

# ASEASUK NEWS



Rhino Arlefansyah

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Royal Holloway, University of London  
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Email: [j.cochrane@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:j.cochrane@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

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Dr Margaret Coldiron  
University of Essex  
Email: [mcoldiron@mac.com](mailto:mcoldiron@mac.com)

Dr Alan Collins  
University of Swansea  
Email: [A.Collins@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:A.Collins@swansea.ac.uk)

Ms Jana Igunma  
British Library  
South East Asia Library Group (SEALG)  
Email: [jana.igunma@bl.uk](mailto:jana.igunma@bl.uk)

Dr Deirdre McKay  
Keele University  
Email: [d.c.mckay@keele.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.mckay@keele.ac.uk)

Claudia Merli  
University of Durham  
Email: [claudia.merli@durham.ac.uk](mailto:claudia.merli@durham.ac.uk)

### **Co-opted members**

Professor Graeme Barker  
University of Cambridge  
Email: [gb314@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gb314@hermes.cam.ac.uk)

Dr Michael Charney  
SOAS, University of London  
Email: [mc62@soas.ac.uk](mailto:mc62@soas.ac.uk)

Dr Kirsten Schulze  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
Email: [k.e.schulze@lse.ac.uk](mailto:k.e.schulze@lse.ac.uk)

Dr Matthew Walton  
University of Oxford  
Email: [matthew.walton@sant.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.walton@sant.ox.ac.uk)

PG Liaison: Tito Imania  
Goldsmiths, University of London  
Email: [menjadi@yahoo.com](mailto:menjadi@yahoo.com)

### **Newsletter editors**

Tamara Aberle and V.T. King  
Email: [aseasuk@soas.ac.uk](mailto:aseasuk@soas.ac.uk)

### **Aseasuk website**

Content editor: Manuel Jimenez (SOAS)  
Email: [aseasuk.memsec@gmail.com](mailto:aseasuk.memsec@gmail.com)

### **Institutional host**

SOAS, University of London.  
**Contact:** Professor Elizabeth Moore,  
Department of South East Asia, Faculty of  
Languages and Cultures, SOAS, Thornhaugh  
St/Russell Sq., London WC1H 0XG, UK

## **ASEASUK RESEARCH GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

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SOAS: University of Leeds  
Email: [v.t.king@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:v.t.king@leeds.ac.uk)

Secretary: Dr Deirdre McKay  
Keele University  
Email: [d.c.mckay@keele.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.mckay@keele.ac.uk)

Professor Matthew Isaac Cohen  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Email: [matthew.cohen@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.cohen@rhul.ac.uk)

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**Cover:** Image provided by Indonesian documentary filer Rhino Ariefiansyah, whose current research interest is in the impact of commodities and children games in Indonesia

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## NEWS

### UK Southeast Asianists

**Dr Susan Conway (SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, London)** is currently working in Hungary in association with the Hungarian Southeast Asian Research Institute and the Zelnik collection, Budapest, to produce a catalogue on gemstones and textiles related to supernatural practices.

**Professor Roy Ellen (University of Kent, Canterbury)** has conducted fieldwork in South Seram on Nuaulu cultural resilience (1-26 April 2015, funded by the British Academy). He presented a paper on 'Pendekatan Etnografi dan Etnobotany untuk memahami Perubahan Landscape di Maluku' (Ethnographic and Ethnobotanical Approaches to the Understanding of Landscape Change in Maluku) at Pattimura University, Ambon, Indonesia, 27 April 2015. On 29 April 2015 he spoke at Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, on 'Anthropological fieldwork in Indonesia: reflections on the first 45 years'. Furthermore he gave a paper on 'Nuaulu ritual regulation of resources, 'sasi' and forest conservation in eastern Indonesia' at Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia, on 4 May 2015 and on 29 May 2015 he spoke about 'Landscapes of exchange and the domestication of Kenari (*Canarium indicum*)' at the Clusius Symposium on 'Other ways of gardening', University of Leiden, The Netherlands.

**Dr Tilman Frasch (Manchester Metropolitan University)** is in cooperation with Rylands Research Institute, Manchester, working on a catalogue of Burmese manuscripts.

He also spoke at the WiMya meeting in Zurich, July 2015 on 'Pali in Pagan: A lingua franca for the Buddhist Cosmopolis'. In July 2015, he presented a paper entitled 'Zarter Schmelz in heissen Zonen: Kakao und Schokolade im kolonialen Asien, ca. 1850-1930' at the South Asia Institute Heidelberg, Dept. of History. In July 2015 he spoke about 'Pali inscriptions from Bagan' at the EurASEAA Conference in Paris. Other presentations and conference attendances include:

- 'It's BED time! Towards a new list of inscriptions from Bagan' (EurASEAA Conference, Paris, July 2015)
- 'Bagan, Angkor, and the Spread of Theravada on the Southeast Asian Mainland' (London, Khmer Theravada Symposium, July 2015)
- 'Die buddhistische Kosmopolis. Kunst und Kultur von Bagan' (Munich, Museum Five Continents, April 2015)
- 'Monumente für Metteyya. Architektur und Glaubenswelt im Reich von Bagan' (Lindenmuseum Stuttgart, March 2015)
- 'Mon – Pyu – Burman. Soundings in the Ethno-Archaeology of Myanmar' (Keynote, Symposium "Myanmar – Current Debates on a Society in Transition", Lindenmuseum Stuttgart, March 2015)
- 'Out in the Dark. Nocturnal Spaces and Electricity in Asian Colonial Cities, c. 1880-1920s' (Conf. "History of Electricity", Paris, Dec 2014)
- 'Gruß aus der Ferne. Empire, Tourismus und Bildpostkarte 1890-1930' (Conf. „Fernweh“, FernUni Hagen, Oct 2014) Link: <http://www.fernuni-hagen.de/videostreaming/ksw/literatur/20141023.shtml>

**Dr Alexandra Green (British Museum)** is currently doing research on Southeast Asian shadow puppets for an exhibition at the British Museum (8 Sept 2016 – 29 January 2017). Her Exhibition: 'Pilgrims, healers, and wizards: Buddhism and religious practices in Burma and Thailand'. The British Museum, 2 October 2014 – 11 January 2015. She has presented a variety of papers during 2014-15:

- 'Felicity, Power, and Piety: Ritual and Commemoration in Late Burmese Paintings,' Linden Museum, Stuttgart, Germany, March 2015.
- 'From India to Independence: The Formation of the Burma Collection at the British Museum', Ideas of Asia in the Museum conference, University of Southern California and LA County Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA, January 2015.
- 'Honoring the Buddha: Indian Trade Textiles and Burmese Wall Paintings', India and Southeast Asia from 7th – 16th centuries, K.R. Cama Institute, Mumbai, India, January 2015.
- 'Conserving and Sharing Myanmar's Heritage: Nyaungyan and Konbaung Dynasty Wall Paintings'. Buddhism conference, Lumbini, Nepal, November 2014.
- 'The Shan Collections at the British Museum', ASEASUK, University of Brighton, Brighton, UK, September 2014.
- 'Pilgrims, healers, and wizards: Buddhism and religious practices in Burma and Thailand, an exhibition at the British Museum', ASEASUK, University of Brighton, Brighton, UK, September 2014.
- 'The religious material cultures of Burma from art historical perspectives', Center for Burma Studies conference, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.

**Dr Lee Jones (Queen Mary, University of London)** was Lee Kong Chian Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the National University of Singapore and Stanford University from January to April 2015. He used this opportunity to start developing a new project on state transformation and the rise of China. Furthermore, he continued to advise government agencies like the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and DFID on Southeast Asia, and has provided training to the Royal College of Defence Studies and the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

He gave the following papers and presentations:

- 'Governing Non-Traditional Security, Rescaling the State in Southeast Asia', Stanford University, 26 February 2015.
- 'Rising Powers and State Transformation: The Case of China' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), International Studies Association convention, New Orleans, 18-21 February 2015; Stanford University, 5 and 10 March 2015; Association for Asian Studies convention, Chicago, 26-29 March 2015; Stanford University, 5 and 10 March 2015.
- 'China as a "Post-Westphalian" Rising Power', National University of Singapore, 29 January 2015.
- 'Explaining FATF's Superficial Success and Deep-Seated Failure' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), From Anti-Money Laundering to Global Governance: Consequences and Outlook of 25 Years of Financial Action Taskforce Activities, International Studies Association workshop, New Orleans, 17 February 2015.
- 'China as a "Post-Westphalian" Rising Power', National University of Singapore, 29 January 2015.
- 'Governing Borderless Threats: Southeast Asia's "Haze" Crisis as a Non-Traditional Security Problem', National University of Singapore, 21 January 2015.
- 'Murdoch International: The "Murdoch School" in International Relations' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), Conference on the Politics of Southeast Asia under Multipolarity, City University of Hong Kong, 20-21 November 2014.

In addition to her research and editorial consultancy work **Dr Laura Noszlopy (Royal Holloway, University of London)** was appointed as copy editor of Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies in March 2015. She is also pleased to announce the publication of another of John Coast's memoirs, Recruit to Revolution, which is a chronicle of his time working for the Republican government of Indonesia during the struggle for independence. Edited and introduced by Laura, and with a foreword by Professor Adrian Vickers (University of Sydney), it was launched at the Indonesian Embassy in Copenhagen by Gerald Jackson of NIAS Press.

**Dr Adam Tyson (School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds)** has received the 2015 British Academy-ASEASUK-ECAF Visiting Fellowship working on 'Pressing the palm oil industry in Indonesia: land rights and politics on the borderline of sustainability'. He presented 'Portrait of political participation' delivered at the Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) – Political Seminar in Surakarta, 31 July 2015. At the 8th International Indonesia Forum Conference, Sebelas Maret University, Solo, Indonesia, 29-30 July 2015, he spoke about 'Westerling's great longing' and on 31 January 2015 he presented a paper entitled 'Will the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 improve our education system?' delivered at the United Kingdom and Eire Council (UKEC) for Malaysian Students Symposium, University of Birmingham.

## Centre of South East Asian Studies, SOAS, University of London

**Professor Vladimir Braginsky (Professor Emeritus and Professorial Research Associate of the Centre for South East Asian Studies of the School of Oriental and African Studies)** is currently researching literary ties between the Malay world and Islamic India as well as Malay Sufi-Tantric texts within their Indian and Middle-Eastern context. For a list of his publications since 2011 please see under 'Recent Publications'.

**Professor William G. Clarence-Smith (SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)** is researching Middle Eastern and South Asian migrants, animals and agricultural commodities in Southeast Asian history. He undertook two short trips to check out Jesuit archives for the Philippines since 1859. The first trip was to Rome (29 March-3 April 2015) and the second trip to Barcelona (10-13 June 2015). Since May 2015, he gave the following papers:

- '*Trypanosoma evansi (surra)*: the globalisation of a major disease of livestock', in panel 'The globalization of medicine and public health: economic and social perspectives (1850-2000)', XVIIth World Economic History Congress, Kyoto, 6 August 2015.
- 'Rubber and the Axis Powers in World War II,' Economic history seminar, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, 12 June 2015.
- 'Nazareth in the First World War: "stately, open and fragrant"', Summer term colloquium, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, 28 May 2015.
- 'Mules in the making of the modern world,' ICS seminar, University of Lisbon, 15 May 2015.
- 'The myth of the deindustrialization of the "Third World" in the long nineteenth century,' ISEG seminar, University of Lisbon, 14 May 2015.
- 'Camels in the Middle Eastern campaigns of World War I,' Third SOAS Camel Conference, SOAS, University of London, 9-10 May 2015.

**Professor Victor (Terry) King (Professor Emeritus, Leeds University, Professorial Research Associate, SOAS, University of London, Adjunct Professor, Chiang Mai University, and Visiting Professor, Universiti Brunei Darussalam)** provided an Introductory Address at the launch of 'Textile Tales of Pua Kumbu: Polysensory Intermedia Exhibition at Galeri Seni, Universiti Malaya, 13 June 2015. He has also written the foreword to a forthcoming publication to accompany the Iban textiles exhibition. He then gave a public lecture entitled at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, 15 June on 'Revisiting "Indigenous Knowledge" in Southeast Asia: is it a Dead-end or a Way Forward?' He gave a keynote address entitled 'Ethnicity and Tourism: Culture on the Move' at the international conference on 'Tourism and Ethnicity in ASEAN and Beyond' at Chiang Mai University, 15-16 August 2015, and contributed to a workshop at the university on 18 August with Professors Erik Cohen and Kathleen Adams on 'Academic Publishing'.

He is currently Visiting Professor for three months (September-December 2015) at the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and will also visit Chiang Mai University in late November to conduct workshops for MA students in Development Studies, give a presentation to final year BA Social Science students and contribute to a workshop on 'Contemporary Studies

of the Malay World'. His edited book on 'UNESCO in Southeast Asia: World Heritage Sites in Comparative Perspective' is in press with NIAS Press, Copenhagen and is due to appear in early 2016. His co-edited book 'Borneo Studies in History, Culture and Society' is in press with Springer, Singapore, and is also scheduled to appear in early 2016.

**Dr Ben Murtagh (SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)** in May 2015 conducted research at Sinematek, Jakarta, on sex in Indonesian films of the 1990s and on the representation of HIV/AIDS in Indonesian cinema. In July 2015, he led a workshop on 'How to get published in international journals', organised by the Fakultas Ilmu Budaya at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. From 1 September 2015 Ben has taken over as Head of the Departments of South East and South Asia at SOAS. He stepped down as Co-Managing Editor of *Indonesia and the Malay World*.

## ABROAD

**Dr Alicia Izharuddin (University of Malay)** graduated from SOAS with a PhD in Gender Studies in 2015. Her research was titled 'Gender and Islam in Indonesian Cinema' under the supervision of Dr Ben Murtagh. She is now Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies at the University of Malaya. She can be contacted via [alicia@um.edu.my](mailto:alicia@um.edu.my).

**Dr Edyta Roszko (Durham University/School of Government and International Affairs/UK; University of Copenhagen/Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies/DK)** has been awarded two research grants: FP7-PEOPLE-2012-IEF-European Commission, *Maritime Enclosures. Fishing Communities Facing the Effects of the South China Sea Dispute* (Acronym: MAREnclosures), awarded by the European Commission (grant agreement n° PIEF-GA-2012-326795), Website: [http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/108501\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/108501_en.html); and an FKK Grant: 0602-02917B/FKK for her postdoctoral project: *Territorialising the Sea: Tracing Ecological and Livelihood Consequences of the South China Sea Dispute for Local Fisheries*, awarded by The Danish Council for Independent Research in Culture and Humanities, Website: [http://tors.ku.dk/forskning/postdoc/territorialising\\_the\\_sea/](http://tors.ku.dk/forskning/postdoc/territorialising_the_sea/). She has undertaken 4 months of postdoctoral field research (between May-August 2014) in Quang Ngai province (Central Vietnam) and another 4 months in Hainan province (Southern China). In 2015, she has co-organized an exhibition with Claire Sutherland from January to April at Palace Green, Durham. Panel: 'Citizenship and Identity in the South China Sea' based on the research findings of the MAREnclosures (FP7-PEOPLE-2012-IEF-European Commission). The exhibition serves as the basis for impact activities benefiting from DU Impact Seedcorn Funding, developed with Durham University Oriental Museum and the contemporary artist Anthony Key. She has also presented her paper 'Fishermen in the Context of Global Changes' at the international conference 'The safeguarding and Promoting of Sea Island Culture', 5-6 January 2015, Nha Trang, organised by the Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism and Vietnam National Institute for Humanities and Art. In 2014, she presented the following three papers:

- Vietnam Update 2014 *Connected and Disconnected in Viet Nam*, 1-2 December, Australian National University, Canberra. Paper presented: 'Local-Customary Fishing Practices and Patriotic Tourism in Vietnam: Identity and Nationhood in the Context of

South China Sea Dispute.'

- International Workshop *Communities in Between: Redefining Social Spaces in Southeast Asian Borderlands*, 3-4 November Lyons Institute of East Asian Studies (IAO-CNRS), Lyons (France). Paper co-authored and co-presented with Oscar Salemink: 'The Navel of the Nation: Centering, Territorializing and Enclosing Vietnam's Margins.'
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference *Intra-Asian Connections: Interactions, flows, landscapes*, 22-24 October - Asian Dynamics Initiative - University of Copenhagen (Denmark). Panel: *Maritime Territorial Disputes: China and its Neighbours*. Paper presented: 'Territorialising the Sea: Tracing Ecological and Livelihood Consequences of the South China Sea Dispute for Local Fisheries.'

She can be reached at: rxk841@hum.ku.dk.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**5th Southeast AsianStudies Symposium  
"Human and Environmental Welfare in Southeast Asia"  
Mathematical Institute, 14 - 16 April 2016**

The Southeast Asian Studies Symposium is the world's largest annual conference on Southeast Asia. It aims to present interdisciplinary and transnational solutions to contemporary Southeast Asian issues; to provide opportunities for dialogue and networking among academic, business, political, and civil society leaders from Europe and Southeast Asia; and to provide a platform for emerging and established scholars to demonstrate their latest research on Southeast Asia.

In 2015, over 700 people took part in the 4th annual Symposium, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was opened by DYMM Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak, and closed with a public lecture by Jeffrey Sachs (Columbia University).

In 2016, the 5th annual Southeast Asian Studies Symposium returns to Oxford. It will be held at Green Templeton College and the adjacent, state of the art Andrew Wiles Building of the Mathematical Institute

Check [www.projectsoutheastasia.com](http://www.projectsoutheastasia.com) for more details.

## EXHIBITIONS

Hackney Museum (free)

**Cambodian Recollections - An exhibition of oral histories**

16 Juni - 14 November 2015

[www.hackney.gov.uk/cm-museum.htm](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/cm-museum.htm)

## FESTIVAL

**Southeast Asian Arts Festival** at various locations in London

26 October to 13 December 2015

See [www.seaartsfest.org](http://www.seaartsfest.org) for the full programme



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BRAGINSKY, VLADIMIR

- 2011. Light, sound and fragrance: the impact of Sufism on the aesthetics of traditional Malay literature, *Malay Literature* 24,1, pp. 51-69.
- 2011. Poetry by Masuri S.N. in the context of Russian Malay studies. In Hadijah Rahmat, Mukhlis Abu Bakar and Rokksana Abdullah (eds.) Masuri S.N.; Sasterwan Melayu di persada dunia (Masuri S.N.; A Malay writer in his world-wide homeland). Singapura: University Teknologi Nanyang, pp. 437-455.
- 2011. The sight of multi-coloured radiance; Lighting effects in Malay love-and-adventure narratives and the Sufi concept of visuality. In Sinha, Lalita (ed.). Rainbows of Malay literature and beyond; Festschrift in honour of Professor Md. Salleh Yaapar. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, pp. 13-26.
- 2012. Co-opting the rival ca(n)non; The Turkish episode of Hikayat Hang Tuah. *Malay Literature* 25,2, pp. 229-260.
- 2013. Imagining kings of Rum and their heirs; The dynastic space of the Malay world and beyond, *Indonesia and the Malay World* 41,121, pp. 370-395.
- 2015. Representation of the Turkic-Turkish theme in traditional Malay literature, with special reference to the works of the fourteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. In A.C.S. Peacock and Annabel T. Gallop (eds.). From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks and Southeast Asia. London: The British Academy, pp. 263-292.

CLARENCE-SMITH, WILLIAM G.

- 2015. Middle Eastern diasporas in Portugal and the Portuguese empire, c. 1750-1975, in Jean Batou, et al., eds., Deux mondes, une planète: mélanges offerts à Bouda Etemad, Lausanne: Éditions d'en Bas, pp. 199-209.
- 2015. Breeding and power in Southeast Asia: horses, mules and donkeys in the longue durée,' in David Henley and Henk Schulte Nordholt, eds., *Environment, trade and society in Southeast Asia: a longue durée perspective*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 32-45.

- 2015. Africa's 'battle for rubber' in the Second World War, in Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, Timothy Parsons, and Ahmad A. Sikainga, eds., *Africa and World War II*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 166-82.

CONWAY, SUSAN

- 2014. *TAI MAGIC: Arts of the Supernatural*. Bangkok: River Books.
- 2015. Decidaction to Professor Sai Aung Tun, Yangon University Publications, Myanmar.

ELLEN, ROY

- 2015. Is There a Connection Between Object Diversity and Aesthetic Sensibility?: A Comparison Between Biological Domesticates and Material Culture. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* [Online version: DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2015.1052085].

FRASCH, TILMAN

- 2015. Der Buddha an der Straßenecke/The Buddha at the Street Junction, in Stephan von der Schulenburg et al. (eds.), *Buddha. 108 Begegnungen/108 Encounters*, Cologne: Wienand, pp. 344-347 (exhibition catalogue, Museum for Applied Arts Frankfurt).
- 2015. Gebaut für eine Ewigkeit: Die buddhistische Architektur von Bagan, in Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz and Andreas Reinwald (eds.), *Archäologie im Schatten von Angkor. Fundamente der Hochkulturen Südostasiens*, Mainz: Zabern, pp. 77-86.
- 2015. 'In an Octopus's Garden': Of cakravartins, little kings and a new model of the early state in South and Southeast Asia, in Margret Frenz/Georg Berkemer (eds.), *Sharing Sovereignty. The Little Kingdom in South Asia*, second rev. ed., Delhi: Primus, pp. 86-108.
- 2014. Die Anfänge – Das frühe Myanmar und das Reich von Bagan, in Dorothee Schäfer et al. (eds.), *Myanmar. Von Pagoden, Longyis und Nat-Geistern*, Munich/Berlin: Dt. Kunstverlag, pp. 100-115 (exhibition catalogue, Museum Five Continents Munich).
- 2014. Review of M. & M. Aung-Thwin, "History of Modern Myanmar" (London: Verso 2012), in *Journal of Asian History*, pp. 303-308

GREEN, ALEXANDRA

- 2015. From India to Independence: the Formation of the Burma Collection at the British Museum, *Journal of the History of Collections*, Online Article.
- 2014. Murals and Painting. *Myanmar Das Goldene Land*, ed. Georg Noack. Stuttgart: Linden Museum, pp. 126-35.
- 2014. Pilgrims, Healers, and Wizards: Buddhism and Religious Practices in Burma and Thailand' at the British Museum. *Orientations*, 45,6, pp. 110-15.

IZHARUDDIN, ALICIA

- 2015. The Muslim woman in Indonesian cinema and the face veil as 'Other'. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 43,127, pp. 397-412
- 2015. The short films of Mien Ly and an articulation of feminist queer theory. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 38.

JONES, LEE

- 2015. *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- 2015. *Governing Borderless Threats: Non-Traditional Security and the Politics of State Transformation*, co-authored with Shahar Hameiri. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2015. Political Economy, State Transformation and the New Security Agenda, *International Politics* 57,4, pp. 371-501: special issue, co-edited with Shahar Hameiri.
- 2015. Rising Powers and State Transformation: The Case of China' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), *European Journal of International Relations*, early online: DOI: 10.1177/1354066115578952.
- 2015. Explaining the Failure of the ASEAN Economic Community: The Primacy of Domestic Political Economy, *Pacific Review*, early online: DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2015.1022593.
- 2015. Probing the Links Between Political Economy and Non-Traditional Security: Themes, Approaches and Instruments' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), *International Politics* 57,4, pp. 371-388.
- 2015. Non-Traditional Security, Political Economy and State Transformation: The Case of Avian Influenza in Indonesia' (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), *International Politics* 57,4, pp. 445-465.
- 2015. Regulatory Regionalism and Anti-Money Laundering Governance in Asia (co-authored with Shahar Hameiri), *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69,2, pp. 144-163.
- 2014. Murdoch International: The “Murdoch School” in International Relations (with Shahar Hameiri), *Asia Research Centre Working Paper* 177.

#### KING, VICTOR T.

- 2015. Mobilities and Encounters : Conceptual Issues in Tourism Studies in Southeast Asia, *Sojourn. Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 30, pp. 497-527.
- 2015. Current Issues in Tourism : Thailand and Beyond, *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 11, Supp. 1, pp. 1-13, (Special Issue, guest editor Victor T. King).
- 2015. Substantive and Conceptual Issues in Tourism Research : a Personal Engagement with Southeast Asia, *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 11, Supp. 1, pp. 15-51 (Special Issue, guest editor, Victor T. King).
- 2015. Introduction . Southeast Asian Studies : Area, Method and Comparison, *Suvannabhumi : Multidisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, pp. 7-11 (Special Review of Southeast Asian Studies, editor Victor T. King).
- 2015. Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Studies : Issues in Multidisciplinary Studies and Methodology, *Suvannabhumi : Multidisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, pp. 13-57 (Special Review of Southeast Asian Studies, editor, Victor T. King).

#### NOSZLOPY, LAURA

- 2015, Introduction. In Coast, J. (L. Noszlopy ed.) *Recruit to Revolution: Adventure and Politics in Indonesia*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, Copenhagen.
- 2014. An introduction to John Coast's Railroad of Death. In Coast, J. *Railroad of Death*. Myrmidon Books, Newcastle.
- 2014. The 'little legong dancers' of Bali: child stars in Indonesian dance theatre. In V. Emeljanow (ed) *Entertaining children: the participation of children in theatre and the entertainment industry*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

### ROSZKO, EDYTA

- 2015. Introduction: Nationalism in Southeast Asia' with Claire Sutherland, *Nations and Nationalism*, 21,2, April 2015
- 2015 'Maritime Territorialisation as Performance of Sovereignty and Nationhood in the South China Sea, *Nations and Nationalism*, 21,2, April 2015

### TAYLOR, ROBERT H.

- 2015. *General Ne Win: A Political Biography*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- 2015. *Ethnicity, Federalism, Citizenship and Politics in Myanmar*, ISEAS Perspectives, No. 31. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- 2015. Refighting Old Battles, Compounding Misconceptions: The Politics of Ethnicity in Myanmar Today. ISEAS Perspectives, No. 12, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- 2015. The Armed Forces in Myanmar Politics: A Terminating Role?, Trends in Southeast Asia 2015 No. 2, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

### TYSON, ADAM

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### PATRICK ZIEGENHAIN

*Institutional Engineering and Political Accountability in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines*  
Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015  
299 pp, ISBN 978-981-4515-00-9, \$40.28

### GARRY RODAN and CAROLINE HUGHES

*The Politics of Accountability in Southeast Asia: The Dominance of Moral Ideologies*  
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014  
230 pp, ISBN 978-0-19-870353-2, \$99

### Reviewed by Michael Bühler

Department of Politics and International Studies  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Among the many puzzles comparativists who work on Southeast Asian politics are trying to explain is why the countries in the region have followed very different political trajectories over the past decades. In his most recent book, Patrick Ziegenhain argues that mechanisms of political control differ between countries in Southeast Asia and that these differences explain the variegated patterns of democratization in the region. Concretely, Ziegenhain compares electoral, vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Electoral accountability mechanisms include stipulations on term limits, as well as the nature of election and party systems. Vertical accountability mechanisms are determined by the

amount of political and fiscal autonomy granted to jurisdictions at the subnational level, as well as the capacity of districts, municipalities and provinces to monitor, supervise and limit central government decision-making. Finally, the relations between executive and legislative branches, the independence of the judiciary as well as whether a country follows a presidential or a parliamentary system of government all determine horizontal accountability mechanisms.

In his book, Ziegenhain briefly examines the scholarly debate on all three accountability mechanisms before proceeding to an in-depth account of electoral, vertical and horizontal mechanisms of political control, devoting a chapter to each. This stock taking exercise culminates in a chapter in which Ziegenhain discusses the potential and consequences of 'institutional engineering'. He concludes that the 'confrontational style' of politics in Thailand and the political gridlock in the Philippines have had a negative impact on democratization compared to Indonesia's accountability regime that favours 'grand coalitions'. There, 'the deepening of democracy went hand in hand with a more consensus-style oriented form of decision-making including power dispersion at the national and subnational level' (p. 237).

Most of the research for Ziegenhain's book was supported and facilitated by German development agencies as mentioned by the author (p. 7). This affiliation to the development industry seems to have greatly shaped the author's views on accountability mechanisms in the region. Development organizations have an interest in pushing an understanding of 'democratization' and 'development' that is commensurate with the 'technical' solutions these organizations have in their portfolio -one of the organizations that facilitated Ziegenhain's research is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit - including support for institutional reforms of the party and electoral system or assistance for the decentralization of government institutions.

To link the struggles for democratization in Southeast Asian countries to structural conditions would require altogether different, more complex 'development' programmes that cannot be designed around 'technical fixes' to be carried out within the short time-span determined by development agencies' funding cycles. It is in this context that Ziegenhain's dissatisfaction with democratization theories that emphasize the importance of socio-economic conditions and broad structural conditions (p.8) is to be situated.

However, there is a danger in problematizing 'democratization' based on the capacity of development agencies. As Abraham Maslow stated in his 'law of the instrument', if the only tool one has is a hammer, it is tempting to treat everything as if it were a nail. Consequently, Ziegenhain's book is based on a rather naïve understanding of accountability mechanisms and the capacity they have in shaping democratization. For the better part of his book, Ziegenhain simply lists, in a rather mechanical fashion, the different institutional changes these countries have seen over the past decades, but provides very little analysis about the various groups and interests that pushed through these 'reforms' in the first place. Likewise, the book provides only few insights into the consequences political accountability reform had on democratization in Southeast Asia. After concluding that most accountability mechanisms in the region do not work in the way envisioned by development agencies and technical support groups, Ziegenhain states that the major obstacle to institutional reforms in Southeast Asia is the 'limited acceptance among political elites' (p.238) of the formal procedures and institutional arrangements

described in this book. No explanation is provided as to why this is the case and the author says little about the broader political context in which such accountability institutions are embedded. Furthermore, there is no critical discussion in this book as to whether the 'best practices' standards against which the author examines the accountability reforms in the three countries are really as technical and value-free as the author assumes them to be. For instance, there are several pages of praise for the 'People's Constitution' adopted in Thailand in 1997, without any mention of the many deeply undemocratic elements this document contained.

The inability to see accountability mechanisms as the outcome of political struggles in Southeast Asian studies and the dangers of understanding such institutions as the outcome of 'technical' reform agendas is precisely the subject of Garry Rodan and Caroline Hughes' new book. The authors show that accountability institutions have different political roots, which themselves have been shaped by broader changes in the socio-economic structures of Southeast Asian states over the past few decades. There are liberal understandings of 'accountability', which emphasize the need to protect the political and economic rights of individuals from state encroachment. There are also democratic understandings of 'accountability' which focus on the importance of elections and other participatory mechanisms that allow 'the people' to sanction politicians. Finally, moral ideologies about 'accountability' are defined by an understanding that 'conformity to received codes of behavior assumes pre-eminence in evaluating the conduct of power holders' (p. 12).

While none of these different understandings of accountability is without problems, moral approaches to accountability are usually not based on a dominant set of values and therefore subject to considerable contestation. Consequently, moral approaches to accountability can either promote social conservatism associated with established political hierarchies or radical change associated with progressive ideas and new political players.

After outlining their main argument that accountability reforms are the outcome of political struggles which are rooted in the political economy of Southeast Asian states, the authors then spend the remainder of their book analysing accountability debates and institutions in various Southeast Asian countries. They provide a comparison of human rights accountability institutions in Malaysia and Singapore and show that they are more developed and more efficient in the former than in the latter due to the different socio-economic trajectory of the two countries over past decades and the different political dynamics (a system prone to elite rifts in Malaysia; elite cohesion in Singapore) that ensued from it. This is followed by a comparison between Cambodia and Vietnam, which again shows how accountability institutions are hardly 'politics-free' like Ziegenhain believes. In both countries, accountability institutions have been used to shore up the authority of existing powers rather than increase public scrutiny over the government. Another comparison between the Philippines and Cambodia shows that accountability reform programmes by international donor agencies have pushed an understanding of social accountability that has insulated policymaking from the masses. Civil society organizations and social movements are expected to 'count, not shout', which means that instead of challenging the legitimacy of the government outright by pointing out the continuing dominance of well-entrenched political elites in most Southeast Asian countries and call for a broader overhaul of political hierarchies, 'the masses' are expected to merely 'supervise' and 'lend support' to their governments. In the final part of their book, Rodan and

Hughes examine the issue of 'horizontal accountability' through an analysis of anti-corruption agencies in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand and show again that most of these agencies have associated the endemic and systemic corruption in these countries with a 'moral failure' of individual politicians and a 'culture of corruption' among citizens. Once again, political developments in these three countries over past decades explain why moral ideologies of accountability have come to dominate the anti-corruption discourse of these states. Popular movements and progressive groups, greatly weakened by the authoritarian regimes that dominated the politics of all three countries at some point over the past few decades, are too weak and fragmented to call for and push through a comprehensive overhaul in the social structures of these states. Since the discourse on anti-corruption eradication lacks this radical dimension, the anti-corruption rhetoric has come to blame individual wrongdoers rather than structural and political conditions for the endemic corruption in these countries.

Rodan and Hughes' book shows the importance of bringing politics back into the accountability debate in Southeast Asia instead of merely understanding the various 'reforms' that have been carried out in the region over past decades as technical programmes whose efficacy is measured against some international defined standard of 'best practice'. Rodan and Hughes' account also calls for supporting more radical political changes in the region, rather than applauding the 'consensus style' rhetoric of reform projects like Ziegenhain does. Finally, Rodan and Hughes caution against interpreting the growing number of accountability institutions across the region as a trend towards liberal democracy. Instead, the various 'reform programmes' could simply constitute an attempt by national elites to recalibrate their power bases after the collapse of authoritarian regimes. Given the growing politicization of anti-corruption agencies, the judiciary and accountability organizations across the region, theirs is an argument that should be taken seriously by academics, civil society organizations and development agencies alike when assessing accountability reforms across the region.

**BRIGITTA HAUSER-SCHÄUBLIN and DAVID D. HARNISH (eds)**

*Between harmony and discrimination: negotiating religious identities within majority-minority relationships in Bali and Lombok*, Leiden: Brill, 2014

xvi+386 pp., hb ISBN 9789004271258, €126.00

**Reviewed by Michael Hitchcock  
Goldsmiths, University of London**

This fascinating collection of papers explores the varied expressions of faith and the interwoven relationships of peoples of different ethnicity and religious affiliation on the Indonesian islands of Bali and Lombok. The fact that it takes a book to examine just two relatively small Indonesian islands shows just how complex the country is in its entirety and, though the book is focused, extrapolations can be made to a certain extent for the country as a whole. In fact Indonesia's main officially recognised religions - Islam, Christianity and Hinduism - are discussed in this volume and thus, in the absence of a book or books covering the whole archipelago, this volume offers important insights into the contemporary condition of Indonesia, which some economists predict will eventually become the world's fourth largest economy. It goes without saying that books on contemporary Indonesia have never been more important.

Religion is arguably one of the most salient questions concerning Indonesia alongside economic development, security and environmental sustainability. And what this book conveys admirably is just how important the issue of religion is and perhaps how it is growing and not declining in significance. Anybody who has visited Indonesia over a long period of time and who has visited Indonesia recently might well be struck at how religion now permeates all spheres of life. Alcohol, for example, which was clearly visible in local stores in Java and Bali has either disappeared from view or is entirely absent. Larger areas of retail stores are given over to more religiously appropriate forms of attire, and television and radio channels seem to be devoting even more air space to religious topics than hitherto. There are now many people who are celebrated as what might be called 'religious celebrities'.

But are these increasingly apparent expressions of faith manifestations of increasing religiosity or is it simply that as Indonesia has become richer its citizens have more time and resources to explore these areas of their lives? It is hard to tell, but what is clear from this volume is that these various religious cum ethnic groupings in Bali and Lombok are increasingly connected to worlds outside of Indonesia, which provides them with sources of information that used to be much more difficult to access. As Hauser-Schäublin tells us in a closely observed chapter on recent transformations within Bali's Chinese community, this minority now has access to products from workshops that have opened up in Indonesia that can be used for Tionghoa Tridharma rituals. While on one hand it would appear that Indonesia has become more tolerant of its religious diversity while on the other it may also represent an increasing lack of integration and national fragmentation. Within this context the Puja Mandala project in Bali whereby the religious buildings of the different faiths were built side by side as an expression of religious tolerance seems dated. In fact, this project is described in a delightfully written paper by I Nyoman Darma Putra, which brought a smile to this reviewer's face in its hints at the eccentricity of the undertaking. The fact that humour can be found in this most serious of topics is cause for optimism as it is often through humour that Indonesians make sense of the very complex world in which they live.

It would be impossible in a short review such as this to provide an account of each authors' contribution as the range of topics is incredibly diverse. There are in fact fourteen chapters, all of which are exceptionally well written, plus an introductory chapter by the editors that tries to flesh out what might be made of this diversity. This reviewer saved the introduction until last as it does attempt to provide an overview using some key concepts and definitions. On reading this first chapter it did occur to this reviewer that a book dealing with religion in a broader Indonesian setting might work very well as many of the observations made here could be applied to the country as a whole. For example, there is an exemplary discussion on the categories used by Indonesians such as *agama* (religion), *adat* (custom), and *pribumi* (indigenous Indonesians) that have far reaching consequences as markers of 'selfhood' and 'others' for the way in which relationships are maintained and invoked in this country.

As the two editors point out, the word *adat* is an Arab loan word under which non-standardised sacred beliefs and rituals are subsumed, and which, in the case of the Wetu Telu of Lombok, may be seen as polluted by Islamic teachers and leaders keen to lure this distinctive group away from their nominalist mosque to a more globally acceptable orthodox mosque. The term *jati diri* caught this reviewer's eye as lying at the heart of Balinese identity and it might be helpful to

explore the etymology of this term too as the first word bears a striking resemblance to the Indian word *jati* that is often translated as caste and may in fact not be a terribly helpful translation. It would be very interesting to find out more about this Balinese concept.

This is an excellent and timely book that is very well written and informative. The writing is largely jargon free and accessible, and is certainly a book that could be put on a reading list in a diverse number of disciplines - Sociology, Anthropology, Theology, Political Science and Asian Studies - without any hesitation. There are many wonderful photographs that have largely been taken by the authors, as well as some very helpful diagrams and tables. This author might have preferred a slightly more punchy title, but that is a minor quibble given the overall excellence of the volume.

**MONICA JANOWSKI**

*Tuked Rini, Cosmic Traveller. Life and Legend in the Heart of Borneo*

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 125, Copenhagen; and Sarawak Museum

Kuching, 2014

viii +174 pp. Nias Press ISBN 978-87-7694-130-7 and Sarawak Museum ISBN 978-87-7694-130-6.

£19.99

**Reviewed by Helen Godfrey**

**Independent Researcher**

Written records and the pictorial tradition are key tools of human expression. So too, of course, are oral history or storytelling. In Janowski's book we are presented with elements of all these, but it is oral history that forms the lynchpin of her work. *Tuked Rini, Cosmic Traveller. Life and Legend in the Heart of Borneo*, recounts part of a centuries old legend told in the longhouses of the Kelabit highlands of Borneo. Tuked Rini, a powerful, charismatic leader guides his people through his special skills and exemplary lessons. A symbol of masculine strength and power in a society historically familiar with the threats of headhunting, if not regular practitioners of it – Tuked Rini and his men are balanced in their roles by the contributions made by the Kelabit women, typified in the legend by Aruring Menepo Boong, Tuked Rini's wife. She symbolises the ideal for Kelabit women in their role of managing and developing the rice crop. Rice, in Kelabit and indeed many Borneo indigenous societies, was elemental to survival because of its key dietary role – but in the broader sense because of its symbolic place in the animist spiritual traditions, beliefs that existed until well into the twentieth century, until the arrival of Christian missionaries.

The Kelabits are one of the smallest indigenous groups in Borneo, perhaps numbering less than 6,000 in total and, while many have now moved to larger cities for jobs, those that remain still live in the remote areas of northern Sarawak. While, as Janowski notes, rice cultivation and hunting and gathering of forest produce have been at the heart of Kelabit survival and spiritual beliefs, the pressures of trade and job seeking have been slowly reconfiguring those core aspects of Kelabit life. Today, as more and more young Kelabits continue to shift to larger cities in search of work, that movement continues to change life in the Kelabit highlands. It is in part because of this slow erosion that Janowski's book was written. The book is one of the products

of a much wider project of interdisciplinary research involving archaeologists, anthropologists, botanists and geographers studying the relationships between people and their environment. This international team – The Cultured Rainforest Project - funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK, conducted research in the Kelabit highlands of Borneo from 2007-2011. The project worked closely with local Kelabit and Penan to study how people have transformed rainforests and vice versa. Janowski's book was launched at the 2014 ASEASUK Conference, and it continues her very extensive list of work including *The Forest, Source of life: The Kelabit of Sarawak* (2003), all of which hark back to her first visit to the Kelabit region as a doctoral research student in the 1980s. Subsequent visits and research have cemented her long engagement with the Kelabits.

While it is not described as such (individual chapters are not numbered), the book could be considered to fall broadly into three core sections. The first section gives us an overview of the author, other contributors to the book and the context for understanding Tuked Rini and the Kelabit world. In part, we have a short window of the journey made by Janowski herself (and that of her husband and daughter who accompanied her on her research visits). While this could risk being self-indulgent, in fact Janowski handles this lightly – drawing the reader in as if we too are looking through the journey as interested scholars, visitors and participants in the process of learning more about the Kelabit people. The section soon continues with an outline of the region, of Tuked Rini as a symbol of all male heroes; strong during time of war, and a leader of society. Yet balanced by what Janowski calls female heroes who complement the power of the men by their own significant powers, the ability to grow rice and produce *borak*, or rice wine – in legend, feasting after head-hunting expeditions symbolising a key part of successful life. In essence, these are stories, legends that provide hope, structure and guidance. Like all legends, we need other characters to keep the story moving and to make it meaningful. The legend offers many, and these are set out for us in the overview section.

These idealised male and female roles feature in the next phase as the book moves to the eponymous sections, the Legend of Tuked Rini – the version here is that told to the author by the Kelabit, Balang Pelaba in 1986. As with many legends repeated in oral traditions, the story is embellished, refreshed and made relevant according to who tells the story – with some versions lasting hours, or even days. Janowski has translated key elements, with audio visual material supplementing the book available at <http://tuked-rini-online.niaspress.dk>, including a recording of Balang Pelaba himself, which even those of us who have no knowledge of the language can still enjoy because of the rhythm and spirit which comes through. Described by the author as a 'culture hero', Tuked Rini hunts down and kills a *balang*, a spirit tiger on his stony outcrop, leaving behind markings which were taken by Kelabit people to explain the existence of extant megaliths and carved stones which can be seen today.

In recent centuries, the Kelabit were, notionally at least, part of the Sultanate of Brunei until 1882 when Charles Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak obtained the Baram region from the Sultan. From that time, the Kelabits become more closely linked to the outside world, notwithstanding their remote location. Even in the nineteenth century, the *Sarawak Gazette* was recording lengthy and successful trade expeditions by quite large groups of Kelabits bringing forest produce for trade in the downriver areas of the Baram district – obtaining subsistence and prestige goods such as the heirloom jars and beads which were a mark of status (examples are discussed at pp. 32-33

of the book). Disputes with other groups were also reported in the *Gazette* at the time, and by administrators such as Charles Hose. So the challenges foreshadowed in the legend of Tuked Rini were not entirely mythical, but in the nineteenth century were to be seen in real life. Aruring Menepo Boong, Tuked Rini's wife, is reflected in these trade patterns as well, her name means 'Aruring who gathers together huge valuable beads'; while *borak* was an important part of Kelabit life and legend as well.

The final section of the book puts the legend in context – the essence of what it means to be Kelabit in the past, present and future – manifested in both the physical and spiritual senses. The section describes aspects of life; the importance of *lalud* (power) is referenced throughout the book. James Brooke, the first Rajah of Sarawak once famously wrote that the Iban (the largest indigenous group of Sarawak) naturally leaned to the side of power, and we see such leanings reflected in the power and influence of Tuked Rini as described by the legend. Yet, as Janowski points out, for the Kelabit, power means to 'live strongly', using power well brings prestige and status, bringing together others who are all considered relatives, *lun royong* (p.100). The name Tuked Rini in fact means 'Good Support for all'. Kinship is interlinked with the nature of power and how it is obtained and exercised. The concept of *lalud*, like many other Kelabit beliefs and practices has, however, mutated in recent years – the arrival of Christian missionaries has led to a refocusing of much of Kelabit beliefs (see for example p. 26) and the resulting mutation of old legends is another reason for recording this history before it is lost altogether (notwithstanding the importance of Christianity to modern Kelabit society). Some of the legend includes special sections, *sedarir*, in 'old deep (*dalim*) language', taken up in more detail as part of the author's work on the Cultured Rainforest Project. The legend translated and set out in the book is the result of extensive work by Janowski, such work being followed up by other scholars to document the Kelabit language; details and a glossary of key words are set out at pages 150-155.

Throughout the book the approach has been to complement the narrative with boxed areas of text and lavish illustrations. These include historic as well as contemporary photographs from the Sarawak Museum, the author's husband Kaz, Douglas Cape and other photographers. The book is enhanced by ten paintings by Kelabit artist Stephen Baya, some illustrating events told in the legend, and other traditional elements from highland cosmology. Drawings by Claire Thorne of various Kelabit tools and artefacts are intricate, informative and beautiful.

As the book is aimed in part at a general audience, references are found in the Endnotes, making the book useful to the scholarly researcher without complicating the flow for other readers. Members of ASEASUK who have not otherwise been involved in research on Borneo might find the study of interest in its approach to bringing to life the interwoven linkages between legend, environment and social change. Those who have a broad interest in the cultural life of Borneo societies will likewise find plenty to satisfy them.

On the one hand setting out the traditional oral history of legendary heroes – the book also makes use of modern forms of 'story' telling through scholarly analysis and through wider media such as the written word, illustrations – along with museum exhibitions and internet resources. As Janowski notes, modern Kelabits also use social media and blog pages to record and maintain their identity. By working to record the traditional legend and making it available

to a wider and younger Kelabit audience, the oral story tellers of the past are gaining a potential foothold with these new and future generations of story tellers. The approach can serve as a model for such disappearing cultures and languages elsewhere of course, given the funding and support as has been shown here.

RATTANA LAO

*A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms: the culture of borrowing*

Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2015

210pp., ISBN 978-1-1138-02268-3 hbk US\$160.00

**Reviewed by Elisa Brewis**

**UCL Institute of Education, University of London**

This book follows on from Rattana Lao's doctoral research, which focussed on recent quality policies in the Thai Higher Education sector (Lao 2012). Here, however, Lao analyses the evolution of Thai Higher Education reforms more broadly, spanning an entire century. Although it focuses on the education sector, the book could be described as an exploration of Thailand's political, economic and cultural relationship with the West. In her own words, it 'offers the possibility of using the field of education as a site to theorize the logic and structure of the Thai state' (p. 188). The main thesis of her argument is that the socio-logic of the Thai state is characterized by a paradoxical desire to both adopt Western phenomena in the name of pursuing 'modernity', and to retain Thai traditions for the sake of perpetuating the hierarchical power structures of the elite (pp. 173-4).

In the Introduction Lao outlines her theoretical lens of policy borrowing, and summarises how this can be applied to study Thai Higher Education reforms. Lao uses the concepts of the politics and economics of borrowing to categorise the European-influenced era of the 1900-1950s and the subsequent American-influenced Cold War era respectively. Beyond that, however, she prefers to turn to a third concept that Takayama and Apple (2008) have termed 'the culture of borrowing'. It is precisely this culture of borrowing, she argues, that accounts for the adoption of Internationalization and Quality Assessment (QA) policies from the 2000s onwards. What she means by this is that certain policy options can hold cultural capital, especially in a post-colonial society where Western power tends to be symbolic more often than physical.

Chapters 2-4 will be of great interest to scholars concerned with the theoretical and historical aspects of statehood in Thailand. In this section Lao deals with the historical development of Thai Higher Education in relation to the changing role and ideological leanings of the state. In chapter 4 in particular, she traces the emergence of a cadre of academic oligarchs-cum-policymakers (mostly from medical and science disciplines) who came to dominate the political scene. Referring to the multiple streams theory outlined by Kingdon (2003) and Zahariadis (2007), she demonstrates that this was the group of policy entrepreneurs who pushed for decentralization and the introduction of market-oriented policies. The window of opportunity came to them in the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. Only two years later, the National Education Act (1999) was passed, paving the way for universities to manage their own finances and even approve their own programmes.

Against this theoretical backdrop of policy borrowing, the discussions in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are also interwoven with analysis from Area Studies specialists on Thai culture such as Rachel Harrison (2010) and Peter Jackson (2007), as well as from often-cited historians and economists specialising in Thailand such as (the late) David Wyatt (1969), Chris Baker and Pasuk Pongpaichit (1998, 2009). Such contributions help Lao to avoid a purely political or purely economic reading of the subject, and serve to explain the complex relationship with the Western ‘other’. This is important, given that the book generally speaking places the state at the heart of the study, leaving less room for discussions on the role of society and culture. What Lao has achieved instead is a public policy-framed study of the Thai state and policy formation that is at the same time embedded within socio-cultural analysis.

The second section of the book (Chapters 5-8), which covers recent policy developments in internationalization, rankings and QA, will be of interest to scholars of comparative education and to those interested in current Thai politics alike. It also makes for essential reading for anyone involved in development or education work in Thailand. In these chapters, Lao draws heavily on her own qualitative research in Thailand to delve in to the bureaucratic, political and cultural processes of decision-making and agenda setting. Her research methods included a three-month observation at the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), and eighty interviews with key policymakers at the highest national level as well as with QA practitioners and academics themselves across 13 universities in Thailand. The resulting account of internationalization and QA policy developments is rich in detail and description, all the while being framed consistently by the theory of policy borrowing.

While the bulk of the book focuses on policy forming and agenda setting, Chapters 9 and 10 turn to the actual implementation of QA policies. From a practitioner perspective, these are perhaps the ‘meatiest’ chapters, as they reveal a diversity of voices that both challenge, subvert and tolerate the directives of the Bangkok clique of policy entrepreneurs. In short, they answer the question: ‘Why has there been little improvement in quality at Thai universities despite the decades of policymaking that emphasised autonomy, dismantling bureaucratization and QA?’ In Chapter 10, Lao specifically highlights several micro-level factors that continue to hinder quality: unequal distribution of funding, the culture of seniority, and moonlighting of academics in a climate of low pay and teaching-oriented institutions. She also points to the fact that QA has been a project driven by those in scientific disciplines, imposing performance criteria on other disciplines such as the humanities where they lack relevance. Perhaps the biggest culprit turns out to be the policy of decentralization and deregulation itself, which the policy entrepreneurs fought so long and hard to achieve. As ministerial level funding and academic oversight were eroded, rapid expansion and commercialization of the Higher Education sector reduced its overall quality. Readers from around the world, including here in the U.K., will most certainly hear echoes of their own frustrated staff room conversations in this chapter.

The book sits somewhere ‘between the global and the local’, in the space where Grant Evans (2002) reminds us there exist ‘regions, cultural areas and nation-states’. Lao defended her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University under the supervision of Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi. Accordingly, the U.S.-influenced theoretical lens of policy borrowing is evident in her work. Yet, Lao is keen to develop the theoretical launching pad of policy borrowing further to include the culture of borrowing (p. 8). She also strives to highlight the importance of

contextual factors, arguing that policy borrowing is a two-way process. All of this is in opposition to what Lao terms a ‘normative and nationalistic worldview that reforms are implemented because they are “best practices” and sound “international standards”’ (p. 3). She argues convincingly that the globalization of education policies is neither uniform nor universally understood. In sum, this study is a classic example of an Area Studies specialist contributing rich qualitative empirical data with the aim of enriching the broader comparative theory.

The book also provokes many further questions for scholars of Southeast Asian politics and of comparative education alike. Who will be the next generation of policy entrepreneurs, and how will they dictate the nature of the Thai state? What role does society have to play in reinforcing or challenging the Bangkok policy elites? How is the education system and reproduction of power linked to this process? Comparatively speaking, how does the case of Thailand fit in to the regional and global pictures of higher education? The final chapter in particular generates themes that are pertinent to current debates internationally, such as the impact of marketization on the quality of education. It would be helpful to see what alternative theoretical attacks on the subject might produce. How might a sociological line of investigation be relevant here? How can theories of education as reproduction of power (Bourdieu, 1990) and academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) be used to better understand the interplay between education and power in Thailand? And what do alternative theoretical perspectives on the nature of the state and Thai politics suggest? This book has certainly opened up a space to have these types of interdisciplinary conversations.

#### **ARKSAL SALIM**

*Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism,*  
Edinburgh University Press 2015  
232 pp., ISBN: 978074869337hbk £70.00

**Reviewed by Al Khanif**  
**Faculty of Law, Jember University, Indonesia**

This book is a version of Arskal Salim’s three-year engagement as a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute Germany from 2006 to 2009. It is the continuation of previous examinations of legal pluralism in Indonesia (Ratno Lukito’s publication ‘Legal Pluralism in Indonesia’ published in 2013 arguably being one of the best examples). The main difference of the book at hand with the others is that Salim focuses on examining the interaction of Islamic law and other legal orders in Aceh province, which has not been discussed in such detail before. Salim’s investigation becomes very interesting as Aceh is the only region in Indonesia that implements Islamic law in its entire jurisdiction. Historically, it is the first province in Indonesia to embrace Islam and therefore they strongly view their identity as Islamic. Thus, after the tsunami disaster, which hit Aceh in 2004, implementation of Islamic law finally took place in the region after years of due (p. 3).

The discourse of legal pluralism in Indonesia asserts that Indonesia is not only known as a country with diverse ethnicities, cultures and religions but also for its legal diversity embedded

within Indonesian society including the jurisdiction of Aceh. While having the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is however not an Islamic state per se. Indonesia is a Republic-Pancasila state, which upholds the significant role of religion in the public realm as enshrined in the first principle of Pancasila - belief in One Supreme God. This is a theistic, yet secular concept, which also inspires the secular nature of all legislation in Indonesia, even though at the same time much legislation is influenced by religious values, particularly Islam (Khanif, 2015). Consequently, the mixture of religion and legal tradition results in the pluralistic nature of the Indonesian legal system; not only on a national level but also on the regional level all over Indonesia including Aceh.

Arskal Salim argues that a situation of plural legal order occurs where two or more legal institutions co-exist, separately or interdependently operating within the same legal system (p. 24). Some 'monistic legal scholars' often describe the dynamic nature of the Indonesian plural legal system as a vast and extensive jungle of law. Society can apply various kinds of legal mechanisms including customary norms and religious law because Indonesia does not apply a legal monism model, which refers to the idea that there must be one and only one centralised hierarchical legal system in order to protect legal certainty as well as to maintain social and political order (Maldonado, 2009: 213). Thus, Indonesian social reality is dictated by highly complex interactions of various different normative systems and Indonesia should bridge the gap between religious ideals and complex social realities (Pompe, 1998: 183). This proposition suggests that the spectrum of legal sources in Indonesia may derive from unwritten laws such as religious texts and traditions as well as written legal documents as facts of the very complex socio-legal cultural identity of Indonesian society.

Since obtaining independence in 1945, Indonesia including Aceh has continually developed its plural legal system including the application of Islamic law, which governs Muslim family law examined in the last chapter of this book. However, during its development especially after the establishment of the Indonesian Constitutional Court in 2003, the state also more and more acknowledged the role of customary law within Indonesian society. In fact, jural legal institutions were largely eliminated in the 1950s to support the unitary Indonesian concept (p. 30-1). At that time, the government enacted Act No. 1/1951 on the Temporary Policies to Run Civil Courts, which abolished jural legal institutions around Indonesia. Yet, it should be noted that the substance of customary law has still existed around Indonesia until the present day. Consequently, on many occasions, Sharia law and local customary laws co-existed and at times were hardly distinguishable (p. 31).

This legal complexity was partly caused by Dutch policies during the time of colonization which dismantled local legal cultures practised by Indonesians and further modified it into their version to accommodate colonial interests. Its unwritten and plural character complicated the task of the Dutch to develop economic and reinforce legal matters. This policy generally modified unwritten legal traditions practised by many Indonesians into written laws to facilitate colonial interests. This policy was mainly based on racial or ethnic groups because the Dutch colonial administration treated diverse groups of the population in Indonesia differently (p. 75).

The consequence of this dynamic legal pluralism in modern Indonesia is that Indonesia's legal system has three sources of law, namely Islam, custom and national legislation (p. 33). Salim also argues that Indonesia including Aceh has two separate national legal sovereignties: the public court, which governs secular legal matters; and the religious court, which executes Islamic law (p. 39). The Sharia court of Aceh is a special court, which is however executed under two separate courts. It falls within the structure of the religious court as long as its jurisdiction relates to the jurisdiction of the religious court and it is within the structure of the public court as long as its jurisdiction involves the jurisdiction of the public court (p. 45). For non-criminal cases, Acehnese Muslims still have 'a choice of law' to settle their case either in the religious court or in the public court while non-Muslim litigants in Aceh must stay with the public court (p. 79). In the case of criminal offense, the Sharia court of Aceh applies a territorial principle. This principle asserts that 'all people' living in Aceh are subject to the jurisdiction of Islamic criminal justice executed by the Sharia court (pp. 81-89).

The territorial principle of the Sharia court has created a contentious debate among human rights defenders because this principle denigrates plurality of pluralities in Islamic law and violates human rights as well. Salim provides controversy of the territorial principle in a short section of the book (pp. 103-107). However, what significantly is missing from Salim's book is his own insight towards the territorial jurisdiction of the Sharia court that is still applicable in Aceh until the present day. The reason for this becomes apparent in the book. Salim notes that the territorial principle potentially results in human rights complexity due to the application of Islamic law to assess all criminal offenses. Firstly, in the concept of plural legal orders, the Sharia court should not apply Islamic criminal justice to non-Muslims because this case should fall within the structure of the public court. The public court can use the Indonesian criminal code to assess the case. Secondly, Islamic criminal justice should not be applied to non-Muslims because the substance of Islamic law operates within the law of revelation, which generally urges Muslims to bring society into the conformity of the law of God. This law potentially violates non-Muslims' religious rights because they are forced to follow Islamic criminal justice.

The co-existence of two or more legal institutions allows people or disputants to have the opportunity to claim their rights and seek justice at a variety of legal systems (p. 189). Yet, the application of the territorial principle signifies that the idea of legal plural orders in Aceh seems to become an illusion because the territorial principle of Sharia court overrides public legal institutions. This means that there is a conflict of competency among legal institutions and one of the best ways to establish plural legal orders in Aceh is by giving equal territorial principle to all legal institutions. The public court is authorized to assess criminal offenses done by non-Muslims while the Sharia court executes crimes done by Muslims.

SARAH MILNE and SANGO MAHANTY (eds.)

*Conservation and Development in Cambodia: Exploring Frontiers of Change in Nature, State and Society*, (Earthscan Conservation and Development) Routledge, 2015  
 xx-292 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-70680-3 hbk \$145.00

**Reviewed by Neil Loughlin**

**SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies**

This book provides a comprehensive and multifaceted account of Cambodia's experience of development, exploring the linkages and dynamics between development and conservation in terms of the relationships Cambodians have with nature and society.

Despite the environmental and social implications of the many large-scale development projects in Cambodia on its people, insufficient scholarly attention has been paid to Cambodia's environmental transformation, despite that, as this book ably shows, this is equally important to – and intimately linked with – other economic and political forces that are shaping the country.

Sarah Milne and Sango Mahanty, both researchers based at the Australian National University's Crawford School, edited the book. Their experience as practitioners and researchers is reflected in the choice of contributing authors to the book's 13 chapters, drawn from scholars and practitioners working at the forefront of conservation and resource management in Cambodia.

The introductory two chapters invite the reader to understand Cambodia in terms of the relationship between nature and society, or what they term 'nature-society'. The process of state formation in Cambodia is located in its history of conflict, enabling the process through which key actors have captured the state and, at the same time, exploited its natural resources for financial gain.

The book is then divided into three sections. The first begins with an insightful case study of the Tonle Sap floodplain by Andrew Roberts. In the chapter, Roberts describes how top-down imposed solutions obscure local knowledge on the floodplain, rendering local voices mute when they have much to say on the issue of land dispossession that plagues rural Cambodia. It is an example of how the book grounds its theoretical interpretation of frontiers and nature-society in practical examples of the problems of contested landscapes manifest on the margins

Later chapters describe how newfound wealth is not spread evenly and the plundering of Cambodia's resources through development projects for the benefit of a small and corrupt elite - and at the expense of the people at the grassroots - has become a rallying cry for environmentalist, activists and the millions of urban and rural poor who have not benefitted from development. In one insightful chapter, Michael Sullivan narrates the contest between development and the environment in the context of dams in Cambodia. This analysis could extend to other infrastructure and development projects globally as it teases how local development practices in poor but resource rich countries are linked to wider geopolitical concerns of bigger nations who seek to profit from their smaller partners.

Part two of the book acknowledges the difficulties and competing interests that hamper conservation interventions, noting how 'colonial' interventions that attempted to separate

people from nature had dire consequences for the people who had lived there. Chapter 7, 8 and 9 problematise conservation interventions and show that these interventions come up against numerous brick walls in spite of good intentions.

Cambodia has a vibrant civil society and the government has attempted to clamp down on it in various ways, most recently by passing a raft of legislative changes and judicial action aimed at curtailing civil society and by threatening its leaders with arrest and detention. Grassroots movements have been particularly targeted by the new Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO) and the government's rationale for this is implicit in part three of the book as it details how new community-led protest movements have worked with established NGOs to advocate for greater autonomy over resources.

In an important chapter which sets the scene for discussing newer protest movements, Margaret Slocomb draws attention to Cambodians' history of resistance, from tempering French control over their everyday lives to instances of direct action and violent confrontation even while under Democratic Kampuchea, Pol Pot's ultra-Maoist totalitarian state.

Over the past few years land grabbing on a massive scale has seen the country erupt into almost daily protest. This, accompanied by union agitation, has been violently suppressed by the government. The authors could be forgiven for excluding this as much has centred on the urban poor and is not always within the areas conservationists concentrate their efforts but it too has lessons for the nature-society nexus and those same movements the book details in chapters 12 and 13.

This reviewer would have liked to read more on how the government has attempted to suppress these movements as this has implications for how conservationists and communities deal with repression and how Cambodians interact with nature and society. Cases such as the so-called secession movement in Kratie encapsulate the myriad actors involved in development, agricultural exploitation and the coercive apparatus of the state in violently repressing dissent and protecting the interests of investors while simultaneously drawing red lines that NGOs and grassroots movements have paid dearly for crossing.

Perhaps however this is too much to ask from a book that not only covers its bases but raises new questions that challenge the reader to see the central role the way people and government have interacted with nature in Cambodia's development.

This book would benefit to a broad range of scholars and activists working on political and development issues in Cambodia and indeed anybody interested in the many and rapid ways the country is changing.

### **COMMUNICATION (with a foreword by V.T. King)**

From time to time in its long history ASEASUK News has included longer pieces reviewing developments in Southeast Asian Studies, particularly in the UK, and presenting extended book reviews, commentaries, rejoinders, and scholarly exchanges.

Traude Gavin's **Communication** combines a review of Michael Heppell's recent book and a commentary and rejoinder. The debate goes back now over ten years, and it continues to be of interest for scholars in the social sciences, especially those in the fields of anthropology, material culture and oral tradition. The debate shows no signs of diminishing in intensity; indeed it seems to have gathered momentum recently. It is of special interest because it serves to demonstrate the ways in which researchers attempt to assert authority over a particular field of studies, and in this case establish a lineage of anthropological authority in Iban Studies. It relates back to the immensely important work of the late Derek Freeman, his commanding position in the study of the Iban of Borneo, his exchanges with others in the field of Borneo Studies, as well as his engagement with Margaret Mead arising from her research in Samoa. Michael Heppell, a former doctoral student of Freeman, in his exchanges with Traude Gavin, continues in this tradition, and it throws up all kinds of complex issues in anthropological fieldwork, self-reflexivity and interpretation, scholarly authority and the access to, control over and presentation of knowledge.

VTK

### **COMMUNICATION**

Michael Heppell, 2014, *The Seductive Warp Thread: An Evolutionary History of Ibanic Weaving*. Phillips: Borneo Research Council [Borneo Research Council Material Culture Series No.1]. ISBN 1-929900-16-3.

As indicated in the title, this book intends to give an evolutionary history of weaving by Ibanic groups in Borneo. This central theme is embedded in two other topics, both of which draw on previous publications by the author. The first of these, early migrations, is largely based on oral histories (2013). The second is the author's hypothesis of sexual selection (2005). Two appendices, including four genealogies, follow seven chapters. The 156 illustrations show numerous textiles, presumably from the author's collection; they further include black and white images from the KITLV archives, photographs taken by Derek Freeman and by the author, as well as Monica Freeman's drawings.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first concerns selected points in Heppell's book while the second concerns Heppell's critique of my published research in Appendix 1.<sup>1</sup>

#### **HEPPELL'S BOOK**

In this book Heppell repeats his hypothesis of a link between weaving/headhunting and sexual selection. Despite Reed Wadley's convincing critique of an earlier version of Heppell's theory,<sup>2</sup> here Heppell takes it to another level. He writes that weaving 'attracted men', because 'men had recognised that weaving provided insights into the reproductive fitness of women' (p. 100), and that by weaving superior textiles, women were 'able to demonstrate better genetic endowment' (p. 141).

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<sup>1</sup>My thanks go to Ruth Barnes, Roy Hamilton, V.T. King and Lillis O'Laoire for their comments.

<sup>2</sup> Wadley 2006.

It requires no knowledge of Iban ethnography to realise there is something fundamentally wrong here. Weaving is a learned skill, whereas ‘reproductive fitness’ and ‘genetic endowment’ are precisely that: genetic. Like men everywhere, Iban males sought competent women as marriage partners. A skilled weaver was a good choice of partner for a number of reasons, but there was no guarantee she would be reproductively fit.

In his review, Wadley argued convincingly that the kind of evidence Heppell would have to show in support of his hypothesis ‘goes far beyond the information available to any of us working in Borneo, especially for historical periods.’ Heppell does refer to Wadley’s critical remarks, both in his response (2006b) and in the present book where he uses the word ‘evidence’ frequently, but he fails to provide the kind of evidence specified by Wadley.

Heppell’s style is sweeping and assertive, but his knowledge of recent Iban history is flawed. I will quote only one instance here.<sup>3</sup> Heppell (p. 120) claims, ‘the Ibanic who remained [my emphasis] in the Merakai decided that they were closer to the groups which had migrated into Sarawak than those remaining in West Kalimantan and called themselves Iban. The Ibanic referred to are Undup and Kumpang Iban from Sarawak who only migrated into the Merakai at the end of the nineteenth century. These recent migrations are well documented in the *Sarawak Gazette* (1898, 1899, 1904, 1905, 1917), and particularly in McKeown’s Ph.D. thesis on the Merakai Iban (1983). Heppell lists McKeown’s thesis in his bibliography but seems to have missed this fact, even though it is referred to throughout.

Jan Vansina who is widely recognized as one of the leading authorities on oral traditions as historical sources, noted that ‘genealogies are among the most complex sources in existence,’ and that even under ideal circumstances ‘one never comes to a precision that would justify citing firm dates’ (1983:182-184).<sup>4</sup> Regarding Iban genealogies as an historical source, Pringle (1970: 42) similarly noted that at about fifteen generations back, they ‘must be regarded primarily as a world of myth;’ and also that the earliest portions of the genealogies cannot not be ‘taken literally.’

Heppell does not cite Vansina (or Goody) which is a serious omission given his heavy reliance on oral source material. Neither does he mention Pringle’s caveats. He only says that his attempt at dating would not “satisfy a good historian” (p.32), but then presents myth as historical fact. Singalang Burong, Iban god of war, is presented as a historic figure (p. 49), as is Antuk, the presumed originator of the spinning wheel (p. 48), and Tampun Juah, the legendary migration site where the Iban separated from their spirit heroes is treated as an historic location (p. 22, 100).

Heppell’s rambling account of Iban history and pre-history is full of speculation and frequently lacks references altogether, such as for early Iban migrations (pp. 16-53). This puts into

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<sup>3</sup> Wadley (2006: 261) similarly wrote that he had “numerous quibbles on various issues of Iban history,” but chose to only touch on two points in illustration.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1963: 309) made the same point.

question the scholarly status of the book.<sup>5</sup> The editors should have insisted on correcting these omissions.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Heppell's evolutionary history of weaving, I will mention just two points. For the influence of Indian *patola* on Iban textile structure and design, Heppell omits to quote Bühler's seminal work on the subject (1959). When he does lift Bühler quotes from Gittinger (1979), he misspells the name as Blücher (p. 80). This makes one wonder if Heppell knows who Bühler is and if he has read his work.

Secondly, according to Heppell (p. 43, 48), the arrival of the spinning wheel was a landmark event in the evolution of Iban weaving. He assumes that while they only had the use of a spindle Ibanic groups had no choice but to wear clothes of bark cloth and cordage 'because they could not spin the thread effectively.'

Heppell would have done well to consult the extant literature on the subject, for example E.J.W. Barber's chapter (1991: 39-78) on the use of spindles from the Bronze Age onwards. One reason why some weavers have chosen not to adopt the spinning wheel to this day is because they can spin yarn while walking.<sup>7</sup> And yet, weavers have produced large, finely woven cloths for several thousand years, using yarn spun with only a spindle. In short, Heppell's claim (p. 50) that Iban 'entered the age of skirts in plain weave' only after the 'introduction of the spinning wheel' is mistaken. This is such a fundamental error that it raises questions about Heppell's evolutionary hypothesis.

#### HEPPELL'S APPENDIX 1

The serious flaws detailed above permeate Heppell's entire main text, but that is not all. He added a 21-page appendix that is an extraordinarily vituperative, personal attack on my research, on the weavers who were my primary sources in Sarawak, and on my professional colleagues who supervised my work. Heppell's appendix is entirely devoted to 'Gavin' and is written in a relentless, mocking tone. It begins with astounding hyperbole, charging me with the 'destruction' of the 'memory banks' of Iban weaving; Heppell likens this to the kind of 'ethnic cleansing' that occurred in Iraq. Next, Heppell compares me to Margaret Mead and his own critique to the 'debunking' of her Samoan research by Derek Freeman (1983).<sup>8</sup> This I find oddly flattering; after all, I am not a larger than life figure as Margaret Mead was for American Anthropology. But Heppell certainly is no Derek Freeman and no match for Freeman's rigorous scholarship. Thirdly, in his concluding paragraph Heppell (p. 169) questions the competence of the supervisors, examiners, and publishers of my doctoral thesis. In short, the aim seems to be

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<sup>5</sup> Wadley (2006: 260, 264) similarly questioned the scholarly status of Heppell's earlier book (2005).

<sup>6</sup> No source is given for Ibanic population census figures (p. 9); Pringle is mentioned critically in a footnote (p. 78) without any reference; Van Naerssen is cited without a reference (p. 117) and is not listed in the bibliography. The index is a muddle. I only had occasion to follow up two entries: of the twenty-two pages listed for the curious term 'extraterrestrial,' only six include the term, while I have noted another nine; of the eight pages listed for 'symbolic representations' only one includes the term, while I have noted another fourteen. Clearly something has gone wrong.

<sup>7</sup> See Ruth Barnes (1989: 25) on this practice in Lamalera on the island of Lembata, Flores, Eastern Indonesia. Also see Barber 1991: 69.

<sup>8</sup> Heppell 2014: 149, 150, 153.

an all-out demolition not just of my published research and of my competence as a researcher, but indeed of anybody who approved or supported my work.

Regarding the numerous arguments presented in the appendix, it seems that Heppell often is so keen to find fault that he criticises without having thoroughly checked my text.<sup>9</sup> He consistently misconstrues the simplest of arguments. For example, in my article of 2010, I wrote that applying Ngaju dualistic cosmological models to the Iban was misguided.<sup>10</sup> Referring to this article, Heppell (p.161) wrote 'Gavin recently rearranged Iban cosmology by removing the upper and lower worlds from it.'<sup>11</sup> Obviously this is not what I wrote. It seems that Heppell is so determined to find fault that he consistently and deliberately misunderstands my writings.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, it seems that many of the points discussed in his appendix were chosen solely to denounce Gavin, rather than because Heppell had researched them in depth.<sup>13</sup> It is of no benefit to Iban studies when Heppell's personalised campaign takes precedence over rigorous, unbiased field research.

However, Heppell makes several key points in his book that tend to get lost in his rambling, and often digressive text. These key points are very important indeed and they need to be examined in detail.

Heppell's key points are:

Iban patterns are made up of symbols. This language of symbols is secret. This secret language was not revealed to Gavin. The women who were Gavin's primary sources in Sarawak belong to the lesser strand of weavers who were merely competent, but had not learned the secret language of symbols. Much of this secret language has been forgotten. Two persons who have access to this secret language of symbols today are Heppell and Vernon Kedit.

### **Heppell: Iban patterns are made up of symbols.**

The main problem here is Heppell's imprecise use of the word 'symbol'. Heppell might have considered how the term is defined in the philosophy of art. A brief look at concise definitions in the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* would have shown that his frequently used 'symbolic representation'<sup>14</sup> is either a tautology or a contradiction in terms.<sup>15</sup> Heppell's main contention with my work seems to be that I do not use the word 'symbol' in relation to Iban patterns. This is true and done with full intent, because, in the strict sense of the word, Iban patterns do not

<sup>9</sup> For example, counter to Heppell's claims (p. 151), I did mention the acquisition books of the Sarawak Museum, twice (Gavin 2003: 171, 311 note 64); and, counter to Heppell's claims (p.166), I did give a definitive gloss to my use of the term 'Baleh style' (Gavin 2003:92).

<sup>10</sup> Wadley (2006: 260) made the same point in his review of Heppell's book (2005).

<sup>11</sup> He further writes in his conclusion (p.169): 'The denial of upper and lower worlds is breathtaking in its brazen suppression of what many Iban scholars have written about their cosmology.'

<sup>12</sup> Heppell (2014: 163-166) similarly missed my point about the equivocal nature of the term 'tree of life' (2010).

<sup>13</sup> For example, *leburapi*, *engkeramba*, and the ritual use of *pua sungkit*; I stand by what I wrote on these subjects in my published research (2003).

<sup>14</sup> Heppell 2014: 56, 91, 93, 122, 130, 131, 134, 138, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 169.

<sup>15</sup> Hospers 2015.

contain symbols.<sup>16</sup> But this does not mean that I say Iban cloth and patterns have ‘no meaning’, a statement repeated by Heppell over and over.<sup>17</sup>

### **Heppell: The language of symbols is secret.**

There is no secret language of Iban cloth patterns just as there is no secret language of invocatory chants and dirges that is being kept from outsiders. Bards and shamans may be more versed in the use and interpretation of the metaphors and deep vocabulary of the chants, but this knowledge is not secret and is open to anyone. As Sather (2001: 168) noted, ‘interpretation of deep meanings is characteristically arduous. This is not because meanings are secret.’<sup>18</sup> The same applies to the metaphors and similes of *pua* titles and praise names, which often borrow stock phrases from the chants.

### **Heppell: This secret language was not revealed to Gavin.**

Heppell (pages 151-154) writes that Iban weavers are reluctant to reveal the names of powerful patterns and of the spirits or deities associated with them and that this information was kept from Gavin. To give further weight to his argument, Heppell (p. 152) quotes Kedit, who says a weaver “...NEVER EVER names a motif she has woven... NEVER.” This clearly is not correct since I recorded on tape weavers providing some fifty or so praise names of *pua* patterns, in addition to documenting dozens of high-ranking, powerful patterns.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, for Heppell to say that this information was denied me is incorrect.

### **Heppell: Gavin’s sources belong to the lesser strand**

Heppell also referred to this lesser strand as ‘non-core track’ and the ‘low road’.<sup>20</sup> This is a very serious allegation. I was fortunate to work with several eminent weavers who had woven the highest-ranking patterns and created their own patterns (*tau nengkebang*); some were also empowered to lead the ritualised pre-treatment of yarns (*tau ngar*); or they were shamans (*manang*) and soul guides (*tukang nyabak*), and thus proficient in the deep language of the dirge. For Heppell to declare that these weavers belong to a ‘lesser’ strand is incorrect; it is also offensive and unscholarly.

Heppell’s division into two strands of weavers (one with knowledge and one without) is inappropriate for other reasons. Heppell seems to argue that the superior strand is limited to a kind of upper stratum of ‘good’ and ‘leading’ families (pp. 144-5); in other words, a kind of Iban ‘aristocracy’, a term favoured by Kedit (1994).<sup>21</sup> It may well be due to Kedit’s influence that Heppell here pursued this line of argument, which was notably absent in his earlier book (2005). The proposition of an upper and lower stratum of weavers does not work for obvious reasons: Iban society is egalitarian, not hierarchical. Nor is there any kind of inner circle, or privileged elite privy to secrets kept from others.

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<sup>16</sup> Gavin 2003, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Heppell 2014: 152, 155, 158, 169.

<sup>18</sup> Also see and Barrett and Lucas 1993: 575; Gavin 2003: 82-3.

<sup>19</sup> Praise names were translated by James Masing and Anthony Richards (Gavin 2003: 20).

<sup>20</sup> Heppell 2014: 144, 145, 150, 158.

<sup>21</sup> See Freeman (1981: 14) and Sather (1994: 77) on Benedict Sandin’s similar fascination with rank.

However, according to Heppell (p.145), this is exactly what Kedit is claiming as the chosen custodian of the memory of his family's weaving tradition. It is commendable that the women in Kedit's family apparently preserved the memory of their cloth patterns to this day with such certainty and often with astonishing detail<sup>22</sup> – a feat not matched by any other Saribas Iban family. But Kedit's claim of privileged knowledge throws up another problem. The definition of an oral tradition (in this case the names of patterns and motifs) includes the restriction that it must be 'commonly or universally known in a given culture'; views put forward by 'favoured informants' therefore become 'their own idiosyncratic culture and no longer the collective representation of the community' (Vansina 1985: 28, 135). In short, to claim exclusivity may place Kedit's family in a superior position, but also separate from Iban society as a whole, which in turn is inconsistent with Iban notions of egalitarianism.

### **Heppell: The secret language has been forgotten.**

Heppell refers to the 'language of symbols', 'scripts', 'encyclopaedia of motifs', the 'language of *pua'*, and 'explanatory text [of cloth]'; in short, the 'writing of Ibanic women'.<sup>23</sup> This harks back to 19<sup>th</sup> century notions, such as Haddon's language of 'pictographs' (1895: 217).<sup>24</sup> However, despite Heppell's assertion of the existence of a language of symbols, he then follows this with a whole chapter, Memory and its Loss, on how this language has been forgotten.<sup>25</sup> The question then is, if this language has been lost, how is it that Heppell and Kedit have become its sole interpreters?

### **Heppell and Kedit know this secret language of symbols.**

In asserting their privileged knowledge, Heppell and Kedit break two fundamental rules, which I learned through experience in the course of my field research:

Rule 1 Do not question pattern identifications made by Iban of their family's cloths.

Heppell (p. 169) triumphantly wrote: 'An irony is that the more Kedit writes about Saribas cloths, the more it seems that Gavin was prone to significant error in her identification of Saribas cloth titles.'<sup>26</sup> Heppell and Kedit apparently fail to understand that the identifications referred to are not mine, rather they are the pattern names provided by Iban of their family's cloths, which is clearly indicated in my List of Figures.<sup>27</sup> And who is Kedit to say they are wrong?<sup>28</sup> One does not question somebody else's identification of cloth patterns, which have been passed down within their own family; rather, such patterns must be presumed to have their own valid pedigree.<sup>29</sup> There is a whiff of aristocratic privilege about Kedit's claims, which is not in tune with Iban egalitarian ethos.

<sup>22</sup> Kedit (2010: 22 note 17) lists the long line of transmission of oral information passed down from his great-grandmother who passed away when he was just eight years old.

<sup>23</sup> Heppell 2014: 94, 144, 146, 150.

<sup>24</sup> Heppell (2014: 151, 152) uses the term 'pictogram'.

<sup>25</sup> In doing so, he joins a long list of mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars; see Gavin 2003, chapter 6, Haddon and the Iban Material.

<sup>26</sup> For specific examples deemed 'incorrect' by Kedit, see Heppell p. 87 note 72 (regarding ritual pole patterns; Gavin 2003 figures 79, 81) and Heppell p. 156 (regarding *buah berinjan igi beras*; Gavin 2003 figure 132; the latter is also mentioned in Kedit 2013: 311 note 3); also see Kedit 2013: 312 note 7 (regarding Nising; Gavin 2003 figure 29).

<sup>27</sup> See Gavin (2003: 307-320).

<sup>28</sup> Kedit also 'corrects' pattern identifications made by other Iban authors (2013: 311 note 3; 312 note 1).

<sup>29</sup> See Gavin 2003: 211.

## Rule 2 Do not presume to name other people's patterns.

To be clear: some patterns are so well known and widespread that there is no problem in naming them.<sup>30</sup> However, as a general rule, only the weaver herself or her immediate descendants know the name of the *pua* patterns she has woven. During my field research I found no weaver who would be so presumptuous to name other people's patterns; in particular patterns that were not known in her longhouse or river area.<sup>31</sup> Not so Enyan, Heppell's principal informant, who provided numerous praise names for patterns that originated in areas other than her own.<sup>32</sup> Regrettably, Heppell published these improvised, *ad hoc* interpretations (2005).<sup>33</sup> Kedit, who is from the Saribas, similarly provided detailed improvised interpretations of Baleh patterns from a museum collection for which we have little or no field information. One cloth stands out, a unique, one-off creation.<sup>34</sup> In my experience Iban weavers would be highly reluctant to suggest a name for such an unfamiliar pattern, much less the improvised interpretation presented by Kedit. Such interpretations may be welcomed in the popular literature aimed at collectors and dealers, but they are unacceptable if we consider Iban weaving worthy of rigorous academic investigation.

To conclude, the problem is that Heppell and others start with the assumption that Iban patterns must contain 'symbols', and that if they do not, it renders them 'meaningless'. Rather, it would make sense to keep an open mind and start with a *tabula rasa*, which ideally should be the basis for any rigorous academic inquiry. With the assumption of symbolic content already firmly in place, questions that should be asked are not asked, and the questioner in effect does not 'hear' what Iban weavers say (Gavin 2005). Many of these questions have been asked and answered in art historical discourse long ago, but textile enthusiasts rarely venture there. The art historian Ernst H. Gombrich wrote at length on the misconception of assumed symbolic content by early ethnographers such as Haddon (1895) and others. Here is an apt (ironic) quote with which to close:

There is no spell more potent than that cast by mysterious symbols of which the meaning has been forgotten (Gombrich 1979: 218).

It would appear that both Heppell and Kedit have fallen under this spell and are determined to stand by their point of view against all evidence to the contrary.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This book has serious factual and evidential shortcomings, which should have been addressed by the Borneo Research Council before publication. It appears that the peer reviewers did not correct the many historical and other factual inaccuracies, only a few of which I have pointed out in this review. But it is Heppell's misinformed and unsupported criticism of my work, which is especially worrying. The Borneo Research Council has approved and supported Heppell's

<sup>30</sup> Obvious examples are the deer and leech patterns on skirts and the firefly pattern on *pua kumbu*.

<sup>31</sup> For details, see Gavin 2003: 21, 235.

<sup>32</sup> See the list in my comments on Heppell's book (Gavin 2008: 278).

<sup>33</sup> Enyan's naming of the *sungkit* 'dancing figure' as Meni also is an improvised, *ad hoc* interpretation (p. 152), rather than one passed down within her family of cloths woven by her forebears; the same applies to Kedit's improvised interpretations of these figures (p.156-157; Kedit 2013: 50).

<sup>34</sup> Kedit 2013 plate 46.

work and yet, in my view, the language he uses and the personalised criticism he levels against my research have no place in scholarly publications.

More than likely Heppell will reply in print to my comments. However, nothing constructive is likely to result from this because Heppell in his replies tends to obfuscate and dissemble. As already mentioned at the start, Heppell has yet to respond to specific points made by Wadley regarding Heppell's hypothesis of sexual selection.<sup>35</sup> In my Rejoinder (2008), I chose just three points from Heppell's earlier book (2005) to show how he habitually misrepresented my text; I further questioned several of his claims, in particular his use of Enyan's *ad hoc* interpretations of patterns from outside her native area. In his response Heppell (2010) sidestepped my arguments and effectively failed to address the points raised. Additionally, there is the issue of the offensive language used by Heppell. With conditions such as these, it is impossible to have a meaningful exchange and consequently there is no "debate."<sup>36</sup>

(Traude Gavin, Herefordshire, United Kingdom)

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<sup>35</sup> Wadley 2006; Heppell 2006b.

<sup>36</sup> In his introductions in the *Borneo Research Bulletin*, Sather used the term 'debate' (2006: 7; 2010: 4).

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