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SUVANNABHUMI means "The Land of Gold" in Pali, which location implies Southeast Asia.
Cover Photo: Guardian giant (Yaksha), called Thotsakan, character from the Thai Ramakian epic, within Wat Phra Kaeo in the Grand Palace of Bangkok, Thailand.

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The Prison and the Sea

Jan Mrázek*

[*Abstract*]

The essay reflects on the work of Adrian Lapian (1929-2011), an Indonesian scholar of archipelagic/maritime Southeast Asia and its "sea people—sea pirates—sea kings." The essay suggests that Lapian's writing mirrors navigation at sea, and the constant re-orientation and ever-changing, multiple points of view that are part of it. This is contrasted to Foucault's "panopticism" and academic desire for discipline. Taking cue from Lapian's writing and from the present author's experience of seafaring, the essay envisions Southeast Asian studies as a fluid, precarious, disorienting, even nauseating multiplicity of experiences, dialogues, and moving, unstable, and uncertain points of view; a style of learning that is less (neo)colonial, more humble, and closer to experiences in the region, than super-scholarship that imposes universalizing, panoptic standards, theories and methods (typically self-styled as "new") that reduce the particular into a specimen of the general, a cell in the Panopticon. The essay concludes with reflections on certain learning initiatives/traditions at the National University of

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Singapore, including seafaring voyages—experiences, encounters, and conversations that make students and scholars alike to move and see differently, to be touched, blown away, rocked, swayed, disoriented, swallowed, transformed, and feel anew their places, roots, bonds, distances, fears, blindness, powerlessness.

Keywords: Adrian Lapian, Michel Foucault, Michel Serres, panopticism, maritime Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Riau Islands, archipelagic studies, area studies and disciplines, seafaring, experiential learning

Ⅰ. Points of View

The Call for Papers of the 2018 Southeast Asian Studies conference in Busan, where this paper was originally presented, echoes familiar anxieties and complaints about the state of Southeast Asian Studies: area studies "has not been established as an academic discipline furnished with its own unique research methodologies," as it is "conducted by scholars from various disciplines." "[A]rea studies is experiencing […] identity crisis by lacking of its own uniqueness." We need "to establish area studies as an academic discipline." The conference aims to explore "new approaches."

The desire for discipline, characterized by unity more than diversity, makes me think of Michel Foucault. His use of the word "disciplines," as instruments of subjugation through which "docile bodies" are produced, crosses boundaries between the prison system, discipline in military and schools, and organization of knowledge. I think of his discussion of the Panopticon, an envisioned prison in which all inmates, all cells, can be seen by a single, centrally positioned watchman, himself invisible to the inmates (1991: 195-228). Foucault speaks of panopticism as a form of subjugation, and also subjugation of knowledge. I am not going to comment here on academic disciplines generally, but specifically on the desire to make Southeast Asian Studies into "a discipline," as opposed to the existing involvement of "scholars from various disciplines," which is seen as a weakness, an "identity crisis," or a

lack of "uniqueness." It is this particular project that makes me think of Foucault's image of a single all-seeing, controlling, central vision. Moreover, the image resonates with the powerful global perspective that posits Southeast Asian studies primarily as a sub-species of area studies, as one cell in a panoptic prison.

So, "for better or worse" (to evoke the title of a book on colonial relationship: Lapian 2010), I think of Foucault. But—it feels like I am escaping—hurriedly I think away from Foucault's Panopticon; I think of the Indonesian scholar Adrian Lapian, whose work in some ways resonates with Foucault's (both reflect on knowledge and power/violence, and both often think in terms of the politics of seeing), yet in other respects it is diametrically opposed—as if Foucault and Lapian were describing the same phenomena from different spaces, different points of view, in different motions. One speaks of the prison, the other of the sea.

Lapian's work in Indonesia is varied, yet he is best known as a scholar of maritime history. In his writings, this focus is presented in terms of position, point of view, and as a response to the particular, archipelagic seascape of Indonesia. He writes at the outset of his dissertation (written in 1986, and published as a book in 2011), a history of the Sulawesi Sea in the nineteenth century:

> Until now, the study of Indonesian history has privileged events that happen on land, even though more than half of Indonesian Republic consists of the sea. … A large part of the experience and actions of the inhabitants of Nusantara in the past escapes the observation and research of our historians. To see Indonesian history from land only makes our knowledge and view of the past—which form the basis for seeing the present—constantly weighted to one side (2011: 1).

As Lapian writes this, he is already seeing Indonesia from the sea: the words for "land" that he uses—*darat(an)*—generally imply land as seen from, or as contrasted with, the sea. A dictionary definition, "*tanah yang tidak digenangi air*" ("land not immersed in water"), gives a sense of this: *darat* is defined in terms of its opposite, it is the non-sea. I am reminded of marine charts, where sea appears as a complex landscape with variegated features, while the land beyond the coastline is blank. Yet, and this is typical of

Lapian's optics and non-positionality, he never remains grounded in one point of view (while we like scholarship to be grounded, for a ship this is the greatest danger): he emphasizes that a view from the sea is a complementary part of Indonesian history, which so far "prioritizes the land element in what should be a history of *tanah air*" (2011: 1). His focus on the sea is a matter of a shift to a previously less dominant position and point of view, where one is conscious, however, that this, too, is merely one position among others. Lapian further relativizes the view from the sea by referring to the statement of the Dutch historian Van Leur that (I quote Lapian's paraphrase) "Indonesia should not be seen from the deck of Dutch ships and VOC forts, as has been done by many Dutch writers at that time," but, Lapian adds, it is often forgotten that "view from indigenous boats and coastal towns must not be ignored" (2011: 1-2). By pointing out that from every boat one sees differently, Lapian adds to the number of views, the boats, the positions, creating a sense of multiple, changing views and moving sights, which "must not be ignored." Moreover, rather than speaking of "new approaches," he brings out the continuity of his focus with past positions, both colonial and local (*Pribumi*). There are many vessels, and from each one sees differently.

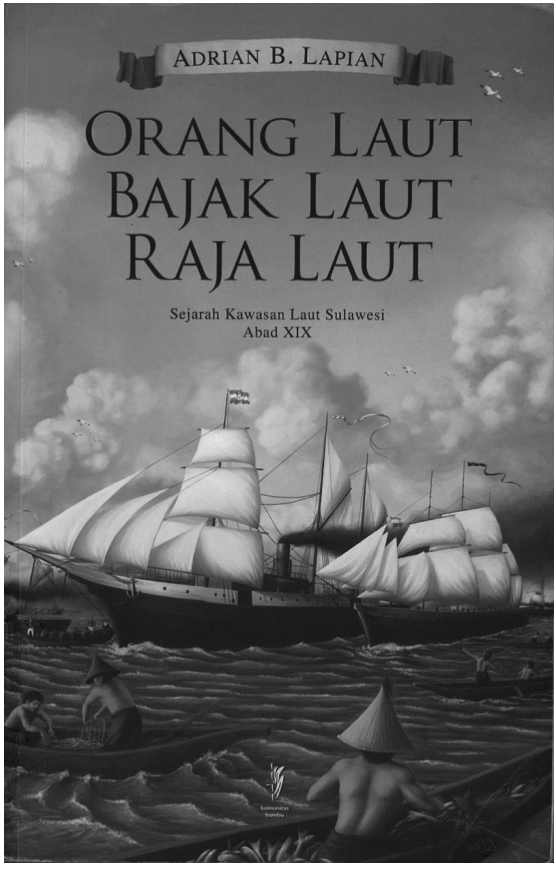
At the back of my mind, evoked though contrast and opposition, is Foucault's panoptic, disciplining view from the fixed, central position in the prison.

Lapian's initial shift of gaze from land to the sea, is merely the beginning of his exploration. When he looks at people, violence, region, or his sources, his point of view keeps moving, always conscious that what one sees now is bound to change, sometimes ever so slightly, sometimes stunningly.

Ⅱ. Kekerasan I: Sea People—Sea Pirates—Sea Kings

Looking at the cover image of Lapian's book, I seem to be on a small indigenous fishing boat—not very stable, moving with the waves and the currents—along with another fisherman (or are we

pirates? shall we be pirates?) looking at other vessels, local and Dutch (which of those might be pirates, and which the kings? does it make any difference for me?).



<Figure 1> Cover of Adrian Lapian's book (2011).

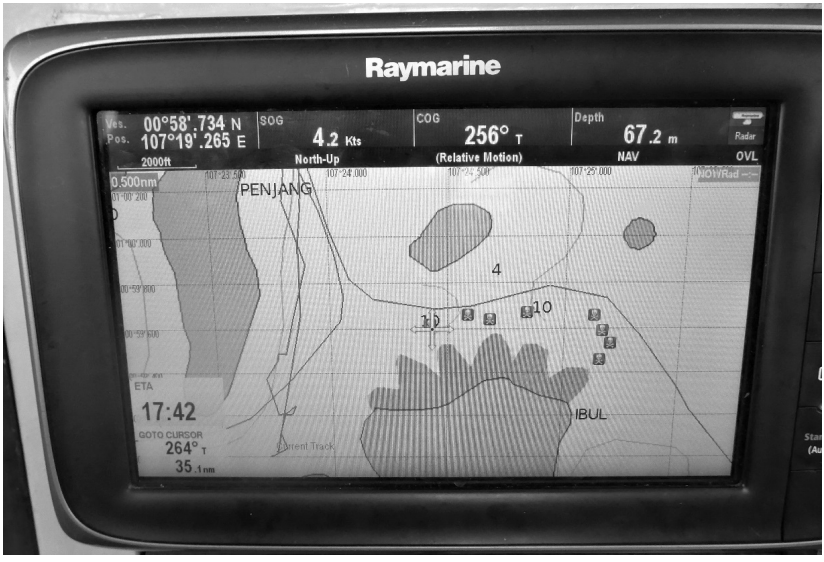
Reading Lapian, I am reminded of learning to sail and navigate, and of my experience of seafaring in Indonesia. Sea is the same everywhere (as Jules Verne writes somewhere, truthfully) and everywhere it is different. Indonesian seas are like, but also very much unlike any other. One grasps this by navigating them. One can sail for days without being out of sight of multiple islands—

"pencil dots" and long coastlines—and in some areas the sea is a maze of waterways through dense archipelagoes. In such seascape, tidal currents tend to be particularly strong, and both wind and currents tend to be especially variable in direction and speed, with various forms of dangers created by multiple currents, and "overfalls" where wind-driven waves crash against tidal currents. Weather, too, is archipelagic, with unpredictable brief squalls and highly localized and quickly-changing weather patterns more important than extensive weather systems. In the narrow straights between islands, in the restricted space between coasts, it often feels like sailing along a river with a very strong current, and such "rivers" can form extensive networks. In such archipelagic waters, watching islands and trying to understand their configurations (and their effects on current, sea depth, wind, waves, etc.), is a key part of navigation and orientation, and it is a part of the experience of seeing Indonesia from the sea. As one sails through an archipelago, configurations of islands keep changing,

<Figure 2> Land-seascape in Riau Islands, Indonesia. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2017.

each island or a group of islands appears different depending on one's position, islands that from a distance appeared to be next to each other turn out to be miles away, their sizes may be difficult to estimate, unsuspected vistas open, inviting bays suddenly appear

only to turn, moments later, into treacherous straights, and one is constantly aware that some danger may be at the moment invisible.



<Figure 3> Finding way through the Tambelan Archipelago (Riau Islands Province, Indonesia), as seen on electronic marine chart, which depicts remote areas such as this extremely inaccurately, as seamen love to demonstrate. The line shows the ship's track, and the danger marks were added by us. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2018.

Navigation involves continuous re-orienting in relation to multiple, changing directions, speeds, and positions. It happens not in the contemplative calm and stability of one's office, but as the wind, current, and other aspects of the situation change, as do one's own position, point of view, orientation, and speed. Nothing is fixed. How one orients oneself and how one fares, and what are the most important variables to watch, depend also on the boat: whether one sails or motors, on the size, draft, power of engine, available navigational instruments and charts, and other factors. But on every vessel, navigation involves multiple variables and the changing point of view within a changing situation.

<Figure 4> A small sailboat and a cargo motorboat, Riau Islands, Indonesia. Near islands or within island clusters, one-person boats (made of wood or plastic barrels) propelled by paddles and oars are also commonly used around the islands. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2017.

Imbued with the sea, more movement than position, Lapian's writings show "sea people—sea pirates—sea kings," who they are, how they are seen, and the various configurations of their relationships, from multiple, moving points of view. For example, in the case of "pirates," he introduces a colonial view of piracy as a "criminal phenomenon." He discusses pirates as a colonial category, emphasizing the subjectivity and the politics of the colonial perspective and categorization ("actions that they grouped in the category of sea pirates"; 2011: 3-4). He then moves to a contrasting view, resulting from "the process of decolonizing of our history writing," in which pirates are seen as "rebels against colonial regime, as freedom fighters and national heroes" and the conflicts of nineteenth century as "a maritime guerrilla war" (2011: 5). "Such view [*pandangan*: also gaze, look] approaches the problem from the opposite direction," but "reversing our view/gaze [*pandangan*] like that does not mean yet that we have achieved an Indonesia-centric view [*pandangan*]. Fundamentally this approach is still based on European vision [*visi*], only the eyesight [*penglihatan*] is reversed. It

would be too simplistic and naïve to change colonial, Europe-centric view [*pandangan*] just by turning the boat's bow [*haluan;* boat's bow; course] 180°." And so he sails on, looking at "piracy" from yet other points of view: as Holy War, European romantic representations of piracy, images of "pirates" in Indonesian literature, as well as positive and negative views of "pirates" in coastal communities, where they are not always seen as "pirates." The result is not a single conclusion or argument, but rather a voyage wherein one has seen "sea pirates"—who by now, it becomes clear, are not simply pirates—from different angles and in different light, a voyage wherein one learns to navigate and see in this way.

The voyage involves navigation among historical sources and secondary literature from a variety of disciplines and genres. Lapian presents diverse perspectives and views—*pandangan* is the word he likes to use, along with *pendapat*, "opinion"— not rushing to dismiss or accept any one of them, avoiding being grounded, steering deliberately from one to another. The "opinions" from different sea scholars are presented like the fluid "points of view" from which sea people, sea pirates and sea kings see each other.

The title of Lapian's book/dissertation, *Orang Laut—Bajak Laut—Raja Laut* ("Sea People—Sea Pirates—Sea Kings") sounds like three waves, connected by *laut*, the sea, each alike and each different. On the book cover, the words appear in three rows, alive with the continuous movement of *laut*, repetitive yet not geometrical, against the background of an image of the sea and ships. Repetition suggests continuity beyond borders, possibly endless (that is how the infinity and eternity of God is evoked in Islamic art). The waves, *Orang Laut—Bajak Laut—Raja Laut*, continue to sound throughout the book, as the names of its chapters (preceded by another wave, another *laut*-chapter, titled *Laut Sulawesi*, Sulawesi Sea) and resound throughout the text.

Lapian writes that sea people, sea pirates, and sea kings are "ideal types," employed for the sake of understanding Southeast Asian phenomena rather than universal theory (2011: 18-19). As "ideal types," they become like interchangeable roles in a play where an actor might don this or that mask. Identities of sea people

—sea pirates—sea kings are fluid, relative, and temporary. The repetition of "sea" brings out that sea people—sea pirates—sea kings are all related, like three variations of one motif, like three views of the sea.

Having introduced the three ideal types, Lapian writes: "But the continuity of the sea world [*dunia bahari*] unifies and is the background [*melatarbelakangi*] of all [*semua*]" (2011: 23).

Lapian uses the word *bahari*, which (as he discusses prior to this passage [2011: 2]) means both "maritime" and "prehistoric, ancient." The sea and ancient time are unified in one word. Repetition, with its continuity, might help in translating (I think of waves):

> The continuity of the sea world unifies and is the background of all.
>
> The continuity of the ancient world unifies and is the background of all.

Now listen again to the ancient continuity of time and sea:

> sea people—sea pirates—sea kings—sea people—sea pirates—sea kings—

They are unified, not in the single instant of a happy end, but through time, in an ancient/sea play of struggle and collaboration, a play of interchanging roles, points of view, and names.

He writes in a sea-passage-like passage during which the "same" people are seen from varying angles and changing distance:

> But the continuity of the ancient sea world unifies and is the background of all, as is implicit in the names. … Both Sea Kings and Sea Pirates are sea people in a general sense, as distinct from land people. Sea Kings (including the subtype Sea Superkings [i.e., colonial powers]) and Sea People in their actions can be sea pirates, in the sense that they use violence at sea in forcing other boats and ships to follow their will, while Sea People and Sea Pirates (…) can consider themselves sea kings in a certain region where they do not recognize other power that is higher and greater than them (2011: 23).

Lapian relativizes all views by presenting other views: *orang laut*, known in literature also as "sea nomads," "sea gypsies," and similar names, are not simply free and nomadic, but typically limit themselves to a rather small marine area; pirates not simply criminal, not simply resistance fighters, not simply fighting infidels, but somehow potentially all of those and more. Every group is seen from multiple points of view, and Lapian is interested in the tidal currents between groups: pirates become kings—kings become pirates—pirates work for and/or against kings and super-kings—and so on.

The one "common denominator" that Lapian accepts is *kekerasan* (2011: 17) – "violence, hardness." The common denominator, however, is immediately complicated. Lapian writes that while the state (*negara*) considers itself to have the "sole authority" over violence, in nineteenth century maritime Indonesia there were multiple political formations, of different kinds, from several colonial powers, whose presence varied in different parts of Indonesian seas, to various local kingdoms and groups, each claiming to be the sole authority over violence in a certain area, while regarding violent actions by other groups as piratical. What we get from this is less a single picture or map, but multiple maps, multiple views, each claiming right to violence.

Lapian's *kekerasan* is like the sea: one overwhelming reality that "unifies and is the background of all." The "common denominator" allows for, but in its sea-like, ancient unity also starkly contrasts with, the multiplicity of views in Lapian's writing, the fluidity of identities, and the movement of Lapian's gaze.

Morality or legality are relativized as functions of position, point of view, and violence/hardness. Who is the king and who is the pirate depends on who is "harder." When law and morality come into view, one sees them as *keras*, hard and violent, as when Lapian writes that the colonial powers, "in their eradicating enthusiasm often grouped all 'suspicious' local vessels as pirates" (2011:24).

This relativity, in which law and whether one is a pirate or a king depends simply on violence and hardness, is, however, itself

softly relativized by introducing the perspective of the *orang laut*, sea people, who are relatively least powerful, but who have a strong sense of traditional ownership of marine territory—a sense of justice not backed by, and therefore not dependent on, sufficient hardness, or potential for violence—and so the *orang laut* have no choice but either to collaborate with pirates and kings, or move away from their territory. From the position of the *orang laut*, the kings and pirates may be for their purposes identical—as both the sea pirates and the sea kings are more powerful than sea people. But the configuration is always subject to change: sea people might become pirates, or might have been pirates, and in collaborating with the sea pirates or sea kings, they share in their violence.

With the same sense of relativity, Lapian views the colonial empires. He calls them *Adiraja Laut*, Sea Superkings, a subtype of Sea Kings. They are thus not essentially different from the other players, and colonial violence is not essentially different from other forms of violence, except that the Sea Superkings have a greater potential for violence, primarily because of superior technology in the nineteenth century, especially steam power—a technology which local groups attempted but generally failed to appropriate. Lapian (again not rejecting any view) writes that in "local-foreign or East-West polarizations, the subtype Sea Superking can be separated from Sea People/Sea Pirates/Sea Kings. …. But continuity of the sea/ancient world unifies and is the background of everything." (2011:23)

Ⅲ. Nation and Region

Moving, sea-based views characterize also Lapian's representation of region. We have already seen that he presents his focus on the sea in the context of understanding Indonesia better, and that his focus on sea involves a shift of position and view, to include not only views from land but also from the sea. He writes at the outset of his dissertation: "History writing that claims or aspires to be national in a true sense cannot be considered complete as long as only the land element is prioritized, in what must be history of *tanah air*"

(2011: 1). The English translation of *tanah air* as "homeland" captures neither the elementary, watery-earthy image of an archipelago evoked by *tanah air* ("land water"), nor the expression's emotional and imaginative particularity and intensity—all these, and the way they are united in the words *tanah air*, are key to understanding Lapian. His discussion of *tanah air* leads him to a reflection on the principle of Indonesia as an archipelagic state, proclaimed in 1957 and "struggled for on an international level for 25 years," until it was ratified as an international maritime law in 1985 (2011: 2). Lapian thus frames his work in the context of a postcolonial struggle of the nation-state, so that its territory would be recognized not as multiple islands, but one *tanah air*. His focus on all-unifying sea is at the same time a focus on the unity and integrity of the nation.

Here again Lapian presents this national struggle and his historical argument in terms of a "reversed" view: "So archipelagic state in fact must be understood as 'great sea state' sprinkled with islands, and not islands surrounded by sea. Thus the paradigm of our country should be reversed, that is, a sea state where there are islands" (2011: 2).

Lapian's reversals always have a political dimension. The multiplicity of views and the constant movement of the historian's gaze, as well as the particularity of his thought that emphasizes the archipelagic character of Indonesia, undermine any single, "panoptic" perspective, any dominant hardness/violence.

Frequently, the politics of these reversals are specifically anti-colonial, and are part of a "history writing that claims or aspires to be national in a true sense," which for Lapian means not turning the boat's bow 180° to reach a new, single view (and thus a new, national panopticism), but rather gaining a multiplicity of fluid views. In a lecture at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, at the opening of the exhibition "Netherlands' encounter with Asia," Lapian began by playfully shifting positions and reversing the perspective of the exhibition's title, and asking how this was Asia's encounter with Netherlands (the possessive marker is moved to Asia), and how it was "experienced by people of Asia" (2010: 1). But,

as we could already expect, he does not adhere to this reversed view. Rather, in his text, he looks now from one side, now from the other, presenting multiple, contradictory perspectives and changing "roles"—change in position is linked to change in seeing *as*—in the human (tragi)comedy. Speaking in Dutch, in Amsterdam, Lapian described how in the earliest days of the encounter, people in the archipelago—influenced by "news" spread by the Portuguese—saw the Dutch as "nothing but insurgents and pirates … people without a king and without a state" (2010: 3). In 1602, a group of Achinese travelled to Holland "to see for themselves that they were not dealing with pirates…. Much later, in the nineteenth century, the roles were reversed and the Achinese were depicted as pirates," which, according to a frank 1837 document, was to be used as a pretext for colonial expansion (2010: 4). The reversals continue. In 1946, at the time of "colonial wars, or 'police actions' as some Dutch writers used to call them" (again we are alerted to the perspective, to "seeing as", that words articulate and hide, as in the case of "pirates" and "kings"):

> the Netherlands regarded the *Republik* as consisting of a handful of insurgents and 'extremists' only. We were back once again in the seventeenth century when an Achinese delegation was needed to determine that the Republic of the United Netherlands was really a full-fledged state. This time a [Dutch] commission…had to ascertain for themselves that the Indonesian Republic was an 'organized and viable' state (2010: 9).

Lapian concludes:

> I hope that between the lines, I have shown that…throughout all these meetings, Indonesians encountered their own self. Through Dutch patriotic songs…the many ethnic groups that pledged to become the Indonesian nation, came to the conclusion that they, too, 'wanted to live in freedom in the little spot that was once bequeathed by their ancestors' (*willen vrij op't plekje wonen dat eens tot hun erfdeel kwam*) (2010: 9-10).

This recognition of oneself in the other, the culminating moment of colonial reversals, is the anti-colonial national revolution

—the reversal of who is the king and who the pirate in this land. The constant reversals and changes of points of view in Lapian's work are subtle revolutions, anti-colonial, and "national in the true sense." As always, Lapian performs his truth, here also by speaking of the Indonesian revolution in Dutch and discovering it in Dutch patriotic songs.

Lapian's insistence that Pirates and Kings are "ideal types" allows his logic of violence to flow freely between past and present. When he argues for the need to include views from the sea, he writes that our "knowledge and view of the past… form the basis for seeing the present" (2011: 1). Elsewhere he suggests that the role of steam technology in the nineteenth century—as that which allows for the dominant violence of Sea Superkings—is comparable to the political significance of nuclear power today (2011: 23). Yet, elsewhere, he sees a continuity between "pirates" (in the past and present) and contemporary "international terrorists" (2011: xii). While these are just occasional cues, they do show that Lapian does not see the eternal play of power in the colonial period as being finished, but rather encourages us to think of connections between pirates, kings, and super-kings in the past and in the present. In this way, too, his historical work on *tanah air* is part of an ongoing, ancient struggle, "national in a true sense."

I think of what the Filipino historian Reynaldo Ileto (2013: 17) wrote, in response to a text that categorized Southeast Asian scholars into three distinct generations, with the "senior" generation —like Lapian and Ileto—being characterized by focus on colonialism, empire, and nation, and the younger generation on challenging the nation-state:

> A borderless world with debilitated and fractured nation-states is the dream setting for an imperial order that scholars can unwittingly help to consolidate. What we need is a more careful and sympathetic reading of the "senior" generation's preoccupation with empire, colonialism, revolution and nation-building so that lessons can be learned from a past that lives on in the present.

"National in a true sense" seems to suggest that Lapian

believes that "national" historiography is sometimes misunderstood. In proposing to study Indonesia from the sea, Lapian criticizes national history written from land alone—a one-sided view, one that is "weighted to one side" (*berat sebelah*; one thinks of a badly balanced boat). We have seen how Lapian finds "simplistic and naïve" the idea that changing the course 180° from colonial view would afford us an Indonesia-centric view—although clearly he is interested in moving toward the later. So, it would seem, history writing that is "national in a true sense" means for Lapian that it is not simplistic, imbalanced, or limited to a single point of view or position.

This allows him to challenge simplistic views of Indonesia, as *tanah air*, and the writing of national history—indeed, part of him seems to look at national maps with the smile of a pirate who is most at home in crossing borders. This is the beginning of Lapian's chapter on the Sulawesi Sea:

> The national map stops at state borders. Area laying outside the border lines is not in color, because it is foreign territory. On an Indonesian map that shows the Sulawesi Sea region, the northern part of Kalimantan Island and islands to the north are pictured as a white area. … But on Malaysian national map, the picture of the same region is different. Here only Sabah is in color, because for Malaysians the other regions are foreign regions, the place where strange things happen, which are not commonly found in their country. Reversely, if we use Filipino national map, precisely those parts that are painted white on Indonesian and Malaysian maps get special attention, while other parts, namely the western and southern part of the Sulawesi Sea area, is not given color. For the Filipinos this realm is foreign. (2011:41)

The three "national" maps represent the same area from three points of view, each showing a different picture, like an actor changing roles as he changes masks, or like the different story versions in Kurosawa's *Rashomon*. There is a characteristic touch of gentle amusement in Lapian's account—one can almost see the old, bearded captain, puzzled by the three maps—like when he observes how, with changing points of view, roles change, and kings turn into pirates and pirates into kings. Lapian goes on to say that "the state

border line does not always follow lines separating cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or economic differences. … Climate and weather… as well as sea currents, earthquakes, tsunami, typhoons, and so on, do not bother about state borders" (2011: 43). He then introduces yet another position: "From the point of view of local inhabitants, the assertion of border lines places them in a difficult situation" (2011: 43). He also writes that "the sea for maritime inhabitants is not seen as something that separates. On the contrary, the sea for them is a unifier [*pemersatu*]—a continuum that enables them to connect with inhabitants in the regions across the sea. … Even though [Sulawesi Sea] is a border region for Filipino, Malaysian, and Indonesian states, there is a continuum when seen from the point of view of the world/environment [*alam*] and from the point of view of the inhabitants" (2011: 44). The rest of the chapter is a rich description of the physical and socio-cultural geography and history of the area, which represents it as variegated but continuous and interconnected.

Rather than a description from above, as if merely looking at a map—although that view, too, may be part of seafaring—one is taken on a voyage around the Sulawesi Sea. One often senses that one perceives the sea from a boat and from the perspective of seamen or sea people: "sailing from outside the area, one can enter Laut Sulawesi from three directions" (2011: 53); "from December to April, seafaring in Sulawesi sea is made difficult by very big waves" (2011: 48); he points out to us "several bays which form very good harbors" and where mountains "are good for taking bearing when sailing along the coast" (2011: 53). Elsewhere, "for the visitor who for the first time enters Berau River, the views are a bit boring and tiring for the eyes" and the "river is dangerous to navigate," with shallow waters "which leads to boats being grounded, and that slows down the voyage" (2011: 54). And so we navigate around the Sulawesi Sea, resting in sheltered bays and exploring rivers, across Indonesian, Malaysian, and Filipino waters, sensing the diversity and the continuities. One learns about the people in this area, but as much about physical geography, weather patterns, currents, and the biosphere—people are only one element of the ancient sea world.

Lapian's focus on border region in some ways resembles

current academic interest in those areas, in marginal groups, and in moving beyond national perspectives to "a borderless world" with "fractured nation-states," in Ileto's words. But while in this dominant scholarly perspective, this tends to constitute a 180° turn away from national perspectives, for Lapian his focus on a fluid border region is part of writing a "national history in a true sense," a history that is not simplistic and one-sided. His work shows, in other words, that writing "national history in a true sense" can include multiplicity and fluidity of positions and perspectives. The continuity between past and present implied in his work—between steam and nuclear power, between "pirates" and "international terrorists"—and his concern with careful decolonizing of Indonesian history writing (one which does not consist in simply changing course 180°), also suggest that such national perspectives can be part of a continually needed decolonization in a world of globally dominant, panoptic super-perspectives.

Lapian's geographic focus shows Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines as connected in the physical, historical and cultural continuity of the Sulawesi Sea region. "The sea for them is a unifier," he writes. Again the "the ancient/sea [*bahari*] world unifies everything." Lapian's "national history in a true sense" thus does not stop at the borders, unlike the national maps, but rather shows the connectedness with neighbors, and through a picture of one area, the connectedness and continuities across maritime Southeast Asia.

In some ways, this view is reminiscent of a long history of seeing the region as a culturally and historically continuous space, either the Malay World, or a larger area of Southeast Asia. In many ways, Lapian's vision is part of this tradition, in which, rather than seeing one nation in contrast to the other, there is no contradiction between a national and regional perspective, where there is a continuity between (national) I and (regional) we, rather than a contrast between an I and a them.

A maritime example that both resembles and contrasts with Lapian's thought, is the project of the Filipino adventurer and former government official Arturo Valdez who, in consultation with the National Museum of the Philippines, organized the building of

"replicas" of the *balangay* boats, based on archaeological finds in Mindanao. He sailed on them first around the Philippines, and in 2009, set out on a seventeen-month voyage across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Cambodia. His project is strongly nationalistic—his group is called "Kaya ng Pinoy," "the Filipino can"—and anti-colonial (he emphasizes that the Spanish have turned the Filipinos away from the sea, inland, in order to disempower them), yet this fervent patriotism includes both the "margins" and neighboring countries, as his travels have shown, and as is clear from his discourse. In it, the Austronesian world figures prominently (construed with an orientation toward Southeast Asia more than the Pacific), but even its extent is not clearly limited or limiting—unifying continuity overshadows border lines. His voyages are presented and experienced as "retracing the routes of our Austronesian ancestors," and he speaks of his encounters with their spirits on his boat. Significantly—considering the polemical debates about Tagalog-centrism and the dominance of Catholicism in the Philippines, and the "problematic" southern, Moslem territories—the boats were built by traditional boat builders from the Tawi-Tawi in Southern Philippines, in the Sulawesi Sea area, and they, Moslems, have been key members of the crew. In 2018, a voyage to China was organized in honor of the Sulu Sultan who sailed and died there in the fifteenth century. One of the boats is named the Sama Tawi-Tawi, in honor of the Moslem crew members, another one is the Sultan di Sulu.

Lapian's vision concurs with the various visions of regional unity in many ways, but there is a difference in emphasis, especially when compared to those variations in which "Malay race" or "Austronesian ancestors" are emphasized: what unifies the world for Lapian is not primarily race or ancestry, but something more open, uniting the whole world, yet also intensely physical, local, and everywhere different; something ancient [*bahari*] and constantly changing and moving: the sea.

The sea: Do not think just of those light blue, flat areas on the map, although they have their own poetry. Reading Lapian's work, with its images and echoes of the sea, as well as his ways of seeing and writing permeated by the sea, brings us to a closer

understanding of Southeast Asian waters. My comments on Lapian's work above might give some sense of what I mean, but I have hardly touched on his descriptions of Indonesian seas, or the chapter in one of his books on wind in the archipelago: the many kinds of winds, their names and significances in Indonesian languages (including, for example, seventeen names for different wind directions used on one Indonesian island in the Sulawesi Sea), the seasonal and local wind variations, all of which form what Lapian considers a "technology of sailing," and a history of seasonal movement and trade across and beyond the archipelago (2008: 2-17). From this kind of writing, one gets a sense of the sea as intensely local and particular *and* a "unifier"; one gets a sense of sea as simple and complex, inviting and dangerous, predictable and not, eternally fluid, in other words, impossible to capture in one view or one word. One is, above all, led to the material reality of the sea and life at sea, and the necessity to experience the sea, to navigate it—a point made by Lapian on which I will develop later in the essay.

Ⅳ. Kekerasan II: Academic Panopticism vs. Southeast Asian Studies

To read Foucault on panopticism is to be taken inside the prison, not into one of the cells but to that central position; to see through the prison also the world outside, which is revealed to be, like the prison, disciplined through various forms of panopticism. What one does not see is what the prisoners might really see and think. We are told that the system produces "docile bodies." But is the watchman, and perhaps the architect, and even the philosopher, any less disciplined? We too are drawn into a panoptic view, its power and blindness. It is a powerful position, powerful writing. To read Lapian is to be taken on a voyage of continually changing, unstable views, unstable configurations of violence, with a constant awareness that one never sees everything. Rather than adopting a position, one moves and sees in a way that responds to the particularity of *tanah air*. Eternally the waves rock the boat.

The juxtaposition of Lapian's and Foucault's ways of seeing can be instructive, considering the increasing presence of what I see as panoptic tendencies/fantasies in Southeast Asian studies: to do away with the variety and movement of views/perspectives/disciplines that it brings together, crosses, and blends or allows to clash; to bemoan the lack of what is misleadingly seen as "theory" (rather than to appreciate the multiple theoretical and methodological currents that flow from and into engagement with the world in Southeast Asia); or to think about Southeast Asian studies as a sub-category of area studies, as if it was better understood from a central point by "area studies" theorists and critics, the "hardest" of whom (to evoke Lapian's Superkings) are not involved in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian studies, but generalize about area studies from elsewhere, and who aspire for the central observatory position.

In the current academic Panopticon, "local" scholars like Lapian appear insignificant, as if imprisoned in the regional. What might not be easily visible from the center, is that in Indonesia, Lapian is widely read and discussed by younger scholars, who build on his work. Most of this happens in Indonesian language, rather than English. A lively conference in honor of Lapian's memory, which took place in Semarang in 2017, as well as an 823-page festschrift titled *Arung Samudera*, "Crossing the Ocean" (Sedyawati and Zuhdi 2001) were just some of the symptoms of a certain kind of significance and intellectual liveliness that remains invisible from the center.

Nor is this scholarship disconnected from, say, European scholarship. When Lapian (who widely quotes from Dutch, French, and English sources), was asked who his favorite scholar was, he responded, "Braudel, of course." Yet somehow, Lapian—like and unlike Oliver Wolters (1982: 41-45), in his Braudelian discussion of the significance of "the single ocean" for understanding Southeast Asia—has fundamentally "localized" the ideas of the French historian of the Mediterranean, in a lively dialogue across seas, no doubt because of Lapian's knowledge of and immersion in Southeast Asian reality.

Foucault warns that panopticism produces "docile bodies." One could think of how scholars, also in Southeast Asia, are pressured to adopt panoptic vocabulary and perspectives, in hope that they too will get into that central observatory. When I visit universities in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, I find everywhere, alongside intellectual liveliness, the desire or fantasy (partly financial) of publishing in ISI journals, of having local journals accepted into the "ISI" (the abbreviation, which has taken on a demonic life of its own, refers to the Institute for Scientific Information). The fantasy is present as a kind of burden, as a feeling of lack or inferiority. It is a violent, hard world. And yet, Southeast Asian Studies, especially in Asia, are *in some ways* flourishing. What their particular drift is, in each different place, is a question that should be explored. I would like to briefly share my own experiences in Singapore.

First, some historical background. I moved to Singapore in 2003, just when the Filipino scholar Reynaldo Ileto became the Coordinator of the Southeast Asian Studies Programme. Ileto had a strong vision of the Programme. It contrasted with—and has to be understood in relation, as a reaction to—the dominant, hard orientation at the university to follow and mimic a primarily American value system, seen as panopticly "global." In contrast, in response to this hardness, Ileto aimed to create a space for conversations for scholars and students from the region and beyond, exploiting the potential of Singapore, as a port, an entrepôt, a meeting place—for people from different places and various disciplines. There was lively, informal interaction among teachers and undergraduate and graduate students, often reminiscent of conversations in coffee shops (e.g., *warung kopi*, an Indonesian institution of knowledge production). Ileto's was a vision of Southeast Asian Studies in Southeast Asia, where one would be shaped by being in the region and experiencing the world here, being touched by it, the way one is touched by living in a place. Ileto encouraged studying important scholars in Southeast Asian Studies, but he would criticize people for citing "big names," if they read the "classics" uncritically. He was empowering students to see and judge (the world, ideas, literature) for themselves, from their

own position, on the basis of their life experience and their own research. An example—one that particularly affected me: Ileto supported the acquisition of a large set of Javanese gamelan instruments, around which, for the last fifteen years, people have come together and created an inclusive community of students, scholars, and anyone else, from within and (even more) without the university. Experiencing Southeast Asian life here means to become comfortable in a particular physical and social space and soundscape, to be immersed in music and music-making, being swayed and rocked by it like waves and carried away by it like currents, rather than just thinking and writing about it.

In those days, in Ileto's times, the Southeast Asian Studies Programme had its own space, its own corridor with rooms, including a room for majors and one for graduate students. Like the gamelan room, these were meeting places where we all barged in, talked, ate, and drank together. The Programme was like a ship where a certain sense of community and closeness develops during a long voyage, a closeness that makes people think, speak, and learn from each other in ways they would not be able to do otherwise.

I write in the past tense because things have changed. But again, I would like to focus on the bright side. As I meet students and some of my colleagues, I realize that something of that old vision survives, and in some ways it has been further realized. The gamelan is still there, still a lively, ship-like meeting and learning space, and increasingly the base for much back and forth travel between Singapore and Java. The undergraduate students, perhaps more than anyone, have a passion for and pride in Southeast Asian Studies that reminds me of the old days: they have a strikingly clear, balanced understanding of the importance and role of Southeast Asian studies at the university, as an alternative and a complement to disciplinary departments, most are fluent in at least one Southeast Asian language; they also take advantage of various opportunities to study and live in other Southeast Asian countries, including the semester abroad program and the large number of courses that involve travel to and learning or research in other Southeast Asian countries.

I would like to conclude with a glimpse of a recent initiative, which is continuous with Ileto's vision, but which also brings us back to Lapian and the sea.

Ⅴ. "We Must Go Sailing"

In an interview, Lapian said: "I think that we must go sailing to have a fresh comprehensive look at our past" (2010: 194). It does not seem that he meant this merely metaphorically. Lapian travelled extensively by sea, and he advised his students to go to sea. Hilmar Farid, one of Lapian's former students, a historian with a PhD from NUS, and at the time the Director General of Culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture, narrated in a conference honoring Lapian's memory, how Lapian would emphasize to his students that they have to get out of classrooms and libraries, and go to sea, and that Lapian himself travelled extensively by the sea, often for weeks. Lapian said:

> As staff member and later the head of the historical section of the Navy, I had the opportunity to join several sea expeditions to various places of the archipelago. … This is how I learned to observe Indonesia from the sea (2010:187).

When asked about his dissertation, Lapian again connected it to his actual experience of seafaring, where he discovered his topic as a real, contemporary phenomenon:

> My dissertation deals with the phenomenon of piracy. In the 1960s during one of our sea expeditions, we landed on a tiny island … Only two days before, pirates had raided the small village. … Piracy, I thought, was something you only read in newspapers, history books, or novels (2010: 193).

One senses here that this is another key moment at which position and point of view are changed—here from thinking based on texts to what one seas during an actual voyage. It is not a "new approach" that would be necessarily better— Lapian was also known for his huge book collection. As in the case of seeing *tanah*

air from both land and sea, the current view complements others.

Lapian speaks of the sea as "unifier." He also sailed beyond Indonesia, and on those occasions he met with historians of neighboring countries:

> We also had to deliver provisions to faraway places, for instance, lighthouses and remote islands. Once we went to Thailand as the Navy had to procure rice during the hard times in the middle sixties. That gave me the opportunity to meet Thai historians (2010: 187).

Seafaring overflows into academic conversations across the Southeast Asian neighborhood. Farid, in reflecting on Lapian's teachings and on what one learns during sea travel in Indonesia, talked about long conversations on boats, and an "intimacy" (*keakraban*) that is nurtured by the long hours and days of sea travel, and how that seaborne intimacy enables one to speak and listen differently. Sanjiava S. Wijesinha (1992), professor of medicine from Sri Lanka, reports on a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-sponsored voyage along the maritime silk route, from Italy through Indonesia to China, which Lapian also joined as Co-Leader of the Scientific Team:

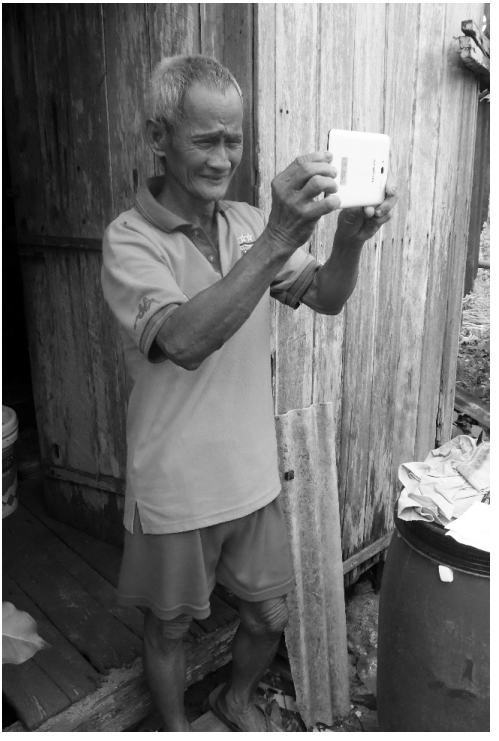
> "The prime objective is dialogue," explained my shipmate, Dr. Adrian Lapian, Professor of Maritime History at the University of Indonesia, at the beginning of our voyage. "First of all, to create dialogue between us and the people in each of the ports where we will drop anchor, for this is where the first contacts between East and West developed. Secondly, to stimulate dialogue on board of our ship, where we will be discussing what we see at each Silk Route port…" … Our team included an archaeologist from Greece, historians from China and Malaysia, an art expert from France, and a host of other scholars drawn from diverse specialties and countries. Put such an international, interdisciplinary team together, let them live, and eat, and visit the Silk Route ports together and undoubtedly there will be a rich exchange of views and a fertile cross-pollination of ideas (Wijesinha 1992).

In the last two years, I have led several seafaring voyages with students from different NUS faculties (the comments below are

based on two Indonesian voyages, in May 2017 and June 2018; for images and stories from the latter voyage, please surf to blog.nus.edu.sg/borneoduewest/). During the two weeks of each voyage, a dozen students and I lived together on the deck of an old wooden motor-sailing vessel, evocative of nineteenth century sailing boats, but, built in Malaysia, in some ways quite like a local fishing boat. It was an intense experience: of beauty, pleasure, fatigue, discomfort, disorientation, nausea, and fear. We were learning how to navigate, steer, keep watch, hoist sails, and otherwise work as a crew; but also to simply live on the boat, move about, and perform life's "basic functions." This meant learning about the sea—the boat (as a space for being and as an instrument through which one is at sea), the archipelagic land-seascape, the currents, the winds, the weather—in an immediate, originary way, as if we were learning to walk and see again.

We stopped on many islands, some inhabited, most not, but all with marks of humanity (an airline lifejacket on the beach of the extremely remote Tokong Kemudi island; some garbage, sometimes from other countries, brought by the sea on most beaches; signs of coconut harvesting and turtle egg collecting on some). We saw pristine green islands covered with dense, impenetrable forest, and red islands, the color of soil, with no vegetation left, utterly destroyed by mining. We visited tiny fishing communities, maritime market towns built over water, and tin mines abandoned by foreign companies and now exploited on a small scale by locals. We talked to fishermen on boats, satisfying both our and their curiosity, bartering provisions or asking for directions and local knowledge. In some cases especially, encounters in villages developed into spontaneous performances in which both locals and crew were involved, with cheering children, laughter, speech-making, and extensive photographic and video documentation by the locals as much as by us. Most people these days have camera phones, and picture-taking was very much mutual—nothing like the panopticon; or panopticon gone mad. I remember long games of domino, and hours in coffee shops or under a tree sharing experiences and stories. Many people were as eager to learn about our world as we were about theirs, even as preconceptions about what is "ours" and

"theirs" were quickly shattered. I think of that old Chinese man who has lived his whole life, and for the last several decades all alone, on an island in the small Badas Archipelago. He is occasionally visited by people from other islands, among whom he has become something of a legend. We heard stories about his spirit wife, ghosts of dead children appearing on his island, and people being pulled under water by a mysterious force nearby. After we talked to



<Figure 5> The old man living alone on the Kapahiang Island (Badas Archipelago), taking a picture of the NUS group with his smartphone. Photo by the author, 2018.

him for a while (he spoke mostly Hainan dialect of Chinese and a little bit of Malay, and referred to Indonesia as *Hindia*, as in the colonial times), he suddenly took out his Samsung smart phone/tablet to take pictures of us (smartphones are commonplace even from places far away from mobile signals, but somehow we didn't expect it from him), and when he saw that we were surprised, he took out his

tablet, showed us his home-made solar charger, and insisted that we transfer our photos and videos of his island to his devices.

<Figure 6> In the uninhabited Penau Island (Badas Archipelago), a local girl (who came here with her family to collect turtle eggs) is teaching an NUS student how to use the bluetooth feature to transfer pictures from one smartphone to another. The monkey also seems to be interested. Photo by the author, 2018.

We were utter outsiders, but not simply that: we were realizing how interconnected our worlds are, across and through the sea. In the Riau Islands, one feels strong cultural and economic links with Singapore and Malaysia (for example, language, food, etc., is closer to Singapore than to, say, Java). Our group was ethnically predominantly local Chinese and Malay (with a couple of "others," to use the Singaporean categorization), just like the communities we visited. Even islands far from any ferry service or mobile phone coverage, are places where people, often from afar, come and stay, or move on after weeks, months, or years. Locals are used to all kinds of outsiders, some easier to categorize than others. Island communities are both remote and strikingly cosmopolitan, and we were perhaps less out of place and less unknown than it might seem.

<Figure 7> A tire embedded in the sea bottom near the extremely remote Pejantan Island. It brings to mind the traces of mysterious rail tracks found on the same small island, possibly the traces of an (apparently unrealized?) fantasy of mining in the area during the colonial period. Photo by the author, 2018.

Fishing vessels travel large distances, and they often carry some merchandise to sell or barter (mostly for fish) on islands. Even as they lack certain things common elsewhere and life is very different, island villages are mostly quite well-to-do and well taken care of, there are no slums and extreme poverty comparable to bigger cities, and people are self-conscious about both the disadvantages and advantages of living here—for many, it is a choice to stay. Rather than merely isolation—which is always there, as one side of the coin—one gets a sense that islands are connected through various networks, and there is a thriving economic activity, communication, and interchange across great distances. We were often told that our presence had become a topic of conversations several days before we arrived, and the news that proceeded us has been often enhanced as it passed from mouth to mouth; in some places, we were rumored to travel on three boats rather than one, while in another place—perhaps because one of the students had a camera drone—we were expected to arrive in a helicopter.

Singapore is commonly known to fishermen even in distant settlements, as the place where their best fish is eventually sold, through multiple middlemen. More than an object of desire (the way Singapore figures for the middle and upper classes in Jakarta or Manila), here it is an important although distant node in a trade network. Some older fishermen remember bringing fish directly to Pasir Panjang Wholesale Market in Singapore, before borders became less porous. Places like Tanjung Pinang and Tambelan function as smaller but locally important nodes and entrepôts, to where fish flows, and from where rice and other commodities come, as well as the occasional school teacher or nurse. Children are also sent to higher schools there.

I mentioned the dead, red islands, devastated by mining. Relatively near Singapore, one sees barges loaded with sand, headed in the direction of the city state. As one approaches Singapore and the more "developed" Indonesian islands nearby, large-scale human destruction is more apparent everywhere. Certainly some of the "legal" things we saw and talked about with villagers, such as a particular kind of "development," especially on islands closest to Singapore, with the involvement of money from both Singapore and far away continents—seemed like nothing but (super)piracy. But *kekerasan*, violence and hardness, permeates everything, and all levels of the "lively communication and interchange," between the various islands, trade nodes, and middlemen. For example, "dynamite fishing"—with disastrous effects on sea life and the livelihood of local fishermen—continues to be practiced. While some such forms of violence and destruction strike one as outrageous, in other cases one feels one is not in a position to judge —such as widespread illegal and environmentally destructive collecting of turtle eggs, which is an important source of nutrition and culinary pleasure in the islands.

Encountering people and catching glimpses of their lives were part of these voyages, but this shouldn't be misconstrued as ethnographic fieldwork. Rather, on sea, one experiences "the ancient sea world that unifies and forms the background of everything," of which humanity forms a small element. Martin Henz, a colleague of mine who pioneered the seafaring voyages, works in computer

science and engineering, and he likes to think about our experience in terms of systems theory: physical, climatic, biological, economic, cultural and political elements are interconnected and interdependent parts of a system. I have also noted that when Lapian describes the Sulawesi Sea, his description is not limited to people. On the voyage, this total interconnection, including people and the natural world, is not encountered as a theory, but rather, like the sea, it unifies and forms the background to thought. People are part of this ancient sea world, but not its absolute center; that is, if they are the center, they have the centrality of the king, who, as we know, is in some ways just another pirate, only a particularly violent/hard one. It is almost a platitude to say that the ocean makes one realize one's smallness, but there is a truth in this sensation that is fundamental to understanding the sea world and our (non-)positionality—even when one focuses on people, even when one realizes their great powers of destruction, they are merely part of the ancient sea world that unifies everything. Even when one can never quite exceed one's own or human perspective, at sea one feels particularly strongly its limits and how transitory it is.

Students from various academic fields and disciplines came together on these voyages. That enriched our conversations, steered it in interesting and difficult ways, and helped and complicated our understanding and practical dealings with whatever we encountered. Living together in the small space of the boat, working in a team and caring for each other's well-being, sharing new experiences, "getting to know intimately each other's bowel movements" (as one student put it) and egos, learning to respect each person's privacy, loneliness, nausea, or cheerfulness, we were constantly reminded that the world is not neatly separated by disciplines, but everything and everyone is interconnected, through dependence, exchange, and violence: "the ancient/sea world unifies and forms the background of everything," even as sea people, sea pirates, and sea kings see and deal with the world differently.

Try Sutrisno Foo Bin Abdul Rahman's name reads like a short biography: his father is Singaporean Chinese who converted to Islam, his mother Indonesian/Minang, and he grew up partly in Singapore and partly in Tanjung Pinang, the provincial capital of the

Riau archipelago. A Southeast Asian Studies undergraduate student who joined all my voyages, he told us how when during the anti-Chinese unrests in Jakarta in late 1990s, some (Indonesian) Chinese from the capital moved to Tanjung Pinang. The local Chinese in Tanjung Pinang, where there were not the same problems, warned them "not to bring their politics with them." Perhaps the same could be said about certain kinds of universalizing theories, methodologies, preconceptions, fears, ethics, political correctness—battles imported from elsewhere. Realizing the interconnection of everything on our voyages, one also realizes that "one must go sailing," one must go beyond seeing from any single dominant, central point of view, especially a powerful point of view from somewhere else; one must constantly move and keep reorienting one's vision, constantly on the verge of disorientation and loss of control.

In the disorientation and uncertainty of waves, changing currents, sudden storms, and increasingly murky, muddy seas (as islands are destroyed and eroded, as land is "reclaimed"), we might be lead to this, in the words of a French seaman who became a philosopher:

> The painter, Goya, has plunged the duelists knee-deep in the mud. With every move they make, a slimy hole swallows them up, so that they are gradually burying themselves together…. [A]ren't we forgetting the world of things themselves, the sand, the water, the mud, the reeds of the marsh? In what quicksands are we, active adversaries and sick voyeurs, floundering side by side? (Serres 1995: 1-2).

Lapian grew up in *colonial* Southeast Asia, and yet, or rather because of that, his work, his continuing concern with colonialism, is as relevant today as ever, under the current imperial regime. I feel equally lucky to be learning from my students, the future generation of pirates, kings, and maybe even people, as we talk over coffee or travel together. Even as, especially when, humanity may be sinking into a quicksand, more slime than sea (rising sea levels? dead islands and dead seas? oceans of plastic bags? smartphone selfies? journal rankings? theoretical frameworks?—global all). More than searching for "new approaches" or a unique methodology, I cherish

conversations across times and generations. I speak as I am sinking: A fluid, precarious, disorienting, even nauseating multiplicity of experiences, dialogues, and moving, unstable, uncertain points of view, along with a respect for both the particular and a continuity/fluidity across borders, can open a space for learning that is less violent, less kingly, less colonial, and more truthful than super-scholarship that imposes universalizing, panoptic standards, theories and methods (typically self-styled as "new") that reduce the particular into a specimen of the general, a mere cell in the panopticon. Especially as we are all being swallowed by this slimy mud.

Some people look at me with suspicion when I go on and on about seafaring. When I told Professor Ileto about my experiences, about conversations across disciplines, ages and personal backgrounds, about meeting and talking with people on islands, about mud, he listened carefully and commented simply: "That is Southeast Asian Studies."

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Exploring Southeast Asian Studies beyond Anglo-America:

Reflections on the Idea of Positionality in Filipino Thought

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[*Abstract*]

As a response to Peter Jackson's call for a Southeast Asian Area Studies beyond Anglo-America, this paper argues that the achievement of this salient objective hinges on an understanding of the idea of positionality and what it entails. Drawing from reflections from Filipino scholars, positionality can be understood not merely as one's determination through geographic location or self-knowledge of one's condition within the politics of knowledge production; rather, it is the power and opportunity to claim a place from which one understands reality in one's own terms, and the capacity to effect influence within her intellectual domain. In redefining positionality as such, one realizes that crucial to establishing Southeast Asian Area studies beyond Anglo-America is acknowledging the importance of the vernacular in the production and circulation of knowledge, as well as the constant danger of English as the global lingua franca, established in the guise of an advocacy that resolves unevenness by providing equal opportunity for all intellectuals to gain "global prominence." This paper argues that, instead of trying to eradicate unevenness, one can acknowledge it as the condition of being located in a place and as a privileged

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position to think and create beyond the shadow of Anglo-American theory.

Keywords: Knowledge production, Philosophy, Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J.; Zeus Salazar; Harry Harootunian; Neoliberal Academia

Ⅰ. Introduction

Over the past decades, scholars have repeatedly broached the problem of legitimacy of Southeast Asian Studies. Critics have time and again underlined its complicity to an imperialist agenda, as a colonial construct and an object of research sanctioned by war (Emmerson 1984a, Anderson 1984, McVey 1995, Miyoshi and Harootunian eds 2002, Heryanto 2007). To get beyond this stigma, scholars have sought to reconceptualize "Southeast Asia" as an ever-changing "contingent device" (Sutherland 2005) that has generated not one but many Southeast Asian Studies arising from varying ecologies beyond Anglo-America (Kratoska, Raben, and Nordholt eds 2005; Goh Beng-Lan 2011; Park and King eds 2013; Winichakul 2016). Others have urged to reconfigure the field beyond a preoccupation with nation building and orient its research towards issues on mobility and globalization (Chou and Houben eds 2006; Mielke and Hornridge eds 2017). And yet, despite these numerous efforts, an anxiety persists, creating an incessant demand to justify the practical and theoretical relevance of area studies.

One of the most recent attempts to provide such an apology is an essay written by Australian National University (ANU) Emeritus Professor, Peter Jackson, entitled "Southeast Asian Area Studies Beyond Anglo-America: Geopolitical Transitions, the Neoliberal Academy and Spatialised Regimes of Knowledge" (2018). This essay presents an extensive rebuttal against the arguments raised by critical theorists Harry Harootunian and Naoki Sakai. For Harootunian, the problem with area studies is not so much its disreputable past as what has become of it in its afterlife. Thoroughly corrupted by a "capacious desire" to serve the imperial and global expansion of unbound capitalism, area studies has consistently "produced no

paradigmatic or conceptual breakthrough" (Harootounian 2012: 9), and has therefore remained bereft of any value as a form of critique. Naoki Sakai substantiates this claim, attributing this failing to a "hostility to theory" prevalent among scholars of area studies, who "refus[e] to reflect on the conditions of their discipline" (2012: 90). For Jackson, however, such views are not only "less relevant" to the forms of area studies that have emerged outside and beyond the geographical space of British and American academia, but more significantly, run the risk of overlooking the significant changes in knowledge production, especially in cases where area studies provide "a form of resistance to historical projects of hegemony" (Jackson 2018). Underlying this oversight is a prejudice, a kind of Euro-amerocentrism, that reduces intellectual centers situated in the peripheries to passive recipients of Western thought, and refuses to acknowledge their agency and capacity to produce critical theory. Furthermore, Jackson argues that such claims have simply failed to factor in "the significant numbers of scholars (e.g., Dirlik, Houben, Spivak) who have reimagined area studies as drawing on non-Western discourses, epistemologies, societies and cultural formations to critique Euro-Amerocentrism and develop more comprehensive theories of global phenomena" (2018).

In this paper, I wish to explore further some of the arguments raised in this on-going and long-standing debate, and present reflections taken from my own knowledge and experience as a student at the Southeast Asian Studies Program at the National University of Singapore (NUS, 2008-2013), and currently as a practitioner of this cross-disciplinary field in a Philosophy department in Manila. While Jackson obviously provides a formidable defense of Southeast Asian Studies against its critics, I would like to lay out a few points that not only corroborate his arguments but also critically engage his ideas. Drawing on my own study of the ideas of selected Filipino scholars, I hope to examine closely his notion of Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America, and clarify how and why it is crucial as a particular form of positionality. As we shall see, Filipino historians, Reynaldo Ileto and Zeus Salazar, as well as Filipino philosopher, Roque Ferriols, S.J., understand positionality not merely in terms of the intellectual's condition and thrownness into the nets

of power; rather, it is the unique position, given one's particular historical and spatial experiences, to bear witness to reality in her own terms. But while Ferriols argues for a positionality that constantly dwells in an ambiguity that tries to bear witness to the contours of a complex reality, Salazar defines it in very clear, unequivocal terms, as the intellectual's task to contextualize, translate, and appropriate in order to transform all material into narratives that are useful and relevant to Filipinos.

Ⅱ. The Narrative of the "Golden Age"

What makes knowledge production a highly contested terrain is that it grants the power to tell one's story. However, it cannot be denied that the story one tells is often, to some degree, already fashioned, since part of being initiated into any field of study is to be "indoctrinated" into a particular narrative. Thus, one of the first things that Southeast Asianists learn is that "Southeast Asia" is merely an artificial construct, a name coined for "geographic convenience," reflective of the perceptions not even of its own inhabitants but of Europeans who found it advantageous to identify "these" lands as located "South" of China and "East" of India (Emmerson 1984a: 7). Furthermore, one is constantly reminded that it was not scholarship but warfare that gave recognition and legitimacy to the region as an important object of research. During the Second World War, and especially during the Cold War, Southeast Asian Studies was conceived as a matter of foreign policy, providing information and guidance to "Western decision-makers" (Emmerson 1984a: 9). And yet, no matter how many skeletons are brought out of the closet, some of the most important events in the history of Southeast Asian studies are moments of a radical, redemptive turn.

In stark contrast to Harootunian's depiction of area studies' "misshapen mission" (Harootunian 2012: 10), Ruth McVey tells us about colonial scholars who, because of their knowledge, sympathy and idealistic commitment, became "too relevant," or "too involved in the questions of the day," deviating from the objectives that their

imperial sponsors had set (1998: 39).[1] In their commitment to study the vernaculars intensively and uphold the value of analyses "from within," they began to recruit Southeast Asian scholars into their Southeast Asian Studies programs. It was the same empathy, which grew from a profound knowledge of the language and culture of non-Western people, that would equally instigate the political and intellectual radicalization of post-war scholars. In fact, Immanuel Wallerstein regards this as one of the unintended effects of Cold War Area Studies, which would eventually lay the groundwork for the emergence of new forms of research that "undermine[d] the plausibility of traditional ethnography and Oriental studies," as well as "force[d] the 'Western' disciplines to take into account a larger range of data" and challenge their hallowed boundaries (1997: 228). However, what truly ushered a time of radical engagement was when Southeast Asianists vocally opposed the Vietnam war, effectively posing one of the fiercest objection to American foreign policy. Harry Benda and George Kahin, both pioneers in Southeast Asian studies, would already express deep concern during the early stages of American involvement in Vietnam (Nordholt 2004:42), and scholars like Benedict Anderson, Daniel Lev, and John Smail, would later conduct teach-ins and organize antiwar rallies in the 1960s, at the height of the Vietnam war. Known as the "golden age" of Southeast Asian studies, these Cornell scholars, according to Laurie Sears,

> had been nurtured by their own mentor George Kahin, whose work on both Indonesia and Vietnam has been a model for a kind of committed yet rigorous area studies scholarship. These men—along with Ruth McVey—set the example for a liberal belief in the power of area studies—the rigorous learning of local languages and an

[1] Carlos Bonura and Laurie Sears substantiate McVey's claim by citing Dutch scholars like T. Pigeaud who, having spent "considerable time in the Indies" (2007: 14) and having done extensive research, objected to Dutch scholarship that purposely emphasized Hindu elements in Javanese textual traditions and undermined four centuries of Islamic influence, as part of a political strategy "to minimize the threat of Islam" against colonial aggression (Sears 1996: 89). Other colonial scholars like J.C. Van Leur and Oliver Wolters, whose ideas on "local initiative" and "localization" respectively, have equally paved the way to the recognition of Southeast Asia as a region culturally and linguistically different from India and China, which deserved a study and exploration of its own "indigenous" framework (Acharya 2012: 85-86)

> alliances if not actually politics itself. This model of area studies challenged the older more conservative Orientalist paradigm of the colonial scholars (SSRC 1999: 7, quoted in Ileto 2002: 1-2).

With Cornell graduate Professor Reynaldo Ileto teaching the module SE5151 which I was required to take as a doctoral student at NUS, I was immediately acquainted with the narrative of Southeast Asian Studies' "golden age." Entitled "Approaches to Southeast Asian Studies," the module SE5151, judging from its name, or so I thought, was meant to provide an extensive exploration of methodologies. To my surprise, however, Prof. Ileto designed the course not as a survey of theoretical frameworks but as a kind of initiation, which later would clearly have a profound effect on my own scholarship. For him, it was paramount for the neophyte not so much to learn the latest trend in theory as to know the history of the field of study to which she would soon belong, as well as the scholars who significantly shaped its narrative, And so, in class, we read and analyzed the texts written by pioneering scholars like DGE Hall, Oliver Wolters, Anderson and others, while discussing their biographical accounts.

Ⅲ. Positionality

It was, however, Ileto's autobiographical essay (2002), one of the readings that was assigned for that module, which helped me understand, long before I had encountered "positionality" as a slick neologism/jargon, what it meant to situate oneself in the politics and history of knowledge production, and more importantly, what was at stake. In the *Encyclopedia of Geography* published in 2010, positionality is defined as the notion that personal values and one's location in time and space, including aspects of one's identity such as gender, race, class, all reflect and shape one's knowledge. This implies an acknowledgement that research is never value-free, and because of this, one cannot ignore the politics involved in knowledge production. Jackson reiterates this point in his essay, identifying positionality as "one's intellectual locatedness in the nets of power that pattern forms of discourse" (2018). Against the claims

of scholars of globalization asserting the idea of a single society and culture, Jackson argues that such belief, along with the notion of a society without borders, is nothing but a myth. Geographic locatedness is inescapable and still undeniably crucial in the formation of hierarchical structures that enforce inequalities of power, specifically in determining whether or not, and which voices are heard. This, according to him, is the reason why despite the growing presence of Asian intellectuals in academia, only a few are really able to achieve global prominence, particularly those whose intellectual works have "the imprimatur of having been produced… at one or other of the elite intellectual fashion houses of Harvard, Chicago, Cornell, Columbia, Oxford, Cambridge, and so on" (2018).

Sakai, however, takes the idea of positionality further, rendering it an explicitly active role. More than being thrown into a specific context, it is a "special position" which one consciously takes when one looks, from "off-stage" so to speak, at the configuration of one's multiple personas, and how they are performed and caught in power relations. As such, positionality is inseparable from "*theoria* and *contemplatio*," and thus, taking such position is inevitably "marked by a certain theoretical investment" (Sakai 2012: 72). It is this reflection of one's position, as mentioned above, that Sakai finds profoundly lacking among scholars of area studies, and the reason to which he attributes their "hostility to theory," that is, an inability or unwillingness to reflect on the conditions and narratives of one's own discipline.

Contrary to Sakai's sweeping generalization, Ileto's autobiographical essay presents precisely a critical reflection of the conditions and narratives that have shaped Southeast Asian Studies, and the role that his mentors expected him to assume. While the essay may not aspire to explicate any kind of theory, it is clearly a rendering of *contemplatio* in action. He recounts how he began his studies in 1967, at the height of that "golden age," and how he was drawn to Cornell, which was then known as the Mecca of Southeast Asian Studies. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had just been established and Southeast Asian Studies seemed to him, at that time, "the wave of the future." He tells us the story of how his mentor, Wolters, previously director of Psychological Warfare in

the Malayan Civil Service in the 1950s, had carried out his "initiation rite." By impressing on him the heap of books and archival papers he had to read and the many languages he had to learn, Wolters made sure that through that brutal shock of the first encounter, Ileto, the neophyte, "would gain a proper awe and respect" for the field of study he was entering (Ileto 2002: 5). Also in the essay is Ileto's account of how that "golden age" equally witnessed "a challenge" in historiography, with Smail's idea of autonomous history being offered as a "third way," an antidote to colonial and nationalist history. The aim of autonomous history was to get beyond the colonial framework and the nationalist or anticolonial preoccupation of scholarship, and reorient it to the study of the social structure and history of the region. It was in this context of an intellectual war between autonomous and nationalist historiography that Ileto found himself caught, and through the injunction of his mentors forbidding him from writing like the Filipino nationalist historian Teodoro Agoncillo, it became clear to him that his admittance to Cornell was a kind of recruitment, and that he had been, so to speak, drafted to war. Ileto writes,

> In retrospect, my being admitted at Cornell had an agenda behind it. Taufik Abdullah (who had commenced his PhD in 1965), Charnvit Kasetsiri, and myself were Wolters' first three PhD students from different parts of Southeast Asia. I'm pretty certain that the hope was that we would return to Southeast Asia to sow the seeds of autonomous history there and hopefully neutralize the evils of nationalist historiography (2002: 7).

It is clear from Ileto's autobiographical essay, therefore, that positionality, as a reflection of one's situatedness is, more accurately, an understanding of how and where one is located in the history and politics of knowledge production, and how through scholarships, fellowships, and teaching positions, one is appropriated to a particular agenda. One could, of course, argue that there were real, altruistic reasons when, at one point, scholars were calling for a reorientation of Southeast Asian Studies as a form of self-knowledge for the people in the region (Wolters 1994), or advancing an indigenization that not only recognized the distinct and unduplicable contributions of Southeast Asians, given their life experiences and proficiency in

their own language (Anderson 1984: 50) but more importantly, gave to the people living in the region the power for self-representation (Emmerson 1984b: 57). But Ileto's account does give us reason to pause, perhaps even towards a reappraisal of the critique posed by East Asianists Harootunian and Sakai.

Ⅳ. The Rhetoric of Underdevelopment

In condemning Area Studies and its afterlife to a "misshapen mission" that only serves an imperialist and capitalist agenda, Haroutunian, in effect, denies it of any history of, or possibility for radical intervention. But in light of McVey's account, such claim obviously commits a kind of reductionism that straitjackets the complicated, heterogenous, and multiple lives of area studies into one, homogeneous, linear trajectory capable only of fulfilling an instrumentalist purpose. Despite this oversight, Haroutunian's criticism could still prove useful, particularly in revealing the devious logic that underlies the formation/ transformation of Area Studies after the Cold War.

"Captured" by identity/cultural/ethnic studies, and the "vocation of postcolonial discourse," Area Studies, according to Harootunian, has witnessed over the past decades a transmutation that valorizes difference and Otherness (2012: 9). It ushers the "return of the native," who appears no longer merely as an informant/ "vanishing mediator" employed as cheap labor, as in the early practices of Area Studies. Instead, through the authority of her knowledge, "steeped in cultural authenticity and lived experience," she earns her right to equal status and finally occupies a place in knowledge production (Harootunian 2012: 11). But this, according to Harootunian, is merely an inversion of the developmental narrative that was employed by America's neocolonial, modernization scheme during the Cold War; for while in the old practice, the Other "lacked fullness and completion into a modern self," and thus required development in order to "catch up" with the West, the newer practice, based on a theory of ethics and right, "authorized a complete, full Other to press its claim for equivalence" (2012: 11).

Both schemes share a desire to include those who have been formerly excluded, but, despite the demands to acknowledge and respect difference, the goal is and has always been to make the Other part of a singular temporality. While it is true that the emphasis on identity and the subaltern subject has led to a resuscitation of native theories and cultural values, and an effective critique of a fictional, unified "West" that monopolizes theory and knowledge production, this claim for equivalence presupposes the logic of the Same, i.e., the singular temporality of democracy within the context of a neoliberal global order. What this means is that, without such equality of rights, the native remains incomplete and ensnared in the "stigma of unrealized self-representation" (Harootunian 2012: 17).

Thus, for Harootunian, the "appeal to the multiplicity of subject positions" has had no value other than a "Benetton advertisement," as "no real light is thrown on any concrete situation by an insistence on recognizing the Other" (2012: 16). At best, such "professions of solidarity with Otherness" (2012: 19), and the struggle to grant it a voice, has led to the misleading assumption that the problem of unevenness only takes place in sites outside Euro-America. We forget, as Harootunian argues, that uneven development, "more than a memory of the experience of defining the third world … is a historical process that has been present everywhere" (2012: 20). But what is perhaps more menacing is how these "symbolic representations of world heterogeneity" are effectively masking the reality of homogenization (Harootunian 2012: 11). It is a homogenization that commits societies to a normative, singular temporality, while denying how capitalism, given the varying registers of time and space, has in fact "produce[d] uneven development and untimely, heterogenous temporalities" (Harootunian 2012" 27).

In academia, one finds this unevenness and its disavowal through a similar rhetoric of underdevelopment. One sees this, for example in Ileto's autobiographical account, and how he was coaxed and groomed to "sow the seeds" of autonomous history "back home," to neutralize the malicious effects of nationalist historiography. With this "civilizing" mission, Ileto sheds light on one of the

unflattering truths about being a "native" scholar abroad, revealing how being drafted into an intellectual war meant being indoctrinated into a narrative, which in this particular case, presented the nationalist historiography of scholars "back home" as antiquated and misguided, and therefore, categorically, the negative Other.

Jackson, in his essay, equally deplores the inequalities that continue to persist in academic institutions. But while Ileto sees how unevenness plays itself out through discursive statements, Jackson calls to our attention how inequality cunningly dissimulates itself in yet another way, that is, by imposing a neoliberalist metric system (2018). Through the metric system, "academic quality" is measured and quantified on the global scale, while presenting its assessment and ranking as both objective and fair. But as scholars have time and again pointed out, this metrification has merely created a growing, "collective obsession" (de Albuquerque 2010: 354) for research assessments and Impact Factor which, in turn, has only helped to establish the hegemony of the English language as the global lingua franca.

According to Brazilian scholar, Ulysses Paulino de Albuquerque, despite its pretense of objectivity, Impact Factor, which measures the visibility and citation frequency of a scientific work, is significantly influenced by language. Not only have studies shown that English native speakers are cited more than scholars from non-English speaking nations, thus putting the latter at a disadvantage (de Albuquerque 2010: 356); French-speaking Quebecoise academic Francine Descarries also asserts, in her analysis of feminist studies, that the use of English as the lingua franca of academic scholarship has particularly given English-speaking scholars control over "the form and content of articles deemed acceptable for publication" in highly ranked, indexed journals (Descarries 2014: 565). But what is perhaps the most devious effect of such control is that in this "transnationalization of knowledge," the saying "publish or perish" has come to mean more accurately, the necessity to publish in English in order to keep one's academic career afloat (Descarries 2014: 564). And thus, as Descarries insightfully points out, what is clearly "at stake in the issue of language… is the power to appropriate or to conceal, enabling the center to reinforce its

privileged position and hegemony" (Descarries 2014: 568).

What I find curious about Jackson's arguments is that, on the one hand, he laments the plight of Asian intellectuals within an oppressive neoliberal metrification of research and teaching; and yet, at the same time, by insisting on and ensuring the inclusion of Asian intellectuals in the international circuit as a way to overcome this inequality, he assumes that the primary goal of all Asian intellectuals or any intellectual for that matter, is to be heard or be visible in the global scene. Ironically, by insisting on an equal playing field, he unwittingly enforces a kind of unevenness, or underdevelopment, where scholars, so long as they are wanting in international recognition, are at a disadvantage, as though marked by the "stigma of unrealized self-representation" (Harootunian 2012: 17). Such belief can only imply that the significance or value of their scholarship hinges only on their inclusion in the global circuit.

Furthermore, despite good intentions, Jackson's critique of the neoliberal metric system, ignores the obvious, albeit significant, relation between the collective obsession for research assessments and Impact Factor and the establishment of the hegemony of the English language. One wonders then if Jackson's understanding of the problem of unevenness coincides with the way intellectuals in the peripheries perceive and experience it, or if his view and the solution he provides are reflective merely of the anxiety and desire of some intellectuals who wish to be part of the "international circuit." Obviously, it is a concern with which Jackson can easily sympathize given that he himself moves in this global scene. But what then of intellectuals whose priority lies not so much on being heard by the so-called gate-keepers of "global knowledge?" What of intellectuals who choose to write in their vernacular, not even as a form of resistance to the global, neoliberal order, but simply because other forms of unevenness concern them?

On this regard, Ileto's autobiographical account is not only significant in the way it unravels an entire drama of power relations (i.e., unevenness) that takes place, albeit taken for granted, in academic discourse. By presenting a myriad of opposing voices, coming from the center as well as the peripheries, and views from

other mandalas and rival institutions, including the dissonances within intellectual traditions and camps, he reveals how power exists in multiple locations and thus can never be absolute nor concentrated in a single place. He further reaffirms this by demystifying the idea of a "golden age," by exposing the conservative and oppressive elements that co-exist with its narrative of a progressive, radical intervention. Ileto will continue this work of exploring other mandalas by inviting Southeast Asian historians to a workshop at NUS in 2004, creating a space for scholars such as Adrian Lapian, Syed Hussein Alatas, and Zeus Salazar among others, to discuss the histories of their respective countries, and share experiences and homegrown concerns regarding "local scholarship and the study of Southeast Asia" in the region (Ileto 2013: 9). Through this initiative, Ileto takes the idea of positionality further, far beyond the notion of intellectual locatedness or self-reflection, which, although undeniably crucial, merely ponders the conditions of one's status quo. By encouraging intellectuals in the region to converse with each other, and perhaps even recognize an alliance towards establishing or strengthening their own mandala, positionality ultimately becomes a creative power—the unique opportunity, given one's location, identity, and history, to build one's own intellectual community and create a space for one's own thinking, i.e., to perceive and interpret the world in one's own terms. Here, what matters is not so much one's visibility in the global circuit as the capacity to think one's own ideas and influence knowledge production, within the intellectual sphere in which one circulates, vis-à-vis forces that constantly threaten to control thought through neoliberal structures and measures and/or discourses of underdevelopment.

As an attempt to provide space for voices suppressed by more powerful discourses, my study on the intellectual history of Filipino philosophers is clearly inspired by the task of addressing this unevenness in knowledge production. In this sense, my work is influenced, not by Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1979), but by his autobiographical essay. His reflections on his sojourn to America has inspired me to ponder on my own position as a scholar, and to acknowledge the particular cause to which I had been drafted. This

meant not only understanding how Singapore, with its advantage of geographic proximity to its Southeast Asian neighbors, constitutes a very different mandala, but more importantly, seeking and reaching out to the intellectual centers that have been relegated to its peripheries.

Ⅴ. On the Idea of Positionality: Reflections Beyond Anglo-America

In exploring further what we mean by positionality, and how pivotal it is to a conception of a Southeast Asian Studies beyond Anglo-America, I draw reflections from two Filipino scholars who have shaped the discipline of Philosophy in the Philippines, namely Zeus A. Salazar, a historian/ anthropologist/ ethnolinguist from the University of the Philippines (UP), and Jesuit philosopher, Fr. Roque Jamias Ferriols, S.J. While both have devoted their intellectual life to thinking in the Filipino language, and became pioneering forces in the Filipinization movement in the 1970s, Ferriols was influential primarily in the field of philosophy, whereas Salazar's contribution was groundbreaking not only in history and historiography but also in the indigenization of the social sciences as a whole.

Given their zealous call for a return to the Filipino language, Salazar and Ferriols have easily been accused of nativism, or worse, a xenophobia that deliberately excludes the foreigner from taking part in local discourse. But I argue that in precisely reflecting on their positionality, as scholars who have lived in a society with a long history of American colonialism, and continue to witness how the English language is used by the affluent and educated to exacerbate the socio-economic divide, their resolve to produce scholarship and create a space for a community of learners in Filipino, is not so much discrimination against the "outsider" as it is a struggle to include those who have long been excluded from intellectual discourse.

5.1 Fr. Roque Ferriols's Idea of Positionality as a Discipline of

Ambiguity

To understand Ferriols's reflections on positionality, it is important to situate him in the context of the Philippine student activism of the late 1960s, and specifically, as part of this larger cause, the Filipinization movement that took place in the Ateneo de Manila University in the 1970s. While this surge of protests was inspired by a wave of student activism that swept the globe, such as the anti-Vietnam war in America and the Paris Commune of 1968 in France, there were "homegrown causes" that triggered the youth's discontent. Some of the issues raised were the lack of school facilities and unreasonable tuition fee hikes, as well as the imperialist intervention in the country's political and economic affairs, and the government's abuse of power (Totanes 2005:2). The tensions between the government and the student activists would escalate to a series of violent confrontations and tragic deaths that would be infamously called the "First Quarter Storm" of 1970. This would eventually lead to President Marcos's declaration of Martial Law in 1972.

Enraged by Marcos's support for the Vietnam War through his signing of the Vietnam Aid Bill, and displeased by the Philippine-US Military Bases Agreement and Mutual Defense Treaty, the student activists expressed a strong anti-American sentiment, identifying American cultural imperialism as the enemy. It was therefore no surprise that the Ateneo, the bastion of "American-influenced education" (Totanes 2005: 9) and under the auspices of American Jesuits, would undergo critical scrutiny and elicit a clamor for change under the banner of Filipinization, an "immersion… into things Filipino" (Magadia, S.J. 2005: 216).

What particularly triggered the Filipinization movement in the Ateneo was a manifesto written by five Ateneans published in the university newspaper. It criticized the Catholic Church, as well as the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, for being dependent on the powerful elite, and for maintaining the status quo that perpetuated the socio-economic injustices in the country. What aggravated the problem was that the Jesuits were promoting an education with a Western, neocolonial orientation, that had become

both irrelevant and alienating, widening the gap between Ateneans and their fellow Filipinos.

In an open letter to the first Filipino rector and president of Ateneo, Fr. Pacifico Ortiz, alumnus Antonio C. Abaya argued that at the core of this "process of miseducation" was language. Describing the Ateneo of his day (1947-1956), Abaya writes how students

> were forbidden to speak any language except English. Each time anyone was caught uttering a word of Tagalog or Visayan or Ilocano, he was punished by being made to stand in the midday sun for one hour (1969).

Ferriols himself experienced this language rule when he was a Jesuit scholastic in the 1950s, but it had already been abolished when he returned home from his graduate studies in Fordham in the 1960s. Nonetheless, western habits continued to persist, and Ferriols found himself struggling against not only the Americans but fellow Filipinos who seem to have adopted a colonial way of thinking.

As part of an attempt to address this problem, and at the same time, to mitigate the escalation of violence and politics of hatred, there was a call among some members of the faculty, Jesuit scholastics and priests, to re-define Filipinization in more constructive terms. Among them was Ferriols, who, seeing a "positive value in the 'Down from the Hill' idea" (Magadia, S.J. 2005: 218), firmly believed that the time had come for the students to "de-Americanize." But for him, having been inspired by the words of Luis Taruc, the former leader of the *Hukbalahap* (*Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon* or the Nation's Army Against the Japanese Soldiers) and champion of agrarian reform in the 1960s,[2] Ferriols saw Filipinization as a rediscovery of the depth of Filipino culture and language, which is merely a step towards establishing real solidarity with people from

[2] After pleading guilty to rebellion for organizing the Huk insurgency in the 1950s, and sentenced to life imprisonment, Luis Taruc was granted amnesty by Marcos on September 11, 1968. On September 20, 1968, Taruc was invited by the Ateneo to deliver a speech on "Land Reform and Community Development." This was his "first public appearance," and his speech was published in the university newspaper *The Guidon* (October 2, 1968).

below. In an interview, Ferriols explains,

> The Atenean has to begin from the bottom. When Taruc came to speak here, one of the students asked him what the Atenean could do for the peasants and workmen. Taruc did not answer by suggesting projects but by beginning at the rock bottom. Go to the barrios and the poor sections of the city and make friends with the people. We like to make plans for the poor. We forget that to make an effective plan we should be only one of the makers of the plan. We should cooperate with other people. This means to known them as human beings, to such an extent that we learn from them, and together with them we plan and execute (Guidon, December 11, 1968).

Ferriols's response to the call for Filipinization was thus to teach Philosophy in Filipino, to enable a community of learners to engage, think, and speak with people in the barrios. But while Ferriols's initiative was "boasted of in public," it was tolerated privately and gained very little support, judging from the unfavorable time slots to which his classes were assigned (Ferriols 1974: 338 - 339).

While Ferriols's advocacy was focused mainly on an immersion "into things Filipino," his support for the student movement certainly went beyond the classroom. Not only did Ferriols, to the delight of students and the editors of the university newspaper, *The Guidon*, publicly articulate a defense of Filipinization, which was particularly crucial at a time when "certain usually vocal American Jesuits" refused to openly discuss their views (Carpio 1968); he also explicated the rationale behind the policy changes that the students were demanding. One controversial issue was the demand to replace some of their American administrators and professors with Filipino counterparts. He argues,

> One who was born in a foreign land and grew up among foreigners cannot be sensitive to the nuances of our present cultural crisis. He cannot appreciate our rich heritage from within. This is not a stigma on the foreigner; merely a fact about him. He is, as a matter of fact, incapable of developing a Filipino culture. The Ateneo has neither faced nor acted on this fact (Puno and Cabanero 1968).

In a personal conversation with Ferriols in 2009, he recounts how those troubled times created political divides and deep-seated resentments, prompting a number of American Jesuits to leave the country. They felt that the Filipinos were ungrateful, despite everything they had done for their country and its people, and blamed Ferriols for provoking student dissent. Ferriols, in his defense, explains that he could not have been responsible for the movement. Filipinization was the desire of the times, and students, acting on their own judgment and volition, clearly did not need to be told what to do. Furthermore, Ferriols argued that the basis of his Filipinization was not political but theological, i.e., that his intention was not so much about taking sides, or choosing a position of, for, or against Americans, but about fulfilling the Church's mission to uphold cultural pluralism. Filipinization, for him, was never about disavowing the contribution of the Americans or denying their place in Philippine society. Ferriols claims that this explanation, which he proffered in a *Guidon* interview, was unfortunately omitted from publication. Believing he was deeply misunderstood, he tries to clarify three decades later:

> I was not fighting the Americans. I encouraged [students] to be Filipino. And if you are to be Filipino, there are American ways to which you cannot agree. Not because you don't want the American, but because you want the Filipino (2009).

In 2016, Ferriols published his autobiography, entitled *Sulyap: Sa Aking Pinanggalingan* (*Glimpses: Into My Beginnings*), giving an account of the first four years of his life as a Jesuit novice during World War II. While the entire narrative is pervaded by death and the horrors of war, it is, at the same time, a story revealing the bond forged among the Filipino Jesuits and their American brothers during those difficult times. The autobiography, more than a historical account of war is a testimony of friendship and an expression of gratitude towards all his American teachers.

Understood against the backdrop of the student movement in the 1970s, Ferriols's autobiography is not just a remembering but an attempt to rectify the misunderstanding caused by what he perceives

as a politically-driven over-simplification of a complicated reality, where there was not just one but an entire spectrum of Filipinization. His own version attests to a Filipinization that struggled indefatigably against Americanism but equally refused to forget the kindness of individual persons who fought against the violence of a colonial system they were expected to uphold. Here, Ferriols locates the intellectual *beyond* the divisive politics of affiliations and agendas and re-defines positionality as a commitment to bear witness to a complicated reality, the fullness of which could only be grasped by one who dwells in ambiguity.

Contrary to the lack of certainty or exactness which ambiguity often evokes, Ferriols argues that dwelling in this precarious space in fact demands acuity and precision in drawing out the contours of a complex reality beyond simplistic representations. Thus, for Ferriols, it requires discipline, both in skill and perseverance, as one who has learned to come to terms with ambiguity will know that the exactness one seeks will never be a fixed point, but one that constantly changes according to circumstances. This "discipline of ambiguity" (*disiplina ng alanganin*), as one of the basic tenets of Ferriols's philosophy (Ferriols 1991), is what defines intellectual locatedness, not merely as one's place in the nets of power, or a critical reflection of the conditions of one's discipline, but a unique position to reveal reality from where one stands, and to think for oneself beyond, and sometimes even against, the forces that shape and control our knowledge.

While Ferriols believes in the possibility of an autonomous, non-political stance, Ileto sees the intellectual constantly caught within the ambit of power and influence. And yet, in his own autobiography, Ileto himself appreciated the value of ambiguity, depicting reality as full of moral ambivalence and complicated relations. While his mentors at Cornell were colonial scholars who asserted their influence and power as "gate-keepers" of knowledge and were not at all timid in labeling their negative other as authors of "bad" scholarship, they were nonetheless great teachers and pioneers in their field, which could only be appreciated in relation to their great passion and awe for the Empire. Ileto also problematized boundaries and fixed notions, arguing for example that, while

Agoncillo was labelled a nationalist, his text was "by no means an imposition of the state on its citizens." In fact, Ileto claims that Agoncillo was open to revisions, inviting his readers to make corrections and criticisms (Ileto 2013: 20).

5.2 Zeus Salazar's Idea of *Pook* (Place) and the Task of Translation

Like Ferriols, Salazar was part of the milieu of student activism in the 1970s. In fact, he took an active role in the Diliman Commune of 1971 that barricaded UP entrances for eight days, in an attempt to keep the military and the police from entering the university premises. UP Professor Petronilo Bn. Daroy argued that the Diliman Commune was an attempt to create a "*revolutionary cultural base* from which would ensue scientific knowledge meant to effect the liberation of the oppressed and exploited masses" (1971: 40, quoted in Totanes 2005: 29). And it was in creating and developing scientific knowledge through the indigenization of the social sciences, that Salazar, along with Virgilio Enriquez of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) and Prospero Covar of *Pilipinolohiya*[3] would dedicate their life's work.

Unlike Ateneo, which under the American colonial government was intended to "excel in the teaching of the English language" through a modification of its curriculum and textbooks (Torres 2010: 139), UP was conceived, from its inception in 1908, as a "university for the Filipino" with the vision of being "relevant to the Filipino people" (Torres 2010: 149). But while the Filipinization policy that granted Filipino teachers to take control of UP's educational system came decades before the Filipinization movement in the Ateneo (Torres 2010: 164), the English language would also officially become the medium of instruction. Thus, even when bilingual education (the use of English and Filipino as medium of instruction) was finally implemented in 1974, the preceding decades of formation in the English language had already resulted in the "miseducation of the Filipino" that had led to the development of a colonial mentality

[3] *Pilipinolohiya* cannot simply be translated as "Philippine Studies" since it is against the latter that the former differentiates itself. For an explanation on their differences, see Salazar(1998: 301-323).

(Constantino 1966). With literacy measured in terms of English proficiency, what ensued was a significant, cultural divide between the educated Filipinos and the illiterate Filipinos who spoke in their native language (Torres 2010: 165).

For Salazar, this cultural divide that disconnects the acculturated group of elites to the rest of the Filipino people is what lies at the very heart of the problem of Philippine society. And if one analyzes its history, one will realize that it is a recurring theme:

> From the time of the Spaniards until now, the Propagandists were writing (and the intellectuals today who replaced them—i.e., ilustrados with their pensions, Fulbright scholars and others who have been sponsored by America, and now, by Japan and other nations) in a foreign language. This is to show that they can [do it] too—and, indeed, they can. That is, though, to create in Spanish (or American English), it would be necessary for those yearning to be "Filipino" to become Spanish (or American, and perhaps in due time, even Japanese). In other words, it would require them to detach themselves from (and leave) their own native culture… [and] later to return to it to use some of its elements in their construction (in truth, to create [something] "different" or "original!") in Spanish (and later, in American). This is the "intellectual" work of the Filipinos from Rizal and Paterno until Villa, Tiempo and Locsin, Sr. cum Jr. What they were able to create therefore was only a local counterpart ("local color" in literature) of whatever foreign culture of which they had taken part (Salazar 2000: 97).

To this day, Salazar has remained steadfast in his advocacy, in his effort to address and rectify the adverse effects of the Americanization of the Philippine education system. In this regard, he has publicly accused a few diasporic Filipino intellectuals for producing what he calls "comprador scholarship," which has consequently earned their ire. A recent case in point was the heated exchange on Facebook between Salazar and Patricio Abinales. Salazar accuses Abinales for being a comprador scholar, i.e., for selling his data about the Philippines to foreign countries and promoting separatism.

> I am referring to the way you sell yourself as a scholar from and of

> the Philippines to a foreign power that is one of those that oppressed the Philippines… and had been a colonizer of it. And almost everything that you write about the Philippines is meant to cast aspersion on the situation here instead of helping to improve its situation, to uplift it. And what it aims at is to separate one part of the country… you can't even strengthen the *loob*/resolve of the nation to fight against the forces that are trying to divide Filipinos. I know, you don't consider yourself a Filipino [sic], that's why your [sic] bent on selling your put-downs of the country's situation to the Japanese and Americans (quoted from Chua 2010, translated by Caroline Hau 2014: 47-48).

In an exchange like this, scholars often cite how Salazar was involved in Ferdinand Marcos's *Tadhana* history-writing project, and how he collaborated with a tyrant "[who] was carrying out the massacre of Moros in Mindanao in the name of the nation" (Chua 2010: 28). Caroline Hau highlights how Salazar responds to Abinales's accusation, by claiming "the moral high ground" of working with someone (i.e., Marcos) who was at least not trying to destroy the nation (Hau 2014: 48). For Hau, this

> uncritical embrace of the nation in the name of national unity, which shades off into identification with the state and its leaders, represents one extreme consequence of a "nationalistic" standpoint that is critical of OFW intellectuals but turns a blind eye to its own problematic status in the Philippines and the inequalities and hierarchies that obtain therein (Hau 2014: 49).

Unfortunately, in such polemic debates, one easily loses sight of Salazar's real contribution: that again, the problem of the Filipinos is not primarily socio-economic but this cultural abyss that separates the acculturated elites from the rest of the Filipino people. But the solution he proffers is, in fact, fairly simple. Instead of producing knowledge and discourse that speaks to the foreign (a discourse which he calls *pansila*, or "for-them" perspective) or speaking in nationalist overtones that still addresses the foreign, albeit in a defensive position (a discourse which he calls *pangkami*, or "from-us-to-you" perspective), Salazar urges Filipino intellectuals to speak in a way where narratives are liberated from the vicious cycle of a neo-colonial discourse and finally rooted in and

influenced by the actual needs and concerns of the Filipino people. Such work, which he calls *pantayo* (or "from-us-for-us" perspective)

> [is] a work which [is] specifically engineered and written for the greater number of the country's population…. A pantayo work [is] not written in English; it is written in the language of the masses, in Pilipino…; and so, it is reflective of the culture of its readers as well. It is reflective of the greater Filipino culture, which one could normally read in this people's language and its linguistic qualities themselves (Reyes 2002: 379).

While all three perspectives lend different ways of conceiving positionality, the *pantayo* perspective (*pantayong pananaw*) clearly asserts a more reflective and profound connection between the intellectual's locatedness and her task. Here, Salazar's idea of place (*pook*) is crucial. According to Guillermo and Reyes, *pook*, for Salazar, has a dual reference:

> It is both the point where a culture or civilization of a particular period stands and one's place in that spatio-temporal continuum. It is from pook that one explains and understands oneself through the use of materya. Materya can run from language and memory to material culture. For a scholar, it pertains to his/her synchronic view of an available reservoir of knowledge and understanding of history and culture across time. Pook, used in conjunction with its materya, brings about narration. Salazar, in a lecture entitled "Pagsasakatubo ng Teorya: Posible ba o Hindi?" names narration as pook's concrete manifestation of itself, its dominant present in the face of its past. A historian at the same time possesses and functions as pook in the practice of history; pook constitutes her/his being that gives shape to a narrative, through which pook takes form through the body of text and its language (Guillermo and Reyes 2009: 80).

Thus, *pook* is the place where one is not just passively shaped and influenced by one's context but the space where one actively assimilates in making sense (*saysay*) and producing one's narratives (*salaysay*). The aim of *pantayong pananaw*, therefore, is to carry out the task of contextualization (*pagpopook/pagsasapook*), and in so doing, appropriate (*pag-aangkin*) all knowledge and wisdom that would otherwise have no significance. It is here that one realizes

that positionality for Salazar is not simply an awareness of one's location in the politics and history of knowledge production (as in Ileto), nor the search for truth by carrying out the discipline of ambiguity (as in Ferriols), but it is a task of translation.

Salazar demonstrates this point most effectively through his own translation of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (2000). Dissatisfied with the Leftist movement and what he perceives as its failure to contextualize and integrate Marxist theory into Philippine history and culture, he puts himself to the task of translating Marx's seminal work, from the original German to Filipino, to reveal elements in the philosopher's thought that may be dissimilar, or even incompatible, to Philippine historical experience. Salazar argues that, in order for real appropriation to take place, one must first understand that Marxism, emerging in the context of Western Europe, was not only a response to modern bourgeoisie but more importantly, influenced by Enlightenment and its idea of progress. The rise and movement of the proletariat is, therefore, merely part of the dialectic, linear progression of history, and its actors are automatons that are given no face. Salazar explains,

> As the effect/product of the expansion of the Bourgeoisie and its European civilization, the advancement and growth of workers within their culture is not essential, that is if we are to accept that they have any. They advance only as workers used/exploited by, and therefore what opposes against, the monstrous expansion of the Bourgeoisie in their midst. They do not exist and advance according to what may already be the dynamic/dynamism of their own culture and totality (2000: 151).

Thus, for as long as Marxism does not fully integrate the nationalist struggle of the Katipunan and the messianic movements in Banahaw, and denies the vision and language of revolution articulated by the likes of national hero, Andres Bonifacio, Filipino poet Francisco Balagtas, and religious leader, Hermano Pule, it will remain a foreign ideology.

One wonders, however, if a real integration of a foreign ideology is even possible in Salazar's scheme of things, given that an analysis and immersion into our historical and cultural heritage

would locate us in a specific and unique time and space register. Thus, the task of translation, as a way of appropriation, may seize glimpses of affinities and similar physiognomies, but only to reveal in the end our positionality, that is, the untranslatability of our unique historical and spatial experience.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

As a response to Jackson's call for a Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America, I have tried to elicit the ideas of two Filipino philosophers, who, by virtue of their exclusion from the global circuit, may be easily deemed as examples of marginalized scholars in the region. Indeed, Jackson has well alerted us to the structural inequality that the neoliberal metric system has put in place. But he has also failed to recognize that, in some cases where scholars either defy or are simply indifferent to the attainment of international stature, the problem of marginalization is not so much a matter of unequal rights as it is the fabrication of a stigma of underdevelopment, of "unrealized self-representation." In fact, such stigma only forces "marginalized" scholars into a homogenous time, where the right to be heard and to equal stature are assumed to be every scholar's ultimate goal. But one further asks, to whose eyes do we appear "marginalized," and by whom exactly do we wish to be heard? In all of this, what seems to be assumed, and thus left unarticulated, is that the condition for inclusion in the global circuit is to accept and nurture English as the academic lingua franca.

For Filipino scholars like Ferriols and Salazar, who have time and again witnessed the effects of neocolonial education, and the vital role that the English language has played and continues to play in creating a social and cultural schism between the educated Filipino elite and the rest of the Filipino people, the inclusion into an English-speaking global circuit becomes an impossible path to take. Their dauntless pursuit of Filipinization, i.e, the immersion into "things Filipino," and the intellectualization of the Filipino language, is merely an expression of their location in a unique conjuncture of time and space.

Like Jackson, I believe that positionality plays a very crucial role in the formation and development of Southeast Asian studies beyond Anglo-America. But in understanding positionality merely as the scholar's geographical location in the nets of power, which in turn determines her inclusion in or exclusion from the global circuit, Jackson stifles the real creative force behind the idea. Thus, by drawing ideas from Ileto, Ferriols, and Salazar, I have tried to re-define positionality, not merely as one's throwness in the politics of knowledge production, nor a reflection of the conditions and narratives that have shaped one's scholarship; rather, it is the unique position determined by a specific register and confluence of time and space, which provides the intellectual the unique possibility to create a space for one's own thinking, to understand the world and produce knowledge in one's own terms.

It is, however, also in the unevenness produced by varying time and space registers that we find differing conceptions between Salazar and Ferriols regarding the positionality of the intellectual. Unlike Ferriols, Salazar refuses to see any value in a position of ambiguity. He is convinced that, given the politics that permeate knowledge production, it is imperative that the intellectual always makes a clear stance. Furthermore, Salazar believes that if Ferriols, at a later stage in his life, felt it necessary to give nuance to his position and invite his readers to understand his views in light of his gratitude to his American teachers, it is because the philosopher is mistakenly convinced that everyone stands on equal ground (Salazar 2018). Thus, while Ferriols believes in the possibility for personal encounters beyond affiliations and agendas, and sees positionality as a witnessing to truth, for Salazar, it seems that the intellectual is constantly at war. Thus, her paramount task is to produce meaningful narratives addressed to fellow Filipinos and knowledge that can help build the nation. But this agenda for intellectual liberation must be clearly distinguished from a discourse that seeks to claim equivalence or equal rights among scholars. Rather, it is by preserving and acknowledging an unevenness that Salazar seeks to constantly affirm the uniqueness, and thus, the untranslatability, of the historical and spatial experience of Filipinos as a people.

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Bonds that Bind

Shared Historical and Sociocultural Characteristics of Southeast Asia*

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[*Abstract*]

The region between mainland China on the east and the Indian sub-continent on the west is referred to as Southeast Asia since the conclusion of the Pacific War (1941-1945). As a region, Southeast Asia appears as a hodgepodge of disparity and diversity, but a closer scrutiny reveals numerous common attributes and characteristics. This study attempts to identify and examine the cohesive and shared characteristics across the Southeast Asian region from a historical and sociocultural perspective. The intention is to differentiate an identity borne of the underlying commonalities of shared characteristics whether physical, experiential, emotive, and/or in terms of heritage. Subsequently, Southeast Asia has more grounds to claim itself as a distinct region, and an "area of

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study," besides the political expediency of ASEAN.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, history, sociocultural characteristics, identity, area studies

Ⅰ. Introduction

> The region itself, an ethnic and cultural shatterbelt, where the Cold War was hot and where revolutionary struggles ended decades of colonialism, should excite our [U.S.] interest. The location, bounded on the north by China, on the south and west by the Indian Ocean and on the east by the South China Sea and the Pacific, can only suggest the range of the region's *enormous diversity*. Yet as diverse as it is, there are *certain commonalities* as well. Understanding the mix is essential for an appreciation of the 10 countries of Southeast Asia (Frankenstein 2014; emphasis added).

At first glance, what is today referred to as Southeast Asia, appears to be a region of complexity and diversity as the above quote suggests. The region accommodates, not 10, but 11 nation-states of quaint sounding names,[1] viz. Myanmar (Burma), Thailand (Siam), Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam that comprised the mainland, and Malaysia (Malaya), Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Timor Leste. But in the midst of this seeming complexity and diversity, there are to be discerned commonalities, and shared features. Drawing from such common denominators that to a certain extent characterized the region as a whole, a certain identity emerged distinct and unique from other regions in other parts of the world. It is in this connection that the present study attempts to identify and examine the shared characteristics across the region from the *historical perspective*. The primary intention is to discover an identity borne of the underlying commonalities of shared characteristics, whether physical, experiential, emotive, and/or in terms of history and heritage. As a result, Southeast Asia then has more grounds to claim itself as a distinct region, an "area of study."

Overall, four elements of shared characteristics drawn from the

[1] Parentheses denotes past designations.

historical prism have been selected for discussion and analysis—shared beliefs and cultural practices drawn from imported and internalized influences, rice as staple food, celebration of diversity, and colonial experiences. While the elements of rice and diversity could be taken as local or from within, the shared beliefs and cultural practices drawn from imported and internalized influences and the colonial experiences were external and drawn from without. Nonetheless, collectively all four elements, each in their respective manner, contribute in molding a distinct identity that the region could call its own, not unlike the "South Pacific," the "Caribbean," the "Balkans," or the "Mediterranean."

The four elements were selected and justified from a historical perspective. Undeniably, there are other elements such as gender, language, integration into the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian nations) to consider.

For instance, there is at least five language families or groupings in Southeast Asia, viz. Miao-Yao, Mon-Khmer, Austronesian, Tibeto-Burman, and Tai-Kadai (Goddard 2005: 27-36). Therefore, although linguistic commonality could be discerned, the diversity is far too vast to justify some feature of commonality. Similarly, gender relations could be another element of shared characteristics for the region (Robinson 2014). ASEAN too could be another unifying element. But four historically-borne elements shall suffice for this preliminary look in examining the cohesive and shared characteristics across the region, primarily from the historical perspective.

Ⅱ. Shared Beliefs and Cultural Practices

As a major crossroads between the east and west, and with its proximity to the Indian subcontinent and Chinese mainland, Southeast Asia drew religious and cultural pollination aside from migration influences from without. For the latter, the most significant was the Chinese whose descendants remained important as a minority across the region. World religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, and Daoism were imported and internalized ensuring centuries-long sustainability to

present times.

History ensured that mainland Southeast Asia shared a Buddhist legacy since the early part of the first millennium to contemporary times (Stargardt 2004). The Hindu-Buddhist period (First century B.C.E. to Thirteenth Century C.E.) spread the religious and sociocultural practices of the two Indian-based religious traditions, but it was Buddhism that proved sustainable possessing devotees until modern times. Despite overwhelming political ideologies, Socialism and Communism in particular, Buddhism survived, and continued to serve the religious needs of the peoples of present-day Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and to some extent, communist-ruled Laos and Vietnam. The lotus flower, symbolically identified with Buddhism, is Vietnam's choice of national flower under the current Communist regime. Buddhist Socialism, a phrase coined in immediate post-independent Myanmar ensured that Buddhism remained pivotal in an emerging socialist state (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2013: 254-263). Buddhism and the monarchy remained the pillars of Thai identity since the Sukhothai Kingdom (1238–1438) (Thosarat and Higham 2012). Across the vastness of island Southeast Asia, there are minority enclaves of Buddhists, particularly within Chinese communities, and to a lesser extent, Indian minorities. Interestingly and uniquely, Bali was, and still is, a bastion of Hinduism and its concomitant sociocultural practices albeit infused, to a certain extent, with local influences (Pringle 2004).

Archipelagic Southeast Asia embraced Islam since the thirteenth-fourteenth century CE (Hussin Mutalib 2008). From the Andaman Sea to the Banda Sea, from west to east respectively, and the Sulu Sea to the north, Islam was adopted among coastal communities of present-day southern Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Philippines, and Indonesia. Singapore and the Philippines are the exceptions, the majority in the former embraced Buddhist-Doaist traditions, and the latter, Catholicism. Malaysia designated Islam as the official religion of the federation while other religions and beliefs are allowed to be freely practiced (Ooi 2018). "Malay Islamic Monarchy" encapsulates the national philosophy of Brunei. The sultanate's very foundation and sustainability is based on this

triumvirate where Islam appeared to be the pivotal pillar (Croissant and Lorenz 2017). Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world at 227 million (July 2017 est.).[2] Since its establishment in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Singapore has had a minority Muslim population, comprising 13.4 per cent of the city-state's 5.8 million (July 2017 est.) (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) [2017] - Singapore).

The southern provinces of Thailand, referred to as the "Deep South," was, and still is, home to indigenous ethnic Malay Muslims. Historically the Malay Muslims were part of the Patani Sultanate, more akin to neighbors, in fact their cousins, across the border in the northern Malaysian states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and also Terengganu (Ibrahim Syukri 1985). Until 1909, the aforesaid four states were part of the Kingdom of Siam, existing on the basis of tributary relations with Chakri Bangkok as the patron overlord. In that year, an Anglo-Siam treaty "returned" Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and also Terengganu to the British then having a colonial role on the peninsular Malay states since the mid-1870s (Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian 1989). Because of the accidents of history, Malay Muslim residents in present-day provinces of Pattani (Patani), Yala (Jala), Narathiwat (Menara)—once comprised the Patani sultanate until its dissolution[3]—Songkhla (Singgora), and Satun struggled with identity, loyalty, and sense of belonging. An on-going insurgency (since the 1970s) remained unresolved (Abuza 2009; McCargo 2008).

Likewise, Mindanao and Sulu in the southern Philippines had long possessed a Muslim majority while the rest of the republic is predominantly Catholic. Since the late 1960s, a Muslim Moro

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[2] Indonesia's total population was 260,580,739 (July 2017 est.), out of which Muslims accounted for 87.2%, Christians (all denominations) about 10%, and the remaining 3% comprised Buddhist, Confucians, and others (animism) (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) [2017] - Indonesia).

[3] Patani had been defeated by Chakri in the mid-1780s and accorded tributary status. Then in 1809, Rama II decided to obliterate Patani in dividing the sultanate into seven puppet principalities, namely Tani, Jaring, Saiburi, Legeh (Ra-ngae), Raman, Yala, and Nongchik. Then in 1901, the seven provinces came under one single administrative unit known as "Area of Seven Provinces" (*boriween chet huamuang*) headed by an area commissioner who reported directly to the Interior Ministry (Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian 2004).

insurgency that had strived for separatism or autonomy, had embarked on a peace process, namely the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed on October 15, 2012 brokered by Malaysia. Autonomy for the Muslim Moro appeared to be the best administrative arrangement for lasting peace (Yegar 2002).

The Philippines, Singapore, and Bali are the mavericks from the religious adherence perspective. Since the late sixteenth century, Catholicism brought by Spanish conquistadors had remained the principal religion of the Philippines, with the notable exception of the southern provinces on Mindanao and Sulu that had embraced Islam since the thirteenth century. Out of a total population of 104 million (July 2017 est.), Catholics comprised 82.9%, other Christians 9.6%, thus collectively 92.5% vis-à-vis 5.0% of Filipino Muslims (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) [2017] – The Philippines).

Singapore has a Buddhist-Daoist majority (45.2%) drawn mainly from the predominantly ethnic Chinese majority. Christians, of all denominations, accounted for 18.1% of the population whereas Islam, 14.3%, Hinduism, 5.2% (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) [2017] - Singapore). Bali's population numbered 3.8 million according to the 2010 census, out of which 83.5% are identified with Hinduism, and Muslim, 13.4% (Indonesia: Urban Population of Cities [2010]; Sensus Penduduk [Population Census] 2010).

Southeast Asia's religious complexities are on the one hand, rather baffling, but on the other, uniquely attractive. Inter-religious tensions are undoubtedly present and occasionally flare-up as witnessed in the last decade of the Rohingya Muslim vis-à-vis a predominantly Buddhist majority population including the ruling elite of Myanmar (Wade 2017; Azeem Ibrahim 2016; Leider 2017). But besides southern Thailand and the Rohingya Muslim issue, to date, tolerance and mutual respect reigned over the region. The diverse and numerous religious traditions and practices contribute to the exoticism and attractiveness of contemporary Southeast Asia.

Irrefutably there are a host of variations within each religious group. Islam, for instance, because of its adaptation to local norms, engendered apparent differences in practice and belief across Southeast Asia. Variations from within are similarly applicable for

Buddhism, Christianity, and other religious faith, simply because of the heterogeneous nature of the region itself.

One conspicuous, shared social element across the region is the Chinese factor. Although their numbers were small, the Chinese in Southeast Asia as a community was, and still is, significant. Their ubiquitous presence in the region could be discerned from the scores of "Chinatowns," viz. Bangkok's Yaowarat, Yangon's Tayoke Tan, Ho Chi Minh City's Cholon, Kuala Lumpur's Petaling Street, Manila's Binondo, and Jakarta's Glodok.

The Chinese diaspora throughout Southeast Asia in modern times owe its antecedent to past centuries of emigration from the mainland to the region (Yen 2008; Wang 2004). Trade opportunities in the Nanyang (South Seas), the Chinese reference to Southeast Asia, was the initial catalyst that brought merchants to this part of the world during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Some of these merchants, following numerous trading voyages-cum-commercial sojourns decided to settle in the foreign lands; others, however, continued to make return journeys to the homeland. There was a ready market for Chinese luxury goods (silk, porcelain/chinaware) in overseas markets, and in turn, foreign lands supplied products such as exotic foodstuffs (bird's nests, *trepang*, spices) that were in high demand on the mainland. Savvy entrepreneurs took the high risks in making the trading voyages. Now and then, the imperial government imposed restrictions on trade with foreigners as well as prohibited Chinese traders from trading abroad. Travels to distant lands and being away from the home for long periods were frowned upon by both family and community owing to the obligations of ancestral worship and filial piety. Nonetheless, enterprising merchants defied norms as well as prosecution in seeking opportunities and fortunes from foreign markets.

Notwithstanding the embargo on private trading during the Ming period whereby the imperial court had a monopoly of foreign overseas trade (mid-fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries), many merchants defied the ruling (*haijin*, lit. sea ban) and continued their trading ventures. Returning to the homeland became less infrequent lest they were prosecuted by the authorities. The noose became

even tighter in prohibiting Chinese involvement in overseas trade when the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) was established (Shi 2006: 8). Returnees faced death penalty as Qing officials took cognizance of those supporting Ming remnants that had fled to Taiwan. Hence, the southern coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, whence Chinese merchants traded across the southern seas, were guarded against returnees. Consequently, many Chinese merchants who were sojourners in foreign lands, owing to trading activities, became settlers. Owing to their changed status, domestic arrangements also transformed, from patronizing brothels or co-habitation with local women to contracting formal marriages. Gradually, Chinese merchants gradually developed a community of traders. Later mercantile émigrés from the sixteenth century brought with them artisans and peasant workers as expertise and labor needs for their trading establishments abroad, viz. erection of shophouses, warehouses, schoolhouses for the young.

Interethnic-marriages between Chinese merchants and local women brought forth the genesis of the Chinese *Peranakan* (literally, local born)[4] comprising the offspring of such unions. While retaining their Chinese sociocultural traditions and practices of ancestral worship and filial obligations, *Peranakan* were akin to their mother's local traits in terms of language, cuisine, and attire. But the Chinese Peranakan only numbered in their hundreds even during their heyday of the 1920s and 1930s.

While most of the mercantile and trading groups were of Hokkien and Teochew stock, the Hakka were well-known as miners, and they too had ventured abroad. The 1740s witnessed Hakka gold mining in north-western Borneo when Malay rulers in Mempawah, Mandor, Monterado (Montrado), and Sambas, in particular, the districts of Singkawang, Loemar, and Larah, initiated this extractive industry in inviting immigrant Chinese labor (Heidhues 2003).

[4] As I have stated elsewhere, "Singularly, peranakan does not ascribe to any racial or ethnic background, but with a qualifying noun of the particular descent, the patriarchal, is identified" (Ooi 2017: 53). Hence, there are *Peranakan Belanda* of Dutch descent, *Jawi Peranakan* or *Jawi Pekan* of South Indian-Muslim descent, *Thai Peranakan* of Sino-Thai union, Chitty of Indian-Hindu descent.

The bulk of Chinese emigration occurred during the mid-nineteenth century when the push and pull factors were in play (Lary 2012: 91-102). Rebellions, famines, economic dislocations compelled many of them, mainly peasants, to emigrate for opportunities abroad or simply to escape catastrophes in their home villages. They were also attracted by the promise of foreign lands, viz. gold fields of Australia, California, South Africa; tin fields of the Malay Peninsula and Phuket; trading opportunities in Rangoon (Yangon), Bangkok, Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), Penang, Singapore, Batavia (Jakarta), Surabaya, and Manila; commercial agriculture (pepper, gambier, sugar cane, rubber) across the East Indies (Southeast Asia) and West Indies (Caribbean). The Qing defeat in the Opium Wars (1839-1860) resulted in the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain and the opening of treaty-ports, namely Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo), Fuchow (Fuzhou), and Amoy (Xiamen). Emigration prohibition was also lifted to allow the outflow of the coolie traffic to the above-mentioned territories abroad.

Hence, the emigration wave from the mid-nineteenth century of penniless coolies channeled into a system involving procurement and transportation abroad of indentured labor, a system identified as the pig trade (Campbell 1969). Labor agents in collusion with captains of junks and ships arranged passage for a coolie. The labor agent paid the ship's captain the coolie's passage fee. Upon embarkation, prior arrangement with local labor agents would see the coolie proceeding to work in a mine or plantation, often for a three-year period to pay off his debt amounting to the ship's passage ticket. Theoretically, upon paying off his debt, the coolie was a "free man," either to continue to work for *his* wages in the mine or plantation, or seek other opportunities (farming, trading, etc.). But, in reality, for thousands, the lure of the gambling and/or opium dens, *arrack* (locally distilled liquor) shops, and brothels, sapped most of their wages. As a result, their debt (passage ticket) would never be settled, besides other accumulated debts from their opium and gambling habits, as well as from brothels. They remained indentured laborers. Opium addiction or overdosage, and/or venereal diseases, consumed many lives of coolies, besides succumbing to infectious diseases of the tropics such as malaria, dengue, cholera,

and leprosy.

While the numbers of resident Chinese across the nation-states of Southeast Asia were small, comprising no more than 10% of the total population, they were mostly assimilated into the wider, indigenous society. Hence, the Teochew rice millers and traders of Bangkok, Saigon, and Jakarta were indigenized in their respective adopted host nations of Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia respectively. Likewise, Chinese traders in Manila too were assimilated into Filipino society. In contemporary Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia, ethnic Chinese by legislation were compelled to adopt native names, their original Chinese names prohibited for official and public usage. Likewise, they also changed their identities to "Thai," "Filipino," "Vietnamese," and "Indonesian," and not "Thai Chinese," "Filipino Chinese," "Vietnamese Chinese," and "Indonesian Chinese." Literally, their ethnic Chinese roots and identity were officially obliterated.

It is only in Malaysia where the Chinese community, though a minority, retained and legally protected their identity. Moreover, the Malay-dominated Malaysian federal government supported Chinese vernacular schools, and one of three streams of national schools at the elementary level (Year 1 to Year 6) utilizes Mandarin as medium of instruction (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2018). Chinese-dominated political parties are commonplace in Malaysia's political landscape. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a component party of the once ruling Barisan Nasional coalition (until May 2018), is reputedly the largest Chinese political party in the world, second only to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Singapore, since its foundation, has remained a Chinese-dominated city-state comprising 74.3% of the total population of 5.8 million (July 2017 est.) (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) [2017] - Singapore). Trade and commerce remain as Singapore's forte since its foundation to present times owing to Chinese expertise and preoccupation. Since its opening as a British free port in 1819, the Chinese have flocked to this entrepôt for trading and commercial activities, with links that stretched throughout Southeast Asia, Hong

Kong, Shanghai, and Taipei in East Asia.

The Chinese tradition of diligence, perseverance, resourcefulness, and instinctive traits of adaptivity and pragmatism sustained them in whatever environs and situations in foreign lands. Not only did they survive. They thrived and prospered over the generations, some more prominently than others. Whether assimilated or unassimilated, the Chinese as a community played an important role in the economic growth and development of their host countries. Chinese, as individuals or business entities, featured prominently in the contemporary list of high-achieving entrepreneurs or top companies in the region. The Chinese factor, then and now, undeniably continue to contribute in driving the economies of their adopted nation-states and the rest of the region. This proves that the Chinese diaspora, as a shared commonality in Southeast Asia, is an asset and boon to host countries and the region overall.

Ⅲ. "We must have rice"

The second binding bond is rice (*Oryza sativa*), the staple grain and food across the region. Literally, everyone living in Southeast Asia consume rice on a daily basis, savored in every meal. Steamed rice served with an assortment of other dishes of meat, vegetables, and preserved condiments compose a typical meal, whether consumed in the interior of Thailand's northern highlands, on the coastal plains of Cambodia, in high-rise apartments in urban Singapore, onboard boats in the Sulu Sea, in the *ruai* (gallery) of a longhouse in the upper Baram in Sarawak, or in the cafeteria of the oil company in Seria in Brunei, on the roadside stalls in Surabaya, in one of the cafes in Dili, Timore Leste. Rice in all its manifestations —fried, steamed, baked, as a component in *kuih* (cakes), in ground form to make vermicelli and other noodles—has been the sustainable grain of sustenance of the peoples of Southeast Asia for centuries.

Varieties range from wet to dry, hill-originating, and glutinous (sticky). Cultivation methods too range from flooded plains with bunds as perimeters, dry cultivation on hillsides, to irrigated terrace

fields on hill slopes, and in jungle clearings as in swidden agriculture. The latter is one example of cultivation on a subsistence basis. Rice is also grown on a massive scale in commercial agriculture.

During the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, rice was cultivated commercially or on a subsistence basis in the alluvial plains of the lower Irrawaddy and its delta in Burma; the lower reaches of the Chao Phraya in the Central Plains of Siam; the lower and delta areas of the Mekong in Cambodia and southern Vietnam; the Red River delta of northern Vietnam; the plains of Kedah on the western coast and the Kelantan plains on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula (present day West Malaysia); on the northern coastal low lands of Java; and in coastal and river valleys throughout archipelagic Southeast Asia. Large-scale commercial cultivation of rice was undertaken in Burma, Siam, and Vietnam, and mechanized processing delivered rice to the global market (Hanks 1992).

Contemporary Thailand and Vietnam are major rice cultivators and exporters. Domestic rice self-sufficiency continued to be the elusive objective of most nation-states in the region. Once a rice exporter, present-day Myanmar imports its rice supply.

Rice is not only food for sustenance but also plays an important role in religious rituals and practices, particularly during the pre-Islamic/pre-Christian period. Communities that retained animistic beliefs continue to regard rice as sacred, guarded by spirits that need to be ritually nurtured, and/or placated to ensure bountiful harvests. An observation of harvest practices in pre-Hispanic Philippines underscored the significance placed on rice:

> Harvesting was accompanied by strict religious taboos. For three days before, harvesters had to remain continent and keep away from fire. Neither could outsiders enter the house: otherwise, they believed, the rice would be all straw and very few grains. In some places they [the farmers] even camped in the field all during the harvest, lest the rice decrease—as they said—by running away angry because the house had not been left to it alone (Scott 1994: 38).

The Kadazandusun, the majority ethnic community of the East

Malaysia state of Sabah, still maintain their pre-Christian beliefs in *adat* (customary practices). One of the common and important beliefs is of *bambarayon* (rice spirits) or *bambarazon* among the Rungus of Kudat. According to the Rungus, they acquired rice from *bambarazon* in the remote past, therefore they made sacrificial offerings of chickens and pigs to the rice spirits. Negligence of this placating ritual might be fatally disastrous, and may result in meagre harvest or rice crops being plagued by calamities (Shimomoto 1979).

Apparently, there are different types of rice spirits, each with specific functions in Tempasuk Dusun beliefs. British ethnologist Ivor H. N. Evans in the early 1950s recorded seven types, viz. Ohinopot (helps guard the supply of rice in the store); Sambilod (looks after the damaged rice and sees that the amount does not increase); Gontolobon (gives rice piled up in "boulders"); Momiaud (similarly gives rice as abundant as spring water); Moniudan (gives rice as abundant as spring water); Sompidot (gives *opidot*, that is full grain in the ear); and, Kabang (makes the rice *kambang* or swell in the cooking pot) (quoted in Low and Lee 2012: 76).

In Thailand, rice planting took on formal garb where there is an annual ritual known as the Royal Ploughing Ceremony, a religious royal ritual held in the Grand Palace in Bangkok. This ceremony is believed to have been practiced since the thirteenth century. It took a hiatus in the nineteenth century and was revived in modern times by King Bhumibol Adulyadej (1927-2016) in 1960.

> It's more than just a religious ceremony—this ritual is a State-sponsored event involving highly-placed civil officials. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives takes on the position of Lord of the Harvest; four single female Ministry officials are appointed Celestial Maidens to assist him. … With half of Thailand's people still dependent on farming for a living, the Royal Ploughing Ceremony is an important yearly event that honors the bond between the King, the government, and the farmers who sustain the country (Aquino 2017).

Altogether there are two ceremonies, namely the Cultivating Ceremony (*Phraraj Pithi Peuj Mongkol*), and the Ploughing Ceremony (*Phraraj Pithi Jarod Phranangkal Raek Na Kwan*). The King himself

is personally involved in the former, "supervising the blessing of the Lord of the Harvest and the four Celestial Maidens," as well as presenting "a ceremonial ring and sword to the Lord of the Harvest to use in the next day's ceremonies … in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, within the Grand Palace complex" (Aquino 2017).

A day thereafter is staged the more elaborate Ploughing Ceremony at Sanam Luang, a plot of land near the Grand Palace. Here, centuries-old rituals are re-enacted:

> The Lord of the Harvest performs several rituals … to predict the conditions in the rice season to come. First, he chooses one of three cloth garments—the longest one predicts little rain for the coming season, the medium one predicts average rainfall, and the shortest one predicts a lot of rain. … the Lord of the Harvest initiates the ploughing of the ground, accompanied by sacred bulls, drummers, umbrella bearers, and his Celestial Maidens bearing baskets filled with rice seed. After the bulls have ploughed the earth, the beasts are presented with a choice of seven foodstuffs—their choices will predict what crops will be plentiful for the season to come. … [In conclusion,] the Lord of the Harvest will scatter rice seed over the furrows. Guests will try to gather some of the scattered rice grains as good luck charms for their own harvests back home (Aquino 2017).

It is clear that in Thailand, rice is given great honor. Similar practices, less formal and/or as elaborate, undertaken by peasant farmers themselves, are commonplace across the region.

Notwithstanding the fact that American-style fast food chains proliferate across contemporary Southeast Asia with brisk sales of fried chicken, burgers, and sandwiches, particularly popular among Gen X, Gen Y, and commonplace and taken-for-granted within Gen Z circles, the status of rice as the preferred food appeared not to be under threat.[5] One scholar assured of rice's unassailable status vis-à-vis other foods.

[5] Borrowed from demographers and market researchers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z refer to those born between 1966 and 1976, between 1977 and 1994, and between 1995 and 2012 respectively. Generally, the particular cohort is identified with particular traits and characteristics.

> There are signs that dietary preferences in the region may be changing with the availability of imported foods, but there is *little chance* that rice will be displaced from its central place in Southeast Asian cuisine (Kratoska 2004: 1148; emphasis added).

Ⅳ. "Unity in Diversity"

In recalling the opening quote that Southeast Asia "can only suggest the range of the region's enormous diversity," it also resonates with Indonesia's motto of, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" or "Unity in Diversity." On the occasion of Indonesia's seventy-first anniversary celebration of independence in 1945, the *Republik* was commended for its achievements:

> From Sabang in Aceh to Merauke in Irian Jaya, Indonesia is home to a diverse group of people who have contributed to the richness of culture and tradition of the country. These are the Batak in North Sumatra, the Dayak in Kalimantan, the Ambonese in the Moluccas, the Javanese, the Sundanese, the Balinese, the Acehnese, and the Minangkabau, each with a different language. The difficult task of bringing together all these diverse groups under one governing system, as stated in its motto "Unity in Diversity," represents one of the *great accomplishments* of any nation in the 20th century (Farolan 2016; emphasis added).

Indeed, Indonesia's success as a sustainable unitary state speaks volumes of its political leadership in being able to hold together peoples of varied ethnicity, cultures, religions and beliefs, languages, creeds, socioeconomic levels, and political affiliations. Indonesia, in fact, represents a microcosm of Southeast Asia itself, where diversity is characterized by multiethnicity, multiculturalism, and multi-religious traits as a norm. Despite the predominance of major ethnic groups like the Bamar in present day Myanmar, or Tai in Thailand, or Viet in Vietnam, or Malay in Malaysia, other ethnic minorities are found in all the aforesaid countries. For instance, Malaysia's eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak support 30 and 20 ethnic minorities respectively. The Chinese community in Malaysia, unlike their counterparts in other neighboring countries in the

region, comprised a sizeable minority accounting for almost a quarter of the total population of 30.8 million (2016 est.) (Ooi 2018: 366).

Even far more diverse in terms of ethnic groups is contemporary Myanmar with an estimated population of 53.86 million in 2018:

> The country is very ethnically diverse with 135 *ethnic groups* recognized by the government. There are at least 108 ethnolinguistic groups in Myanmar. The Bamar account for around 68% of the population, followed by the Shan (10%), Kayin (7%), Rakhine (4%) and overseas Chinese (3%). … Other ethnic groups include the Mon (2%), Overseas Indians (2%) and the Kachin, Chin, Anglo-Indians, Nepali and Anglo-Burmese (World Population Review – Myanmar, 2018; emphasis added).

Southeast Asia appears to embrace and celebrate diversity, the colorful kaleidoscope characteristics of multiethnicity, multiculturalism, and multi-religious traditions. Undoubtedly, predominant ethnic majority groups have a tendency to assimilate small minorities. They have a higher tendency to do this if they hold the reins of political power. Assimilation, then, may be adopted as state policy. Minorities persist despite attempts by central governments in Thailand, Indonesia, or in the Philippines, by force of policy, to assimilate them into the mainstream majority's sociocultural milieu. In Myanmar, for instance, "ethnic minorities in the country prefer to be called *ethnic nationalities* to fight against the proliferation of the dominant Bamar people" (World Population Review-Myanmar, 2018; emphasis added). Likewise, the substantial minority of the Chinese in Malaysia not only have two Chinese political parties in the ruling coalition (until May 2018) Barisan Nasional (National Front), but also a forceful and vociferous political party in the rival camp Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope), all lending voice for Chinese interests.[6]

[6] Both the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan; Malaysian People's Movement) are members of the Barisan Nasional (National Front), the incumbent ruling coalition prior to the general elections of 9 May 2018. In the rival camp—currently a component of the Pakatan Harapan coalition government (since 9 May general election)—is the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP).

The existence of a variegated population composing a tapestry of various ethnic communities undoubtedly presents multiculturalism in practice. Each ethnic group brings their sociocultural traditions and practices, language, religious beliefs, way of life, and worldview. Multiculturalism and multi-religiosity are inevitable in multiethnic population settings. Generally, social plurality does not necessarily lead to inter-ethnic conflict. If the dictum of "live and let live" is embraced by all quarters, and the government does not favor any particular group, a spirit of co-existence will generate peace. Contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia exhibit such peaceful existence. On the obverse side, Myanmar continues to struggle with separatist minorities, due to real or perceived Bamar predominance, discrimination and sidelining of minority interests.

Malaysia's brand of multiculturalism is analogous to one of its favorite street foods, the *rojak* a.k.a. the Malaysian salad, which also presents itself as a dessert. Literally, derived from the Malay, *rojak* means "mixed up." This offering comprises cucumber, *jambu-air* (rose-apple), *sengkuang* (yam bean), *ambra* (ambarella or June plum in Sri Lanka, *kedondong* in Indonesia and in Malaysia), pineapple, cuttlefish, *hae-ko* (shrimp paste), chili paste, molasses, and crushed (unsalted) peanuts, *all mixed up*, hence *rojak*, and served in a cone-shaped paper, eaten with bamboo sticks. Without doubt, savoring mouth-watering *rojak* means experiencing a feast of flavors:

> The multiethnicity and multiculturalism of Malaysian society are likened to rojak: the various sociocultural elements drawn from each ethnic and cultural group *are mixed together, but each element keeps its distinct character and identity* (Ooi 2018: 284; emphasis added).

In other words, despite the thorough "mixing up altogether" of the rojak, the pineapple remains a pineapple, and the *jambu-air*, *hae-ko*, and other ingredients retain their unique flavors.

Similarly, the multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious mix of modern day Southeast Asia too, to a certain extent, resembles *rojak,* whereby each ethnic, cultural, and religious group has its own identity, characteristics, idiosyncrasies. These remain intact despite the plural and variegated setting of the region.

What holds each "unity" forged amidst the "diversity" within each nation-state is different from one another. Malaysia, for instance, often falls back on the so-called "social contract" forged by the founding fathers drawn from the main ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, who pledged to share the burden as well as the fruits of the country among them. Owing to the comparative backwardness of the Malays at the time of independence (1957), affirmative action as translated in the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1970-1990) was adopted (Gomez and Saravanamuttu 2012; Jomo 2005). Indonesia's "unity," to a great extent, was galvanized by the protracted *Revolusi* (1945-1949), or the war of independence, to fulfil Sukarno's declaration of independence on August 17, 1945.

> Like other revolutions, it demanded a huge price in violence, human suffering, and the loss of cultural traditions; like them too, it offered a glittering prize. The prize turned out not to be the freedom and equality of which the revolutionaries had dreamt, but a previously *inconceivable unity* enforced by a state of a completely new kind. (Reid 2011: blurb; emphasis added).

Ⅴ. "We were once colonized"

All the territories of Southeast Asia, with the notable exception of Thailand, were once colonized by European imperial powers and the U.S. (Table 1 and Map 1). Economic motives of trade and commerce, and access to raw materials and markets were the common denominators and catalysts for colonization. Whether aggressively intending to colonize or forced by circumstances, often to deny rival powers, all the imperial powers ended up with colonial territories. Forms of administration varied in name but all basically imposed colonial possession.

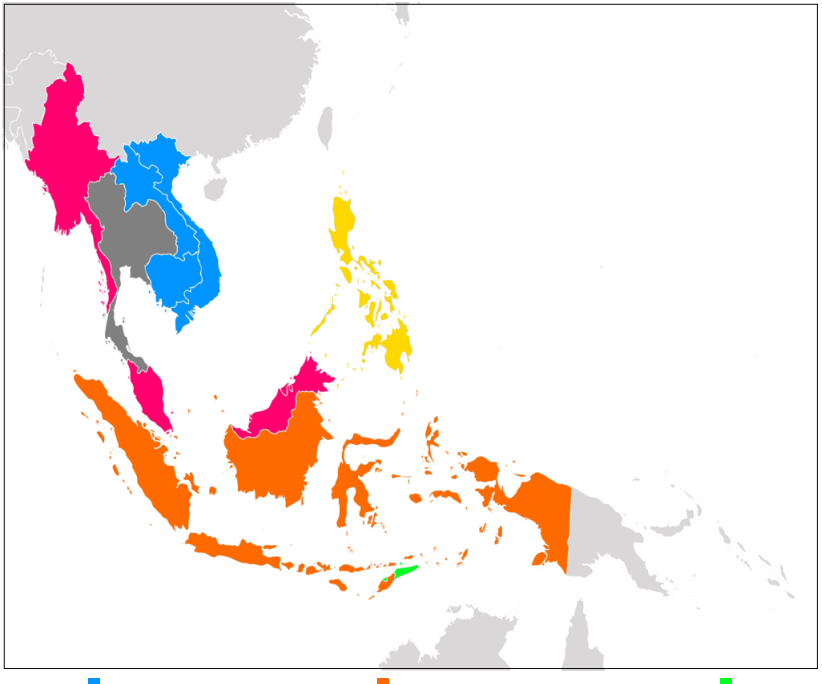
<Table 1> Periodization of Colonial Rule of Southeast Asia

	Britain	Spain	United States	France	Netherlands	Portugal
Burma□	1824–1942 1945–1948					
Malaya◇	1874-1957					
North Borneo*	1881-1963					

	Britain	Spain	United States	France	Netherlands	Portugal
Sarawak	1841-1963					
Brunei	1906-1984					
Philippines		1565–1898	1898-1946			
Laos				1893-1941 1946-1953		
Cambodia				1863-1941 1945-1953		
Vietnam				1887-1954		
Indonesia					1800-1949	
East Timor †						1702–1975 (de jure 1999)

□ Name change to Myanmar in 1989
◊ Malaya refers to present day West or Peninsular Malaysia
* Upon independence within Malaysia in 1963, adopted the name Sabah
† Or Timor Leste

<Map 1> Colonization of Southeast Asia



Legend: France (French Indochina) Netherlands (Dutch East Indies) Portugal (Portuguese Timor) Spain (Spanish East Indies), followed by U.S. (Philippines) United Kingdom (British Burma, British Malaya and British Borneo)
Source: European Colonisation of Southeast Asia.

The French declared protectorates over Laos, Cambodia, Annam, and Tonkin while Cochin-China was governed as a colony (Brocheux and Hémery 2011). All the nine peninsula Malay states were British protectorates, again differentiated as federated (Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang), and unfederated (Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Johor). The Straits Settlements of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore were British colonies (Andaya and Andaya 2016). Until 1937, Burma was administered by the British as a province of British India, thereafter separately by the Burma Office under the Secretary of State for India and Burma (Cockett 2015).

What is today Indonesia was initially colonized piecemeal by the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, "United East India Company," VOC) from 1603 of then known as the East Indies (Ricklefs 2008). When the VOC folded up towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Netherlands government assumed governance of the Dutch East Indies (Netherlands East-Indies; *Nederlands(ch)-Indië*) as a colony from 1800. Spain, likewise, from the mid-sixteenth century, gradually colonized the Philippines (Francia 2013). As a settlement of the Spanish-American War (1898), the archipelago was sold to the U.S. Consequently, the U.S. was drawn in the Philippine Revolution (1896-1898), and subsequently, the Philippine–American War (1899-1902).

Prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941-1945), northern Borneo comprised Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo. While Brunei was an ancient Malay Muslim sultanate under British protection, Sarawak was governed by the Brooke family, an English family of white rajahs, whereas North Borneo was administered by the British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBC) (Ooi 2004a and 2004b; Ooi 2004a).

Colonialism was sustainable, to some extent, because of local collaboration with the indigenous elites. If not for their collaboration and cooperation, colonial regimes would have faced protracted incessant opposition through armed insurrection and anti-colonial uprisings. Despite being engaged in an unequal relationship, local elites were more than willing to partner with foreign colonial power to gain some of the spoils of subjugation.

For instance, the peninsula Malay sultan in pre-colonial times was but one of the chiefs, and it was not surprising that some of the territorial chiefs possessed more manpower and material riches through taxes than the royal personage who was entirely dependent on the chiefs for delivery of taxes (Gullick 1988). But when the British initiated their system of indirect rule through the residential system, the sultan enjoyed an elevated status and enjoyed greater wealth from the centralized system of tax collection.

Without much doubt, colonialism no matter how benign, has its downsides. The native peoples were denied of self-determination and had to march according to the colonial drumbeat. The metropolitan country of the colonial power was the main benefactor of the colonies, from the economic standpoint, in particular, but also politically and socio-culturally in general. The mindset of the superiority of the colonial powers was perpetrated through propaganda, socio-cultural traditions and practices, education and schooling. Generations of native peoples imbibed their inferiority and doubted their own capability. Colonization is sustained when the colonized are made to internalize their sense of ethnic and/or cultural inferiority (Nunning 2015).

On the positive note, colonial rule brought economic development, built infrastructure (transport and communications, sanitation, water, and electricity supply), and advanced social services (formal schooling, public health). The colonial period initiated overall improvements, mostly in the urban centers. Jeevan Vasagar (2018), correspondent of *The Guardian* shares this observation:

> Bombay is Mumbai, Léopoldville is Kinshasa, Cecil Rhodes has been hoisted from his plinth by a crane; but when I moved to Singapore a few years ago it quickly became clear that much of its colonial legacy had been left intact. …The country's founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew once said the statue reminds his people of [Thomas Stamford] Raffles' vision of Singapore becoming "the emporium of the east," adding that Singapore was different from most of its Southeast Asian neighbours because it had "no xenophobic hangover" from colonialism. It's an attractive story. In other countries, the end of imperial rule has required a detox regime of

> new names and new doctrines. Singapore has taken a different path.
>
> The Singapore model combines economic liberalism—in keeping with Raffles' free-trading vision—a politics that subordinates the individual to the collective, and efficient government.

Considering this, what comes to mind is Bruce Gilley's (2017) controversial piece, "The Case for Colonialism," that urged developing countries to seriously consider replicating the colonial governance of the past, citing the successful examples of Singapore, Belize, and Botswana.

Nationalism inevitably entered the psyche and vocabulary of the indigenous peoples of Southeast Asia. Ironically, the advances in infrastructure and education served the nationalist struggle. The latter spurred national consciousness, as exemplified in the motto of the French Revolution (1789) "*Liberté*, *Egalité*, *Fraternité.*" Armed with various –isms, nationalists were able to take advantage of improvements in transport and communications to meet one another and discuss their common agenda.

Various revolutions, viz. Chinese (1911), Russian (1917), the protracted struggles for independence in the Indian sub-continent, spurred nationalists in Southeast Asia to oppose their colonial masters. Although the Philippine Revolution (1896) ended unexpectedly in a change of colonial masters—with the U.S. replacing Spain—the writings of Philippine hero Jose Rizal (1861-1896) inspired nationalists throughout the region. Revolutionary leaders and personalities elsewhere such as Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) became models to emulate. Political thoughts and ideologies like fascism, democracy, socialism, communism all had their dedicated followings among nationalists in Southeast Asia, from Aung San (1915-1947), Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969), Norodom Sihanouk (1922-2012) to Sukarno (1901-1970), Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015), and Chin Peng (1924-2013).

Political freedom and independence for some were bloodless through constitutional means, *inter alia* the Philippines (1946), Burma (1948), Malaya (1957). Others, however, struggled through

protracted revolutions and wars, notably Indonesia and Vietnam. Still others, their post-independence period were dogged with conflicts spurred on by the Cold War (1947-1990), Cambodia, being an example.

Possessing a colonial past is a shared experience among Southeast Asian nation-states except Thailand which was spared from colonial domination. Thailand, however, had its share of confronting colonial powers; it was a thoughtful strategy of having a buffer between them, that both France and Britain dissuaded from colonializing Siam. Nonetheless, Thailand paid the price of having to cede economic benefits (Britain) and territories (France), and had to suffer the indignity of the extraterritoriality clause that compromised its sovereignty, just to keep its independence (Wyatt 2003). Others had argued that Thailand was, in fact, "quasi-independent" (see Anderson 1998, and Owen 2005).

Although brief but significant, the military occupation of the region by Imperial Japan, again except in Thailand, during the Pacific War (1941-1945) was yet another shared baggage among Southeast Asians. Mutual benefit between the militarist regimes in Bangkok and Tokyo led to a pact that was concluded in Tokyo on June 12, 1940. Consequently, Imperial Japanese forces did not invade and/or occupy Thailand during the Pacific War.

For better or for worse, Southeast Asians share a commonality of a colonial past, whether Western/European or Imperial Japan. To some extent, such shared experiences fostered greater understanding and empathy of one another.

Ⅵ. Conclusion: A Southeast Asian Identity?

As highlighted, Southeast Asian countries share a whole gamut of beliefs and cultural practices, rice as the staple food, diversity, and colonial experiences. Do all these four elements bring the peoples and the nation-states closer ? Are they ties that bind? And, if they do bind, do they bring forth a Southeast Asian identity?

"Unity in diversity" appears to be the most plausible identity

marker, reflected in individual parts (viz. the component nation-states in different degrees), and as whole (that is, Southeast Asia as a region overall). Nonetheless, questions abound, as in this:

> But does it ["unity-in-diversity"] work as a political strategy to enhance a regional identity, as in the case of the [sic.] Europe? It depends on how it is constructed, both in regards to "unity" and "diversity." Without doubt, Southeast Asia is a region with great diversity, and each country is, in fact, composed of diverse cultures. The question is, then, how much "unity-in-diversity" can be achieved? And who should decide what constitutes "unity" and what constitutes "diversity"? (Jönsson 2010: 65)

Consciously excluded from the aforesaid discussion is ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), admittedly another unifying element, and which increasingly, in the last decade has been forging an identity of its own (Charter of ASEAN 2007: Preamble). But as a scholar rightly forewarned, identity of Southeast Asia as a region must not be misconstrued to be "ASEAN identity":

> As noted at the outset, *the identity of Southeast Asia as a region should not be confused with the identity of ASEAN as a regional organization*. Although the two identities can overlap and be mutually reinforcing, they also have different sources and distinctive trajectories. Southeast Asia's regional identity predates ASEAN's identity…While ASEAN might have strengthened Southeast Asia's regional identity, the latter has a wider basis. It was constructed by a combination of outside powers, foreign (at first) and local academics, regional political leaders, and civil society groups, while the ASEAN identity is mainly the creation of the region's political elite. The Southeast Asian identity is more grounded in historical and socio-cultural factors than the ASEAN identity, which is more of an institutional, political, and strategic phenomenon and is fundamentally statist and elitist in nature (Acharya 2017: 37; emphasis added).

Admittedly, regions, like Southeast Asia, the Caribbean or sub-Sahara Africa, are constructs. Some conspicuous sociocultural features are identified with a particular region hence its identity. Out of the seeming complexity and diversity that characterized Southeast Asia, it has been argued that there is a commonality of shared

elements amidst the diverse features. The "unity" found in these may comprise the region's identity.

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Asymmetric Terrorist Alliances:
Strategic Choices of Militant Groups in Southeast Asia*

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[*Abstract*]

Why do some local rebel groups choose to form asymmetric alliances with large transnational terrorist organizations? This paper examines asymmetric terrorist alliance patterns by studying the international ties of domestic insurgencies in Southeast Asia. It uses data from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand to construct a theory defining the determinants of the choice of alliance strategies by terrorist groups. The findings conclude that rebels with limited aims prefer to act alone out of fear of entrapment. They are cautious of becoming associated with the struggle of transnational radical groups and provoking organized response from international and regional counterterrorism authorities. Local groups are more likely to seek alliance with an established movement when they have ambitious final objectives, challenging the core interests of the target state. In this case, the benefits of training and logistic support provided by an experienced organization outweigh the costs of becoming a target for coordinated counterterrorist campaign.

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Keywords: terrorism, asymmetric alliances, terrorist alliance behavior, Southeast Asia, non-state actors

Ⅰ. Introduction

The global war on terror is moving to Southeast Asia. First, Al Qaeda, and later, the Islamic State (IS) sought to expand their influence in the region as a manner of compensating for the loss of territory in their traditional zone of action. The two groups have claimed responsibility for a number of attacks in Indonesia, the Philippines, and most recently in Malaysia. In all cases the attacks were organized with the assistance of local rebels whose aims were initially unrelated to the global agendas pursued by the two radical jihadist organizations. In 2016, more than sixty local groups were believed to actively support IS. Militants in the region are steadily becoming more ambitious and increasingly violent. Some of them, however, are yet to be associated with the transnational terrorist networks active in neighboring states. Thus while rebels in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines formed alliances with international jihadists organizations, Thailand's homegrown terrorists continue to be independent (Abuza 2011).

Operating under similar conditions some rebel groups formed alliances with international terrorist organizations, while others continue to act alone. Why do some insurgents choose to forgo the benefits of cooperation? Put in general terms, when do local rebel groups form asymmetric alliances with large international terrorist organizations?

Understanding the incentives to ally faced by terrorist organizations is essential when choosing the appropriate strategies to counter the threat. At the international level, response to global terrorist networking includes breaking the links between patrons and local groups (Rabasa et al. 2006a: 161). This can only be achieved if the utility of an alliance for each of the sides is clearly understood. At the local level, government efforts effective against the type of local groups unlikely to cooperate with an international organization would be counter-productive against militants who could not be

deterred from escalating the level of violence. In the first case, negotiations and appeasement could potentially bring the rebels into the regular political process; in the second, anything short of a firm denial strategy would create favorable conditions for the organization to find allies and present a challenge to the stability of the state.

Effectively containing rebels prone to allying with international terrorist organizations is important for several reasons. First, alliances affect terrorist behavior. Interaction with fundamentalists, such as Al Qaeda, contributes to the radicalization of religious rebel groups and the expansion of their aims. Due to the influence of their patrons, their ambitions outgrow their original agenda, threatening targets beyond the borders of the original host state (Abuza 2002, 2003; Basile 2004; Adamson 2005; Matthew and Shambaugh 2005). Second, terrorists connected with strong experienced allies tend to become more effective and deadly (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008a, 2008b). Ties with global organizations make local terrorists more dangerous. They acquire technology and knowledge and benefit from shared financing networks, thus achieving higher success rates in their attacks. Lastly, cooperation allows international terrorist organizations to increase the threat they present to state governments (Cragin et al. 2007). Close ties with local ally groups enables them to escape counterterrorist actions by sending fighters to train in the secret camps of the local militants, hiding financial assets in different states, and exploiting an expanded pool of potential recruits who are harder to detect for their lack of apparent affiliation with the broader jihadist cause.

Existing studies fail to offer satisfactory answers to the questions posed here. Alliances between terrorist organizations are widespread and dangerous, but remain undertheorized and asymmetric relationships are particularly neglected. Many experts agree that groups sharing either ideology or enemy occasionally ally in pursuit of their goals (Asal et al. 2016; Phillips 2018). Compatible beliefs and aims, however, are a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for cooperation, particularly when the potential allies are not involved in a common conflict. Studies that stop short of specifying the strategic calculations behind local rebels' alliance decisions are

ill-equipped to explain the variation in outcomes in Southeast Asia, where some local groups choose to ally with international terrorist organizations while others actively avoid any association. Some scholars have explored the puzzle from the perspective of global terrorist groups by looking for the reasons why they seek the cooperation of local insurgents and the factors that affect the success of their efforts (Bacon 2017). Area specialists among them have studied Al Qaeda and IS's growing networks specifically in Southeast Asia (Abuza 2002, 2003; Febrica 2010; Harris-Hogan and Zammit 2014; Gunaratna 2017). These works provide a solid basis for further research, but highlight the need for a theory explaining the strategic considerations of local militant groups that allows international terrorist organizations to take root in the region.

This article aims to fill the gap in the literature and offer a systemic explanation for the divergence of alliance decisions between militant groups in Southeast Asia. The main argument is that rebels choose to engage in alliances based on rational utility calculations of the costs and benefits of cooperation. Groups in Southern Thailand with limited aims prefer to act alone out of fear of entrapment. Their fight for autonomy of the Patani region does not necessitate the significant increase in operational capabilities that can only be achieved through an alliance. At the same time, they are cautious of becoming associated with the struggle of global Jihadists and provoking organized response from local and international authorities. In contrast, groups in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines formed alliances with international terrorist organizations to gain access to the expertise and resources that would allow them to pursue ambitious objectives that threaten the existence of the rival state in its present form. For them the benefits of training and logistic support from a larger organization outweigh the costs of becoming a target for a large-scale counterterrorist cooperation.

This research examines asymmetric terrorist alliance patterns by studying the international ties of domestic insurgencies in Southeast Asia. It uses data from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand to uncover the reasons leading to the choice of alliance strategies by terrorist groups. The study highlights

the differences in behavior between seemingly similar rebel groups by focusing on the varying objectives they pursue. It relies primarily on secondary data sources as gaining access to terrorists for research purposes remains problematic.

Terrorist alliances are defined here as pacts for continuous conscious cooperation in preparing and conducting operations between two terrorist organizations. Cooperation may include sharing of training facilities and expertise, financial contributions, and joint attacks. The alliances are rarely formal in the sense that no legal agreement needs to specify the conditions for action. Some groups such as Al Qaeda require a *bayat*, formal pledge of loyalty from its allies, but this is not a necessary condition for the existence of an alliance (Kirdar 2011). Asymmetric are alliances formed between organizations with a significant disparity in capabilities in terms of operational proficiency and available human and financial resources.

The local rebel groups chosen for this study are small insurgencies counting no more than several hundred members. They are selected based on the similarities allowing for controlled focused comparison of cases with varying outcomes. All of them originate from a repressed minority in the host state, profess beliefs compatible with the religion of potential patron organizations, and use terrorist tactics to advance their agendas. These are Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines, the Southern insurgency in Thailand represented mainly by Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), and several emerging militant groups in Malaysia.

Transnational terrorist organizations are groups with active operational cells in more than one country pursuing a global agenda. They are hubs in terrorist networks with large membership and high lethality rate. Two such groups currently operating in Southeast Asia are Al Qaeda and IS.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section proposes a theoretical framework detailing rebel groups' strategic considerations in deciding whether to ally with an international terrorist organization. It is followed by an empirical evaluation of the

alliance choices of local insurgencies in the Southeast Asian region. A concluding section sums up the findings and offers some implications and directions for further research.

Ⅱ. Theoretical Framework

Local rebel groups ally with international terrorist organizations when the benefits of association are higher than the costs. The benefits of an alliance for the rebel group are increased capability for executing attacks and the costs stem from the entrapment resulting from the commitment. Rebels with limited aims who are highly dependent on the population of the contested area prefer to act alone to avoid being associated with a global radical cause and becoming the target of large-scale counterterrorist efforts. Insurgencies with ambitious agendas and weak ties to the local population seek cooperation with international groups to increase the chances of achieving their objectives.

Terrorist organizations are strategic actors performing according to a collective rationality. They make informed judgments based on experience and logical reasoning to maximize the chances of achieving their objectives. A group evaluates possible lines of action and chooses the one that promises the highest rewards at the lowest cost. Militants need to calculate what methods will help them overcome the problem of significant power disparity between themselves and the target state without provoking overwhelming retaliation. While the choice of strategy does not have to follow an established decision-making procedure, the group as a whole ultimately adopts the behavior that proves to be most efficient in pursuit of its goals (Crenshaw 2008; Oots 1986). Differences in opinion between separate factions regarding the aims of the movement are resolved in one of two ways. The group can negotiate a compromise and agree on a final objective and an appropriate common line of action. Alternatively, the rebels can split into subgroups, each pursuing its own proclaimed agenda as happened when members of the Muslim separatist movement in the Philippines, dissatisfied with the moderate approach of the main

organization, left to form the radical ASG. The newly formed factions generally differentiate themselves from each other and act as separate groups.

The benefits of terrorist alliances can be narrowed down to enhanced capability for launching attacks and added legitimacy to the rebels' cause. Access to training and expertise increase the success rate of small groups' assaults and the international network of an ally helps with procurement of funds, weapons, and technology. In addition, association with a global struggle adds appeal to the local group's cause and creates publicity. These benefits improve the rebels' chances of achieving their political objectives by increasing their coercive leverage and expanding the pool of potential recruits to the cause.

The fastest way for a local rebel group to improve its operational capabilities is through cooperation with an experienced organization. Through joint training the militants gain knowhow and improve the effectiveness of their assault tactics. They often learn techniques tested in previous operations of the patron and unavailable to outsiders (Cragin et al. 2007). A terrorist group's capabilities to carry out attacks are categorized according to five thresholds: having basic knowledge allowing it to kill or injure around 50 people in a single assault; possessing ability to target foreign nationals; capability to kill or injure more than 150 people in a single strike; ability to assail guarded targets; and ability to perform coordinated attacks (Cragin and Daly 2004: 14). Rebels receiving training from organizations of the caliber of Al Qaeda (rated 5 on a 0 to 5 scale) can expect to graduate to the final level in a relatively short time. Apart from technical skills, international organizations share funds and the financial networks required to move them with their local allies.

Association with a global organization increases the credibility of local militants before a broad audience. A local insurgency's appeal normally does not transcend the confines of a small region. It may find it challenging to gain support from outsiders who would view the group as no more than a criminal gang pursuing a narrow agenda. Being "accredited" from a widely known organization

provides a small group of rebels with a ready running platform that can be used to appeal to populations outside of their original area of operations. This creates a recruitment pool, which can be used to gain more members and replace battle losses. For this dynamic to apply, the allied groups need to share a minimal common ideological denominator as radicals with fundamentally different systems of political or religious beliefs cannot appeal to the same audiences (Karmon 2005).

The principal costs of terrorist alliances are decreased security and loss of local support. Association with an international terrorist organization guarantees that a group will be entrapped in a global fight and targeted by international counterterrorist authorities. There is also the risk of alienating domestic supporters if the ally organization's agenda is inconsistent with local values or the methods it uses are particularly extreme.

Paradoxically, by becoming more operationally efficient, a rebel group may become less secure. Cross-border alliances between terrorist organizations invite attention from multiple states and provide incentive for legitimate coordinated retaliatory action against the rebels.[1] Common threats such as transnational terrorist activities create incentives for dialogue and facilitate communication between governments that would otherwise have no basis for cooperation. Organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have developed mechanisms for joint counterterrorist action, which specifically address transnational terrorism and cannot be effectively utilized when the threat is purely domestic. The main belligerents in the war on terror, led by the United States, also provide direct financial and military assistance to countries where local terrorist groups are identified as indirect challenge to their own national security. As international counterterrorist cooperation is more effective than single state efforts, a rebel group faces increased level of threat to its existence by entering an international alliance.

[1] For this reason, most rebel groups deny all connections to international terrorist organizations. The nature of cooperation is different from interstate alliances where the value of the alliance as a deterrent grows when the adversary is aware of its existence.

Association with an international terrorist organization may result in loss of local support for a rebel group. First, it leads to an increase in the levels of violence above the threshold tolerated by the average public, alienating all but the most radical supporters of the militants. Second, it involves the targeting of foreign civilians that are not necessarily seen as enemies by the local population. Lastly, as it causes increased retaliatory action by local and international counterterrorist authorities, the community hosting the rebel group often suffers collateral damage. Ultimately, the militants face a tradeoff between maintaining the support of the local population and benefitting from an alliance with a skilled patron.

Additional costs in asymmetric alliances may include the risk of loss of policy autonomy and exploitation of local resources by the international terrorist organization. The weaker side may find that while it provides recruits and bases for operation to the patron, its own interests are not considered and that it does not receive support in pursuing its original agenda. This is likely to create further tensions between its fighters and the local population, which will be unwilling to bear the costs of supporting a fight for a purely foreign agenda. In this sense, the motivations of the international organization in seeking connections with a local group will affect the calculations of the potential costs of an alliance.

The central problem here is to determine when local rebel groups find allying with international terrorists more useful than harmful. This kind of cooperation is a high-cost strategy that would only make sense when the stakes are also sufficiently high. The reason is that an alliance maximizes the coercive potential of a group at the expense of the security of its members. Rational actors would only accept the risk if the expected returns justify the investment or if the goals are unachievable by alternative means.

In general, rebel groups pursue either limited objectives, such as a change in policy or ambitious aims involving a major revision of the status quo. Limited objectives include equal treatment of a minority, some level of regional autonomy, or the displacement of certain political elites. Being rarely incompatible with the vital interests of the rival state, such goals can be achieved through

bargaining and negotiations. Ambitious are objectives requiring radical changes such as a new form of government, the creation of a new state, or the abolition of an existing one. Such extreme aspirations require the authorities to relinquish control of the state apparatus, which makes them unlikely to be fulfilled by peaceful means. The nature of a group's goals determines the likelihood of success of a rebellion and the range of its supporters, which in turn affect the value put on the benefits of cooperation with an international organization relative to the costs.

Local rebel groups with limited objectives will calculate that the costs of allying with an international terrorist organization outweigh the benefits. For them, the increase in operational capabilities resulting from cooperation with an experienced patron is of limited value, insufficient to offset the costs of increased counterterrorist activity. Moreover, as limited aims promise returns only for the local population, maintaining its support is valued higher than attempting to expand the appeal of the group to a transnational audience.

Rebels with limited aims are likely to be successful without forming alliances. Their agenda can potentially be achieved by peaceful means if the government of the rival state commits to negotiations. Such fighters generally use low-casualty demonstrative and destructive forms of terrorism to draw attention and mobilize support that will pressure the authorities to change policy and avoid doing serious damage to maintain sympathy for the cause.[2] Tactics of this kind can be employed with the resources available to a local group. Alliance with a patron organization has few benefits because it does not significantly affect the chances of fulfilling the final objective of the rebellion, even if it brings operational expertise. At the same time, association with a global terrorist network will threaten the existence of the movement by making its militants a target for international counterterrorist efforts. Faced with overwhelming power, the minority that produced the rebellion may even be forced to cease resistance and accept a truce on terms that

[2] I use the distinctions provided by Robert Pape in discussing the different forms of terrorism and their objectives (2005: 10).

cement the unfavorable status quo.

The risk of alienating the local population acts as an additional deterrent preventing groups with limited aims from associating with radical international organizations. As the rebels claim to act on behalf of the people in the contested region, the aim of securing the political freedom or equal treatment for the oppressed minority creates legitimacy for their militant activities. In this sense, the support of the local community is vital for the continued existence of rebellion. An alliance with an international terrorist group will erode that support, without replacing it with any tangible benefit. A global radical organization can promote a local agenda before a broader audience, but this is unlikely to cause an upsurge of foreign recruits because the success of the rebellion can offer few material or moral rewards to actors from outside the contested region.

Domestic insurgencies pursuing ambitious agendas will seek cooperation with international groups to gain a chance in achieving their goals. If the main objective of a group is a major change in the status quo, such as gaining control over the state, the benefits of cooperation will outweigh the costs. Such groups stand less to lose in terms of local support as their hope is to appeal to a broader audience than the population in their main area of operations to recruit more sympathizers sharing their extreme views.

A local group with ambitious aims cannot hope to be successful without forming an alliance with a patron organization. Its agenda presupposes achieving full victory against a state, which requires maximal levels of operational proficiency and capability to inflict significant damage. This includes the use of suicide terrorism aimed at creating a high number of casualties, to increase the coercive leverage of the insurgents against the authorities. In addition, given the difficulties of sustaining a rebellion over a long time, the time horizons of the fighters will be relatively short. Calculating that they are unlikely to complete their aims alone over a brief period of time, they will seek tactical support from organizations with experience. As an alliance is necessary for the success of the rebellion, the militants will be less sensitive to the costs of cooperation.

An asymmetric alliance will create publicity and expand the recruitment pool of an ambitious group. Rebels seeking control over a state rarely have strong ties with the people inhabiting their main area of operations. As their aims outgrow the agenda of an oppressed minority, they cannot claim to represent the population of the contested area, which may include the entire territory of one or more states. Such groups can instead hope to gain legitimacy for their actions by being associated with the ideological cause of an international organization. Additionally, ambitious groups will expect that the extreme methods necessary for the pursuit of their objectives will inevitably alienate the majority of the average public. If the patron group has a significant number of radicalized adherents, this will produce exposure to a larger audience and allow the protégé to recruit among a wider base of supporters. They will not be deterred by fears of losing the little local following they may have.

The theory assumes that international organizations always try to attract local rebel groups to their cause. Maintaining alliances in different regions significantly strengthens global terrorist networks at an affordable cost. They gain agents furthering their strategic interests, expand their pools of recruits, and benefit from access to the training camps and logistic networks of local groups in their native countries.

In sum, the theory presented here argues that militant groups with limited agendas relying on the support of the local population will avoid allying with international terrorist organizations. Rebels who pursue ambitions objectives will choose to benefit from cooperation with larger, more experienced groups. The next section assesses the plausibility of this theory against four cases in Southeast Asia.

Ⅲ. Terrorist Alliances in Southeast Asia

Two international terrorist organizations trying to gain influence in Southeast Asia are Al Qaeda and IS. Al Qaeda's penetration of the region started in the 1990s and accelerated after the crackdown on

its activities in the Middle East in the early 2000s (Abuza 2002). IS is currently actively recruiting support from radicalized Southeast Asian Muslims sympathetic to the idea of establishing states governed by Sharia. The group is seeking connections with local rebels sympathetic to its cause in an effort to increase its global influence and build an additional outpost for the jihadists in their fight against the West. Both organizations are attracted to the permissive environment of states where governments have relatively weak capacity to counter terrorist activities. The presence of elements within the population that are receptive to their cause makes the region particularly appealing. The readiness of local rebel groups to form alliances with the global actors varies depending on the rational calculations of the benefits that cooperation can bring.

3.1. Indonesia

In Indonesia, JI chose to increase its strength by allying with an international terrorist group, in this case Al Qaeda. The alliance significantly contributed to JI's capacity to organize and carry out lethal attacks increasing its capability to pursue its political goals. The clear association with a global terrorist network and its agenda, however, instantly made the group a target of international anti-terrorist efforts, ultimately leading to its rapid decline. The rising levels of violence alienated the public, undermining the rebels' position in the homeland. Recognizing the high costs associated with the alliance, moderate members of the group's leadership signaled intent to reject violence and further involvement with extremist networks. The more radical members, harboring ambitions unlikely to be satisfied through negotiation with the government, however, continue to place higher value on the benefits of cooperation with a patron organization.

JI was founded in 1993 with the aim to unite Indonesia, Malaysia, and several other countries under a pan-regional Islamic Caliphate ruled by Islamic law. Its base of operations is Indonesia, with four command centers, called "mantiqis," stationed in different parts of Southeast Asia, reflecting the group's wide regional ambitions. The main targets of the group are Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, and the Unites States. JI is funded through

membership donations and business activities, many of which are of criminal nature (Abuza 2003). The group never enjoyed popular support and did not benefit much from its ties with the local population.

JI has formed a strong long-term alliance relationship with Al Qaeda. Starting in 1998, the international terrorist organization has consistently provided funding through bank transfers or cash funds, training, and bomb-making expertise to the local militants while encouraging attacks on Western targets. JI on its side assists with recruiting and establishing cells serving as outposts of the radical jihadist network in Southeast Asia.

JI's connections with Al Qaeda have deep roots going back to the time when the group was first created. JI was born out of resistance against the leadership of the decades-old Darul Islam group, which became increasingly passive in the fight for the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia (Dewanto et al. 2013). Its founders, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir started building their network in Malaysia in the late 1980s while hiding from a prison sentence for their ties with the main movement. Soon after, they began sending Muslim volunteers to join the fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. The men that had been through the training camps and battlefields in South Asia received combat practice and became indoctrinated in fundamentalist ideology. This is where they first formed relationships with Osama bin Laden and other leaders of Al Qaeda (Gordon and Lindo 2011).

The willingness to commit to cooperation with Al Qaeda was not shared among all members of JI. Moderate factions believed the implementation of Osama bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* calling for a holy war against the West to be inconsistent with JI's long-term strategy of gaining mass appeal through religious indoctrination (ICG 2004). However, members stationed in the region covered by Mantiqi I—Singapore and Malaysia—wished to adopt Al Qaeda's global agenda and pressured for attacks on Western targets and immediate action in Indonesia. Although Hambali (Riduan Isomuddin), the chief of operations for that region, originally had no intention to attack US targets, his position changed during his involvement with the patron

network and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—the mastermind of the 9/11 plot—in particular (9/11 Commission 2004: 150).

Leading the fighters who supported the *fatwas*, Hambali went on to organize and execute lethal attacks on the territory of Indonesia. On October 12, 2002, they detonated several bombs in popular tourist locations on the island of Bali, killing 202 people. The attack was professionally executed and demonstrated JI's increasing capacity as a militant organization.

The Bali bombings precipitated a split in the organization. The moderate faction insisted on distancing from Al Qaeda and focusing on their primary objective to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia only. Fighters committed to building a regional Caliphate continued to plan and execute high-casualty attacks across the country supported by the extremist patron. While it is not clear whether there is an actual division within the organization, it can be seen that the group pursuing a more ambitious agenda is more inclined to cooperate with an international organization, while those members envisioning more modest objectives disapprove of the relationship.

Lethal attacks on Western targets continued to take place despite internal disagreements. Abu Bakar Bashir embraced the fight against America as his own and propagated waging *jihad* against the West, although he insisted that westerners should be attacked on their own territory (Atran 2005). Regardless of rhetoric, further attacks in Indonesia, such as those in Jakarta in 2003, 2004, and 2009 were linked to Noordin Mohammad Top, leader of the Malaysian JI splinter group loyal to Al Qaeda. In 2016, another attack in Jakarta was linked to IS, showing that JI was committed to maintaining ties with major terrorist organizations and that it was forging new alliances.

According to *The 9/11 Commission Report*, prominent figures in the leadership of JI, including Hambali, decided to seek alliance with Al Qaeda because their objectives were unachievable without the resources that the bigger organization could supply (9/11 Commission 2004: 152). He reportedly spent years developing connections with operatives from the patron organization and

sending recruits to be trained in camps in Afghanistan to build a network of strong recruits (Kuppusamy 2003).

The benefits of the alliance for JI were substantial. Teaming up with Al Qaeda significantly improved JI's attack capabilities. Indonesian fighters trained in international camps acquired skills they could not have developed independently in a short time. Their deadliest operations were executed by members who had lived and fought in Afghanistan. In addition, the group enjoyed financial support from bin Laden and his associates, as well as free access to their global money laundering network. Al Qaeda sponsored the 2002 Bali bombings and other attacks by directly sending funds to the radical members of JI who could then perform the operations without having to seek the approval of factions that opposed this approach.

The moderates in JI were correct to anticipate strong governmental response to Al Qaeda's involvement in the country. As soon as Indonesia's rebels were associated with the infamous group, they quickly became targets in the global campaign against terror. At the first signs that Al Qaeda had a support base among local extremist groups, Indonesia was promptly included in a short list of target countries as the US planned to expand its war against Al Qaeda beyond Afghanistan. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz stated that "going after Al Qaeda in Indonesia is not something that should wait until after Al Qaeda has been uprooted from Afghanistan" (Ch and rasekaran 2002).

US experts believed that there were links between Al Qaeda and local extremists as early as 2001. They worried about "sleeper cells" being set up in the country that could be activated as the global network's strongholds in Afghanistan became threatened. Concerns about the safety of Americans at the scene increased as local militants appeared to be associating with Al Qaeda and its global jihadist agenda. At the time, there was no evidence for Al Qaeda's ties with local militant groups and the plan was based on suspicions of training operations conducted by the group with the support of local Muslim militia Laskar Jihad, whose representative denied the allegations. Laskar Jihad was among several groups

actively backed by JI before it dissolved.

International efforts brought results. Intra-agency cooperation led to the arrest or killing of many of the organization's leaders. In 2003, Hambali was captured in Thailand and transferred to Guantanamo "to face prosecution for terrorist activities against the United States." (DOD 2008).

The Indonesian government stepped up its efforts to curb JI's activities after becoming convinced that the group was supported by Islamic radicals. Sponsored by the United States and Australia, the Police Force's special counterterrorism squad Detachment 88 played the lead role in curbing JI's activities in the country. The squad was formed in 2003, but became fully operational after 2005, succeeding in incapacitating the most violent factions in the rebel organization (Gordon and Lindo 2011).

The Al Qaeda-inspired attacks in Bali produced strong public opposition to the *jihad* and JI in general (Lim 2005). This change in public opinion regarding JI's actions was the necessary condition that allowed the government to adopt an aggressive approach against the militants. While the group never had a strong support base among the general public, in the early 2000s, politicians in Indonesia risked alienating a significant portion of the Muslim population by authorizing firm response against JI. Several deadly attacks linked to Al Qaeda were enough to erode support for the rebels' cause among Indonesians and the government was free to pursue them without fearing electoral backlash (Gordon and Lindo 2011).

Despite the risk, Indonesia's most sophisticated terrorist organization maintained an alliance with Al Qaeda to maximize its fighting capabilities. The rebels paid the cost of this cooperation and JI suffered significant damage after becoming a target in the international fight against terror. Many of its most prominent leaders were captured in international counterterrorist operations and its support among the general population in Indonesia withered beyond repair. Some members of the group insist on focusing on ideological propaganda to gain more popular support for the cause and avoid being associated with a global radical group singled out

as the main enemy in the global war on terror. Others, however, continue to attach more value to the benefits of cooperation with a strong ally. Strategic reasoning may lead JI to distance itself from the methods and the global radical agenda promoted by bin Laden in the short term. But in the end, since the group has ambitious long-term objectives, it is likely to continue to rely on cooperation with larger terrorist organizations to increase its capabilities to further its political aims.

3.2. Thailand

Insurgent movements in Southern Thailand take great caution not to be identified with global terrorist organizations, thus effectively remaining outside the scope of concern of international counterterrorism initiatives that focus mainly on trans-national threats. Their limited aims and high-reliance on the support of the local population make the rebels averse to allying with a large international terrorist organization.

Organizations resorting to terrorist tactics in Thailand consist of Malay-Muslim rebels operating in the southern parts of the country. For half a century they have demanded autonomy and the creation of an Islamic state on the territory of the three provinces incorporated into the Thai state by the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 —Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Militants act from numerous urban cells heavily relying on the support of the local population to avoid detection. Since 2001 there has been a noticeable rise in the intensity of attacks and their level of sophistication. The choice of targets has become more explicitly religiously motivated, leading to worries about the possibility of the insurgency transforming into a new front for global jihadism (Chalk 2008; ICG 2016).

Thailand's Malay-Muslim insurgency holds the potential of outgrowing its national agenda and becoming connected with transnational extremist groups, but so far the conflict has not become a part of a broader jihadist struggle. Although recently attacks have become more sophisticated, militants have deliberately made an effort not to be related with a jihadist cause, which would turn them into target for international antiterrorist efforts. Security

officials and other specialists agree that they have made a strategic decision to not seek alliance with global terrorist networks to avoid first a crackdown on the insurgency, and second, alienating the local population (ICG 2005; Chalk 2008).

The rebels did not avoid allying with an international Islamist organization for lack of potential partners or because they do not expect to gain much from such cooperation. Both Al Qaeda and IS have been actively working to increase their presence in the country. Since Al Qaeda started expanding into the region back in the early 1990s, a few of its fighters are known to have used Thailand as a base for operations. A weak state, lax regulations on the movement of people and finances, and easy access to training facilities and weapons, on top of existing underground networks of rebels sharing an ideology compatible with their own, present an ideal environment for extremists to hide and develop their fighting capabilities (Abuza 2002). Thai militant groups could have established strong ties with the international organization if they perceived this to be in their interest.

The Southern insurgency could benefit significantly in terms of increased capabilities by allying with an established terrorist organization. At present, the number of incidents is rising, but the insurgency lacks organization and the ability to produce sophisticated bombs (Chalk 2008). As JI's experience has shown, by allying with an international organization, domestic groups could quickly achieve a new level of professionalism by participating in training, sharing weapons-related expertise, and gaining access to substantial funds.

By not allying with an organization with the global exposure of Al Qaeda, however, Thailand's insurgency successfully managed to avoid both focused international and domestic counterterrorist action. International institutions dealing with terrorism in the region did not get directly involved in what was considered to be a local affair. Their role with regard to internal insurgencies is limited to assisting with counterterrorism capacity building through bilateral or multilateral incentives under the flag of ASEAN and other regional organizations. The effectiveness of such incentives depends most of

all on the willingness and commitment of member-states to participating and applying the provided guidelines within their own borders. As Thai authorities failed to appropriate the resources made available through ASEAN, the rebels never had to worry about evading advanced counterterrorist measures developed by international experts.

Absent sufficient incentives, the Thai state hardly demonstrated any improvement in its ability to fight Malay-Muslim militant groups in its Southern provinces. The levels of violence increased in the early 2000s, with fighters resorting to the use of bombs and drive-by shootings. The insurgents claimed close to 6500 lives between 2004 and 2017 as the Malay minority actively opposed assimilation with the rest of the society (Domínguez 2015). By 2016 the rebels had successfully expanded their activities beyond the Southern regions and launched attacks in major tourist resorts, including Phuket and Hua Hin. The capacity of the police and the army to prevent future bombings in highly populated areas, however, failed to evolve and match the insurgents' improving capabilities (Chalk 2008).

The ineffectiveness the government's efforts is due less to the lack of interest in countering the insurgency and more to the relatively low priority of the issue. The Thai government started developing a strategy for dealing with the unrest in the Southern provinces since violence levels increased in 2004. The Royal Thai Police and the Royal Thai Army deployed more than twenty thousand security personnel in the region by 2006. Paramilitary rangers, various village defense units, and even a teacher-protection battalion supplemented the efforts of the specialized units (ICG 2005). Security forces in the country, however, continue to be unable to control what has become the deadliest conflict in Southeast Asia at present (Abuza 2011). The government relies on a weak intelligence infrastructure and its agents know little about the problem region. There is no strategic framework or comprehensive plan of action guiding stabilization efforts (Chalk 2008). Deployed forces are poorly prepared and coordination between agencies remains problematic (ICG 2005). Several administrations consistently implemented policies that had the effect of increasing tensions while focusing on issues with higher priority and rising political tensions

in Bangkok. Domestic political rivalries affected the Thai state's ability to control the Southern insurgency as politics took priority over the limited security concern (Chalk 2008). As a result, its effort to counter the threat have been sporadic, unfocused, and often counter-productive.

The insurgency's high reliance on the support of the local population also factored in its decision to not ally with a radical international group. The Malay-Muslim minority is economically disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country and suffers from general alienation from other regions. Its distrust in the government enables the insurgents to effectively hide and operate from numerous urban cells without fear of detection. Local citizens, however, are not firmly committed to winning independence and largely disapprove of extreme attacks (Chalk 2008). The insurgents stand a high risk of losing their much needed support by allying with a radical organization and further increasing the level of violence.

By preserving its limited aims and avoiding association with international terrorist networks, the Thai insurgency never became an issue of overwhelming importance in Thailand. The strategy of going it alone and relying on low-casualty demonstrative terrorist tactics adopted by the rebels is effective in generating publicity for their cause, paving the way to a negotiated settlement in the future. As their objective does not threaten the state's core interests, the militants can expect to reach an acceptable agreement without risking entrapment in a costly alliance.

3.3. Philippines

ASG in the Philippines provides support for the argument that rebels enter alliances out of utility considerations rather than based on personal affiliations, shared objectives, or in response to common threats. Its mode of operations exhibits a curious pattern. The group allies with an international organization and increases its capabilities and the intensity of its attacks. The rising level of violence provokes strong counterterrorist response from local and international authorities, significantly weakening the rebels and severing connections

with their current patron. Without external support, the group reverts to kidnap-for-ransom activities to raise funds. The process is then repeated again. As the ambitious agenda pursued by ASG requires significant negotiation leverage against the government, backed by ability to inflict damage, their strategy focuses on rapidly increasing their mastery in carrying out lethal attacks through alliances. Incapable of conducting high-casualty operations alone, the ASG puts a very high value on the benefits of cooperation with an experienced bigger organization. Different factions of the group have allied in turn with Al Qaeda, JI, and IS, depending on their accessibility at the given time. Although these patrons share a broad ideological tradition, they have different goals and different long-term objectives (Byman 2015). ASG partnered with them to increase its coercive capabilities rather than out of perception that they are on the same side in a global struggle.

ASG was founded in 1991 by Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani as a Filipino Muslim (Moro) separatist insurgency. It emerged when some members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) refused to accept the outcome of the peace process aimed at establishing an autonomous Muslim region. After Janjalani was killed, the group split in several factions active mainly in Mindanao in the southern Philippines, where reside the majority of the Muslim population of the country (Fellman 2011). ASG's main target is the Philippine government, including the police forces and the military, as well as Christian missionaries and priests. The group is financed through patron organizations, kidnappings, and other criminal activities.

ASG is the most radical of the separatist movements in the Philippines. Rejecting the moderate aims of the MNLF leadership, they declared the goal of overthrowing the Philippine government and establishing a Mindanao Islamic State (Cragin and Chalk 2003). Their objective is, in their own words, no less than "an Islamic state —not autonomy, not independence, not revolution" (Fellman 2011). Emerging out of the disillusionment of radicals with the moderate approach, ASG chooses to act aggressively using extreme high-casualty terrorist tactics. Its founders embraced an ambitious agenda requiring the support of a patron organization to succeed. MILF

serves as a contrast to the ASG by intentionally evading association with international terrorist organizations. They deny any involvement specifically to avoid being targeted in the global war on terror (Rabasa et al. 2006b: 162).

ASG's first ally was Al Qaeda. Abdurajak Janjalani met and possibly fought together with Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan in the late 1980s. Since this early period, when ASG carried out a series of attacks against Christian targets in the Philippines, it was funded, trained, and armed by Al Qaeda. Bin Laden's brother-in-law served as a connection between the organizations and headed charities used to hide the flow of money from Al Qaeda to ASG. Mindanao became a major operational hub of Al Qaeda with many terrorist operations being planned there, before the relationship was ended by focused government efforts in mid-1990s (Abuza 2002).

Having suffered a blow from the military, ASG regrouped and forged an alliance with the largest Southeast Asian terrorist group, the JI. Its expertise, resulting from its own alliance with Al Qaeda, helped the smaller new ally develop more sophisticated attack capabilities. While providing shelter for JI militants, members of the ASG benefitted from training in bomb-making and assistance with funding. The two groups planned and executed several attacks in the Philippines, provoking increase in the intensity of international counterterrorist efforts targeting ASG. Sustained counterterrorist action succeeded in dissolving the alliance by 2007 (Fellman 2011). The benefits of cooperation, however, gave the group a fighting chance against the government and solidified the conviction, among several of the leaders of the group, that the only way to success is through association with an established terrorist network.

Following a period of lower activity, in July 2014, a group of ASG factions committed to yet another alliance. The fighter, designated as their common leader, Isnilon Hapilon, posted a video swearing allegiance to the head of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Hookway 2014).

The group saw significant improvement in its capabilities with each of its alliances. Acting alone, it was able to perform small-scale assaults or kidnapping of foreign nationals. With the support of Al

Qaeda, attacks become more sophisticated and the group evolved from using improvised devices to plastic explosives (Cragin et al. 2007). After experiencing a significant setback due to the dissolution of the alliance with Al Qaeda, joining forces with JI enabled ASG to execute a series of high-casualty operations, including the sinking of the SuperFerry14 in the world's deadliest terrorist attack at sea, claiming 116 lives. In the brief periods when the group was acting without the support of a patron organization, it degenerated into a criminal gang with little political relevance (Abuza 2010). On each occasion, ASG sought partnership with a different international organization in a bid to increase its power.

Every time the ASG formed an alliance, the resulting spike in the levels of violence provoked strong international response. In 1995, successful government counterterrorist operations cut the ties between ASG and Al Qaeda, essentially putting end to their cooperation. In 2001, the US government launched Operation Enduring Freedom to address the terrorist threat in the Philippines as part of the Global War on Terrorism. US soldiers trained local forces in counterterrorist operations and closely assisted local efforts to curb terrorist activities in the southern parts of the country through tactical-level advice and participation in operations. The activities of US special operational forces decisively contributed to the weakening of ASG and drastically reduced the group's ability to launch attacks (Robinson et al. 2016). In 2006, the US led yet another operation, Oplan Ultimatum, killing the top leaders of the insurgency and again diminishing its capacity for action (Fellman 2011).

The Armed Forces of the Philippines performed a series of autonomous successful operations against ASG. The attacks consistently resulted in the death and capture of key figures in ASG leadership. By 2014, the membership of the group declined from more than 1,300 to around 400 militants (Abuza 2010). A key achievement of counterterrorist forces was eroding popular support for the insurgency. An explicit task for the troops was to separate the population from the militants. An assessment of public opinion showed that trust in ASG had declined from 8% in 2011 to 2.5% in 2014 (Robinson et al. 2016).

Concerns about losing popular support, however, do not appear to weigh much in the decision whether to risk association with a global radical network in the case of ASG. The majority of Mindanao Muslims support the more moderate MILF (Cragin and Daly 2004). ASG supporters are so few that the legitimacy derived from joining a bigger cause may be enough to lure more sympathizers from a transnational audience than will be alienated in their home provinces by the radical methods associated with the alliance.

Like JI, ASG maintains alliances with international terrorist organizations to maximize its fighting capabilities. It pays dearly for this association, but continues to attach more value to the benefits of cooperation with a stronger ally. The group's ambitious long-term objectives make this strategy the only choice, providing a chance at success against the state when its vital interests are at stake.

3.4. Malaysia

Malaysia currently has no fully operational home terrorist organization. However, a number of newly established extremist groups appear to follow closely the pattern seen in other countries. They are led by radicalized individuals with ambitious agenda, and who have little or no connection to the local population (The Straits Times 2016/12/18). Emerging as the influence of IS grows, they are potential allies to the jihadist organization that could facilitate its further spread into the region.

Several groups are developing terror cells on the territory of Malaysia at present. The largest of them, Kumpulan Gagak Hitam, numbers around 100 fighters with several possibly already receiving training in IS camps in Syria. This and other groups exhibit coordinated activity suggesting that they are more than recruitment networks for IS.

Newly emerging groups define their objectives as no less than overthrow of the government and "freeing" the population from secular rule. Whether they will grow into functional militant groups is a matter for speculation, but if they do, their behavior suggests that they are likely to ally with an international organization and

rapidly develop their capabilities to execute lethal attacks in pursuit of this ambitious aim.

Cooperation between emerging radical groups and IS resulted in a jointly planned operation in June 2016. IS launched its first successful attack in Malaysia after nine failed attempts with the help of local militants. The organization claimed responsibility after two fighters threw a grenade into a bar in the town of Puchong, west of Kuala Lumpur, calling the attackers "soldiers of the Caliphate from the wilayat of Malaysia." The suspected mastermind behind the attack was a Muhamad Wanndy Mohamad Jedi, Malaysia's top IS recruiter who had moved to Syria two years beforehand (Gunaratna 2016). He was also associated with one of Malaysia's emerging militant groups, Al Qubro.

So far the Malaysian government has been successful in curbing terrorist activities in the country. The number of potential recruits, however, continues to be on the rise (Shah 2016). As in the other cases where rebels have ambitious goals, increased government response does not appear to affect the decision to align with a global terrorist network.

Overall, newly emerging radical groups in Malaysia behave as similar actors in other states did in the early stages of their development. Their priority is to rapidly develop superior capacity for performing attacks through close alliance with an experienced international terrorist organization. Low levels of public support and low dependence on the local population for survival means that they are not averse to adopting a radical ideology and executing high-casualty attacks against targets in their home country.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

This article has argued that strategic considerations explain the divergent alliance patterns of local terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia. Thailand's Southern insurgency avoided allying with a global terrorist organization because the cost of cooperation would have outweighed the benefits and endangered the rebel's cause. The

limited aims of achieving regional autonomy are within the reach of the militants without help from outside. Association with an interstate jihadist network, on the other hand, would put the group on the radar of international counterterrorist agencies and provoke an increase in government efforts to suppress the uprising. Terrorist groups in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines formed asymmetric alliances with established international terrorist organizations to increase their capabilities to launch high-casualty attacks. They chose to risk retaliation, because their ambitious objectives require more operational efficiency than they can achieve without outside expertise.

Another determinant of alliance policy is the level of dependency of a rebel group on the local population. In Thailand, the insurgency is closely connected to its local constituency and relies on them to continue its activities. Therefore, it is averse to risking the alienation of the people it represents by associating with a patron having a radical agenda and using extremist tactics incompatible with the local values. Terrorists in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have aims going beyond the liberation of a limited territory. Their extreme views are supported by a small percentage of the local population, which they are not afraid to alienate. Forging ties with radical international organizations promoting a global agenda lends legitimacy to their cause and allows them to appeal to a larger transnational audience.

Contrary to the common view, the local insurgencies and international terrorist organizations discussed here did not form alliances to address common threats. Prior to cooperating, they shared neither enemies, nor targets. If some convergence in objectives did occur, it was a result of the alliance and not a prerequisite for its formation. Rising levels of threat and response to oppression also do not explain alliance patterns in Southeast Asia. The insurgency that suffered the highest level of violence from the government, the Malay-Muslims in Thailand, continues to avoid association with a radical jihadist cause. In all other cases, the rebels willingly accepted an increase in the level of threat as a result of their alliances.

The findings in this article have specific implications for regional security. If international jihadist organizations continue to penetrate the region, domestic terrorism will grow into a transnational threat (Enders et al. 2011). Local rebels could provide a support base for global jihadist groups threating stability at the regional level. Disconcerting tendencies are already clearly visible in Malaysia. Recognizing that the emerging extremist organizations are likely to follow the alliance patterns of JI and ASG is crucial for producing a timely and effective response to the threat. At the same time, local groups with moderate aims such as the Southern insurgency in Thailand and MNLF in the Philippines can be placated and even coopted by the governments. Being able to identify the groups that are prone to allying with global terrorist organizations will allow counterterrorist authorities to focus on prevention and better tailor approaches to different types of actors.

The questions raised here create the need for further research. Beyond the calculations of costs and benefits, there exist personal sympathies and convictions that define individuals' willingness to cooperate, but these considerations become crucial only if the strategic requirements for alliance are satisfied and as such remain beyond the scope of the present work. Additionally, understanding why some groups pursue ambitious goals would help authorities develop appropriate preventive strategies that could significantly increase the security of the state. A further investigation in the durability of the relationship, the level of autonomy of the smaller group in asymmetric alliances between terrorist organizations, and comparisons of the influence of different types of groups on regional dynamics would also provide many insights needed to develop effective approaches to addressing the terrorist threat on a global scale.

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The Acculturation of the Worship of Goddess Tianhou in Vietnam

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[*Abstract*]

The Chinese began migrating to Vietnam very early (in the third century BC) and continuously underwent either mass or small migration afterwards. Their long processes of living and having contact with different ethnic communities in Vietnam made the Chinese worship of Goddess Tianhou change radically. By examining these practices of worship in two areas where the Chinese settled the most, Thừa Thiên Huế province (central Vietnam) and Hồ Chí Minh City (southern Vietnam), this paper aims to understand the patterns of acculturation of the Chinese community in its new land. An analysis of information from both field research and archival sources will show how the Chinese have changed the worship of the Tianhou goddess during their co-existence with ethnic communities in Vietnam. It argues that there is no "peripheral fossilization" of the Chinese culture in Vietnam.

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Keywords: Acculturation, Assimilation, Peripheral Fossilization, the Chinese in Vietnam, Worship of Goddess Tianhou

Ⅰ. Introduction: The Chinese in Vietnam and Their Cult of Goddess Tianhou

Tianhou worship is a folk belief of the Chinese, which emerged in the tenth century on the Meizhou (湄洲) Island in the Fujian (福建) Province of China. This paper investigates how the worship of the Tianhou goddess evolved during the periods in which the Chinese migrated to Vietnam and co-existed with different Vietnamese communities. It seeks to understand the evolution of this cult in two areas where the Chinese settled the most, that is, Thừa Thiên-Huế province (central Vietnam) and Hồ Chí Minh City (southern Vietnam).

The term “acculturation” here means the changes a culture undergoes after it has had long contact with another culture, bearing in mind that many factors impact these changes, and that the changes proceed in different directions. This understanding of acculturation is agreed upon among many authors (Kottak 2005; Ember and Ember 1990: 310, 324; Kroeber 1948; Herskovit 1955; Clifton 1968). This paper also borrows the term peripheral fossilization of American anthropologists such as C. L. Wissler (1870-1947), Franz Boas (1858-1942) and A. L. Kroeber (1876-1960. These American anthropologists have developed the idea of diffusionism at the end of the nineteenth century into the "central and peripheral” theory, to study interchanges and intercontacts of different cultures. This theory holds that each culture is formed from one center, then diffuses to the surrounding area which is called peripheral, which also impacts the center. Some cultural phenomena that spread to the peripheral areas are commonly believed to be "fossilized." Supposedly conforming to this theory, the Fujian culture of China played the role of the center of the Tianhou worship, while Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries became its peripheral areas. Nevertheless, in this paper will argue, based on an analysis of information from both field research and archival sources, that

there was no peripheral fossilization of the Chinese culture in Vietnam.

Regarding the term "Chinese," this paper refers to the community that officially defined by the Vietnamese government as those who are of Han Chinese origin, those who belong to Sinicized ethnic minorities in China who then migrated to Vietnam, and those who are descendants of the Han Chinese migrants; they have Vietnamese citizenship, maintain cultural practices of the Han Chinese, especially language and customs, and self-identify as "Hoa people" (Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam – Ban Chấp hành Trung ương 1995).

In China, Tianhou (天后) has different names including Lin Mo (林默), Lin Moniang (林默娘); Ma Zupo (妈祖婆) or Mazu (妈祖), Niangniang (娘娘), Guma (姑妈), and Niangma (娘妈). Mazu, which literally means "mother-ancestor," is the most popular name. She was conferred by different Chinese dynasties with various royal titles such as Tianfei (天妃), Tianhou (天后), and Tianhou shengmu (天后圣母), the last two titles are of the highest rank. Places to worship Tianhou were called Tianhou gong (天后宫) or Tianhou miao (天后廟).

Studies in China share a common legend about Mazu. She was the daughter of Lin Yuan (林愿), a native of the Meizhou Island in the Putian county (Fujian, China). [1] She is believed to have been born on the 23rd day of the third lunar month in 960 and to have died on the 9th day of the ninth lunar month in 987.[2] Mazu was

[1] Some legends in the Fujian region tell that she also had the ability to bless women giving birth as the Avalokitesvara. These new functions arose out of the demand for life and the economic and social situation in China at the time (VCD Documentary: 2006). Also see *16 Incarnations of Mazu*: 2004 and *18 Epiphany legends of Mazu*: 2004.

[2] According to another less popular legend, she was born on in 1110 and died in 1119. It is told that while her mother delivered her, a bright red light that was dazzling and fragrant suddenly appeared in the sky; Mazu did not cry during the first month of her age, and for that reason, people called her Lin Mo (林默) or Moniang (默娘). In her youth, Mazu was smart and knowledgeable; she was determined to sacrifice her entire life, along with any prospects of marriage, to save other people from bad fortune. She was also talented at medicine; she cured many sick people and taught people about how to prevent disease. In one instance,

believed to be goddess of agriculture, medicine, peace, and especially the sea. She would usually appear either in dream or in reality, taking the form of a lightly red air-shaped figure, to rescue seafarers from shipwrecks, to support imperial armies fighting with enemies, to protect imperial officials in diplomatic missions, to teach the people how to cure epidemics, to fight drought, and to prevent floods and the coming of pirates. She was worshipped by all people, particularly sea traders, mariners, and fishermen (Li 1994; Yang 2012; China Central Television 2006).

Today, both the Chinese in China and overseas Chinese perform ritual ceremonies for Mazu in various shrines, temples, family altars, and communal halls called "House of Friendship" on the first and the fifteenth day of every lunar month. Similar ritual ceremonies are also performed on her birth and death anniversaries. (Li 1994: 135-46; Yang 2012: 135-37; China Central Television: 2006). In the past, the Qing dynasty of China recognized Goddess Mazu and organized these ritual ceremonies at the central court. It was a prevalent practice that common people offered incense sticks and garlands and donated money at the shrines of Mazu. Yet, there were differences from one region to another. At some places, people frequently changed the clothes on the statue of Mazu, but they did not in some other places. People living at coastal areas usually organized the ceremonies at shores; they prepared flowers, various offerings (often meats of chicken, duck, pig, goat, and fish) and incense to pray to the goddess for peace. At the end of the ceremonies, people released the flowers and poured wine into the sea in order to show their respect for the goddess. During these ceremonies, people also organized folk-performances such as dragon, lion, and umbrella dances. There were also activities such as the recitation of poetry, circus performing, processions, and stilt walking (Yang 2012: 135-37).

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knowing that her father and her brothers had an accident while fishing at sea, Mazu practiced meditation at home in order to draw a magical force to save them from afar. Having thought that Mazu was sleeping, her mother tried to wake her up at once, which resulted in the loss of one of her brothers (although some legends say that it was actually her father whom they have lost). At the age of twenty-eight, Mazu died without any signs of disease.

The Chinese carried the cult of Mazu to Vietnam when they arrived. Consistent and long interactions with different communities in Vietnam changed the way that Chinese performed cultural rituals in general and the worship of the Mazu goddess in particular.

In Vietnam, places to worship the Mazu goddess usually have signboards, which say Tianhou gong (天后宫) or Tianhou miao (天后廟). However, since people in northern Vietnam normally call the Mazu goddess "Tianhou" or "Mu" (母), temples and shrines devoted to this goddess are often called the Mu Temple or the Mu Shrine. People in central Vietnam call Mazu "Po" or "Tianhou" and her shrines or temples are accordingly called the Po Temple or the Tianhou Palace. In southern Vietnam, Mazu is known by different titles depending on the ethnic groups which worship her. The Kinh people call her "Po" while different Chinese groups refer to her by other different names. The Chinese of Chaozhou origin call her A Ma (阿妈), which also means Po, Mazhu (马珠), a variation of Mazu, or A Po (阿婆). The Chinese of Guangdong origin call her A Fu (阿扶), which means "adopted mother," or Mazu (马祖). The Chinese of Fujian origin call her Mazu. The Chinese of Hainan origin refer to her as Ma Chou or Ma, which means "mother." Scholars who have written about the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam usually refer to the Mazu goddess as Tianhou, and this paper will follow this custom. In the following sections, the paper will illustrate that changes in the worship of the Mazu goddess vary from one Chinese community in Vietnam to another mainly because of the different waves of migration and inhabitation patterns of the Chinese in the new land.

Ⅱ. The Acculturation of the Worship of the Tianhou Goddess in the Minh Hương village in Thừa Thiên – Huế Province

The first settling place of the Chinese in Thừa Thiên – Huế province is the Minh Hương village, today located in the Minh Thanh hamlet of Hương Vinh commune of the Hương Trà district. According to conventional understanding in Vietnam, Minh Hương is the name of the Chinese people who migrated to Vietnam after the Ming dynasty collapsed in 1644. Most of them were the Ming loyalists who arrived

Vietnam in the late seventeenth century. Many male individuals of the Minh Hương village were married to Vietnamese women, and their children eventually became Vietnamese. These people were granted Vietnamese residency by the Nguyen rulers and were allowed to form their own villages. Generally, their villages looked similar to the villages of the local Kinh people.[3] These villages were named "Minh Hương." Prior to the twentieth century, the Minh Hương people were apparently treated as Kinh people. They were allowed to study and attend civil service examinations in order to obtain government positions. At the same time, they were obligated to dress like local Vietnamese people and follow other cultural rituals. Today, the Chinese who did not convert to Vietnamese citizenship live outside Minh Hương villages and do not follow Vietnamese customs. These people are identified as "Hoa kiều" or overseas Chinese. It is a common belief in Vietnam that the Minh Hương village grew its own culture in ways that are far different than those of the Chinese and rather similar to local communities with whom they co-existed and eventually intermarried.

Minh Hương in Thừa Thiên – Huế province initially engaged in trade and commercial business at the international Thanh Hà port. This harbor was constructed in the seventeenth century and it developed prosperously until the early nineteenth century. However, as sand increasingly filled up the mouth of the Thanh Hà river, boats and ships eventually could not pass nor dock at the port. This ecological change was one of the key factors that led to the decline of the Thanh Hà port in the late nineteenth century (Chế 1982). In the aftermath, members of the Minh Hương village were confronted with two choices: either they migrate to overseas Chinese communities and continue their trade or they stay in their village, shift to agriculture and marry Kinh people. The evidence shows that many Minh Hương people moved close to these overseas Chinese communities and continued their trade. This process led them to return to their traditional culture. In other words, they were "re-sinicized." This return, however, is not a restoration to the origin but a restoration to basic traditional Chinese culture that adapted

[3] Today, the Kinh or "Viet" is one of fifty-four ethnic groups recognized by the Vietnam government, accounting for 90% of the national population.

some Vietnamese cultural elements. This, therefore, is not a peripheral fossil.

Those who remained at the Minh Hương village gradually became agriculturalists; they bought land from the Kinh people of nearby villages to lease commercial real estate, tend fields, and make graveyards for the dead. Until 1975, farming was the main productive activity of the Minh Hương people in Thừa Thiên – Huế. They cultivated crops, vegetables, and plants of the local Kinh people, used the same farming tools, and followed the same farming calendar as their Vietnamese neighbors (Đào 1943; Trần 1961; Chế 1982; Nguyễn 1995).

As the Kinh people from nearby areas also migrated into the Minh Hương village, mixed marriages occurred more often between the Chinese and the incoming migrants. Consequently, many aspects of Kinh culture, such as methods of production, marriage rituals, the ritual performance of the "life-circle," and kinship structure, increasingly penetrated the Chinese village, creating radical changes in the cultural, social and economic lives of the Chinese. In other words, lasting and vital processes of co-existence and intermarriage with the Kinh people have changed the cultural patterns of the Minh Hương people in ways that have drawn them closer to the Kinh people themselves. Until now, wedding and death rituals of the Minh Hương people have completely followed those of the Kinh people. Additionally, the Minh Hương people also name their descendants in accordance with the Kinh tradition - that is, they retain the same middle name through many generations. In contrast, the original Minh Hương practice was to use a different middle name for different generations (Chế 1982: 48-50). The influence of the Vietnamese Kinh culture is also present in some types of folk culture of the Minh Hương people, including old tales, folk poems, and folk songs. These tales and songs recount the beauty of their villages in Vietnam. The Minh Hương also learned the ballad of pounding rice and the singing style of "trading twos," often performed by a pair of a male and a female singer, which is very popular in Kinh culture. The Minh Hương people used the Vietnamese language as their first language, and they are even able to use the Huế dialect to compose folk-songs, such as "dòm vô,"

"chậu mô," and "Ôn cha mồ tổ mi" (Chế 1982: 110).

In 1982, the Minh Hương village in Thừa Thiên – Huế had a population of 278 people, 66.% of which are Kinh and 33.1% Chinese (Chế 1982: 14, 20). In the present-day, the village has only ten families with sixty-nine Chinese-origin members.[4] They are Chinese in origin but they identify themselves as "Kinh people of Chinese origin," in their personal documents such as IDs and household registers. The "Chinese-ness" of people in the Minh Hương village is vague, located only somewhere in family names that are seldom in Kinh communities, such as Hầu, La, Lâm, Nhan, Nhiêu, Hứa, Từ, and Khu. That is to say, the Minh Hương people completely followed local culture. They bond in blood with Kinh people over many generations, do not know any language except Vietnamese, and do not have any family connections back in China. In other words, choosing to stay in the Minh Hương village makes the Chinese become Kinh people—the result of voluntary assimilation.

Similarly, the Tianhou cult of Minh Hương changed radically when it was practiced in the lands of Vietnam. The Tianhou temple is called "Chùa Bà" (Temple of Grandmother) in Vietnamese and "Thiên Hậu cung" (Tianhou Palace) in Sino-Vietnamese. The temple was built around 1685 and was located in the former Minh Hương village, which belongs to the present-day Minh Thanh hamlet of Hương Vinh commune, Hương Trà district, Thừa Thiên Huế province.

The temple was initially constructed with materials imported from China and followed traditional Chinese architecture. Statues and other objects of worship were also brought from China. However, renovations often led to the use of local materials, such as Bát Tràng bricks, Bửu Long stones, Biên Hòa pottery, as well as the recruitment of Kinh artisans and architects. As a result, the temple in the present-day heavily carries Kinh architectural styles, with the Chinese statues and many objects of worship completely disappearing by (see figure 1 and 2). Vietnamese architect Đỗ Thị Thanh Mai comments that the style of "trùng thiềm điệp ốc" (double

[4] Data are provided by Mr. T, head of Minh Thanh commune on April 19, 2018.

eaves and connected buildings) present in the roof of the temple is in fact typical of the traditional architecture in Huế, strongly influenced by style during the reign of King Khải Định (1916-1925) (Đỗ 2010: 137).

The temple includes three chambers. The statue of Goddess Tianhou is located at the central chamber. Beside Tianhou are other local gods and spirituals, including twelve goddesses of good wishes for newborn babies, three goddesses of childbirth, and Văn Xương - Phúc Đức (i.e., good stars in horoscope that carry prosperity and the good merits of a family). Other village headmen's cults are also worshipped in this place. The chamber on the right side is used to pray to the first settler of a new land ("tiền hiền"), the City God, and the village leaders of the past. The chamber on the left side is used for villagers to gather and discuss public issues. The Tianhou temple in the Minh Hương village is a complex building that embraces a holistic design of a Daoist temple, a Buddhist temple, and a Vietnamese-style communal house. It functions as a religious and cultural center of people living in the Minh Hương village today.

<Figure 1> The Tianhou temple in Minh Hương village, Thừa Thiên –Huế province. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 10/2/2014

<Figure 2> "Tiền hiền" house of worship in the Tianhou Temple in Minh Hương village, Thừa Thiên –Huế province. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 10/2/2014

The results of my fieldwork in 2010 indicate that, prior to 1975, the Tianhou temple in Thua Thien-Hue organized thirteen annual rituals as followed:

<Table 1> Thirteen annual rituals at the Tianhou temple before 1975

No	Name of Ritual	Objects of Worshop	Reason for Worship	Time in lunar calendar
1	Tết (Vietnamese New Year)	Gods in the Temple	Welcoming New Year	The 30th of the twelfth Lunar Month – First lunar month 2
2	Prayer for Peace at the beginning of the lunar year (Worshipping the Spring)	Gods in the Temple	Prayer for peace and good season for all villagers	The fifteenth of the first lunar month
3	Rituals of "cổ con" (small party) and "cổ lớn" (big party)	The three goddesses of childbirth, twelve midwives, and Văn Xương - Phúc Đức	Prayer for the Minh Hương people who want to have sons. Minh Hương people may also pray in order to have sons and, generally, many children and grandchildren	The fifteenth of the firth lunar month

No	Name of Ritual	Objects of Worshop	Reason for Worship	Time in lunar calendar
4	Women's Festival	The three goddesses of childbirth and twelve midwives	For women who want to have children. Women receive the Tianhou refuge during the Tianhou refuge ceremony, as in a typical Buddhist refuge ceremony.	The sixteenth of the first lunar month and the eighteenth of the Firth lunar month
5	Văn Xương - Phúc Đức	Văn Xương - Phúc Đức	New-year writing and poem reciting by highly-educated scholars	The second of the second lunar month
6	Spirit of Tianhou's birth	Tianhou goddess	Anniversary of the Tianhou goddess's birthday	The twenty third of the third Lunar Month
7	Five Elements	Five Elements which are also composed of five women: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Soil	Anniversary of Five Women's Spirit Day	The tenth of the sixth Lunar Month
8	Tiền hiền (asking for prosperity and blessing)	Officials and meritorious people of the village, who are called "tiền hiền"	Expressing gratitude to "tiền hiền" and asking for prosperity for villagers	The fifteenth of the seventh Lunar Month
9	Spirit of the goddess Tianhou	Goddess Tianhou	Tianhou's death anniversary	The ninth of the ninth Lunar Month
10	The City God	The Spirit of City God	Express gratitude to the City God	The sixteenth of the eleventh Lunar Month
11	Trần Tiễn Thành's death anniversary[5]	Grandfather of the village Trần Tiễn Thành	Express gratitude to those who sacrificed for the village	Twenty-second of the eleven Lunar Month
12	Tomb-sweeping Festival	Ancestors	Performing ceremonies at ancestors' graves	Sixteenth of the Twelfth Lunar Month
13	Winter Solstice Festival	Sky and Earth	Change of seasons	Eleven Lunar Month

[5] Trần Tiễn Thành (陳踐誠, 1813-1883) was a Minh Hương people. His father was Trần Dương Thuần, a Chinese of Fujian origin and an official of Ming dynasty. When the Qing dynasty came into power, Trần Dương Thuần fled to Vietnam and settled there for the rest of his life. Trần Tiễn Thành was smart and studied well. In 1838 he obtained a doctoral degree in the Chinese-style civil service examination

The present-day Tianhou Temple organizes the following ritual ceremonies:

<Table 2> Eight annual rituals in the Tianhou temple nowadays

No	Ritual	Worshipped Objects	Worshipping Content	Time
1	Tết	Gods in the temple	Welcoming New Year	Thirtieth of the twelfth Lunar Month – the second of the first Lunar Month
2	Prayer for Peace at the beginning of the year (Worshipping the Spring)	Gods in the temple	Prayer for peace and good season for all villagers	The fifteenth of the first Lunar month
3	Women's festival	The three goddesses of childbirth and twelve midwives	For women who want to have children. Women receive the Tianhou refuge during the Tianhou refuge ceremony, as in a typical Buddhist refuge ceremony.	The sixteenth of the first Lunar month 16
4	Tế Văn Xương, Phúc Đức	Văn Xương, Phúc Đức	Students pray for studying well and passing exams	The second of the second Lunar month and examination seasons
5	Tianhou's birth	Goddess Tianhou	Anniversary of the Tianhou goddess's birthday	The twenty-third of the third Lunar month
6	Tiền hiền (asking for prosperity and blessing)	Officials and meritorious people of the village, who are called "tiền hiền"	Expressing gratitude to "tiền hiền" and asking for prosperity for villagers	The fifteenth of the seven Lunar month
7	Death anniversary of grandfather Trần Tiễn Thành	Grandfather Trần Tiễn Thành	Express gratitude to those who sacrificed for the village	The twenty-second of the eleventh Lunar month

and then became a high-ranked official of the Nguyen dynasty. He made great contributions to the Minh Hương village as he bought land to expand the village, built graveyards for the dead, and put up free shelters (usually called Peaceful House) for homeless people. He also set up the rituals to worship Tianhou and issued regulations for dining at the Po Temple. The Minh Huong villagers considered him as the Protector of the Village.

8	Visiting the Ancestors' tomb	Ancestors	Worshipping and taking care of ancestor's tombs	The Sixteenth of the twelfth Lunar month

Comparing the above two tables, worshipping activities at the Tianhou Temple have changed radically since 1975. Some rituals have completely disappeared, such as that of the "Big Party," "Goddess Tianhou's death anniversary," "City God," "Five Elements," and Winter Solstice Festival. The City-God and "Five Elements" are gods of the Kinh people and they are worshipped at shrines located at the border of the Minh Huong village. In the past, the Minh Hương people bought land from the nearby Kinh people in order to expand their village, leading them to worship at the shrines that already existed on the land they bought. During the birth anniversaries of these gods, the Minh Hương people performed ceremonies both at the shrines and at the Tianhou Temple.

Meanwhile, the remaining rituals transformed in terms of form and content. For example, the "Women's Festival" integrated rituals of Kinh people. In the past, Minh Hương women organized this ritual. They placed all offerings on the altar of the Twelve Midwives goddesses. If they wanted to have daughters, they offered the goddesses gold bracelets, trays, and bands; if they wanted to have sons, they offered bands that attached with silver or gold bells. Afterwards, when they delivered babies, they asked the goddesses for their permission to take these offerings back for their children. The performance of the "Women's Festival" in the past embraced aspects of the traditional Chinese culture. However, in the present-day, any childless women can pray at the Temple any time and their offerings are various and undetermined. Moreover, the Văn Xương - Phúc Đức rites have almost disappeared. Instead, students who want to pass their examinations might randomly turn to these gods. The Minh Hương people used to visit their ancestors' graves on the Tomb-sweeping Festival, which occurs on the third day of the third lunar month. However, in the present-day, they follow the Kinh people's custom, that is, visiting graves at the end of the year. On the third day of the third lunar month, the Minh Hương people visit the graves of those who do not have children often located on the An Cựu Mountain in Huế. On the first and the

fifteenth day of every lunar month, monks residing at the temple prepare fruits and flowers to worship the Buddha.[6] Furthermore, in addition, the Yulan Festival is even annually organized at this temple. These changes indicate strong the influence of Vietnamese Buddhism on the Tianhou Temple.

The acculturation of the worship of the Tianhou goddess can be observed in the way that local authorities appropriated the Minh Hương. The Nguyễn Dynasty (1802-1945), the last imperial power of Vietnam, ordained the Tianhou goddess four times with significant titles in the years 1826, 1831, 1842, and 1850. The Nguyễn court dispatched its high officials, including ministers and provincial heads, to lead the ceremonies for the Tianhou goddess (Huỳnh 1997: 37). Moreover, regulations of ritual processes and food intakes in the Tianhou Temple were completely similar to those in the Kinh's communal houses: the worshipping committee included a ritual master and a ritual assistant master, both wearing blue robes and official headwear. The ritual ceremonies include three parts: the opening, the main process, and the ending sections. Each section included practices of offering wine and tea, burning oration texts, and a closing ritual. The offerings must include three kinds of meat —beef, goat meat, and pork. Participants in the temple are seated in the order of age and position in the village. Trần Tiễn Thành, a court official of the Nguyễn Dynasty, set up all of these regulations, which remain to the present-day.

The acculturation of the Tianhou goddess is also observable in changes in stories about the appearance, family record, and the characters and missions of Tianhou in the Minh Hương village. It is visible that the Tianhou goddess in the Minh Hương village carries physical and cultural characteristics different from the Tianhou goddess in China. A grandson of the Minh Hương people, who is self-identified as a Kinh person, told me:

> The Tianhou goddess lives in boats; she has twelve miracles. Chinese

[6] In 2004, an overseas contingent of Vietnamese of Minh Hương origin from the United States donated a standing statue of Avalokiteśvara. The Minh Hương people built a small pond with a rock garden next to the meeting chamber. The statue was then placed at the middle of the pond.

> people worship the Tianhou goddess on boats so that their sea travelling may be propitious. Even if people fall into calamity, they just need to sit on their knees, pray to the Tianhou goddess, and the calamity will be over immediately. The Tianhou goddess is very helpful.[7]

For a long time, villagers have called the Tianhou goddess "Mother Goddess," and many females of old age have taken refuge under the patronage of Tianhou. Since 2000, people have installed Buddhist temple-styled-radiant lights behind the statue of Tianhou, which makes it look like the statue of Avalokiteśvara. The temple also permits the practice of spiritual writings and divination by drawing lots. By these, one may predict the health and luck of the village during the year. The practices of ritual money-lending and offering-return currently appear at the temple, which is similar to that being done at the temple of Lady of the Storehouse by the Kinh people.

A researcher named H.Đ.K shared with me that when he visited the temple around 1990, he saw that there was a wallet on one of the hands of the Tianhou goddess statue. He asked the temple priest and was told that a traveler returned the money he borrowed to the goddess.[8]

Today, people come to the Tianhou goddess, praying for all sorts of things they wish, including good health, peace, intelligence, successful studies, the ability to bargain well, passing examinations, and promotion. Many people consider the Tianhou goddess as Avalokiteśvara, Mother Goddess, or Lady of Storehouse because all of them are powerful, able to save people from danger, and grant their wishes.

In the past, offerings include food typical in Chinese communities such as abalone, shark fin soup, steamed fish, stewed chicken, and toasted lamb. In contemporary times, offerings have become more oriented towards Huế culture, with "bánh ít" (little cake), "bánh phu thê" (husband-wife cake), "bánh ướt" (wet cake), tangerine,

[7] Interview with Mr. L.N.C., born in 1958, on October 2, 2014, at the Tianhou Temple
[8] Interviews with researcher H.Đ.K on October 5, 2014 in Hue City.

gandaria, and mangosteen. Food typical of the Kinh people, such as green bean-mixed sticky rice, sweet gourd-mixed sticky rice, boiled pork, and boiled chicken, are familiar offerings at the Tianhou temple as well. The only offering which bears similarity to Chinese culture in the present-day is fried pork, an essential item in ceremonies at the temple. The language used in praying and practicing other rituals at the temple is Vietnamese. Although the present priest is of the Minh Hương of the third generation, he identifies himself as a member of the Kinh people of Minh Hương origin. Members of the Association for the Management of the Temple and Worshippers are also Kinh.

The acculturation of the worship of Tianhou goddess is the result of the long settlement of Minh Hương people into Vietnam, their acquisition of Vietnamese citizenship, and their willingness to leave their Chinese culture behind to follow the customs and rituals of the Kinh people in Vietnam. Nowadays, it is difficult to differentiate people of Minh Hương origin and Kinh people in the Minh Hương village. This is the reason why Trần Kinh Hòa (a.k.a. Chen Cheng Ho),[9] a famous scholar in the research of Chinese in Southeast Asia, commented sixty years ago, that the Minh Hương village "is Viet-ized completely, looking completely like other Vietnamese villages; nothing is different" (Trần 1961: 96).

Ⅲ. The Acculturation of Worship of the Tianhou Goddess in Ho Chi Minh City

The Chinese have migrated to Ho Chi Minh City beginning the late seventeenth century, largely settling around the Chợ Lớn area (parts of present-day District 4, 5 and 11). There were other waves of Chinese migration in this area in the late nineteenth and the early

[9] His name in English is Chen Cheng Ho. He is a Taiwanese professor of Southeast Asian History. He used to be affiliated with University of Huế, University of Saigon, and University of Đà Lạt of Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. His research is published in different languages including Chinese, English, Vietnamese and French. He uses Trần Kinh Hòa to byline his research in Vietnamese. He is particularly famous in Vietnam and in Southeast Asian for a considerable number of achievements in studying Chinese people in Vietnam.

twentieth centuries. Since the late eighteenth century, Chợ Lớn is home to the largest Chinese population in Vietnam. The population of Chinese radically dropped when between Vietnam-China soured between 1976 to 1979: three fourths of Chinese migrants left the country. Regardless, Chợ Lớn is still the place with the highest population density of Chinese people, consisting of 50% of Chinese people throughout Vietnam and 90% in southern Vietnam. The Chinese in Chợ Lớn include five groups—the Guangdong, Fujian, Chaozhou, Hainan, and Hakkas. Each group has its own place of Tianhou goddess worship. Moreover, the population density of Chinese is not the same in different areas in Ho Chi Minh City; specifically, 70% percent of them live separately in District 5 and 11, while the remaining are scattered in peripheral wards such as Nhà Bè and Củ Chi.

In areas with the largest and densest Chinese population who live separately from other ethnic communities, worship of the Tianhou goddess maintains a particular Chinese characteristic. In these areas, the Tianhou goddess is worshipped in the Tuệ Thành Clubhouse located in district 5. Chinese people from Tuệ Thành, an alternate name of Guangzhou (Guangdong province, China) constructed the Clubhouse in 1760. Initially, the Chinese used materials imported from China for the house. It was later repaired with materials from Vietnam under the restoration project, which has been active since 1996. The building presents characteristics of traditional Chinese architecture (see figure 3).

It has four closed chambers and three chapels; among these chapels is an oculus to draw natural light for shrines and to release smoke from burning incense. A variety of pottery styles engraved with symbols of Chinese culture and history is attached to the porches of the building and on the shrine roof. There are a number of horizontal lacquered boards inscribed with images and verses that aim to eulogize the victories of the Chinese gods worshipped in the Clubhouse.

The building is historically recorded as “a temple famous for its being oldest, wealthiest, the most exquisite, and the most well preserved in the area [Chợ Lớn]” (Vương 2004: 183). Thus, the

Clubhouse demonstrates that Chinese people have maintained their culture even though they have lived in Vietnamese land for a long time.

Many Chinese characters are honored in the Clubhouse, including Mazu, Caishen (God of Wealth), "Hoa ông" (Chinese Gentlemen), "Hoa bà" (Chinese Lady), Tudigong (Lord of the Soil and the Ground), Longmu niangniang (Queen of the Heavenly Water Palace), Avalokiteśvara, Guan Yu, Fude zhengshen (Lords of Mercy and Happiness), and Môn quan vương tả (Lord of Gate).

<Figure 3> Tuệ Thành assembly hall in Hồ Chí Minh City. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 04/23/2011.

The most important rite at the Tuệ Thành Clubhouse is done duirng Mazu's birthday, on the twentieth-third day of the third lunar month. The performance of this ceremony is typical for Chinese people from Guangdong.

In my field research in 2011, I observed that the ritual of bathing the goddess ("mộc dục") took place on late-night twenty-firsty and early-morning twenty-second of the third lunar month. On these days, people cleaned the temple, put on lights, and

made flower strings. On the twenty-third of the third Lunar month, the committee performed the ritual of worshipping Tianhou.

On these days, members of the Clubhouse association cleaned the clubhouse, put on string lights, and stitched flowers, while crowds of people came to pray. In the morning of the twenty third of the third Lunar month, male members of the managing committee of the Clubhouse performed rituals of worship for the Tianhou goddess. They wore suits, where a flower was attached on the chest as a sign that the ceremony is on. They lined up in two queues in front of the central altar.

The chair of the committee played the role of the ritual master, standing in the center while the two deputy chairs and other members of the Association stood on either side of him. A woman took the role of ritual speaker. After the gong was sounded three times, the ritual participants lowered their heads three times as well. Then, the master burnt three big incense sticks, while other members burnt small incense sticks; all of them continued bowing three times. The ritual master poured three cups of wine and three cups of tea into a Nine-Tripod Cauldron. Then the woman recited an oration about Tianhou in the Guangzhou dialect. After the oration, people stood solemnly, their hands straight down and their heads slightly lowered, to show respect for the goddess (see figure 4).

After that, the master brought a tray containing "lots" for people to draw. This is for the selection of a person to perform the ritual of sealing the Tianhou goddess's stamp and carry the sacred casket. The selected persons came closer to the altar of the Tianhou goddess, where the casket of stamp may be found.

After another sounding of the gong, one of the two selected persons opened the casket while the other took the seal to stamp on the two red pieces of *dó* paper the phrases "khai ấn đại kết" (opening grace, grand solidarity) and "hợp cảnh bình an" (harmonious with natural scenes and peace). In the meantime, many people came to pray to the Tianhou goddess.

<Figure 4> A Tianhou in Tuệ Thành clubhouse in Hồ Chí Minh City**.** Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 04/26/2011

Moreover, the participans offered to the goddess typical Chinese cuisine, such as the so-called "bánh quy", sea crab, stir-fried rice noodle, dumplings, and pudding, all of which were presented alongside burning incense, candles, flowers, and fruits.

"Bánh quy" is actually a type of vegetarian Chinese bun on which people inscribed images of turtles. Many "bánh quy" are often put on a big tray to form a tower of buns. According to a Chinese belief, "bánh quy" symbolizes longevity. Also, roasted hog is a mandatory offering for the Tianhou goddess in official rituals. Noticeably, three kinds of herbs, including lettuce, onion, and celery, were added in the stir-fried rice noodle dish and "bánh quy." Pilgrims believe that "these three herbs are for smartness, brightness, and providence because their Chinese names rhyme with the pronunciation of those merits."[10]

[10] Interview with worshippers on the ceremony day of the Tianhou goddess's birthday (Third Lunar month 23, 2011) according to the lunar calendar (Fourth Lunar month 26, 2011 in solar calendar) at the Tuệ Thành clubhouse.

Poorer people offer the goddess incense, cooking oil, and some money[11]. On festival days, the clubhouse committee usually appoints its female members to perform rituals for prayer. In this case, pilgrims give their offerings to Chinese women at the central shrine. These women receive offerings and pour more oil into seven-top-kerosene lamps before making vows. They vow either in Chinese, if they are Chinese, or in Vietnamese if they are of the Kinh people. Here, people usually buy many towels and baby-shirts to ask for Mother Tianhou's stamp so that those who use them will always be in good health, peace, and blessed with good luck (see figure 5).

<Figure 5> People worshipping Tianhou. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 04/26/2011

On Tianhou's birthday, people also make offerings of hats, clothes, and jewelries. The Hoa people believe that people only receive the goddess's grace if she uses the things that have been offered. Therefore, the clubhouse association amended the frequency of changing the goddess's dress. Before, people change the goddess's dress once a year. Today, during festival days, the goddess is made to wear all offered dresses, even for a minute. This

[11] Incense and cooking oil are used to burn seven-top-kerosene lamps.

assures association members of being recognized by the goddess.

Beside Tianhou's birth anniversary, people also come to the clubhouse for prayer whenever they have issues to resolve. On the first and fifteenth day of the month, more people come to pray at the clubhouse. Additionally, fifteen other ceremonies over the course of the year are held in the clubhouse.

These include the following: Tet's Collective Greeting on the second of the fifth Lunar month; Lamp Hanging Ceremony (lễ Khánh đăng) on the first of the eighth Lunar month; the Taking-off of the Lamp Ceremony (lễ Hoàn đăng) on first of the tenth Lunar month; honoring the Protector of Land's Spirit on the second of the second Lunar month; the Worshipping of Spring (one day before the Qīngmíng festival); the praying to the Spirit of Kim Hue Lady (Mother of Blesses) on the first of the fourth Lunar month; the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth of Fifth Lunar month; the praying to the Spirit of the Queen of Heavenly Water Palace on the fifth of the fourth Lunar month; the praying to the Spirit of General Guan Ping on the thirteenth of the Fifth Lunar month; the praying to the Spirit of General Guan Yu on the twentieth fourth of the sixth Lunar month; the praying to the Spirit of Caishen (God of Wealth) on the twenty second of the seventh Lunar month; the worshipping of Autumn on the ninth of the eighth Lunar month (clubhouse committee members visit the founders of the Chinese communities); the worshipping of Winter in the Eleventh Lunar month (oranges and glutinous rice balls in boozy sweet soup); the celebrating of the Open Grace on Twelfth Lunar Month 12; the Meeting at the End of the Year on Twelfth Lunar Month 28); and New Year's Eve (Night of Twelfth Lunar Month 30).

Local culture influenced the design and appearance of the Clubhouse. In 1993, the Ministry of Culture and Information of Vietnam recognized the Clubhouse as a National Art and Architecture Building according to Decision no.43-VH/QĐ, issued on January 7, 1993. On the walls of the Clubhouse, people can recognize many familiar images of Vietnamese creatures such as racing forest animals, singing birds, blooming flowers, gourd rigs, and bouquets of lotus. Verses on pairs of wood panels present the

Chinese's affection for their second-homeland, Vietnam:

> 海国偏慈航,水德参天,横览闽云连粤嵩；
> 湄洲隆懿范,坤仪配地,永留越岛护华侨
> At seas are available good boats, Mazu's merits echo to the Heavenly Sky, which guild clouds of the Min country to connect with the mountain of Vietnam.
> Mi Chau violates the Kingdom's rule in intention, and Mazu's righteousness helps to expand the land, maintaining the Vietnamese land for the overseas Chinese (Lê 2000: 52).

When the Clubhouse underwent renovation in 1996, its association utilized local materials. For example, the big gong at the central shrine was made by the traditional gong-crafting villagers in northern Vietnam. Ceramic objects in the house were bought from traditional kilns in Đồng Hoà (District 8) and Bửu Nguyên (District 5); they are made of clay derived from Biên Hoà in Đồng Nai province.

In 1989, while repairing the pond, the association hired artists to carve two reliefs with nine dragons and five goats on the walls of the Clubhouse. The Hoa people called the "nine dragons" "Cửu Long," a homonym of the Cửu Long River Delta (i.e., Mekong River Delta), the land on which they currently reside. "Five goats" are called "Ngũ Dương,"a homonym of their original homeland named Wuyang, a district in Guangdong (China). The reliefs demonstrate the idea that the Hoa people have two homelands, "Wuyang" in China and "Cửu Long" in Vietnam.

The languages used in ritual performance at the Tuệ Thành Clubhouse are Kinh and Hoa. On gravestones, myths about the Tianhou goddess are carved in the Hoa and Vietnamese languages, while calendars and certificates of merit granted by local governments are all in Vietnamese. The Hoa people in Tuệ Thành Clubhouse are both Chinese and Kinh people. Today, participants of ceremonies at the Clubhouse include not only Hoa people but also Kinh people living nearby.

Since the late 1990s, the custom of borrowing money from the

Tianhou goddess and returning offerings to her emerged at the Clubhouse. On Tianhou's birthday, people engaging in trade and commercial activities usually present the goddess with offerings so as to return money they borrowed from her in the previous years, and in order to make new loans from her. Money borrowed from the goddess is usually small, typically symbolic, and are placed in red envelops. Money returned to the goddess is always bigger than the amount borrowed and people usually donate directly to the clubhouse committee for their record. Those successful return money generously. This practice indicates the influence of customs originating from Bắc Ninh, a province in northern Vietnam,.

In short, the worship of the Tianhou goddess at the Tuệ Thành Clubhouse maintains many aspects of traditional Chinese culture while it displays some local Vietnamese elements such as temple architecture, cult offerings, and carved verses. The acculturation of the Chinese in this case follows what W. Berry (2003) calls the strategy of "separation." This community of Chinese is very flexible in bending and changing some of their traditional cultural practices in order to adjust well in the new land. Obviously, this also shows the absence of peripheral fossilization in the Tianhou worship in Vietnam.

By contrast, in areas where the Chinese lived with local people, acculturation is more vital. Beside Chợ Lớn, Nhà Bè is a Chinese settlement but with a smaller number of settlers. According to a record issued on April 1, 2009, Nhà Bè is made up of 99,172 people of different ethnicities, such as Kinh, Hoa, Chăm, Khmer, Tày, and Nùng. Hoa compose 480.[12] The Hoa people in Nhà Bè are descendants of those who migrated to Hồ Chí Minh City before 1975. Intermarriages with the Kinh produced mixed ethnicities, who in later generations, identified themselves as Kinh people of Hoa origin.

At Nhà Bè, there is only one joss house temple for worship of the Tianhou goddess. It is located at the Phước Kiển commune, where Kinh, Chăm, Hoa, and Khmer people coexisted. The Kinh people constitute the majority. Agriculture once became Phước

[12] Data provided by People Association of Nhà Bè Ward on May 18, 2013.

Kiển's primary industry, only to be reduced by urbanization. The joss house temple is very small, just 2x2.5 m in size; it is located in a hut built in the center of a lake (see figure 6). At the entrance gate, there is a signboard, which says "the Nhà Bè ward - Vietnamese Fatherland Front of Phước Kiển commune – Shrine of the Tianhou Goddess – Holy Mother of the Realm, the Great Grandmother, Lady of Five Elements." The signboard is filled with the names of goddesses worshipped at the temple. The local government's involvement in managing this shrine is visible. The shrine faces west and it was constructed with bricks, painted with lime, and covered with tiles. The gates and doors of the shrine were designed by Mr. L.M.Đ. He drew some string flowers and painted a few Sino-Vietnamese verses to accompany them.

<Figure 6> The Tianhou Temple in Phước Kiển village, Nhà Bè district, Hồ Chí Minh City. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 05/4/2011.

The architecture, design, material, and cult worship in the shrine are shaped by Kinh culture. At the rooftop hangs a big drum and in front of the altar is a statue of storks riding a tortoise. A woman donated this statue to the shrine in 2004, which was apparently intended to make it appear similar to a typical village communal house of the Kinh people.

There is a site dedicated to the worship of the Earth and the Agriculture God, Shennong, in front of the above-mentioned shrine.

Inside this shrine, one may pray to the Tianhou goddess, the Holy Mother of the Realm, the Great Grandmother, the Lady of Five Elements, and Avalokiteśvara. Images of these goddesses have been put side by side (see figure 7).

The signboard shows that Tianhou is the principal goddess. However, it is the Great Grandmother Lady who is worshipped at the central place. The drawings, lines, contents and structure of the painting of the Great Grandmother are completely similar to tablets; the difference is that the painting placed in a cloth embedded in mirror while it is in the tablets. The phrase, "Respectfully inviting the Great Grandmother to have a sit" (恭请祖姑座位 *Cung thỉnh tổ cô toạ vị*), is carved in Chinese characters on the central column, with "Great Grandmother" set in a bigger size. The two sides come with a Sino-Vietnamese couplet in verse (see figure 8):

祖德千年盛	Tổ đức thiên niên thịnh
姑恩万代荣	Cô ân vạn đại vinh.

<Figure 7> A small shrine that is dedicated to Tianhou, the Holy Mother of the Realm, Great Grandmother, the Lady of Five Elements, and Avalokiteśvara the Land God, the God of wealth. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 05/5/2011

<Figure 8> The painting of the Great Grandmother. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 05/5/2011

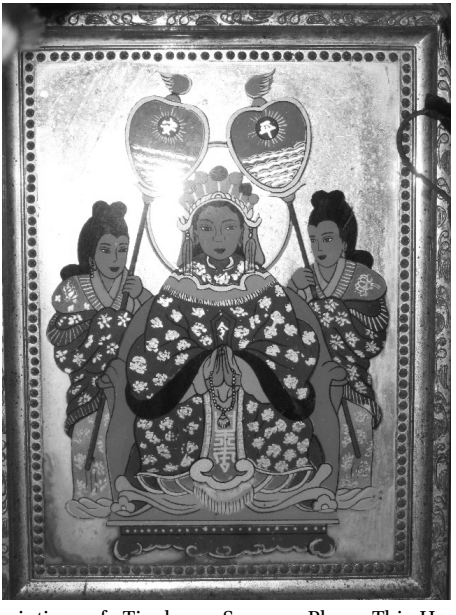
On two sides of the tablet, there are drawing of two twisted dragons rolling around the column; their heads are facing a framing ball. This couplet can remind us of a couplet which is often found next to altars in many Kinh families in northern Vietnam:

祖宗功德千年盛	Tổ tông công đức thiên niên thịnh
子孝孙贤万代荣	Tử hiếu tôn hiền vạn đại vinh.

The shrine also honors the guards of these goddesses, Lord of Land, God of Wealth, and “deposited worshipped objects” (“đồ cúng gửi”). Deposited worshipped objects are sent to the temple by families who could not carry them along as they moved to a new place. Families ask people in the temple to maintain these objects because they do not want to continue to worship them, as the families believe they might bring bad luck. Many families worship this goddess to pray for good health, peace, and professional

success. But there are also some families that face bad lucks such as illness, business loss, and family break up; these people do not want to worship the goddess anymore, but they do not dare to throw their objects away for the fear of punishment. This cultural habit is very popular in southern Vietnam. Noticeably, all gods and goddesses are presented in images instead of statues. Specifically, the Tianhou goddess is presented in the image of the Jiutian Xuannu (see figure 9), while the Avalokiteśvara image is a photograph of a lady of the ethnic Kinh with an oval face, double eyelids, and a straight nose. In 2012, the shrine association replaced all of these holy images with statues as per the wishes of the deceased priest. At the most sacred place in the shrine, where the statue of the Great Grandmother is worshipped, some verses are written as follows:

> The moral of the Great Grandmother is thriving for thousands of years
> The Lady's blessing is greatly glorious for millions of years.



<Figure 9> The painting of Tianhou. Source: Phan Thi Hoa Ly, Date taken: 05/5/2011

Interestingly, the shrine manager insists that the statue is the image of Lady Cố Hỷ, a goddess of the forest in the Chăm people's beliefs. This god is widely believed to have accompanied Chăm people when they migrated from central to southern Vietnam. The Holy Mother of the Realm is also seen as a Kinhicized Chăm goddess. She used to serve as the holy mother of Chăm people in Po Narga, but through the process of co-existence, the Kinh people in central Vietnam embraced the worship of the holy mother and called her by different names such as "chúa Ngọc" (Jade Goddess), "chúa Tiên" (Fairy Goddess), "Yna," and "Thiên Y Ana." She particularly became a magical protector of women.

The Kinh people in Southern Vietnam called her the holy mother who played the role of "an owner of the land." In this case, the holy mother was seen as similar to the traditional gods of the Kinh people, as "Thành hoàng bản cảnh" (The City God of this Land) and "Lord of Land."

Both the Hoa people of Chaozhou origin and Kinh farmers worship the God of Agriculture. However, while this god in Chinese culture actually exists as a system consisting of eight gods, in Kinh culture it is embodied in the image of a people who teach others how to grow rice. Prayers are often offered to the God of Agriculture with boiled duck meat, in accordance with rituals of worshipping goddesses in southern Vietnam, as in the saying "for gods, offer chicken; for goddesses, offer duck." In this case, it seems that people identify the God of Agriculture with local goddesses such as the Mother of Rice and the Mother of Earth.

Celebrating the Tianhou goddess's birthday (Third Lunar month, 23) is the most important ritual of the shrine. The birthdays of the Lady of Five Elements (Third Lunar month, 18), the Holy Mother of the Realm (Fourth Lunar month, 24-26), Caishen (First Lunar month, 10), and other gods are also organized on the same day with that of the Tianhou goddess.

The combination of these ceremonies has been recently encouraged by the local government to reduce expenses. Members of the shrine association cook food for the ceremonies. While Avalokiteśvara is offered with vegetarian foods, other gods and

goddesses are offered trays of a variety of food such as a boiled duck, a piece of boiled pork (an alternative is roasted pig), five bowls of pork soup, five bowls of white bean soup, five plates of green bean sticky rice, five pieces of spiritual money notes, betel nuts, rice, salt, wine, and fruits. These offerings demonstrate interesting cultural aspects of the Hoa and Kinh communities.

The Hoa people's offerings include colored sticky rice, while the Kinh people use sticky rice with green beans. Pudding from the Hoa people is similar to "bánh chay" (lean cake), which has "viên" (rather flat and and round) dimpled in sweet soup; people offer "bánh chay" to gods on the First Lunar month, 15 because its name, "viên," is a homonym of the word "viên mãn," which means "fullness," "perfect," and "accomplishment." Meanwhile, at the shrine, the Kinh people offer sweet sticky rice pudding to the Twelve Midwives and plain rice soup, raw rice, and salt for the wandering spirits. The presence of food for the wandering spirits seem also to be offered to the Great Grandmother. These offerings are all the food of the Kinh people.

At the altar of Guards, people offer three kinds of meats and other foods, including sweet white bean soup, pork soup, "canh kiểm" (vegetarian soup), "bánh bò" (sweet, chewy sponge cake), wine, and flowers. "Canh kiểm" is a vegetarian food of Vietnamese southerners and people believe that this food originates from a type of sweet soup called "tàu thưng" of the Chaozhou people. "Tàu thưng" means "bean soup," which is made from green bean, tapioca, tofu skin, and sweet potato.

As the Chaozhou immigrated into the Mekong River delta and intermarried with the Kinh people, their dish of "tàu thưng" was Kinhicized. The Chaozhou people in Vietnam added more coconut milk and potato curb in the "tàu thưng" and turned it into the present "canh kiểm."[13] Similarly, "bánh bò", the sweet, chewy sponge cake, also originated from southern China. It was once made of plain sugar, but when it arrived in Vietnam, people added coconut milk to it. Vietnamese people call this cake "bánh bò,"

[13] See *Báo mới press* May 12, 2014 (http://www.baomoi.com/Canh-kiem-mon-chay-Nam-Bo/84/6767926.epi, accessed May 12/2014)

which literally means "crawling cake." This name indicates the fermentation that forces the powder to "crawl" up to brim of the bowl.

During the Tianhou goddess's birthday, people also performed ritual ceremonies for the founders of villages and communes at the shrine. The ritual begins at 5 pm on the twenty-second of the Third Lunar month. Food offerings include boiled pork (around 200 g), pork rice soup, pork salad, curry, fruits, and flowers. People arranged the food on a tray to be placed at the back of the shrine. After the ceremonies, the food is distributed to the worshippers. Some food also come with curry, though mainly cooked with curry powder. Vietnamese curried dishes have their own flavors. A typical curry dish in Vietnam is made of chicken (or, sometimes, pork, or duck meat), bamboo shoots, peanuts, potatoes, coconut milk, sugar, and some curry powder.

In the past, the shrine association would hire shadow puppet groups on Tianhou's birthday because shadow puppetry is typical of Chăm culture, particularly in the tradition of worshipping the Holy Mother of the Realm. Since 2008, the local government does not permit the performance of the shadow puppet dance. Budget is now spent buying more drums and gongs to "entertain the goddesses better."[14]

Today, language used in the performing rituals in the shrine is done entirely in Vietnamese. The names of goddesses/gods, verses, and praying hymns are all in Vietnamese. No one knows the myths about the Tianhou goddess and there is no funeral oration for her either. Instead, the ritual master follows the format of the Kinh's oration to worship the goddess.

From my fieldwork, I have learned that Mr. L.M.Đ is Chinese (born in 1942) and his wife is a member of the Kinh people (born in 1945). He told me that his family used to live in District 4 in Chợ Lớn. When the family business became bankrupt in 1954, his parents and their seven children moved to Phước Kiển and reclaimed land for growing rice.

[14] Interview Mr L.M.Đ, May 5, 2011, at the joss-house. temple

Phước Kiển was an empty land at that time, but more people moved in. They constructed houses, and began to form a village. Nearby, there was a dilapidated temple, and people discussed the possibility of contributing money to build a new shrine, completed in 1965. At that time, as the villagers lacked money to by statues of the goddesses, villagers wrote their names on papers in Sino-Vietnamese language and placed them on the altars. The shrine was repaired several times. Its last renovation was in 2006, and since then has been maintained well.

During this renovation, the shrine association decided to restructure the shrine. Verses and the images of festoons were drawn up by Mr. L.M.Đ. He also brought photographs of the goddesses to worship at the shrine. "I brought them from the Chinese in Chợ Lớn," he said. "I just told the sellers the names of the goddesses, and they gave me photos."[15] Because he could not find photographs of the goddesses' guards, he worshipped them through their names written on the signboard

The shrine association initially included around ten families, but the number was reduced to six because people have gradually left the area. Two members of the association are of Hoa origin; their family names are Lưu. Families of the association take turns caring for the shrine during the year. Tasks for maintaining the shrine include cleaning and burning incense twice per day, once in the morning and in the afternoon. Members of the association have decided to place all of the statues of goddesses in one altar, combine all birthday ceremonies of goddesses into one festival, offer the same tray of food to all goddesses, worship the goddesses' guards, and replace the photographs with statues.

The worship of the Tianhou goddess at the Phước Kiển commune has mingled strongly with the beliefs of the Kinh and Chăm ethnic groups. Aspects related to a number of goddesses and gods, as well as of ritual, language, and offerings mingle with those of the Kinh and Chăm cultures. The myths of the Tianhou goddess and the traditional cultural forms associated to her seem to be fading away in places where the Chinese have co-existed with

[15] Interview Mr. L.M.Đ, May 5, 2011, at the joss-house temple.

different ethnic communities.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

It is certain that the acculturation of the worship of the Tianhou goddess in Vietnam is complex. This cultural process follows a number of models such as assimilation, separation, restoration, and combination, and it has evolved in different contexts. The worship of the Tianhou goddess changed significantly in terms of rituals, frequency, language, the role of the ritual masters, and the architecture of the places of worship. In areas populated by the Chinese, aspects of Chinese culture attached to the worship of the Tianhou goddess remained strong. In contrast, in places where very few Chinese residents live among and mingle with other local ethnic communities, the worship of the Tianhou goddess incorporated and even assimilated into local cultural practices. That is to say, the Chinese in Vietnam have changed the worship of the Tianhou goddess in various forms by way of their co-existence with various ethnic communities. Thus, through the case-study of the worship of the Tianhou goddess, this paper insists that there has been no "peripheral fossilization" of the Chinese culture in Vietnam.

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The Other's Body:
Vietnamese Contemporary Travel Writing by Women

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[*Abstract*]

In recent years, Vietnamese literature has seen the rise of women writers in a genre traditionally dominated by men—travel writing. Phuong Mai, Huyen Chip, Dinh Hang, among others, are just a few who have introduced innovations to this genre. This paper investigates the practice of contemporary Vietnamese women travel-writers and how they differ in perception compared to their male counterparts. One of the most crucial differences is that women perform cultural embodiment, employing their bodies instead of their minds. An encounter of the woman writer with other cultures is, therefore, an encounter between the body and the very physical conditions of culture, which leads to a will to change, to transform, more than a desire to conquer, to penetrate the other. Utilizing the concept deterritorialization developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, this paper argues that despite being deemed fragile and without protection, women's bodies are in fact fluid and able to open new possibilities of land and culture often stripped away by masculinist ideology.

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Ⅰ. The rise of women's travel writing in Vietnamese contemporary literature, and the problem of gender in Vietnam

Travel writing is something quite new to Vietnam. Before the colonization of the French, Vietnam is largely a Confucian and agricultural country. Before the 1900s Vietnamese people, mostly peasants, resided in one place all their whole lives. A proverb is still very much common among people nowadays, and its speaks about being rooted: "an cu lac nghiep" (better settle down before making any business). This made travelling troublesome and dangerous; one traveled only if he had no choice. Therefore, most of travel writings in the past were written by Vietnamese ambassadors: *Stories from abroad (Hải ngoại kỉ sự), Seafaring stories (Hải trình chí lược), Report on journey to the West (Tây hành kiến văn kỉ lược)*, etc.... The Vietnamese usually travel not because of the desire to discover new lands or cultures, but because of duty, like the ambassadors to China and several western countries. The doctor Le Huu Trac wrote *Chronicle of a journey to the capital (Thượng kinh ký sự)* as requested by the royal family. Travel writing existed in pre-modern Vietnam, but it was not of great importance.

When the French colonized Vietnam, they introduced modernity, and consequently, with the emergence of the journalism, travel writing as a literary genre. Journalists Pham Quynh, Nguyen Don Phuc, Duong Ky, Nguyen Van Vinh, Dao Trinh Nhat, among others, emerged as its leading writers. Communist Vietnam, after its independence, saw the travel chronicles of Nguyen Tuan and Hoang Phu Ngoc Tuong in their books *Chronicle of Da River (Ký sông Đà)* and *Who named the river? (Ai đã đặt tên cho dòng sông?)*, respectively. It may be said that travel writing does not have a long tradition in Vietnamese history, and is yet to make an impact in Vietnamese literature.

Also, travel literature in Vietnam was strongly dominated by

men. There was hardly any woman engaged in it, save for the poet Nguyen Thi Hinh[1]. When the French came to Vietnam, there were several women writers in journalism, but mostly used male pen names, as they were expected by society to inhabit the domestic space and just as the poet Tu Xuong wrote in one of his poems, to "raise five children and a husband."[2] Travelling was something unnecessary, and even after the French came with a different notions of gender, which led to a rise of women's liberation in the works of Tu luc van doan and other writers, travelling was still a luxury activity. Sometimes, travelling is also believed to encourage the infidelity among women, as in a realist short story by modern writer Nguyen Cong Hoan, "So my wife travelled to the West" (Thế là mợ nó đi Tây). The story narrated the exchange of letters between a husband who stayed at home and his wife who traveled to France to study literature. As the story progressed, the wife became colder and more distant, as she was getting involved with someone else. Modernity has not completely liberated Vietnamese women from the idea that travelling means freedom, and freedom means infidelity, and this notion stood until recent years.

Despite these, it is surprising to see nowadays a surge of travel books written by women. 2010 was a banner year with the release of many of these books—Huyen Chip's *Carry my backpack and go (Xách ba lô lên và đi)* and *Don't die in Africa (Đừng chết ở châu Phi)*; Phuong Mai's *I am a donkey (Tôi là một con lừa)* and *The Islamic Path (Con đường Hồi giáo)*; Yem Dao Lang Lo's *A female traveller (Gái phượt);* Ngo Thi Giang Uyen's *Sweet bread, bitter coffee (Bánh mì thơm, cà phê đắng)*; Phan Viet's *Alone in Europe (Một mình ở châu Âu),* among others. These quickly attracted readers and were afforded big book launchings, proving how travel writing is a highly profitable genre than other "serious genres".[3] Moreover, these

[1] She is better known as "Bà Huyện Thanh Quan." She is the author of several landscape poems including *Cross the Ngang Pass (Qua đèo Ngang*).

[2] My pitiful wife (Thương vợ), Tú Xương.

[3] Ho Anh Thai, a famous contemporary writer, published two travel books, *Apa Kabar! Chào xứ Vạn Đảo* and *Namaskar! Xin chào Ấn Độ* [Hello! the nation of million islands and Namaskar! Hello India]. Di Li, a writer of horror detective fiction, also turned to travel writing in her latest books, *Đảo Thiên đường, Những nụ hôn thành Rome, Và tuyết đã rơi ngoài cửa sổ* [The heaven Island,

encouraged travelling, transforming altogether Vietnam's age-old notions. In the era of freedom, travel has become an act of exploration.

While both men and women writers are capable of rendering lively and attractive travel stories, it seems that works penned by women are becoming more popular: "All recent books on travelling [...] are well-crafted. But the most important criteria here is: the reader will be interested 10 times, 20 times or more, if the author—the traveler—is a woman" (Mi 2013: 1). Di Li, who wrote horror detective fiction, and who turned to the genre claimed that: "If I place in front of you two books of travel, both of which containing thrilling stories of new lands, which one would you choose to read first—the one written by the female writer or the one by the male writer? I suppose most of us will be curious with the former" (Mai 2017). Women writers also overwhelm their counterparts, both in quantity and quality. From 2006 to 2017, there have been 62 travel books published in Vietnamese, 44 of which were written by women (70%). Women were also more productive: while Truong Anh Ngoc and Ho Anh Thai were the only males who have more than one travel book, 11 females have two books published.

The rise of travel writing in Vietnam nowadays reveals the long standing masculinist ideology that is now being subverted by women writers, mostly young and single. In the launching of her third travel book, Di Li shared her opinion which could be thought as a negotiation between the duty of a wife, a mother, and the desire of a traveler:

> I was asked many times, that if a woman travels like that, who would take care for the house and the family? Actually, each of my trips did not take so long. Every year, I arrange only two or three trips, and the longest one is only 20 days. I suppose that with married women, a short trip is totally acceptable (Mai 2017).

While encouraging women to travel, Di Li says they must maintain their domestic duties. She seems to display how one must come to terms with travelling and writing, and the social

The Kisses in Rome, and It snows outside].

expectations placed on women in general.

In some cases, challenges may go extreme. Huyen Chip, author of two travel books, was accused that some details in her *Carry my backpack and go (Xách ba lô lên và đi)*, are untrue, therefore making it fictional.[4] Her staunchest was Tran Ngoc Thinh, a Fulbright scholar who petitioned for the suspension of the book's publication. Thinh maintained that audiences must be protected from Huyen Chip's misrepresentations (Mai 2013).

Ⅱ. Travel Writing by Women

Travel writing has been dominated by men since its inception. In the West, it has taken form by way of knightly quests, chronicles of colonial explorers, and other genres that narrate journeys in this and other worlds. Meanwhile, Vietnamese literature boasts of ancient myths and legends such as *Descendant of the Dragon and the Fairy (Con rồng cháu tiên),* and modern novels and poems where men face the world matters and their women stay behind. In both traditions, it is male gaze that rules upon all discoveries of the world. Women are considered unsuitable for travelling as they are biologically inferior.

This prejudice may also be observed in popular culture. In horror movies, for instance, women, most specially young girls, are first to become casualties in a bloodbath: "The common characteristic of horror movie is that it features sudden and bloody death, naked scenes, exploitations, strange places, and a survival girl. [...] Generally, in slasher movies, women are often the victims who are tortured, raped, and killed..." (Ngọc 2017). Women are rendered susceptible to attack and rape.

In a famous war-time Vietnamese novel, *The Sorrow of War*

[4] Huyen Chip claimed that she had travelled to more than twenty countries, and had started her journey with only 700$. Many considered this too little for a journey like that. Huyen Chip was eventually forced to provide a 31-page report to the Ministry of Culture. After this scandal, she withdrew from writing, but fortunately received a scholarship in Stanford University on AI learning.

(Nỗi buồn chiến tranh) of Bao Ninh (1987), a protagonist tried to catch her female lover from a train that brings soldiers to the front. Before he found found her, she had been raped by the other soldiers. In another detail, a young female guerrilla was raped by black American soldiers. There representations suggest the utter vulnerability of women.

These discourses permeate and create for women a fear of being harmed. This is not lost on contemporary Vietnamese travel writing. Right at the beginning of *I am a donkey (Tôi là một con lừa)*, Phuong Mai wrote about her fear of being raped when she traveled to Africa. Upon arrival, a local woman told her: "Welcome to the world's rape capital." (Nguyen 2016: 22). In Vietnam, one is most likely able to dissuade a woman from traveling by bringing up the possibility of getting raped. Here, we find an interesting contradiction: if in the past, "new territories were metaphorized as female, as virgin lands waiting to be penetrated, ploughed, and husbanded by male explorers" (Bassnett 2002: 231), female travelers, in their desire to explore, often find themselves threatened with being raped, penetrated by the new lands. This may be the very reason why women in horror or detective films and novels are only rendered as surviving, escaping the unknown, instead of conquering it, as if it were a much-coveted prize. It is because women, aside from being vulnerable to the outside world, is also vulnerable, *because of themselves.* Women are perceived to be unable to think and decide rationally, and if they find themselves in danger, it was *their choice.* They are often led to their demise because of their inexperience and recklessness. In Vietnam, many still believe that women are short-sighted and therefore should not be trusted. This is made legitimate by the exploitation of women's very bodies.

Masculine ideology, which pervades Vietnamese culture, posits that women are a "weak gender," men of a "strong gender."[5] Capabilities and roles are determined by biology. However, feminists have long refuted these sexist arguments and insisted that weakness is rooted, not in the biological, but in the verbal body. Woman is

[5] In Vietnamese, women are called "phái yếu" (weak gender), and men "phái mạnh" (strong gender).

surrounded by all kind of discourses that her body is, somehow, *unhealable*. The moment she has sex, she "loses" her virginity forever. Women's ovulation is often defined as "the *discharge* (or *expulsion*) of ova or ovules from the ovary" (in Vietnamese, it is named "rung trung"), while man's sperm is "produced" (in Vietnamese, "sinh tinh"—the sperm is borne of a man's body). Woman irretrievably loses a substantial amount of blood monthly in nearly half of her life. The vagina can be penetrated and may be taken away from her. All these metaphors relate with the unhealable and vulnerable notion of the female body.

Feminists have been arguing that "Masculinist rationality is a form of knowledge which assumes a knower who believes he can separate himself from his body, emotions, values, past and so on, so that he and his thought are autonomous, context-free and objective." (Rose 1993). From a feminist point of view, the rational is not something universal, but is closely associated with the desire to escape the physical, particular body, and transcend to an abstract, objective mind. Moreover, transcending the body also means transcending all the emotions which must be replaced with a rational logic of right and wrong, of Sameness and Otherness. Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, claimed that:

> The historical evidence [...] shows that modern men were not thrown back upon this world but upon themselves. One of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps its most original contribution to philosophy has been an exclusive concern with the self, as distinguished from the soul or person or man in general, an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself (Arendt 1998: 254).

Modern man does not show any concern with the outer world. The desire to conquer, and somehow, to explore is, in fact, a reflection of the deepest fear of the Other. Rationality is, in short, invented to reduce the whole world, or we may say, Otherness, into some form of Sameness. This marks a key characteristic of the way modern men conceived the world: the explorations, the conquests, all of them have nothing to do with the outer world. They are more

of a struggle to unite everything into a kind of abstract mind, rather than an effort to understand the world.

However, another question arises: is there any difference with the way women perceive Otherness? Allow me to offer a reading of Phuong Mai's *I am a donkey (Tôi là một con lừa)* and *The Islamic Path (Con đường Hồi Giáo)*.

Ⅲ. Cultural embodiment and the journey of becoming other

Born in 1976, Phuong Mai belongs to the post-war generation in Vietnam. At 24, she came to the Netherlands for higher education. She eventually became a lecturer in Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. In 2010, she decided to quit her job at the university and prepared for a journey through Africa and Central America. The entire journey was chronicled in *I am a donkey (Tôi là một con lừa*). Unlike many in her generation, Phuong Mai was Western-educated. Her being a lecturer who received a PhD in Intercultural Communication from Utrecht University shaped her intellectual vision and sensibility, as may be seen in her books. For instance, *I am a donkey* was considered extraordinary for its meditations on culture. However, what is interesting is her perception of the world, which we may describe as "cultural embodiment."

In the beginning of her second book, *The Islamic Path (Con đường Hồi giáo)* she wrote that two weeks before she set off, a colleague had sent her a niqab—a garment of clothing worn by Muslim women. She then decided to wear it and walked in the Luzern shopping center in Switzerland. She described her experience as follows:

> My life has never changed so drastically like that. Doubtful gazes, angry frowns, terrified eyes. A group of old women intentionally bumped into me from behind. A man walking his dog angrily shouted at me. A mother irritably pulled her child away from me. Wandering around Luzern for two hours, I forgot that I was wearing a niqab. Those discriminating eyes reminded me that I was still the grotesque one (Nguyen 2017: 26).

Phuong Mai did not merely wear a particular garment. On the contrary, she wore a culture, an identity. Switching her identity from a Vietnamese lecturer in a prestigious Western university to that of a Muslim woman, she experienced Islamophobia in the West. This experience shows her specific way of perceiving Others: to understand them, she must embody them culturally. Wearing a niqab made her experience what a Muslim woman feels in a European country. Culture then, in her writings, is indeed a bodily thing: she must wear, eat, drink, and place her own body in physical spaces.

In India, she bought the cheapest ticket despite being able to afford a whole carriage. She wanted to experience a normal life in India: "Feet behind a coat, face on a no-bar-no-glass window, in a 25-seat carriage with nearly a hundred of people plus a dozen of chickens and five bicycles. [...] No TV, no sofa, I could only close my eye and count sheep to avoid the indecent stare of Indians" (Nguyen 2016: 15). Her travel meditations are vicarious experiences.

Phuong Mai's way of embodying cultures is also different from other people she got to know on her trips. When she came to visit the Saudi Consulate for her visa, she met a man named George. She narrated: "George is German, blond hair blue eyes, but he converted to Islam when he was only 20 years old and went to Saudi for work." (Nguyen 2017: 28). George represents masculinist ideology that extends to Western capitalism. He is young, ambitious, and, in Phuong Mai's words,

> an ordinary merchant who cannot perceive a truth that a Vietnamese girl had worked hard for one year, had not spent a single penny for clothes and become a penurious one in order to save up for a trip which may bring more danger than joy, a trip that has nothing to do with her religion belief or cultural consensus or even requirement of her job. A journey simply for the sake of knowledge, and if there is someone like her, she would share her knowledge (Nguyen 2017: 29).

George converted to Islam simply because he wanted to use the religion belief as a disguise for his own purpose, that is to "be

accepted" and so as he could exploit "the belief in the Middle East society where religion belief is even more important than blood-relations." (Nguyen 2017: 30). George was no different from the explorer-conqueror of the old days, in pursuit of wealth rather than knowledge or revelation. He only used a different strategy to penetrate the other. For them, cultural identities are merely disguise in the pursuit of wealth.

In her first trip to Africa, she also made a clear distinctions between having a holiday and travelling. In *I am a donkey*, Phuong Mai wrote about her experience of purchasing a tour in Africa, which eventually it turned out to be a bad idea. Being required to strictly follow the itinerary of the tour, she found a "terrible distance between us and the indigenous people" (Nguyen 2016: 110). For her, tourists are presented with an exotic version of land and people by the tourist guide. Tourists simply see indigenous people from a safe distance, where the ideological wall between Sameness and the Otherness is fortified. For Phuong Mai, a traveler must live, work, and eat with the indigenous—or in other words, he or she must embody the very daily, physical life of the native people.

Why is cultural embodiment crucial Phuong Mai's perception of the Others? It is because a body of one's own is the only thing that exists without discourses and ideologies. To pierce through the veil of discourses that covers almost everything is the most effective way to turn one's own body into the body of the Other, and perceive the world through that new body. Indeed, her journeys through Africa and the Muslim world are some kind of a re-exploration. She tried to unveil the discourses created and dispersed mostly by Western mass media, and showed new pictures of familiar places. Many are actually trapped in what Jean Baudrillard called "hyperreality," where reality is distorted by its simulation. And that hyperreality is a product of masculinist ideology, as it denies the physical, particular body and sets up everything in binary oppositions, for example, the Self and Other. The abstract mind does not recognize the Different, and only sees, among many other possibilities, the Opposite.

Fortunately, there is at least one way to escape from this

hyperreality: a return to the physical body, as suggested by Phuong Mai in her books. To return to the body is to emphasize and respect the very emotions and feelings which can only be evoked and cannot be simulated by the platforms like the mass media. By doing that, she was able to pierce through the veil of cultural differences and prejudices, and sympathize with people and culture on the other side.

However, this cultural embodiment has one requirement: one must be disconnected, though temporarily, from one's own identity. In other words, one must be uprooted from one's Self to become the other. This requirement was mentioned repeatedly in her two books, especially *I am a donkey*. In the part titled "Meditations," Phuong Mai wrote about how one is composed of three animals, each representing a specific identity: the first animal is the person one wants to become, the second animal is what society wants one to become, and the third animal is one's own identity. Describing how she switched among three animals in an African country, Phuong Mai concluded:

> The first identity encourages me to travel (I *want* to be an adventurer). The loneliness on the road helps me better understand my third identity (who I *am*). Finally, in my journey, my second identity is a jigsaw puzzle which helps the traveler explore the diverse perspectives of herself, transform into an unpredictable chameleon" (Nguyen 2016: 107).

Here lies the key characteristic of a feminine traveler. Masculinist ideology finds travelling or adventuring an effective way to transcend the body. On the contrary, a feminine traveler seeks a way to *transform* the body, instead of transcending it. In other words, while masculine travelers undertake a journey of the abstract mind, the feminine traveler undertakes a journey of the physical body. The body must undergo a process which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari called deterritorialization.

In *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari(1986) defined deterritorialization as a process that happens in all aspects of the world, from the noise which is deterritorialized

by the mouth and the tongue and reterritorialized in the same sense, to commodity which is deterritorialized and reterritorialized in different marketplaces. Deterritorialization therefore could be understood as "a process in which a thing detaches from a given territory" (Bui 2013).

Deterritorialization always comes with reterritorialization, which indicates how a thing attaches itself to a new territory. In their work, Deleuze and Guattari explored the importance of deterritorialization in creating a minor literature, though their argument may also be applied to the body. Our bodies are always rooted in specific places or cultures. To travel in a feminine way is to uproot it, deterritorialize it. That means having a body cleansed of its given cultural identity as well as all the prejudices that goes with it. A deterritorialized body is also a body made strange, or in other words, the Othered. While masculine heroism ignores the body and celebrates the mind, the female traveler celebrates the body. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, deterritorialization opens up new possibilities. The body is then able to take root in the Others, embody new cultures, and therefore, become an Other.

Phuong Mai, as a woman traveler, performed the cultural embodiment in her journeys. With each place she visited, she embodied as much culture as she could, and let her body become something she didn't even know. Masculinist ideology might argue that the feminine body is fragile in the dangerous world out there. However, the world out there is also full of new possibilities of otherness. Being prone to changes, the feminine body is fluid rather than fragile. Its fluidity comes from the ability to deterritorialize itself from a give place, culture, discourse, and most importantly, the mind. In her journey, we see that although her body is single, it was able to embody multiple identities: a white man, a Muslim woman, an African, a Jew, an Indian, a gypsy, etc. The feminine traveler seeks to understand rather conquer or discover. The world has been mostly discovered, and there is hardly any land, any culture that we, civilized people, do not know. However, there is a huge distance between knowing and understanding. The later requires the engagement of the body which must make itself strange, deterritorize itself from the given culture. Thanks to that, the fluid

body opened new possibilities and became something other than itself.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

In travelling as well as travel writing, women are undeniably late-comers. In the past, there were few female travelers, much less, travel writers. For women, writing about travel hass always been a struggle: they have to write against a whole tradition of a male-dominated genre. Other than that, there seems to be nothing else for women to discover, explore, name, or conquer. The world has been mapped already with men's heroic stories. What else will women write about travelling? In *I am a donkey* and *The Islamic Path*, Phuong Mai answered that question by offering us a way to perceive the other. Images of Africa, Central America, the Muslim world, abound in mass media daily. She told us a whole new story about these places. By abandoning the masculine way of travelling, Phuong Mai performed what we called "cultural embodiment." In the journey of the body, Phuong Mai deterritorized her own body from her culture, ideology, and mind. Seeking not to conquer, but to become the Other, Phuong Mai rooted her body in a new land and culture, set it loose from the restriction of given ideology, and let it become something she did not even know. The case of Phuong Mai's travel writing provides a good example of a woman traveler's capabilities. She travels to re-explore rather than explore, sympathize rather confront. In dealing with Otherness, she chooses to abandon her given identity and become Otherness itself. The feminine body infiltrates rather than penetrates; it is able to adapt itself to other culture. The feminine traveler does not try to show us a land we have known already. She tries to show all the possibilities of a familiar land stripped by the mass media and masculine ideologies.

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Appendix 1:
Books on travel published in Vietnamese from 2006 to 2017

Book's title	Author	Year of Publication
Ngón tay mình còn thơm mùi oải hương	Ngô Thị Giáng Uyên	2006
Namaskar! Xin chào Ấn Độ	Hồ Anh Thái	2008
Đảo thiên đường	Di Li	2009
Venise và những cuộc tình Gondola	Dương Thụy	2009
Nước Mỹ, nước Mỹ	Phan Việt	2009
Nhắm mắt thấy Paris	Dương Thụy	2010
Chuyện tình New York	Hà Kin	2010
Bánh mì thơm, cà phê đắng	Ngô Thị Giáng Uyên	2010
Trả lại nụ hôn	Dương Thụy	2011
Nước Ý câu chuyện tình của tôi	Trương Anh Ngọc	2012
Hẹn hò với Châu Âu	Bùi Mai Hương	2013
Dưới nắng trời Châu Âu	Hoàng Yến Anh	2013
Đừng chết ở châu Phi	Huyền Chip	2013
Châu Á là nhà, đừng khóc	Huyền Chip	2013
Một mình trên đường	Lệ Tân Sitek	2013
Ngã ba đường	Lệ Tân Sitek	2013
Tôi là một con lừa	Nguyễn Phương Mai	2013
Một mình ở Châu Âu	Phan Việt	2013
Xuyên Mỹ	Phan Việt	2013
John đi tìm Hùng	Trần Hùng John	2013
Phút 90++	Trương Anh Ngọc	2013
Bỏ nhà đi Paris	Camille Thắm Trần	2014
Con đường Hồi giáo	Nguyễn Phương Mai	2014
Lữ khách gió bụi xa gần	Tiến Đạt	2014
Bảy năm ở Paris	Camille Thắm Trần	2015
Những nụ hôn thành Rome	Di Li	2015
Quá trẻ để chết	Đinh Hằng	2015
Đường về nhà	Đinh Phương Linh	2015
Ta ba lô trên đất Á	Rosie Nguyễn	2015
Minh và Linh hai chúng mình đi khắp thế giới	Thùy Minh	2015
Mùa hè năm ấy	Đặng Huỳnh Mai Anh	2016

Book's title	Author	Year of Publication
Chân đi không mỏi	Đinh Hằng	2016
Tôi nghĩ tôi thích nước Mỹ	Dương Thụy	2016
Đất nước ở gần bầu trời	Lê Toán	2016
Bánh bèo phiêu lưu ký	Ngọc bích	2016
Nước Mỹ những ngày xê dịch	Nguyễn Hữu Tài	2016
Hạt muối rong chơi	Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai	2016
Nào mình cùng đạp xe đến Paris	Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân	2016
Rong ruổi Scotland cùng anh, em nhé	Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân	2016
Chạm ngõ thiên đường	Trần Việt Phương	2016
Những chuyến Rong chơi	Xuân Huy	2016
Có hẹn với Paris	Amanda Huỳnh	2017
Và tuyết đã rơi ngoài cửa sổ	Di Li	2017
Có một nước Mỹ rất khác	Huỳnh Chí Viễn	2017
Đến Nhật Bản học về cuộc đời	Lê Nguyễn Nhật Linh	2017
Trái tim trên những con đường	Mai Thanh Nga	2017
Từ rừng thẳm Amazon đến Quê hương Bolero	Nguyễn Tập	2017
Ở Cà Mau mà lại nhớ cà mau	Nguyễn Thị Việt Hà	2017
Đà Lạt một thời hương xa	Nguyễn Vĩnh Nguyên	2017
Về nhà	Phan Việt	2017
Seoul đến và yêu	Quỳnh in Seoul	2017
Tuổi trẻ đáng giá bao nhiêu	Rosie Nguyễn	2017
Bụi đường tuổi trẻ	Tâm Bùi	2017
Từ Bàng Môn Điếm tới Chernobyl	Trung Nghĩa	2017
Nghìn ngày nước Ý, nghìn ngày yêu	Trương Anh Ngọc	2017
Từ sông Hàn đến Hlaing	Trương Điện Thắng	2017
Những ngày ở Châu Âu	Vũ Minh Đức	2017
Gái phượt	yếm đào lẳng lơ	2017
Apa Kabar! Chào Xứ Vạn Đảo	Hồ Anh Thái	2017
Tuổi trẻ không hối tiếc	Huyền Chip	2018
Mình nói gì khi nói về hạnh phúc	Rosie Nguyễn	2018
Trở về nơi hoang dã	Trang Nguyễn	2018

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Women, Feminism, and Confucianism in Vietnam in the Early 20th Century

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[*Abstract*]

The early years of the twentieth century introduced Vietnam, then a French colony, to feminism, which helped expose the problem of suicide among women, prostitution, and the trafficking. This article surveyed writings in three influential newspapers published for and by women, namely, *"Phụ Nữ Tân Văn" (PNTV)* (*Woman's Newspaper)* 1929-1934,*"Phụ nữ Thời Đàm" (PNTĐ) (Women's Discussions on Topical Questions)* 1930-1934, and *"Đàn Bà"(ĐB) (Women)* 1939-1945. The writings were analyzed to illustrate how feminism was perpetrated in this period, and how the writers were able to reconcile it with prevalent Confucianism, which this paper also argued as having put in place, gender inequality.

Keywords: Women, Confucianism, Feminism, Women's Newspapers

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Ⅰ. Introduction

In general, women's rights became an issue of concern in Vietnamese society in the early twentieth century. It was widely reported and discussed in the press. More than ten newspapers were established for the sake of women in this period. This article surveys three newspapers, namely, *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn (PNTV)* (1929-1935), *Phụ nữ Thời Đàm (PNTĐ)* (1930-1934), and *Đàn Bà (ĐB)* (1939-1945), considered most significant because rallied for substantially change in society's understanding of women and fought for the female labor force in Vietnam. This study assumes that the press played a critical role in changing public perception about women, especially during this period.

As advocates of women, each paper kept a specific perspective and concretely developed principles. *PNTV* confirms that it was "an independent organization, working single-mindedly at women's issues, and surveying all matters relative to women. That means, it will deal with issues connected to the whole nation's fate" (No.1, 2/5/1929). Meanwhile, *PNTĐ* utilized two keywords, "Balance" and "Neutral" to express its editorial attitude. Both *PNTĐ* and *ĐB* advocated to "heighten knowledge," by elaborating on their mission: "What are backward things we change, what are legitimate benefits we follow, in such a way that is appropriate to an evolution of human beings and preservation of a particular beauty and identity of Vietnamese women" (No.1, 8/11/1932). The three established a common platform for people to discuss women's rights and issues—a landmark in Vietnamese culture rife with gender inequality.

The French introduced feminism to Vietnam, and it certainly made an impact in public consciousness. It also led to conflict, as it interrogated traditional views on women and their role in society. The aforementioned newspapers focused on forwarding causes, proposing solutions to change a depressing reality from the context of Vietnamese culture and history, and encouraging women to participate in freeing themselves from inequalities.

Ⅱ. Feminism: Causes & Effects

2.1. Internal and External Conditions of Vietnam Society in the early 20th century

2.1.1. French Colonial Policies in Indochina

Long before the rise of newspapers for and by women, the press in general has been instrumental in French colonialism in Indochina. Publications such as *An Nam tạp chí (Annam Review), Đông Dương tạp chí (Indochina Review), Ngày Nay (Present Day), Phong Hóa (Mores), Tri Tân (New Knowledge)), Trung Lập (Neutral News), Thanh Nghị (Enlightened Opinion),* among others, mirrored colonial values and programs.

The book, *Giáo dục Việt Nam thời kỳ thuộc địa, qua tài liệu và tài liệu lưu trữ 1858-1945 (Vietnamese Education in a Colonial Period through Materials and Stored Materials 1858-1945)* (2016), published by National Archives Center N.1, Vietnam, contains materials that attest to education policies on education between 1858 to 1945. This period saw how the French deployed an educational system that broadly formed subjects from the basic to the disciplinal levels. Ngo Bac, in a review of his translation of John K. Whitmore's "From Classical Scholarship To Confucian Belief In Vietnam" wrote that "the invasion of the French finished a Confucian cycle in Vietnam by the abolishment of tests in Han and a propagation Vietnamese language, using the sound notation replaced hieroglyph of the Chinese" (2016).

Governor-General of Indochina (1897-1902) and France President (1931-1932) Paul Doumer, in his memoirs *Xứ Đông Dương (L' Indo-Chine Francaise)*[1], asserted that "being present at Indochina of the Republic of France not only deployed the missions of organization and management of colonies but also… strengthened France's reputation, power and actions in Indochina" (2015:15). This was confirmed by Alleyne Ireland, FRGS, in his essay "French Indochina": "With Indochina, Paul Doumer's reforms achieved lots of meanings in the direction of improving the colonial administration

[1] These memoires were written and published in French. But in this article, all quotations of this work were translated from the Vietnamese.

and finance." (1905: 145). Despite aversion to colonialism, it cannot be discounted that the French invasion is a historical turning point for Vietnam, considering the many changes that will be surface the early twentieth century.

2.1.2. Social conflicts and its Manifestations: Suicide among Women, Prostitution, and Trafficking

French colonial policies led to a "Europeanization" in Vietnam, as Vietnamese poet Hoai Thanh attested: "A nail has also carried a part of the Western spirit on human life and the universe, and one day, it will change the mind of the East." (1942: 16); "The encounter with the West is the biggest change in Vietnamese history for many centuries" (1942: 15). And change resulted in social conflicts, as Virginia Thompson, in her *French Indochina,* emphasized that "no other culture can compare to the attitude of the Vietnamese with Western education" (1937: 434). The Vietnamese way of life changed as it adopted, and to a certain extent "distorted" Western culture and values. Thompson reported a specific case: "Annam people sacrificed by sending their children to study at French schools. They accepted the change in their children's behaviors: respect and traditional manners have been altered with rudeness and arrogance. The Patriarchal system was shattered. Western culture has given birth to an individual self in society" (1937: 434). Despite conflicts, more ideas continued to proliferate, like feminism.

Our subjects, the three newspapers, *PNTV* in Sai Gon, and *PNTĐ,* and *ĐB* in Hanoi, provide the most comprehensive account of the feminist movement in early twentieth century Vietnam. While feminism (Phong trào Nữ quyền in Vietnamese) was found to be quite strange by intellectuals in Vietnam, it significantly rallied for equal rights, as it focused on issues that directly affected women. One issue was the spike in female suicide, which these papers related to oppressive social structures between the 1920s to the 1930s. In *PNTV's* "Women Have Committed Suicide Again" (No. 123, June 2, 1932), for instance, the paper lamented that "the suicides have been an infectious disease which no power can stop." The paper, by way of its two columns, "The Domestic News" and "Our Opinions of the Topical Questions" reported on these cases. The

first one more specifically reported in about 30 to 70 words the names, ages, and reasons for suicide—*PNTV*, No. 118, 28/1/1932: "Two Female Teachers Committed Suicide," "A Female Teacher Cut Her Bosom and Neck to Commit Suicide," "A Mother and Four Her Daughters Committed Suicide at Truc Bach Lake"; *PNTV* No. 115, 14/1/1932: "Because of the Obstacles in Love, a Girl Committed Suicide From a High Building"; *PNTV,* No. 98, 3/9/1931: "Two Female Siblings Committed Suicide at Hoan Kiem Lake at the Same Time"; *PNTV,* No. 218, 28/9/1933: "A Victim of the Constrained Marriage." Most were about 16 to 25 years old.

The papers also attempted to expose the sensitive issue of prostitution. By the end of the 1930s, *ĐB* reported that brothels rapidly increased like "mushrooms up after rain." (No. 35, 24/11/1939). Discussions were made in the form of literary works (novels, short stories, investigative reports), debates, and articles on treating venereal diseases (syphilis, gonorrhoea, etc). While only a few writings discussed prostitution, advertisements selling medicines for treating venereal diseases regularly appeared in the papers' pages.

Phan Khoi, a well-known scholar, wrote in *PNTV* that "society is getting sick, and the traditional Vietnamese views of the family are no longer compatible with the rapid changes in the society itself." The scholar added, "we must wake up and find the way to deal with the problem" (No. 83, 21/5/1931). His conclusion that "all deaths have risen from the family" (*PNTV*, No. 83, 21/5/1931) reminds of Vu Trong Phung's fierce polemics on the chaos of Vietnamese society in the early 20th century: "This society has a wound, and I have proposed how to cure it in my work *Lục Xì (Luc Xi: Prostitution and Venereal Disease in Colonial Hanoi)* Prostitution is the country's venereal disease. It has been destroying 9 out of 10 this society" (*Tuong Lai*, No. 11, 1937).

Related to both suicide and prostitution is trafficking of women. This phenomenon was less publicized in the press, however, when surveying news as well as non-fictitious and fictitious texts in the newspapers, trafficking (hidden in the form of marriage) caused the most suicidal deaths and prostitution. In the article "The

Unfair Disadvantage of Women" TB.ĐB asserted "wedding customs and marriage are essentially a sale of their daughters" (*ĐB,* No. 54, 3/5/1940). Forced marriages brought the girls in a wide range of a dismal situation.

2.2. Search for Reasons

The papers analyzed different social dimensions of the said problems. They maintained that kind of attitude despite being fundamentally incompatible with Vietnamese traditional culture, steeped in Confucianism. These interrogated the Confucian doctrines that encouraged male chauvinism, as they also proposed strong opinions on family issues such as marriage among young people, arranged marriage, dowry and wedding presents, and after-marriage matters, which illustrate the regime of a multi-generational family and customary laws based on Confucian practices. Some writers went to the extent of relating suicide, prostitution, and trafficking in women with Confucian ethical norms. For instance, Thu Linh, in "We Have Encouraged Prostitution," emphasized that arranged marriages only led men astray and women forced to engage in prostitution (*ĐB,* No. 35, 24/11/1939).

2.3. Solutions and the Emergence of Women's Equal Rights

The three newspapers sought to propose solutions to the crises of female suicide, prostitution, and trafficking, by "improv(ing) women's knowledge… (and) mak(ing) women broaden their knowledge and have an open mind," as *PNTV* would have it (*PNTV*, No. 1, 2/5/1929). They concentrated on the publication of articles on education, the professions, sciences, literature, and family life, where women were deemed important.

For instance, in "What in Women's Brain Make them Inferior to men?," Dao Hoa discussed the need to "attend to the education of women" (*PNTV*, No.5, 30/5/1929) if society intends to embrace feminism. *PNTV* also recognized that "the noblest purpose of education is training human beings to have good behavior" (*PNTV*, No.17, 22/8/1929). In *PNTĐ*, No. 1, Monday, December 8, 1930, GGTP also argued that "if we want to gain an equal social position with men, we must have equal knowledge and profession." On the other hand, Doan Tam Dan emphasized that "women should realize

that their virtues and knowledge are very closely related to the country's future. Because the country's prosperity will depend on our educative responsibility" (*PNTĐ*, No. 2, 9/12/1930).

Meanwhile, Van Chung, in "The Education of Women Concerns the Future of Society," said that "women are a family's and a nation's models. A good or bad family, a healthy or weak nation depend on their hands" and "education can change the human mentality, amend the country's customs, complement human spirits, and stir human behavior" (*PNTĐ*, No.3, 10/12/1930). Intellectuals writing for the papers also showed how a lack in education leave women to a sad state, or as Nhan Viet would have it, a "weak mind" or "spiritless energy." "Committing suicide," she wrote, "comes from narrow-minded thoughts." (*PNTV*, No. 135, 6/6/1932).

Meanwhile, PNTĐ also argued not only for women's education and involvement in disciplinal fields and intellectual fields but also for their right to participate in political activities. (No. 21, 2-3/1/1931; No.22, 4/1/1931; No. 23, 5-6/1/1931)—in the name of liberating women's minds. The change this has brought was made evident in the use of language.

2.4. Women's Language in the Early 20th century and Traces of Confucianism in Vietnamese Social Life

In both cases of newspaper fora "Well-known Men's Opinions on Women" and "Women's Opinions on Women Themselves," male opinion almost drown women's voices, though the latter was still made a significant impact. It could have been otherwise, had there been more women registering their opinions. In PNTĐ's forum, Phan Khoi reported that "female newspapers in our country is initiated by men with a goal to help women become fully human" (No.12, 3/12/1933).

Male writers were very instrumental in bringing forth the cause during the early years of the twentieth century. Until more women were educated and compelled to turn to writing, the movement gradually brought in changes. It was still notable however that papers became "a forum where Vietnamese educated women can share their ideas to educate and clearly understand their rights and

duties mutually" (*PNTV,1929)* or a "common institution where one is willing to receive and propagate all ideals related to maintaining ethics, broadening knowledge, and supporting women's activities" (*PNTĐ,*1930), despite being penned by male intellectuals.

When Susan Lanser argues that if women are voiceless, their language is "a discourse of the powerless," their speech may be characterized as "polite, emotional, enthusiastic, gossipy, talkative, uncertain, dull, and chatty" (1986: 348).

A characteristic feature of women's language in their writings is self-effacement, as may be seen in Huynh Lan's "Women's Opinions on Women's Issues" and Bang Tam's "The Feminist Narrative." Both started with wordy explanations about Western feminism and norms of a virtuous woman. Both authors were highly educated women but could not begin very directly and strongly in terms of language, a discourse of convolution and repetition. They represent many female authors who did not refer to their status and who seem to feel compelled to hide their individuality in all levels of Vietnamese grammar.

Their arguments mainly concentrated on the education and training of women to have good behavior and skills for looking after their children and supporting their families. Also, to resolve a complex or sensitive issue, female authors usually resorted to the flexible and indirect styles of intimate conversations or heart-to-heart stories. In Doan Tam Dan's "The Issues Women Should Discuss First," the writer conceded that the feminist movement brought women to much a better position in society, but however maintained the need for them to subscribe to traditional ethics and norms, as "women's ethics and knowledge are closely related with the nation's future" (*PNTĐ*, No.2).

Feminist texts by women of this period also used the kid-glove and indirect discourse. Although encouraging women to participate in the struggle for equal rights, some still could not transcend limiting thoughts. Articles by Bang Tam, Huynh Lan, Mrs. Nguyen Duc Nhuan, and Van Dai in *PNTV*; Doan Tam Dan, Trinh Lan Phuong, and Lien Huong in *PNTĐ*; and Thuy An, Ngoc Minh, and Hoang Ngoc Dung in *ĐB*, motivated women to excel in their fields

and jobs, but also emphasized that the family is the best place of women.

For instance, *PNTV* editor-in-chief Nguyen Duc Nhuan talked about feminism in Vietnam (*PNTV*, No. 91, 92, 23/7/1931) but emphasized three primary responsibilities of women: 1) to become the husband's friend; 2) to become the children's mother; and 3) to be the master of the house. The editor said: "the education and training of women are to do well in these things."

Looking at the lexicon and grammar of feminist writings may also provide insight to how women writers often utilized the grammatical structure of "should" or "should be + participle" in sentences: "The law 'One Husband-One Wife' should be passed"; "We should eliminate male chauvinism" (Huynh Lan); "Women should have their jobs in order to get equality with men" (Nguyen Duc Nhuan); "Women should step on all obstacles and advance forward" (*PNTV*, no. 117, 21/1/1932); "Women should give up timidity" (*PNTV*, No. 122, 13/3/1932). This provided them room for flexibility.

This will change when they confront the suicide and prostition issues. Phrases "must" and "must be" became more prominent in the texts, as in the following: "Women must oppose the polygamous marriages because it makes women mean" (Nguyen Thi Bach Minh, *PNTV*, No. 96, 20/8/1931); "We must fight to build an equal society. We must abolish unsound customs that hurt women; we must eliminate what sets apart women and men, lower and higher classes." (Nguyen Duc Nhuan, *PNTV,* No. 110, 26/11/1931).These illustrated changes in women's discourse, as it gradually becomes stronger, more direct and undoubtedly sure.

2.5. Men's Discourse

As mentioned, although *PNTV*, *PNTĐ*, and *ĐB* were newspapers published by and for women, the most robust discourses made in these papers for women's equal rights were written by men.

Men's writings occupy a large portion in these papers. Male scholars and intellectuals of various education and persuasion occupied their pages—Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chu Trinh, Nguyen Van

Vinh, Pham Quynh, Nguyen Phan Long, Phung Ngoc Tuong, Ngo Thuc Dich, Trinh Dinh Ru, and Phan Khoi.

Phan Khoi alone wrote about 70 articles discussing and fighting for women's equal rights, while at the same time resolving the conflict of women and Confucianism. It is quite clear to him that Confucian practices brought about gender oppression, most especially Confucian thought from the Han period and the Song dynasty. The latter, which introduced neo-Confucianism, taught that virtuous women must submit to men.

As a positive collaborator of *PNTV* and the Editor-in-chief of *PNTĐ*, Phan Khoi vigorously struggled with regressive Confucian thought. When encouraging women to get an education, he told them that "women must realize their fundamental requirements and entitlements" (*PNTV*, No. 7, 13/6/1929); he used the the language of a magistrate to discuss the law that rules that women must stay loyal to their husbands when they die: "the principle that insists the cult of chastity for women was born from men's selfishness and has made women insignificant"; "Neo-Confucian ethical norms have caused men to turn nasty!" (*PNTV*, No. 21, 19/9/1929); "I want all the people in our society to wake up, repent, and adjust the moral principles and norms of male chauvinism" (*PNTV*, No. 22, 26/9/1929).

Lexical and grammatical differences, undoubtedly, reveal the attitudes and real status of men and women in society. Robin Lakoff, in her *Language and Women's Place* (1975), maintained that: "our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings. Woman's language has as its foundation the attitude that women are marginal to the serious concern of life, which are preempted by men" (1975). Moreover, language used also illustrated that "a man is defined in the serious world by what he does, a woman by her sexuality, that is, in terms of one particular aspect of her relationship to men" (1975: 30). This is a viewpoint that we find appropriate as we continue to illustrate Vietnamese women's marginality. This perspective is also shared by Kira Hali, Miriam Meyerhoff, Susan Ehrlich, and Scott Fabius Fiesling (2004), and Susan Lanser (1985). Their works compel us to find implied

meanings in texts that are normally covered by different discourses and purposes.

It cannot be denied that the language of Vietnamese women writers of this period shows how they are still bound by many social conventions. They cannot completely transcend from Confucian ethical norms and the traditional culture. By and by, these writers avoided vague discourse and became stronger, as can be seen in Hue—Tam Ho Tai, who insisted that in Vietnam, “woman as a singular conceptual category does not correspond to reality” and her language “does not recognize the autonomy of the individual but instead enmeshes each and every speaking self in webs of familial and quasi-familial relationships” (2001: 168).

Ⅲ. Reconciling Feminism and Confucianism in Vietnam

3.1. An Antagonistic Relationship

In the early twentieth century, Confucian practices were mainly influenced by the Han-Song Dynasties' neo-Confucian ideology. Essentially, Confucianism espouses power relations in maintaining political institutions, and from this, the Han Dynasty instituted the virtuosity of women’s full submission to men. This kind of Confucianism was embraced in Vietnam.

The "Three Principles and Five Constant Virtues" and "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" of Confucianism were used to perpetrate female oppression in Vietnamese society. In discussing female suicide and prostitution, Phan Khoi, in a series of articles titled "Family in Vietnam Has Become a Problem” (N.83, 21/5/1931), “Comparing between the Family Regime in Vietnam and Confucius-Mencius’s ethical Norms” (No. 85, 4/6/1931), and “More Discussion on the Three Principles and Five Constant Virtues” (No. 89, 30/7/1931), pointed out why Confucian ethics need to catcth up with the times.

To do this, he needed to distinguished between Confucian ideology in Confucius and Mencius and Confucianism in the Han-Song period. The latter’s neo-Confucianism consolidated the

authority of political leaders, especially the King that governs the country. He also asserted that Confucian practices and interpretations of the "Three Principles and Five Constant Virtues" have changed a great deal. During this period, only the "Three Principles" remained. He emphasized that "the Vietnamese family model has long deviated from how it was imagined in Confucius and Mencius's ideology," which he said "mainly served the sake of the Monarchic system and maintained the authority of king" (*PNTV*, No. 85, 4/7/1931). Phan Khoi illustrated the real nature of the "Three Principles and Five Constant Virtues" and underlined what Bell mentioned as its function to support "the monarchic system" and "define the power and authority of the political leaders" (2006). For him, neo-Confucian thought may have "trampled on" the personhood of women despite its aspiration to be humane (No. 89, 30/7/1931).

He also argued against traditional norms that dictate how women should behave. In "The Word *Virginity:* Loyalty and Virtue" (*PNTV*, No. 21, 19/9/1929) and "Song Dynasty's Confucianism and Women" (*PNTV*, No. 95, 13/8/1931), Phan Khoi he criticized the valuing of virginity and the "cult of chastity" in widowhood. He condemned these as pushing "many women into a dismal and depressed life." (*PNTV*, No. 21, 19/9/1929). He also said that the "keeping of virginity and loyalty are borne of men's selfishness," as he advocated that these must be practiced "in more educated and cultivated manner rather than obligated." (*PNTV*, No. 21, 19/9/1929). In quoted a statement by the Song Dynasty Confucian Cheng Yi, "to starve to death is a small matter, but to lose one's chastity is a great matter," he asserted that "enforcing the 'cult of chastity' is an unnatural thing," and that "prohibiting widows to remarry is an unfair, inhumane, and robs women of their human rights. Thus, we must abolish it" (*PNTV*, No. 95, 13 May 1931).

Doctor C.'s "Virginity in Marriage" (*ĐB*, No. 24, 1/9/1939), Dong Tung Thon Nu's "Are *Three Principles and Four Virtues* Suitable for Women of Today?" (*PNTV,* No. 93, 30/7/1931) also comment on the doctrine's inadequacies. However, both concede that these views are not easy to repudiate.

The newspapers also re-evaluated Confucianist filial piety and

ancestor worship. Filial piety is a cardinal virtue of respecting one's parents and ancestors, which extends to the privileging of male heirs and their mothers. This practice has led to several inequalities, including being forced to come to terms with the possibility of polygamy. Only women who can provide male heirs are perceived to be fulfilling the obligations to this essentially patriarchal order. It was necessary to find a way to reconcile the two opposing paradigms, Confucianism and feminism. Intellectuals, both men and women, engaged in it, as it proved to be very challenging. Confucianism is deeply embedded in Vietnamese culture. Feminism, a creature of modernity, proved to be incompatible with it in many ways.

3.2. Exploring Reconciliation Further

Vietnam was not alone in Asia in its attempt to reconcile tradition with feminism. The early twentieth century brought Europeanization in East Asian countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Malaysia. These cultures, with economic conditions, political institutions, and the cultural traditions, also had to come to terms with feminism as it was propagated and practiced in different levels. Feminism's encounter with the so-called "Asian values" (Doh Chull Shin 2012) inevitably had to be dealt with.

Confucianism is a set of philosophical, political, and social doctrines attributed to Confucius, which also underwent drastic changes and interpretations over the years. "Undoubtedly, Confucius was the founder of Confucianism," said Shin, "but all of the ideas of Confucianism did not originate with him." (2012). The dynamics of Confucianism, also according to Shin, both in principle and in practice, "can be understood from two contrasting perspectives: historical and spatial. Confucianism can be viewed as a historical phenomenon that has undergone a great deal of transformation or reformulation over time" (2012: 23). Eventually, Confucianism was expanded and turned into an official ideology of the imperial state. With regards to women, Han dynasty Confucianism valued the virtue of chastity, and as a cornerstone of family and social stability, its norms perpetrated gender disparity.

Li- Hsiang, in *Confucianism and Women*, pointed out that

"gender oppression in premodern China might be interpreted as being interconnected with filiality, patrilinearity, and ancestor worship" (2006: 123). As a very complicated issue in China, "the intersection between gender oppression and Confucianism lies in the mutual reinforcement of these three cultural imperatives and Confucian virtue ethics, which takes the familial virtue of filial piety as the root of civic virtues" (Li- Hsiang 2006: 124).

Recently, some scholars began to discuss the viability of constructing a "Confucian feminism," one that esposes an "ethic in-the-making," and Li-Hsiang affirmed its possibility: "Despite its emphasis on reciprocal inequalities of social roles and its emphasis on the familial virtues of filiality and continuity, Confucianism is assumed to be able to inform feminism with an alternative theoretical ground for women's liberation. A fully articulated Confucian feminism will be reserved as a future project to do justice to contemporary feminist theories" (2006).

A test case for this is that of Korea and Japan. John Ducan (1998), in *Confucianism and Family,* mentioned that "the Korean adoption of the Neo-Confucianism" depended on "the social context," while in Japan, the ethics of filial piety was "incorporated into a different human network from that of China" (1998: 63).

In this manner, reconciling Confucianism and feminism in Vietnam needs a contextual application of what had been carried out in other places in East Asia. Retaining the exceptional views of Confucianism and reconsidering the new ideas of feminism may definitely help in reconciling them. The interface between the two may also be contextually appropriated to Vietnamese culture and realities. Huynh Thuc Khang once warned that in dealing with feminism, "we must look for what is suitable, and what is not" (*PNTV*, No.9, 27/6/1929). Phan Khoi, Nguyen Duc Nhuan, and Dong Tung Thon Nu (*PNTĐ*, No. 15/11/1933; *PNTV*, No. 89, 2/7/1931) wrote spirited discussions utilizing feminist keywords "emancipation" and "freedom" while looking for a reconcilable path for feminism, a key for national emancipation in Vietnam. This may be seen in *PNTĐ's* vision (No. 1, 8/12/1930) of "finding the *middle way* to help women have enough knowledge and experiences for

cultivating their personhood and developing society." *PNTV's* Pham Quynh supported this cause by saying that the paper's priority is to enlighten women so they "can receive new ideas" (*PNTV*, No. 6 June 1929). These may have reduced friction, but how the two were reconciled more specifically is a complicated matter.

Throughout history, and in many cases, Confucianism became an inherent obstruction to Europeanization, though Wolters, in John K. Whitmore (1987), was quick to suggest that Confucian creeds were not intrinsic in Vietnamese culture. Wolters maintained that "we must think twice before using the term "Confucianism" to Vietnam History, and that "there is a difference between what looks like a Chinese model seen from the outside and what aspects of the model is to be considered reasonable for specific purposes within Vietnam itself." (1987: 49)

It may be perceived that the looseness of neo-Confucian practice in Vietnam has led to an easy reconciling of Confucianism and feminism. However, the latter was not really able to completely shatter the ceiling, so-called, as women still continue to be oppressed.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, French colonialism has profoundly changed Vietnamese society in various ways. The early twentieth century ushered in the introduction of feminism, at a time when suicide among women, prostitution, and trafficking were prevalent. These were the issues touched on by the feminist movement that emerged from newspapers for and by women.

In the process, the movement, as may be seen in the example of the three papers in the study, not only rallied the cause for women equality and empowerment, but also the reconciling of traditional Confucianism with the new gender paradigm. It had been quite a challenge in Vietnam, but scholarship was able to turn to Japan and Korea for the possibility of doing so. The work of emancipation in Vietnam continues to the present.

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5) Newspaper Articles

• In case of a daily newspaper, by-line story of weekly magazine and column, the following form shall be followed.

> Peterson, Thomas. 1993. The Economic Development of ASEAN. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 22: 23.

6) Internet Sources

• In case of the internet searching, it shall be in order of author, year of production, subject and web address (Accessed Month DD, YYYY).

> Hadar, Leon. 1998. U.S. Sanctions against Burma. *Trade Policy Analysis* no. 1. http://www.cato.org/pubs/trade/tpa-001.html. (Accessed May 07, 2008).

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