

## Editorial Foreword

The eight research articles featured in this issue address themes concerning cultural and technological transmission; religion and identity; representation and narrative; political spectacle and performance. Drawing upon rich ethnographic, textual, linguistic, and visual sources, the articles showcase research conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines.

Freek Colombijn explores how the colonial past is negotiated through an exploration of the built landscape in Surabaya, Indonesia. The article considers how select colonial buildings are understood and given meaning by contemporary Indonesians, part of a broader discursive analysis of how the notion of ‘heritage’ has become popular in Indonesia. Referring to the concept of ‘bricolage’ as an alternative to concepts such as ‘colonial nostalgia’ and ‘imperial debris’, Colombijn addresses a classic question in Southeast Asian Studies of how the ‘foreign’ is continually localised across time and space.

Markus Balázs Göransson’s article examines political mobilisation and resistance to the building of hydro-electric dams in the highlands of northern Philippines. The study focuses on the internal factors leading to the successful halting of the Chico River Dam project in the Cordillera Mountains in Luzon. Göransson studies mechanisms of mobilisation, such as the *bodong*—peace pact—to highlight the role of local structures, practices and symbols that were part of the successful resistance campaign.

Christina Skott’s article examines the rise and decline of nutmeg cultivation by the East India Company in the Straits Settlements to understand the nature of botanical knowledge transfer and species transmission in the region during the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Focusing on the island of Penang, Skott shows while it was initially British planters and colonial authorities who played a direct role in the development of large scale monoculture production projects, the influx of immigrant Chinese farmers and labourers intensified the rate and extent of deforestation in Penang. Her article shows local species and the techniques for growing them were appropriated by colonial interests and how commentators at the time began to use the case of the nutmeg industry in Penang as a focal point for discussing issues of conservation and environmentalism.

Nu-Anh Tran’s contribution examines the Republic of Vietnam’s Denounce the Communists Campaign of 1955–60 and its role in the historical construction of the dominant anti-French resistance narrative. The article argues that state officials and intellectuals in South Vietnam crafted a historical narrative that separated nationalists from communists, a rendering of history that reflected deeper fissures over the place of communism within the broader anti-colonial/independence movement and differences amongst anti-colonial nationalist groups. Through an analysis of the terms and language utilised in the official anti-French narrative, Nu-Anh Tran’s research shows that the promotion and maintenance of this perspective emerged out of a campaign that was directed as much towards rivals of the South Vietnam government as it was

anti-communist, highlighting the competition and factionalism amongst nationalist organisations competing for a post-French Vietnam.

Yufu Iguchi and Abdul Rashid's article discusses tensions between global understandings of sexuality, gender, culture, and public health through their case study of 'female genital mutilation' in rural Malaysia. In doing so it examines how bio-medical discourses efface social practices that ultimately transform and redefine how concepts such as *sunat* (circumcision) are understood by scholars and international advocacy groups. Based on their (northern dialect) Malay language interviews, the authors provide alternative understandings of how *sunat* is viewed within rural Malaysia and the tensions that arise via bio-medical ethnographies of the practice.

William B. Noseworthy and Pham Thi Thanh Huyen reassess the issue of religious classification and belonging amongst Cham Bani communities in the south-central coast of Vietnam. The article examines the different ways through which state authorities and minority groups interpret and give meaning to official terms of religious affiliation while tracking changes to these meanings across time. The authors suggest that forms of 'particularism' help explain lived realities within various Cham communities, whose members debate what proper behaviour, ritual and practice mean within their particular social contexts. Their research raises broad analytical questions about how analytical notions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy can limit how we understand the complexities surrounding identity construction and expressions of community in the region.

Questions of representation and national identity animate Yulia Nurliani Lukito's study of Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Indonesia in the Miniature Park), located in Jakarta. The article examines the continuing development of the ethnographic park as a symbol of the nation and the way in which it constructs and represents various sub-identities within the Indonesian nation-state. Lukito argues that visitors understand the cultural village cum leisure park in ways that differ from the official script that is inscribed into the various cultural pavilions and performances. She suggests that Taman Mini has evolved into a site for cultural production and negotiation rather than a symbol of state cultural containment.

Finally, Beiyu Zhang's article explores the performative dimensions of political activism and mobilisation through a study of Chinese school concerts in 1950s–60s Singapore. Through a study of folk dances, songs, and theatre, Zhang contends that these student concerts were a space where visions of the postcolonial state, expressed through themes of socialism and multiracialism, could be expressed artistically. Through an analysis of these performances, the article suggests that students utilised these events to actively engage in political discussions about anti-colonialism, Cold War rhetoric, and nationhood. Basing the analysis on rarely used Chinese student publications and oral history testimonies, the article connects the history of these performances to broader discussions of political mobilisation and contest that pervaded this period of decolonisation across the region.

As always, the issue has a healthy review section of recently published books. We are grateful to and depend on the international community of colleagues whose generosity and expertise has made this issue possible.

Maitrii Aung-Thwin