad square column rises up from the center to support a ceiling beam (Figure 4). The main entrance and the altar both occupy the front, southern wall of the building, so the Buddha image is not immediately visible upon entering as it would be in a Thai temple of traditional design. There is also a back door in the corner diagonally opposite from the altar, but the staircase and column create visual obstacles to the immediate perception of the image. Whether entering from the front or back door, one must move completely into the room before the image

Left: Figure 2. Naga staircase beneath portico.

Right: Figure 4. Staircase in ubosoth.

can be perceived. The tendency for religious architecture to favor symmetry, but for domestic architecture to eschew it, creates a challenge for those who hope to convert a residential house into a place of worship: how can one emphasize the significance of the primary icon if it is denied centrality? Wat Mongkolratanaram solves this problem through the ingenious use of an existing feature, the windowed bay that runs up the front wall of the house. The main altar was placed in the center of the shallow recessed space created by the bay, creating a subtle architectural frame for the Buddha image (Figure 5). This act of framing, its effect enhanced by the windows on either side that augment the illumination upon the gilded image, creates a sense of visual importance that overrules the asymmetry of the altar's position in the room.

In addition to the main altar, which supports a Buddha with all the iconographic features associated with statues categorized as "early Chiang Saen" or "lion-type," there are two other sites in the ubosoth that enshrine images.[1] To the left of the main altar is a picture of the temple's abbot,

Figure 6. Portrait of Luang Pho Mongkol.

formally styled Phra Mongkolthepmoli, but known more simply as Luang Pho Mongkol. The ornamental framing of his picture suggests the accoutrements of an altar, heightening the importance of his image, but without the full extension into three-dimensional space that would demand actual ritual performance (Figure 6). Occupying the center of the west wall of the room, and framed by another shallow windowed bay, is a functional altar beneath a photograph of the reigning King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX (Figure 7). In an ubosoth in Thailand, it would be unusual to find a shrine to the king whose magnificence rivaled that of the Buddha. Its presence here suggests that the veneration of the Chakri dynasty has not waned among Thais living abroad, but possibly increased, and is perceived as a form of devotion that unites the expatriate community, like Buddhism itself. The proximity of the two altars, taken together with the Thai community that built and uses them, symbolically instantiates the phrase, "Chart, Satsana, Phra Maha Kasat" (Nation, Religion, King), that has become the touchstone of Thai nationalism.

Wat

Left: Figure 8. Guardian figure on back door.

Right: Figure 9. Murals inside the front portico.

Mongkolratanaram uses figural painting in several areas to enhance the atmosphere of Buddhist devotion. The inside surfaces of both the front and back doors are decorated with guardian figures. The front doors have two panels, allowing the guardians to be paired in the usual format. The back door is somewhat more incongruous, and again shows the need for adaptation to a foreign environment: the door has but a single panel, and is outfitted with a horizontal handlebar that bisects the image. However, the colorful figure looks unconcerned by any suggestion that he is trapped in an awkward frame or lacks a companion figure. His animate pose suggests that he does not find his surroundings stifling, and he holds a different weapon in each hand, affirming that he can do the work of two (Figure 8).

The most extensively painted surfaces in the temple are the inside walls of the front porch. The side walls flanking the staircase are decorated with a thepchumnum pattern, a horizontal row of kneeling celestial beings that would normally occupy the upper reaches of the interior walls of an image hall. A person exiting the temple from the front doors would pass under two more paintings as they descend the naga staircase (Figure 9). The first shows the Buddha lecturing to devas in a heavenly realm. Indra and Brahma are present, easily identifiable by their characteristic traits of green skin and four faces, respectively. This is a scene of the Tavatimsa heaven, where the Buddha ascended to preach to his mother after her death; it is likely that she is one of the female divinities on the left. The mural one encounters next shows the Buddha descending from this heaven on a ladder, accompanied by the aforementioned gods and other celestial beings. The scene of the Buddha's descent from the Tavatimsa heaven has been a mainstay of Thai temple art since at least the fourteenth century, as evidenced by the stucco carving that still survives on the south face of the mondop at Wat Traphang Thong Lang near the old city of Sukhothai (Gosling 1991: 91). Here, the preaching scene and the descent, although painted on separate surfaces, are put into the appropriate chronological relationship by the order in which they will be experienced by the viewer who exits the temple.

The most significantly placed murals in the ubosoth of Wat Mongkolratanaram are the scenes from the Vessantara Jataka that cover all four sides of the central column. These paintings are an excellent example of the blend of tradition and adaptation that characterizes the temple as a whole. One might first wonder why it is the column that is so adorned, rather than the white walls of the room which would also provide an adequate surface for mural painting. Close examination reveals the texture of cloth beneath the paint, demonstrating that the colors were not applied directly to the architectural surface, but on an intervening canvas medium that was first painted and subsequently pasted into place. The mediation of canvas was less a matter of choice than of necessity, since the artist who created the paintings never visited the Berkeley temple. In 2002, Phra Maha Manat Suksa-ad, the head of the monks currently residing at the temple, commissioned the artist Pailauch Laungpairin of Nakhon Chaisi to create the paintings.[2] The artist is a layman who specializes in an array of arts suitable for decorating temples: mural painting, woodcarving, lacquer, and the fashioning of Buddha images. For Wat Mongkolratanaram, in addition to the Vessantara murals, he carved the outer frame for the door-panels screening the staircase (Figure 4). The paintings and carvings were both fashioned in Thailand, then shipped to California to be installed at Wat Mongkolratanaram.
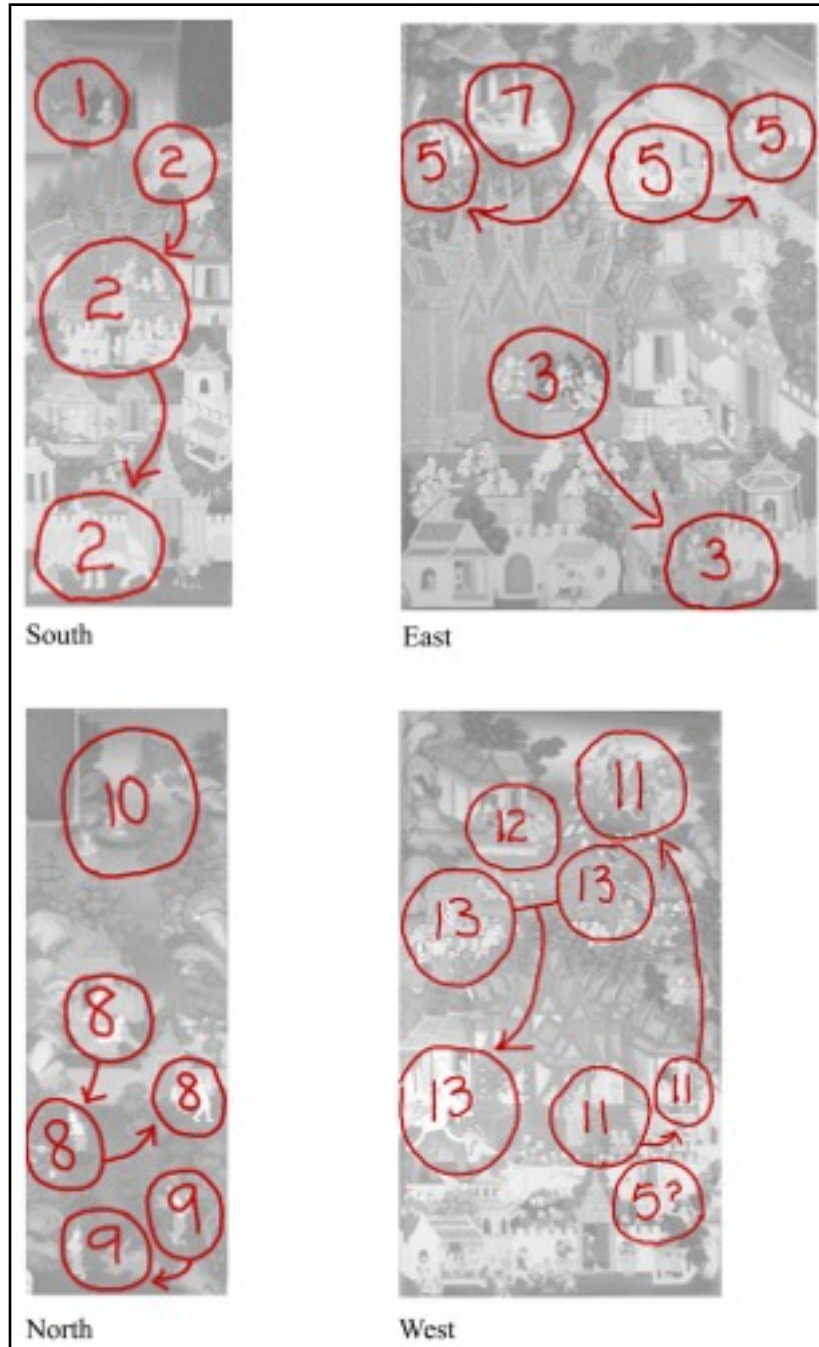

Figure 10. Order of major scenes in Vessantara mural, numbered by chapter.

When questioned why he chose the Vessantara Jataka as the subject of the murals, Phra Maha Manat Suksa-ad informed me that it was for the sake of the Thet Mahachat festival held at the temple annually, during which this jataka is recited. This festival has been widely practiced in Thailand since at least the early Bangkok period, perhaps even in the former capital of Ayutthaya, and was enjoyed by commoner and aristocrat alike (Jory 2002: 46). In the past, most temples owned

at least one set of such paintings, usually consisting of thirteen individual scenes, each separately sponsored and representing one of the thirteen stanzas of the Thai version of the story (Lyons 1990: 7). These sets were often done on highly portable materials such as cloth, paper, or panels of wood, and would be displayed only temporarily during the festival period. Sometimes they bore inscriptions that identified the donors (McGill 1997: 195–217). The tradition of commissioning thirteen separate paintings for the Thet Mahachat is gradually becoming obsolete, and the Vessantara paintings in Wat Mongkolratanaram do not observe these conventions. They are uninscribed, and the composition observes the more general tendencies of Thai narrative mural paintings, which typically privilege topographical over chronological order in the arrangement of scenes (Wray 1972: 133–34).

The Ves-

Left: Figure 11. South face of Vessantara mural.

Right: Figure 12. East face of Vessantara mural.

santara Jataka is the story of the Buddha's

penultimate birth, in which he perfects the virtue of generosity. So selfless is Prince Vessantara that he cannot refuse a request. When he gives away his kingdom's precious white elephant, his father the king becomes so angry that he banishes Vessantara and his family to the forest. As they travel there in a horse-drawn cart, they encounter wayfarers who ask for all their horses and finally the cart itself, so they are forced to make the rest of the journey on foot. After they have lived in their forest hermitage for some time, a greedy man named Jujaka who has heard of Vessantara's legendary generosity finds the prince and asks for his children to take home as household slaves. Even a gift so great, to a person so vile, Vessantara cannot refuse. His final test occurs when the god Indra disguises himself as an old man and demands his wife Maddi. Vessantara is at the point of relinquishing her when Indra reveals his true identity. Meanwhile, his father the king has discovered and ransomed the children's freedom, and the whole royal family is soon happily reunited.

The murals at Wat Mongkolratanaram do not depict the Vessantara Jataka chapter by chapter, or scene by scene, in a linear sequence, although each of the column's four sides follows a loose progression through time (Figure 10). The images depart from the text when necessary in order to show things where they are spatially appropriate: for example, the god Indra appears in two scenes, and in both cases he is situated at the very top of the composition, a position appropriate to his location in the heavens. The Vessantara Jataka begins with the departure of Phusati, the bodhisattva's mother, from Indra's heaven, so this provides a clear starting point for the narrative at the top of the south face of the column (Figure 11). As the gaze travels down, it encounters the flying white elephants that manifested at Vessantara's birth, then the bodhisattva as a child with his royal parents and myriad wet nurses. Below this is an ambiguous scene in which Vessantara sits in an open pavilion watching a couple who are opening a box; although the contents of the box are impossible to discern, it is possible that this represents one of the many gifts of largesse he made during his youth. The lowest scene in the painting is the critical episode in which Vessantara gifts the white elephant to the Brahmins of a neighboring kingdom. From the middle scene in which the bodhisattva is shown as a child in the palace, each successively lower scene occurs in a walled area that suggests a courtyard, and chronologically denotes the passage of time. The artist places the scene in which Vessantara gives away the white elephant entirely outside the city walls, precisely

Figure 13. North face of Vessantara mural.

the location in which is it said to have occurred in the text. The text specifies that the gift took place near the city's southern gate. There is a gate depicted in the mural, and it seems no accident that this sequence has been affixed to the column's southern face.

The east side of the column carries on the tale (Figure 12). Here, the sequence of events begins neither at the very top nor the very bottom of the compositional space, but in the middle. The reason for this is easy to discern, and again it derives from spatial logic: in the upper areas of this section are wilderness and small town regions; the palace occupies the center, and at the very bottom, again, is an area just outside the city walls. During this phase of the story, Vessantara is first exiled, and then leaves for the wilderness. Subsequently there is a shift of perspective and a new character, the Brahmin Jujaka, is introduced. To accommodate these elements of the story, the mural shows Vessantara's sorrowful parting from his parents in the palace in the center of the pictorial frame, then his departure with Maddi and the children at the very bottom, outside the wall. The latter scene is enlivened by the presence of deer, rather than horses, pulling the carriage, and the presence of a Brahmin kneeling to request a gift. These details clearly identify the moment in the story: Vessantara has already given away the horses that were pulling his carriage, inspiring deities to come assist him in the shape of deer. But now another Brahmin has come and requested the carriage, so the bodhisattva's family will soon be obliged to walk for the remainder of their
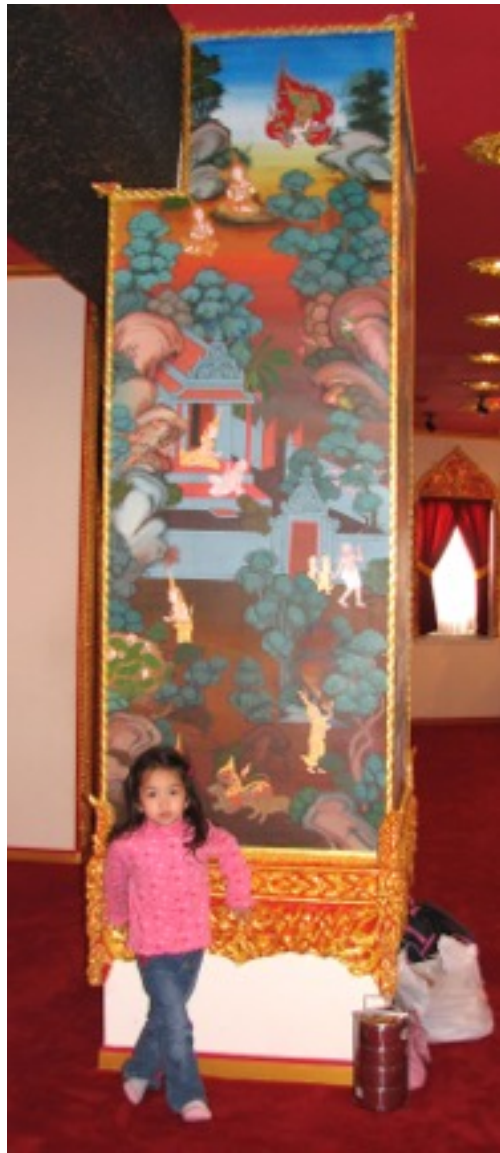
journey.

Figure 14. West face of Vessantara mural.

'synoptic narration,' is particularly vivid here.[3] By now, the pattern will be familiar: the chief architectural structure, in this case Vessantara's hermitage, occupies the center of the composition, and the scenes are arrayed around it with less regard for their temporal sequence than their spatial relationship to this building.

The story concludes on the column's west face (Figure 14). Here, the artist has undertaken the challenge of depicting two important scene-settings in the same composition. The wilderness and hermitage where Vessantara endured his exile occupies the upper half of the total area, while the lower half contains his native city of Jetuttara, dominated by the royal palace. In such a complex pictorial space, the order of the scenes in particularly nonlinear, forming a rough circle. In the city, Jujaka ransoms the children to Vessantara's father, who subsequently travels to the wilderness to return them to Vessantara. The whole royal family is united in the remote hermitage. After this happy reunion, depicted in the upper left hand corner, they all return together to the urban palace. Although the text describes Vessantara's place of exile as lying a considerable distance from Jetuttara, here the two areas are shown as adjacent, and only the elephants and palanquins of the royal procession suggest the rigors of traveling between the two. One might also observe that the hermitage on this face of the column has a very different appearance from the one depicted on the north face. Since the story leaves no room for doubt that they are the same building, the artist felt free to play with the structure and details, rather than tediously repeating himself. There is one scene in this composition that does not correlate to the text, or at least the Pali version. In the lower right corner, just inside the city wall, Jujaka is attacked by the residents of Jetuttara (Figure 15). According to the Pali text, after ransoming Vessantara's children back to the king for an enormous fortune, the villainous Brahmin dies peacefully of sensual over-indulgence. The only time he suffers violence at the hands of the city residents occurs much earlier in the story, at the beginning of his journey in Chapter 5, an episode that might be included with greater narrative congruity in the cityscape on the east face of the column (Cone and Gombrich 1977: 45). However, the

Through the clever use of visual clues, though the image is static, the artist is able to inform the viewer both what has already happened in the narrative, and what is soon to come. This strategy relies on the assumption that the viewer has prior knowledge of the story derived from a source outside the painting itself. The upper reaches of the painting on the east face compress three chapters worth of material into an abbreviated space: we see Jujaka acquiring his wife, the new wife being beaten and reviled by the village women, and several stages of Jujaka's journey to find slaves for her, in which he is first treed by dogs and then asks a hermit for directions to Vessantara.

The north face of the column is painted entirely as a wilderness, the setting for the climactic episodes in which Vessantara gives away both his children and his wife (Figure 14). Because the human figures stand out markedly against the background of vegetation, the repetition of individuals to designate changing moments in the story, a technique that may be classified as

moral effect of seeing Jujaka beaten late in the story is much more satisfying because he has by this time earned our ire by acting despicably toward the defenseless children. It is possible that this scene was shifted in the visual narrative to increase its dramatic impact.

The Vessantara murals of Wat Mongkolwatanaram do not assiduously follow the textual narrative on which they are based. Some chapters are represented by multiple scenes while others go unrepresented. A literary narrative has the freedom of introducing new topography on a whim, but a pictorial narrative, like a play, operates in a fixed space, and must wait until the curtain falls to shift the scenery. The set of paintings in question, because they wrap around a column with four sides, enjoy the liberty of four separate "acts" to narrate the tale. They accomplish this by repeating as necessary key figures within a static environment as appropriate to different moments in the story. As much as this diverges from a linear translation of the text, it proves to be an effective strategy that renders the composition legible to viewers who possesses basic knowledge of the jataka.

Like the paintings in its ubosoth, whose composition has been tailored to the dimensions and the four faces of the column that they adorn, Wat Mongkolratanaram characterized by the simultaneous appeal to tradition and through adaptation to an existing architectural space. Wat Mongkolratanaram is not a literal translation of a Thai temple on American soil. However, it is easily recognizable to anyone who has seen such a temple before.

Figure 15. West face of mural, detail of Jujaka receiving a beating.

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End Notes

1. The terms "early Chiang Saen" and "lion-type" are both problematic. The categorization as "early Chiang Saen" relies on a periodization that is now widely questioned, so the term is used with less frequency. "Lion-type," on the other hand, is just a gloss of "Sihing," an image type of which three different statues claim to be the original. Unfortunately, the three have very little in common iconographically, so the term "Sihing" itself can be ambiguous as a designator of style. Of the three Sihing Buddhas in Thailand, located in Bangkok, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Chiang Mai, the Buddha image in Wat Mongkolratanaram appears to have the most iconographic features in common with the last.

2. Phra Maha Manat Suksa-ad, personal communication, December 11, 2005.

3. Both synoptic narration and continuous narration are terms that designate the repetition of figures and motifs in a single composition to demonstrate temporal change. The former differs from the latter in that it does not follow a simple linear progression through space. See Julia Murray, "Buddhism and Chinese Narrative Illustration in China," *Archives of Asian Art* 48 (1995): 23.