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Director’s Chair
Judy Ledgerwood

This has been a very exciting year of events marking the Center’s 50th anniversary on March 5, 2013. I would like to first thank a number of people who made all of the year’s activities come off so smoothly. These include the staff of CSEAS: Nancy Schuneman, Trude Jacobsen, Julia Lamb, Jayeeta Chowdhury, and most especially Liz Denius, who served as the chair of the 50th organizing committee. I would also like to thank CSEAS director emeritus Clark Neher and alumnus John Brandon of The Asia Foundation, who served as co-chairs of the committee, the committee members, and students who worked tirelessly as volunteers at many of the events.

Thanks also to those many departments around campus who collaborated on activities, including the School of Music, the Center for Burma Studies, the Anthropology Museum, the NIU Art Museum, the Jack Olson Gallery, CLAS External Programming and the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection at Founders Memorial Library. Associate Jui-Ching Wang (School of Music) deserves special mention for all her work with the gamelan orchestra, and Media Services designer Sophia Varcados, who designed our beautiful anniversary logo, posters, events calendar, and announcements.

At the gala dinner in March we honored our founding mothers and fathers who were present: M. Ladd Thomas, Clark and Arlene Neher, John Hartmann, Richard Cooler, and Jim and Patricia Henry; along with those emeritus faculty who could not be with us, Dwight King, Kuo-Huang Han, Ron Provencher, and original founders Daniel Wit and J. Norman Parmer. NIU President John Peters and CLAS Dean Christopher McCord both provided funding for the gala events, for which we are most grateful.

This year was also important with the retirements of both Jim (Computer Science) and Pat (Foreign Languages and Literature) Henry, though both stayed on to teach for the 2012–13 academic year. Pat is most well-known for all the students she has trained to speak the Indonesian language. She and Jim were also pioneers in developing SEASite, the Center’s Southeast Asia language and culture website. We thank them for their many years of service. Indonesian will continue to be taught at NIU, for the next two years by Graduate Assistant Rahmi Hartati, a PhD student in the College of Education. Joining us this year was Tharaphi Than (PhD history, SOAS University of London) to teach Burmese language and culture, following the 2010 retirement of U Saw Tun who had taught Burmese at NIU since 1989. Than has ably stepped in since her arrival on campus. Her book Women of Modern Burma is forthcoming from Routledge this year. She also came to NIU just in time to participate in the university’s new engagement with Myanmar/Burma. NIU has joined eight other universities in the International Academic Partnership Program-Myanmar (IAPP) sponsored by the Institute of International Education (IIE). The program’s goal is to build long-term partnerships between institutions of higher education in Burma/Myanmar and the United States. This will be a continuing source of news in the coming months.

History turns a page
On a two-week regional visit to Southeast Asia partner institutions and in-country alumni in October 2012, Center Director Judy Ledgerwood, right, and College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Christopher McCord and Associate Provost for International Programs Deborah Pierce happened to be in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, during the period of public mourning at the Royal Palace, above, for the late King Norodom Sihanouk, 89, who died Oct. 18 in China. With thousands of mourners lined up to pay their respects to the late monarch, the three managed to get into the main square in front of the palace to sign the official condolence book. Over the course of the trip, the team made visits to colleges and universities to discuss student exchange, future collaborations, and memoranda of understanding.
Enrollments in Southeast Asian languages remained strong this year with classes taught in Burmese, Khmer, Indonesian, Malay, Tagalog, and Thai. In fall 2012 in beginning classes we had enrollments of: Burmese 18, Khmer 13, Indonesian 23, Malay 10, Tagalog 25, and Thai 26; and in intermediate and advanced classes: Burmese 2, Khmer 1, Indonesian 5, Malay 6, Tagalog 3, and Thai 3. At the graduate level there were 28 students enrolled in the Southeast Asian Studies graduate concentration and fourteen 14 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships. At the undergraduate level, there were forty-five SEAS minors and four FLAS fellowships. We awarded seventeen summer FLAS fellowships in 2012, eleven at the graduate level and six at the undergraduate level (see Fellowship Notes for this summer’s and next year’s FLAS awardees, page 28).

During the past year, the Center and NIU continued active exchanges with the countries of the region, hosting visitors from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma/Myanmar. Many scholars came to attend the two large international conferences; Imagining Cambodia held in September and the International Burma Studies Conference in October (see Conferences, page 21). Center visitors included the Thai Ambassador to the United States, Chaiyong Satjitpanon, and a delegation of officials and students from Khon Kaen University, which came to DeKalb to formalize ties with NIU.

With a productive and eventful anniversary year behind us, I can report that Southeast Asian Studies at NIU has some important changes under way. Over the course of the next year we will be changing our graduate concentration into a graduate certificate. One advantage to this change is that someone from beyond NIU will be able to take the concentration as a student-at-large. With this shift, we will be adding a new graduate-level course to parallel our ILAS 225 Southeast Asia: Crossroads of the World course that is the gateway to our undergraduate minor. Faculty from across several disciplines will teach sections of this course designed to review “great books” and recent critiques in the field.

Next year Assistant CSEAS Director Trude Jacobsen (history) will be on leave as a Visiting Fellow in both the Centre for the History of Public Policy and the Centre for Mental Health Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She will be replaced for one year by acting assistant director Eric Jones (history).

We have a strong cohort of nine FLAS students in Southeast Asia this summer, three of whom are headed for Burma/Myanmar. As follow-on from NIU’s participation in the IIE’s International Academic Partnership Program on Myanmar, four faculty members will visit institutions of higher education there this summer. I wish everyone safe travels and a productive summer, and look forward to the year ahead.

**Transition**

Associate history professor Eric Jones will serve as assistant CSEAS director for the 2013–14 academic year, taking the place of current assistant director and fellow historian Trude Jacobsen, who will be in London next year. Jones, who received his PhD in history from the University of California-Berkeley in 2003, has taught undergraduate and graduate level history courses on Southeast Asia since coming to NIU in 2003. He has also led seven summer Study Abroad Malaysia programs for NIU. Acting director of undergraduate studies for the History department for the past year, he is also the author of Wives, Slaves, and Concubines: A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia (NIU Press, 2010). He will be teaching HIST 448, History of Indonesia, in the fall. “I am looking forward to being assistant director,” Jones said. “I plan on helping to maintain the strong momentum of the Center by doing more of the same. We have a big year ahead of us writing the next [U.S. Department of Education] Title VI grant, which should be a rewarding challenge.’ Jones’ appointment will begin Aug. 16.

Jacobsen has accepted a 2013–14 visiting fellowship in the Centre for the History of Public Policy and the Global Mental Health Centre at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine where she will conduct research for her next book, Madness and Mental Health in Mainland Southeast Asia: Buddhism, Colonialism, and Medical Modernities, and work on developing short courses for NIU partner universities in Southeast Asia.
A Year to Remember

With exhibits, lectures, films, performances, special events, and a book, the Center celebrated its half-century mark all year long.

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies’ fiftieth year since its founding in 1963 began in March 2012 at Holmes Student Center with “Islamic Cultures in Reflection,” a traveling photographic exhibit of the Muslim world in Southeast Asia. Many activities later, CSEAS capped its anniversary year in March 2013 with a gala weekend that included a keynote lecture and reception at Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center; a tour of the Center’s signature exhibit, “Rarely Seen Southeast Asia,” at the Anthropology Museum; a formal dinner in Altgeld Auditorium; and cultural performances at Boutell Hall. Behind the scenes an organizing committee of Center council members Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail, Hao Phan, Jui-Ching Wang, and Deborah Pierce; student Robert Kollas; art historian and professor emeritus Richard Cooler and Center staff worked on various projects with honorary co-chairs Clark Neher, political scientist and CSEAS director emeritus, and alumnus John Brandon of The Asia Foundation. See the Center website for more photos, videos, and an interactive historical timeline of CSEAS history.
October 11, 2012 / **Frequently seen:**
Exhibit curator Richard Cooler, left, is in his element with Anthropology Department chair Kendall Thu at the opening of the Center’s year-long 50th anniversary exhibit, “Rarely Seen Southeast Asia: Art, Artifact and Ephemera,” at the Anthropology Museum. The exhibit contained objects ranging from Cambodian crocodile banners to betel nut containers from several Southeast Asian countries. (Photo / CSEAS)

March 1, 2012 / **At the podium:** London School of Economics political scientist John Sidel gave the Center’s 50th Anniversary Spring Lecture, which compared revolutions in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, before a faculty-student reception in the atrium at Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center. (Photo / CSEAS)

March 2, 2013 / **The arts speak:** The Center’s Celebration of Southeast Asian Performing Arts at Boutell Hall featured performances by Indonesian Dance of Illinois and the NIU Gamelan Ensemble, far left; the Thai Cultural and Fine Arts Institute of Chicago; NIU students performing selections from the Filipino opera Noli Me Tangere; and Malaysia world fusion recording artist and NIU alumna Amirah Ali, at left center, seen here after the show.

October 1, 2012 / **Drum beat:** NIU music professor and percussionist Gregory Beyer premiered “Five Ponds,” his composition for five Burmese bronze drums, at the International Burma Studies Conference in October and reprised it with NIU Percussion Studio students at the gala performance March 2. (Photo / CSEAS)

March 4, 2012 / **Telling the story:** CSEAS Director Judy Ledgerwood, right, presented the newly published book about the Center’s early history, Rise of the Sarimanok, Volume 1, to Library Dean Patrick Dawson and Associate Dean Chalermsee Olson at the opening of the Founders Library exhibit, “50 Years of CSEAS and the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection,” curated by Center associate Hao Phan. The book, available for $5 from CSEAS, was written by Assistant Director Trude Jacobsen (history) and NIU alumna Maria Hancock Nihei. (Photo / CSEAS)

…before a candlelight dinner and keynote address by Clark Neher inside. (Photos / Media Services)
The last amateur: Reflecting on 50 years of engagement with Asia

For more than five decades, David Steinberg has watched Asia transform itself and be transformed by global events. His engagement in the field, as a student and as a maker and implementer of policy, has given him unique insight into the Asian political and cultural context, particularly for Burma and Korea, which form the basis for most of his fourteen books. Currently Distinguished Professor of Asian Studies at Georgetown University, Steinberg was educated at Dartmouth College, Lingnan University in Canton, China, Harvard University and the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies. During his career, Steinberg has represented The Asia Foundation in Burma, Hong Kong, Korea and Washington, D.C. and USAID in Thailand. He has also served at the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C. During International Education Week in November at NIU, Steinberg gave the Center’s 50th Anniversary Fall Lecture, exploring his long-standing relationship with Asia, particularly Burma, which has lasted through the end of the Cold War and into the 21st century. This is an edited version of that address.

By David I. Steinberg

It is an honor to be invited here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. I have been asked to comment on changes as I have seen them in Southeast Asia and beyond in my long involvement in Asian affairs. I have considerable trepidation in doing so for reasons I will discuss below.

But first I want to compliment Northern Illinois University and all of you for your long involvement in Southeast Asia. Your activities have contributed so much to our knowledge. On a trip to Myanmar last month in October, I was reading some of Montaigne’s essays on the plane. About 1580, he wrote that “conversation with men and travel into foreign countries” is important not for minor observations, but “to be able chiefly to give an account of the humors, manners, customs and laws of those nations . . . and
that we may whet and sharpen our wits by rubbing them against those of others.” He goes on to advocate teaching languages “most differing from our own, and that which, if it not formed betimes, the tongue will grow too stiff to bend.” I have been through that myself—several times. And that is what your Center has been doing for fifty years, and I applaud your work and those of your predecessors.

Reflecting on history is a challenge, and one not without the dangers of both memory and mortality for those in one’s shortening days. One knows one has reached a high actuarial plateau when the following happened to me at a conference. An historian approached me and asked me if I would discuss with him U.S. cultural policies in various Asian countries in the 1950s and 1960s, and an economist overheard this request and commented, “You know you really must be old when an historian asks you about history.” And another person, meaning to be kind, said, “It must be nice to see changes in Myanmar before you die.”

The vastness of history

The changes in the region have been so vast that comments on them would be jejune unless we had volumes of space in which to write and hours in which to discuss them. For my involvement did not start with Southeast Asia or Burma. I was the last American exchange student, the first and last junior from Dartmouth, to China in 1948–49 in the midst of the Chinese revolution. Of course, my students regard this as in the time of Methuselah, or perhaps in the same era as the Confucian Analects. But if you had asked me then whether the Kuomintang would still survive fifty years later, that Korea would develop, that Burma would not be the richest country in Southeast Asia, and that Thailand would teeter on the edge of social disintegration, I would have been incredulous and thoroughly wrong. So I bring to this talk humility and a sense of one’s own limitations.

Those in the modern era . . . have had the fortune to study the states of Asia built on past, cumulative knowledge by less well-trained observers. No matter how modern our self-images, and whether we regard ourselves as post-colonial or even post neo-colonial, these intrepid individuals . . . have immeasurably increased our understanding of Burma and other countries.

My life has been an interplay among academia, civil society and the policy community. One’s influence on any of the above has been exceedingly limited, but it has given one the scope to explore. Rather than concentrate on the changes in Asia that I have witnessed in some 65 years, which would be long, tedious and would be things that all of you know, it might be more interesting to engage in some digressions into some future issues, based, of course, on events of the past. I recognize the dangers—both immediate and longer term—for much of what I anticipate may be proven wrong, and that Dante in the Divine Comedy wrote that soothsayers go to a very low circle of hell.

I say some of these things because in the peripatetic movement along career paths, emphases get lost in translation. So, while probably all of you here would agree that history matters, and matters critically in analyzing what happens contemporaneously and in policy formulation, there is a very short historical attention span in U.S. policy circles. One need not go as far as Chou En-Lai, who famously replied when asked about the effects of the French Revolution of 1789 said it was too early to tell, to realize that policies are often made without consideration of historical antecedents that strongly influence policy choices. These nuances are critical, but as George W. Bush is quoted as having said, “We don’t do nuances in Texas.” And Mark Twain is said to have remarked that history may not repeat itself but it often rhymes.

So when the Chinese Kuomintang troops retreated into Burma from the People’s Liberation Army in 1949, did we remember that the Ming troops did exactly the same thing when the Chi’ing took over in 1644? We have seen rural Thailand a half century ago, where poverty was considered a

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result of one’s karmic inheritance, not governmental indifference, be transformed into continuing demands for services that [former Prime Minister] Thaksin was able to capture. But will an equally traditional peasantry in Myanmar, when subjected to more information and access, make the same demands on that government and will whatever regime is in power then recognize the changes and be able to meet these requirements? These are serious questions of political stability. How much will various efforts to devolve government to local levels succeed in a wide swath of societies? How will each of the states resolve problems of multiculturalism in heterogeneous social systems? How have some governments, such as Burma/Myanmar, failed so far, and what are the prospects for the future? These are real questions of policy, of analysis and of teaching.

Of future importance is the relationship between the academic community and the government, and there are lessons to be learned from that liaison—lessons I hope have been applied to Iraq and Afghanistan, but of which I am dubious. In the late 1960s, related both to the Vietnam War and general insurgencies in the region, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored the Academic Advisory Council on Thailand and the Southeast Asia Development Advisory Group (SEADAG), the latter run out of The Asia Society in New York. There were in addition various defense-related think tanks employing professors of various stripes of opinion. These professors were to advise USAID on the problems facing Southeast Asia. Alas, USAID did not know how to ask the right questions and academicians did not normally think in policy terms. In addition, if there were sound suggestions, the relationship between an experienced academician was with a rather low-level, inexperienced USAID officer. Without a peer-level interchange, incorporation of academic ideas into policy was difficult at best. In addition, USAID tried to hire social scientists, and when I had lunch with the deputy administrator of the agency, he asked me why such integration did not work. I replied because the social scientists did not speak a language taught at the State Department’s Foreign Service Institute. Academicians also had a tendency to do what they wanted regardless of Asian needs. One agricultural economist from Illinois whom I met in Khon Kaen, who did a dissertation on some aspect of tomatoes in Illinois, decided that the solution to Northeast Thailand’s agricultural problems was—guess—tomatoes.

But in some sense, therefore, as a quasi-academic, I am here under false pretenses. For in universities, I came to it late, and without the normal preparation required for such a career. I am thus an amateur in a field of professionals. In fact, in some sense, at least in Burmese studies, I am the last amateur. Let me explain.

As life becomes more ubiquitously specialized, the role of amateurs is rapidly receding. They have been replaced with professionals who specialize—whether it is in an academic discipline or fifteen years of the T’ang Dynasty. The amateur athlete has effectively been ousted from the Olympics. A liberal arts undergraduate education may be desirable for broadening students’ exposure, but a professional, disciplinary graduate degree will get one the job.

A time for specialists

As life becomes more ubiquitously specialized, the role of amateurs is rapidly receding. They have been replaced with professionals who specialize—whether it is in an academic discipline or fifteen years of the T’ang Dynasty. The amateur athlete has effectively been ousted from the Olympics. A liberal arts undergraduate education may be desirable for broadening students’ exposure, but a professional, disciplinary graduate degree will get one the job, if anything will. As we have gained specialized competence and enhanced performance, which is all to the good, we have effectively
diminished the broad sweep of inquiry, which also results in limitations.

This phenomenon is true of those seriously concerned with Southeast Asia, but it is especially true of those enmeshed in Burma/Myanmar in a, perhaps, unique manner. In spite of repressive military regimes in Myanmar from 1962 to 2010, the country had increasingly unfastened its borders since 1988, allowing in younger scholars who are providing new waves of information and analyses of Burmese conditions—internal and external. These new interests were perhaps prompted by Burma/Myanmar as the last "exotic" country in the region because its policies had been generally isolationist to the West through a mutually determined set of decisions, the attractions of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her international acclaim and the dire state of affairs internally that attracts those developmentally focused. Now, however, Myanmar has become a "growth" industry—if not yet economically, than at least academically. We should see a flowering of understanding of that complex country with its diverse societies.

But those in the modern era do not start exploring de novo Burma or Myanmar or other societies in the region; they have had the fortune to study the states of Asia built on past, cumulative knowledge by less well-trained observers. No matter how modern our self-images, and whether we regard ourselves as post-colonial or even post neo-colonial, these intrepid individuals, to whom we owe a considerable debt, have immeasurably increased our understanding of Burma and other countries.

These were the amateurs, my term because they lacked the modern social science or other disciplinary skills that are now the required hallmarks of contemporary academia or even employment in government and the non-governmental sector. Equally important, the disciplinary tools of the social science trades had generally not been so sophisticatedly developed. This is not to denigrate their accomplishments, intelligence, or often commitment to the peoples of the area, which were often remarkable, but simply to note that they were trained in a different era under different criteria, and with different required skills. They accomplished much, and present scholarship often harkens back to their work, findings and observations. They may have been professionals as doctors, colonial administrations or preachers, but they contributed to our understanding of Burma as amateurs—beyond their vocational skills.

First were the missionaries who greatly enhanced our capacities to study societies by creating many of the critical dictionaries, and sometimes written scripts, that (updated) are still in use. However prejudiced they may have been in examining the cultures in which they worked, what we know is in part dependent on their dedication and prodigious accomplishments. They may not be our intellectual

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mentors but they have been part of our intellectual support system. The second, often contemporaneous group, were the colonial officers and diplomats sent to the field to strengthen or expand the imperial flags. Their motivations may today be deplored, but their studies, often used to increase colonial control or income, provided insights into societies that traditional, local records sometimes lacked. Protected by primitive international communications, they often languished in long periods of relative isolation in which they pondered the societies in which they were enmeshed and provided unique glimpses of local civilizations, customs and mores.

The third group comprised the stalwart Western travelers who wandered the region commenting on “exotica” and who wrote often fascinating and insightful comments of the societies they encountered. These also provided insights that dynastic histories and official records often lacked.

In a few disciplines on Asia in certain countries professionalism did exist. Nineteenth-century efforts to study Buddhist and Hindu scriptures and make them available to Western audiences were unique contributions to our knowledge. Equally, those scholars who studied and translated traditional Chinese and Confucian literature remain today outstanding examples of literary professionalism. These are, however, the exceptions.

Who seriously involved in Burma/Myanmar today can forget Judson, or Scott, or Fielding Hall or the intrepid “bachelor girl in Burma”—later Mrs. Scott? The list is long, and many of the British administrators, from Donnison to Eric Blair (George Orwell), are part of our collective memories and knowledge. The social science amateur list is long and impressive; their professionalism, however, often did not extend to many of the subjects on which they wrote and upon which many of us to some extent still rely for portraits of society at certain points in time and space.

**Independence’s unwinding legacy**

The short period under civilian administration after independence resulted in a small but influential number of academic social science professionals who were able to do field work in country. We all know their names—Mendelson (British but American trained), Spiro, Pye, Nash, Lehman, Silverstein, Trager and others. All of them who later published their findings, and upon which we still rely, can be counted on little more than on one’s fingers and toes. They were elite—indeed, a unique group. Most are now retired, some only in different incarnations.

For about a generation beginning in 1962, field work was largely prohibited except for a few studies of Buddhism or the arts and archeology and linguistics; it has only been since 1988 that a new generation of specialists with modern disciplinary training has begun to focus on Burma/Myanmar. That Burma was ignored for advanced degrees was understandable under General Ne Win. What responsible professor could have advised students in that socialist period to pursue Burmese studies without the possibility of extensive field experience in country? Surrogate studies of those Burmese who fled into Thailand and lived abroad elsewhere were only partial substitutes for in situ research. So Burma is perhaps unique in the region for the gap in professional observers.

We are now witnessing the birth of a new generation of scholarship on Myanmar, with some dozens of scholars doing field studies, publishing and enriching our understanding of what is now called Myanmar and all its complexities. There are perhaps over two dozen serious students of Burma/Myanmar pursuing PhDs in the English-speaking world. Much is expected of them, and our hope...
is that those institutions that hire will pay proper heed to the regional or area specialist as much as they do to the theoretician who is only peripherally committed to a country’s future.

So the early amateurs who contributed so much to our understanding (and in some cases our misunderstanding) of Burmese society or Southeast Asia more generally have, as the saying of old soldiers, faded away, their memories important but now overshadowed by the newer disciplinary regimens.

I came to Burma/Myanmar studies without real disciplinary training, for in those days an “Asian area studies” graduate degree was a respectable field and level that even offered some limited academic opportunities. But then I had no interest in academia as a career, for I was emotionally enmeshed in “action” based on my formative experiences as a student in China during the revolution. But action should also require reflection, and as the medical profession is supposed to practice “do no harm,” so the administrator and program planner needs to respect and follow that dictum. If one is to try to think coherently and act effectively and prudently, I believed one ought to be able to put those ideas on paper and test them in the intellectual marketplace. And so one began to write: first to clarify one’s own thinking, and then to try to express oneself in the external arena, and then to influence policy.

So now I find myself among the last of the dying breed of amateurs.

Replaced by professionals in a broad array of disciplines, these younger scholars bring to their work skills and methodologies that I never learned. They will do a far better job of in-depth analysis. These younger intellectual professionals naturally regard the older amateur writers as working within limited horizons and lacking intellectual rigor. This is, of course, true—inherent in the development of scholarship in any field. We amateurs often operated in an intellectual penumbra—viewing societies and events through hazy, shadowy perspectives and often lacking comparative foci with which to consider events, sometimes equating anecdotal information with data, and prone to dangerous generalities.

We would like to believe that we contributed something to the field; perhaps we plowed only the ground’s surface with archaic instruments that never uncovered the rich fertility of the subsoil. But now, the role of foreigners is augmented by nascent internal Burmese academic capacity. This is a new phenomenon. First, after independence there was the lack of Burmese scholars using these new social science disciplinary skills, for few were trained in them. Then, when interest accentuated, the internal Burmese government control and censorship prevented intellectual maturation within the country. This now is beginning to change, and the prospects for intellectual interchange between those resident internally and those abroad have vastly improved in the past year or two. So we have a new and promising dynamic among those Burmese who have the professional disciplines in hand, and their foreign counterparts, and we may begin to see collaborative research and publications that will enrich us all.

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Age has its privileges

But the aged amateur may still have one last card to play. Aging, especially in the United States, has only marginal value-added, as the economists might say. It has more utility in Asia, however. I had a cousin by marriage who, when I was much younger, told me that he wanted to be an old curmudgeon. At the time, it did not occur to me that this was sometimes a useful status in spite of the attendant aches and pains and other ills that flesh is heir to, as the poet once wrote.

Growing old in the United States is no fun. As a comedian used to say, "I get no respect." But there are times when senior status allows liberties that youth cannot share. This is not true in the U.S., I am afraid. Even my cane does not get me any special consideration, except perhaps from some Asian students who occasionally maintain residual trickles of respect from their older, cultural residues.

In Asia, however, the situation is different. I find that stumbling into a senior official's office, my cane in hand and my gait like some sailing ship swaying in a nor'easter, gives me curmudgeon status. Whatever the real emotional response of such an official might be, he or she is culturally constrained by my curmudgeonly coolness to listen respectfully to whatever suggestion or complaint I might have, even though he or she might harbor a passionate desire to throw me out because my comments may be interpreted to those in power as subversive.

So I am often able to say things that a younger person could not. Even diplomats, or perhaps especially diplomats, have not been able to complain in the same frank tones that on occasion I have been able to use. While this affords me avoiding landing on my rear when the security guards would no long tolerate my excesses, does it do any social good, except, of course, to my ego?

One tries to suggest, cajole, insinuate positive ideas into closed systems. On most occasions, this will likely be unsuccessful. But one hopes that the ubiquitous note taker, sitting respectfully on a slightly removed chair, will understand one's perhaps ill-expressed and convoluted ideas and faithfully record one's deathless prose, conveying the sentiments to some appropriate higher-level official who, one hopes, will incorporate one's ideas as his or her own. That would be the ultimate success. At one meeting with a deputy minister in Myanmar, I noticed the note taker, a lesser official whom I knew, quietly smiling to himself. As he walked me to my car, I asked him why. He replied, "It is good to hear the truth, sometimes." Last month President Thein Sein of Myanmar said to me that my homework was to solve the Rohingya problem, and if I did, he would take the credit, and if I failed, he would blame me.

So, intentionally, one uses one's age for what one hopes is the public good. By playing the curmudgeon card, the prospect of some potential usefulness before departing this scene is, as the poet once wrote, a consummation devoutly to be wished.

As one enters one's November years, one inquires from one's institutional home the mechanics of the transition to retirement—what Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope called "the slippered years." And so with an ironic twist one is informed that, by the simple act of passing from faculty into a new social incarnation—unfaculty if you will—one is eligible, after leaving the university, for a significant number of free semesters at the university. So in the twilight, one may at last reach the status of becoming the professional that one had never attained, and with that the usefulness of an extra toe.

But whether as amateur or doddering professional, I used to write about Burma/Myanmar issues in what might be called inverted diplomatic parlance, "guarded pessimism." That era is, one hopes, behind us. We can look forward with some confidence to a new, more intellectually engaged era, of greater understanding, and with it, I would like to believe, greater progress. One would like one's supposed insights to be transmuted into considerations bama-lo or myanma-lo—in the Burmese manner. It is now up to the professionals to replace curmudgeonly amateurism with professionalism that will engender even greater respect in the new era.
Center Council News and Notes

Michael Buehler (political science)
- Has been named a 2013–14 Rajawali Research Fellow at Northwestern University’s Equality Development and Globalization Studies program
- Contributed “Countries at the Crossroads: Indonesia” in September 2012 for Freedom House’s annual assessment of government performance in 72 strategically important countries worldwide
- Gave a presentation Feb. 20 on the mediating influence of the state on Islamist groups in shari’a policymaking at a University of California-Los Angeles colloquium, “Subnational Islamization through Secular Parties: Comparing Shari’a Politics in Two Indonesian Provinces”
- Brought the Indonesia perspective to a Feb. 6 Program of African Studies roundtable on radical Islamic movements in Africa at Northwestern University

Kenton Clymer (history)
- Presented “Burma, the United States, China and the Guomindang (KMT) Problem in the 1950s” at the October 2012 International Burma Studies Conference at NIU

Kikue Hamayotsu (political science)
- Published “Once a Muslim, Always a Muslim: The Politics of State Enforcement of Syariah in Contemporary Malaysia” in September in South East Asia Research 20(3): 399-421
- Presented “Testing Religious Intolerance in Indonesia: Comparative Cases in West Java” on her panel, “Political Violence in Contemporary Southeast Asia,” at the Association of Asian Studies conference in March. She reprised the presentation April 5 at a Friday lecture for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Southeast Asian Studies
- Was interviewed May 12 in the New Mandala online bulletin about the outcome of Malaysia government elections in May
- Is collaborating on a panel, “Religion and Politics in Contemporary Southeast Asia,” for the July 2-5 EuroSEAS conference in Lisbon, Portugal

John Hartmann (foreign languages and literatures)
- Presented “A Geo-History of the Chain of Chiang of Upper Southeast Asia” at the September 2012 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs at Western Michigan University
- Presented “Connecting Chiang: Historical, Linguistic and Archaeological Possibilities” at the October 2012 International Burma Studies Conference at NIU
- Co-presented “Wat Puthumwanaram: A Lao Cultural Transplant in Bangkok’s Siam Square” with CSEAS associate Catherine Raymond and adjunct Alan Potkin at the October 2012 Council on Thai Studies conference at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. The three presented the lecture again at the April International Lao Studies Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Published two co-authored articles in the October 2012 issue of the Journal of Lao Studies: “Folk Epidemiology Recorded in Palm Leaf Manuscripts of Laos” and “Comparative Tai Toponymic Analysis: Lao Village Names in Laos”
- Was invited by Thai Ambassador to the U.S. Chaiyong Satijpanon to participate in a Feb. 8 roundtable of U.S. Thai language instructors at the Thai consulate in Chicago
- Presented “The Expansiveness of SEAsite: A TAI (Technology Assisted Instruction) Solution to Learning Multiple Languages of Southeast Asia” April 27 at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages conference in Chicago

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All the difference
Susan Russell (anthropology) participated in the inauguration of the Bajao Learning and Livelihood Center in 2012 in Iligan, Mindanao, an NGO project that, among other things, offers girls the opportunity to learn to read in an alternative learning program. (Photo provided by Susan Russell)

Patricia Henry (foreign languages and literatures)
- Traveled to Conway, Ark., in October 2012 to participated in a University of Central Arkansas workshop, “Colonial Legacies in Asia: Perspectives from History, Literature, Philosophy, Religion and Politics,” a Freeman Foundation-funded program sponsored by the East-West Center’s Asian Studies Development Program

Trude Jacobsen (history)
- Has been elected to serve as the Southeast Asia representative on the executive board of the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs
- Spent Jan. 7–18 in an intensive Pali course at Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages at the University of California-Berkeley
- Presented “Historicizing Identity: Arakanese Muslims, the Khmei Kraom and the Legacy of Porous Borders in Mainland Southeast Asia” at the March 2013 Southeast Asian Studies Symposium at Oxford University
- Presented “The Curious Case of Sherlock Hare: Race, Class and Mental Health in British Burma” at her panel, “Disciplining les dingues: Psychiatry, Madness and Mental Health in Asian History,” at the March Association for Asian Studies meeting in San Diego

Judy Ledgerwood (anthropology)
- Published “Buddhist Ritual and the Reordering of Social Relations in Cambodia,” in South East Asia Research 20(2): 191–205
- Presented “Prophetic Histories: The Buddha Damnay and Violence in Cambodia” at the 2012 Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast conference at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash.

Grant Olson (foreign languages and literatures)
- Published an essay on Southeast Asian literature in the 44th edition of The Lincoln Library of Essential Information (Random House Value Publishing)

Barbara Posadas (history)
- Was appointed by the NIU Board of Trustees to serve on the Presidential Search Committee to replace retiring President John Peters. A new president, University of Idaho Provost Douglas Baker, was selected in April and assumed the office July 1

Catherine Raymond (School of Art, Center for Burma Studies)
- Presented “Collecting Burmese Art in the 21st Century” at a seminar on Burmese art and culture seminar at the Lugano Museum in Lugano, Switzerland, in July 2012
- Documented mural paintings influenced by Lao tradition in a royal temple in Bangkok in June 2012, the results of which she later presented as a Friday CSEAS lecture and as a paper at the November 2012 Council on Thai Studies conference, and at the Fourth International Lao Studies Conference in April at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Led an NIU group Nov. 8 to the University of Illinois-Urbana for a forum on the status of the Rohingya Muslim minority population in Myanmar/Burma
- Discussed the history behind the movement of Chin, Kachin and Karen refugees to the U.S. since 2006 at a Rockford (Ill.) Urban Ministries program, “Welcoming Burmese Immigrants into the Community,” in January, and was interviewed by local National Public Radio for a story about Rockford’s efforts to aid refugees
- Was invited to Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., Feb. 8 to participate in the panel, “Burma Today: The Challenges of Democracy”
- Gave a lecture March 20 on the recent return to Myanmar of a lost Buddha
image from Pagan for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Buddhist Ideas in South and Southeast Asian Art course (see sidebar for details on the story of the image)”

Susan Russell (anthropology)
- Presented “Civil Society and the Conflicts of Peacebuilding in Northern Mindanao” Oct. 12 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Southeast Asian Studies
- Presented “Peacebuilding: The Role of NGOs in the Philippines” at the October 2012 International Conference on the Philippines at Michigan State University in East Lansing
- Was the discussant on the panel, “Organization of Work and Politics in Marine Fisheries,” at the November 2012 American Anthropological Association meeting in San Francisco

Tharaphi Than (foreign languages and literatures)
- Reviewed The Return of Galon King in the Journal of Economic and Social History 55: 183–86
- Presented “All That Glitters is Not Gold: The Political and Social Reality Behind the Image of Powerful Women in Contemporary Burma/Myanmar” at the October 2012 International Burma Studies Conference
- Was invited to Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., on Feb. 8 to participate in the panel, “Burma Today: The Challenges of Democracy”
- Presented “Censorship and Cartoons in Twentieth-Century Burma” at her department’s Brown Bag Series on Feb. 27

Kheang Un (political science)
- Received a Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) senior research fellowship at the Center for Khmer Studies. Over the summer, he will be working on two research projects, one on donors, state and society in contemporary Cambodia and the other on the politics of natural resources in Cambodia. The latter is a collaboration with alumnus So Sokbuntheoun (PhD

Faculty spotlight: Tharaphi Than

There has been a new teacher in front of Burmese language classes this past academic year as well as a new face at Friday lectures and numerous other NIU activities related to Myanmar/Burma. Tharaphi Than, assistant professor in the Foreign Languages and Literatures department, received her PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London in 2010 and was a post-doctoral research fellow at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam in 2011.

Prior to her doctoral studies at SOAS, Than taught Burmese language, literature and texts at both undergraduate and graduate levels there in addition to several area studies courses. She also served as a research assistant on a Wa-Burmese dictionary project and wrote more than 300 English lessons for BBC Radio broadcast inside Myanmar/Burma.

Than, who will be in Myanmar over the summer, has been equally busy since coming to NIU, which hosted the International Burma Studies Conference in October at which Than was an active participant. She launched a new class (FLST 382) in spring exploring censorship in literature around the world and is looking forward to the publication of her new book, Women in Modern Burma, forthcoming from Routledge. Along with Center associates Judy Ledgerwood, Catherine Raymond, and Deborah Pierce, she is also a member of an NIU task force working on an Institute of International Education initiative to assist Myanmar on rebuilding its system of higher education.

“I consider myself privileged to be able to work with many faculty members, Southeast Asian Center associates and students who are very supportive of my teaching and research here at NIU,” Than says. “I enjoy connecting Southeast Asia, and particularly Burma, to my students’ world and I look forward to another year of lively discussions and class projects with my students.”

Than’s office is in 122 Watson Hall. She can be reached by phone at 815-753-6453 or by email at tthan@niu.edu

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Center Council News and Notes (cont’d)

political science, 2003)

• Was interviewed by Voice of America in September 2012 about the International Cambodia Studies Conference at NIU prior to the conference’s convening later in the month

Danny Unger (political science)

• Presented “Using Formal and Informal Institutions in the Analysis of Thai Politics” at the October 2012 Council on Thai Studies conference at Ohio University

• Was invited by Thai Ambassador to the U.S. Chaipyong Satjipanon to participate in a March 5 gathering of U.S. Thai studies instructors at the Royal Thai embassy in Washington, D.C., to discuss the nature of Thai studies programs around the country

• Served as the discussant and chair of the panel, “Building Trust on Democracy and Governance in Thailand” at the Association of Asian Studies meeting in March

Jui-Ching Wang (School of Music)

• Took the NIU Gamelan Ensemble on the road this past academic year with performances at Kishwaukee College and Purdue University, in addition to numerous campus appearances during the 2012–13 academic year

• Presented “A Musical Journey to Taiwan, Ilha Formosa, The Beautiful Island” at a clinic for elementary school music teachers at the January Illinois Music Educators Association annual conference in Peoria, Ill.

Katharine Weigele (anthropology)

• Presented “Reshaping Philippine Civic Spaces: Forces of Renewal in Politics, Gender and Citizenship,” at Pentecostal Aesthetics: A Global Perspective conference in June 2012 at Padova University in Italy


A Buddha image finds its way home

Adapted from NIU Today

More than 2,000 temples and shrines dot the landscape of Pagan, the ancient royal capital of Myanmar. It was here in 1988, amid the country’s political unrest, that a nearly 1,000-year-old statue of a rare standing Buddha went missing, snatched from its base in a remote temple cave. The priceless sculpture would travel from Myanmar (also known as Burma) to Bangkok, then to San Francisco, New York and DeKalb. It would be saved from the auction block, draw the involvement of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and become the subject of a precedent-setting lawsuit.

In the end, the stolen statue finally made its way back to Myanmar in late 2012, through the persistent efforts of Center for Burma Studies Director Catherine Raymond and her predecessor, NIU art historian emeritus Richard Cooler. And in February, while Raymond was in the country with an Institute for International Education (IIE) delegation, she received a “Certificate of Honour” for her efforts from the Myanmar Ministry of Culture during a highly publicized ceremony at the country’s National Museum presided over by U Ko Ko Hlaing, chief political adviser to President Thein Sein.

At the ceremony, Raymond was surprised to see the top of the 22-inch-high sandstone statue, still containing traces of stucco and red paint, reunited with its base. “I obviously was very familiar with the top two-thirds of the statue, but I suddenly became worried over whether the two pieces would be a perfect match,” she said. “The statue wasn’t reassembled, but we could see the top and base did fit together. I was touched by the ceremony because it was evident how much the Burmese really care about this antiquity.”

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Christopher McCord, who was also in Myanmar with the IIE delegation, called Raymond and Cooler heroes. “During a period of great tension between the U.S. and Myanmar governments, NIU faculty members went out of their way to preserve Myanmar’s cultural heritage and fight against the trade in stolen antiquities,” he said. “They worked to ensure that the statue was cared for and safely returned to the country in a way that would preserve its historic and religious value.”

Raymond is currently working with the museum on an exhibit that will tell the story of the statue’s journey and return. Read the entire article about the lost Buddha image in the April 1, 2013 edition of NIU Today.
Clymer, Un return to campus after fellowship year away

The Center welcomed back CSEAS associates Kenton Clymer (history) and Kheang Un (political science) to NIU in September 2012 after the two spent a year on fellowships in Washington, D.C., and Cambodia, respectively.

Looking back as U.S.-Burma relations move forward

Kenton Clymer spent the 2011–12 academic year as a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., working on a forthcoming history of U.S. relations with Burma. As it turned out, his timing couldn’t have been more fortuitous in light of recent developments in Burma/Myanmar. With U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton making her historic visit to Burma in November, and later announcing the re-establishment of an embassy in the country, Clymer said he enjoyed interacting with the foreign policy community in Washington on the topic of Burma’s emergence. During his time in D.C., he made three presentations, including one for the National History Center’s weekly seminar at the Wilson. As part of his research endeavors, Clymer traveled to Burma in February 2012 where he interviewed current and former government officials as well as U Tin Oo, chief of staff for democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi. He also spoke briefly with Suu Kyi on the telephone.

While in Asia, Clymer presented “U.S.-Guomindang Relations in Burma during the 1950s” at a conference at Hong Kong University, followed by presentations at the Center for Cold War Studies at East China Normal University in Shanghai; the School of International Studies, Peking University, Beijing; and the School of International Studies, Renmin (People’s) University, Beijing. Clymer’s first major article about U.S. relations with Burma, “The Trial for High Treason of the ‘Burma Surgeon,’ Gordon S. Seagrace,” appeared in the May 2012 issue of Pacific Historical Review. He also published two online pieces: “The First Visit to Burma by an American Secretary of State,” an article for the Wilson Center website that Clymer posted in December 2012 shortly after Clinton’s visit to Burma, and an opinion piece, “Sectarian Violence in Burma: A Country Opening Up or Collapsing?” in June 2012 for the e-International Relations website. In November, Clymer was tapped to be interim director of NIU Press during spring semester. He also is serving as a History faculty mentor to Chinese visiting scholar Bai Xuefeng, who arrived in March to spend a year at NIU studying Southeast Asia-U.S. relations.

A time of transformation for Cambodia

Kheang Un, who is back in Cambodia over the summer, returned to his home country of Cambodia in September 2011 on a 2011–12 J. William Fulbright Fellowship at a time he describes as a “critical juncture” for the country. “Just in a short fourteen years since 1997, Cambodia has become deeply intertwined with regional and global economies as evidenced by the impact of the ongoing global financial crisis on Cambodia. Such an impact was not felt during the 1997 Asian financial crisis,” Un said. “Politically, there is deeper political consolidation by Prime Minister Hun Sen and the ruling Cambodian People’s Party.” Un, who spent spring semester as a lecturer in the Department of International Studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, said that being in Cambodia for the past year gave him the opportunity to dig deep into the country’s shifting political landscape. In the fall, Un conducted research on democratization and the quality of peace in addition to participating as an expert discussant in workshops on Cambodian politics and political economy. Un also served as advisor to the Cambodia Development and Resource Institute, Cambodia’s leading policy research institute.

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In addition to conducting his own research, he found time to write several articles. “Cambodia 2011: a Thin Veneer of Change,” a year-end review article, appeared in the February 2012 issue of Asian Survey. “The Khmer Rouge Tribunal: a Politically Compromised Search for Justice” will appear in a 2013 volume of the Journal of Asian Studies. Un is continuing to work on a project examining what constitutes a successful peace process, and how that success might be measured, for the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, funded by the National Science Foundation. His research will form a chapter in a volume, titled Quality Peace, edited by John Darby and Madhav Joshi, which is part of the Oxford University Press series on Strategic Peace-Building, Un said. Un is also completing work on his own book, Cambodian Hybrid Democracy: Neo-Patrimonialism, the State, and Society, which will analyze Cambodia’s democratic development between 1993 and 2008, amid changing political and economic conditions, by mapping the interplay among various political and social institutions.

Center Council News and Notes (cont’d)

A time of transformation for Cambodia (cont’d)

By Danny Unger
Since 2007 I have spent a good deal of time in Thailand. I have been lucky to be here during this time given the political conflict I have been able to watch unfolding. The conflict, as of mid-2013, shows no signs of abating soon. And by now the spectacle, even with a ringside seat, seems ever less edifying. One dimension of the conflict is particularly important: the vast majority of Thais who have participated in their political system only very superficially are being mobilized, are awakening to their society’s injustices, and are coming to expect to be able to have a degree of meaningful voice. Alas, even today they are not very well-organized, are rather ill-informed, are emotional and readily manipulated, and do not constitute in any obvious way the core of a new Thai politics of citizen solidarity. All political systems have their serious flaws, but those in Thailand, I would argue, not only are interesting in their distinctive features, but are also reveal a fairly pervasive inability to address real social and political concerns. In many respects Thailand has fared rather well, comparatively speaking, over the past several decades. It is far from assured that we will be able to say the same for the next few decades.

While in Bangkok, I have mostly been occupied with doing research and writing. Some of the work has been on a number of smaller projects, for example the electronics industry in Thailand and public policymaking in the areas of forestry and water issues. My major writing focus has been on a book project on democracy in Thailand that looks at rule of law, state building, political participation, and Thais’ access to political information. I also have been fortunate to sit in on a number of interesting discussions involving the Thai Research Fund, the Asian Scholarship Foundation, and other groups. Occasionally I give lectures here and there and my wife and I are regularly in touch with a wide circle of fascinating Thais working in academia, business, medicine, the arts, and politics. I initiated a local research group, the Bangkok Research Seminar, designed to serve the needs of PhD students doing their research and writing up their findings in Thailand. I also maintain contacts with former NIU students as well. I will be spending the entire 2013-14 academic year in Thailand.

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Catching up with: Danny Unger

Center associate Danny Unger (political science) returned to NIU for the 2012–13 academic year after moving back and forth between Bangkok and DeKalb for several years. When not chasing down his active young children (ages three and five) in their Bangkok home, Unger said that he has had the opportunity to observe firsthand Thailand’s conflicted politics, as he writes below.
British Library funds Cham manuscript preservation project

Adapted from NIU Today

Center associate Hao Phan, curator of the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection at Founders Memorial Library, has been working for the past year on a project to preserve centuries-old Cham manuscripts through a $15,000 grant from the British Library.

Historians consider Cham descendants, once part of the Champa kingdom that lasted from the second to the seventeenth centuries, to be an important minority group in Vietnam comprising Hindu and Muslim people, Phan said. The manuscripts they created give readers a glimpse of their religious traditions, family customs, literature, and daily life.

“These people possess a rich culture that can still be appreciated today through architecture, arts, festivals and literature,” Phan said. “There hasn’t been much written about the people, and not many pages of the manuscripts have been preserved. There should be thousand pages of the manuscripts still available.”

Although the Champa kingdom was eliminated by the Vietnamese in 1720, Cham people managed to stay together in large communities where their traditions and culture are well preserved. Since receiving the grant in May 2012, Phan spent a month in December visiting local archives in central Vietnam in December to inspect existing handwritten and yellowing pages, some of which are written on palm leaves. He has also spent time talking to Champa descendants to track down manuscripts kept in family homes. His second trip to Vietnam this summer will take him to the Mekong Delta in the southern part of the country.

About 146,000 Cham descendants currently live in Vietnam. The largest community (57,000 people) is located in Ninh Thuan, a province in central Vietnam. Other enclaves are in Binh Thuan, Phu Yen, Ang Giang, Tay Ninh, and Ho Chi Minh City. The majority of Cham people living in central Vietnam practice Hinduism while those located in the Mekong Delta are Muslim.

While some Cham manuscripts are now in École Française D’extrême Orient archives in France, most Cham manuscripts in Vietnam are falling victim to heat, humidity, and poor storage conditions. In addition, most young Cham people, Phan said, are not able to read the Sanskrit-based Cham writings, and have paid little attention to manuscripts kept in their families. “Furthermore, some Cham people believe that it is bad luck to keep ‘deserted books’ in the home, and hence, books not cared for or read frequently are eventually discarded,” Phan said.

After Phan completes his survey, he will apply to the British Library for a larger grant to begin the digitization of the manuscripts. When the entire project is complete, the digitized manuscripts will be sent to the British Library and at the same time included in the Southeast Asia Digital Library at NIU.
Center associate Susan Russell (Anthropology) this spring celebrated ten years as director of the U.S. State Department-funded Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) with a new focus for this project bringing together Muslim and non-Muslim students and adult leaders from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to NIU to learn about civic education, leadership, respect for diversity and community engagement.

The tenth session of PYLP took place April 13 to May 11 and was built around twin themes: environmental leadership and ecological activism. Twenty-four students and four adult leaders participated in the intensive four-week exchange program.

“The World Bank’s new Country Assistance Strategy for 2010–2012 highlights the need to reduce the Philippines’ vulnerability to climate change impacts by focusing on climate change mitigation, adaptation and preparedness,” Russell said. “The report also noted that 75 to 80 percent of the costs of climate change damage caused by extreme weather events (including deadly typhoons, floods, landslides, severe El Nino and La Nina events, drought, and forest fires) are expected to be borne by the countries of the Asia and Pacific region. The long-term success of new environmental and climate change efforts in the Philippines depends on the involvement and participation of youth in all levels of decision-making processes.”

During their time at NIU, participants learned about current environmental issues in the Philippines, the region’s geography, community organizing, leadership strategies, and social media in between field trips to the Field Museum and the Center for Green Technology in Chicago, two local high schools, sustainable farms with green energy practices, and the Mississippi River Museum. They learned how to test water for contamination and spent thirteen days living with area host families. The last five days were spent in Washington, D.C. where the group toured the White House, the Capitol, and the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Center associate Lina Davide-Ong, head of the International Training Office (ITO), has served as the program’s administrative director since its inception.
Conferences

Imaging Cambodia: The academic meets the creative at Cambodia conference

By Liz Denius

Imagining Cambodia, the first international Cambodia Studies conference in decades to be held in the United States, drew 119 scholars and students to NIU’s Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center Sept. 13–16, with ninety-one attendees from the U.S., ten from Cambodia, and the rest from France, Australia, Germany, Canada, Thailand, Japan, Mexico, and the United Kingdom.

Reflecting the conference’s academic and creative agenda, the conference program brought together not only scholars but performing and visual artists, said CSEAS Director and Cambodia specialist Judy Ledgerwood (anthropology). “So often discussions of Cambodia focus on war and genocide and those who suffer from the aftereffects of these events,” Ledgerwood said. “The idea for the conference was to evoke new ways of imagining Cambodia that included the explosion of creativity in the visual and performing arts, as well as discussions of change in post-conflict society.”

Panels were organized around such topics as youth culture and education; culture, memory and genocide; diasporic communities; economics and social change; contemporary Cambodian society; ethnic minority groups; decentralization and civil society; archeology and Angkorian history; conflict and resolution; modern architecture and design; modern and contemporary Buddhism; and Cambodian media and film. More than sixty papers were presented in all.

In between sessions, conference-goers made their rounds of campus attending special events, including a gallery opening of an exhibit of contemporary Cambodian photography at the NIU Art Museum, a film screening at Cole Hall, a choreography presentation at the O’Connell Theatre, and a concert in Boutell Memorial Concert Hall.

All five members of NIU’s Cambodia Studies Working Group (all Center associates) presented at the conference, including Ledgerwood (anthropology), Assistant CSEAS Director Trude Jacobsen (history) Kenton Clymer (history), Kheang Leang (foreign languages and literatures), and Kheang Un (political science). One NIU student, Jordan York (MA candidate, anthropology) also gave a presentation.

At the end of the first day of panels on Sept. 14, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Christopher McCord officially welcomed the group to NIU at dinner, which concluded with the keynote address, “Witnessing Cambodian History,” by Cambodia historian David Chandler, professor emeritus of Monash University in Australia and widely published author. Afterward, attendees walked over to Cole Hall where Cambodian filmmaker Chhay Bora screened his film, Lost Loves, for an audience of about 200. Two other films were also shown during the conference schedule: We Want (U) to Know, directed by Ella Pugliese, and Who Killed Chea Vichea, produced by Richard Garella; both Pugliese and Garella were at the conference.

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The next day, the second round of panels concluded with a dinner honoring Cambodian-American composer Chinary Ung. After being introduced by School of Music associate professor Gregory Beyer, Ung’s biographer and University of California-San Diego colleague Adam Greene spoke about the composer’s life and work. The conference group adjourned to Boutell Memorial Concert Hall to hear a concert of six of Ung’s signature works, including one performed by Susan Ung, an NIU music alumna who met Ung when he was on the NIU School of Music faculty from 1977–79.

The conference concluded Sept. 16 with a field trip to the Chicago American Heritage Museum and Killing Fields Memorial in Chicago. There the Cambodian Association of Illinois welcomed the group to view “Remembering the Killing Fields,” an exhibit based on oral histories of Cambodian genocide survivors collected by Ledgerwood and NIU students over the course of several years. The association honored David Chandler and Chinary Ung during a reception for the conference group, and also presented a certificate of appreciation to Ledgerwood for her work organizing the conference.

The conference was funded in part by grants from the Asian Cultural Council, the Henry Luce Foundation, the NIU Foundation through its Venture Grant program, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and the Graduate Colloquium Series, and was co-sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ohio University and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.
International Burma Studies: A noteworthy meeting as Myanmar takes the world stage

By Fanny Potkin

NIU’s Center for Burma Studies (CBS) welcomed more than 140 Burma scholars from around the world to the 12th International Burma Studies Conference October 5–7 at the Holmes Student Center. From wide-ranging disciplines and backgrounds, the visiting scholars presented and discussed their current research in twenty-one diverse sessions during the three-day event.

The biennial symposium was the sixth such conference convened by the Center for Burma Studies since the year 2000. But it was the first since Myanmar/Burma began opening up, and according to CBS Director and Center associate Catherine Raymond (School of Art), it was “the most important and fruitful edition yet.” It was also the first that included senior Burmese government representatives, whose participation was underwritten by The Asia Foundation.

In addition to the considerable number of independent scholars and authors, the conference saw a record number of registrants affiliated with American, European, and Asian institutions, which later included a delegation from Yunnan University at the conference to give an insider’s view on Sino-Myanmar relations.

Panel and plenary topics addressed everything from aspects of the country’s culture and past history to stunning recent developments and future political expectations. As always at such meetings, lively and productive conversations on panel topics extended beyond the formal sessions, with participants heard praising conference organizers for so broadening its scope this year. Conference chair Lilian Handlin of Harvard University praised the large number of young practitioners present, explaining that they were “changing the landscape of Burmese studies through their innovative ideas, and knowledge of both Burmese and minority dialects.” Certainly the conference was a testimonial to the continuing vitality of Burma studies, and to the growing relevance and scholarly interest in that field.

The conference also honored the work of Sayagyi Saw Tun, recently retired professor of Burmese language at NIU, and David Steinberg, Distinguished Professor of Asian Studies at Georgetown University and eminent Burma expert, with gifts of testimonial plaques and speeches by colleagues and former students. For her research paper on Burmese migrants in Southwestern Thailand, Inga Gruss was awarded the 2012 Sarah M. Bekker Prize.

In addition to the scholarly panels, participants were treated to an opening reception at the NIU Art Museum for a new exhibit, mounted by Raymond and her graduate students, entitled “Music for the Divine.” Composed mostly of the musical instruments themselves and their representation in artworks from the Burma Art Collection at NIU, the exhibit showcased the transcendent role of music in Myanmar’s secular and religious traditions.

In honor of the exhibit, the Center for Burma Studies and the NIU School of Music jointly commissioned an original musical piece by NIU music professor and percussionist Gregory Beyer to be performed on an array of antique Karen bronze drums from the NIU collection (along with several more on loan from CBS founder and art historian emeritus Richard Cooler). Performed by Beyer and students from the NIU Percussion Studio, the piece premiered to an enthusiastic audience at the conference’s cultural gala in Altgeld Hall Auditorium on the last night of the conference. Also on stage at the gala were Mon and continued on next page
Conferences (cont’d)

Burmese dancers and musicians from nearby Indiana.

Other cultural events at the conference included a screening of the feature-length documentary *They Call it Myanmar: Lifting the Curtain*, along with a question-answer session with director Robert Lieberman. Controversial in its approach, the film received a mixed reception by an audience more familiar with its venue and scope than most.

The conference’s arguably most significant moment came during the Sunday morning roundtable, at which two personal advisers to President Thein Sein, U Ko Ko Hlaing and U Than Kyaw, discussed key recent events and their personal views on the country’s future. The roundtable also included National University of Singapore Professor U Tin Maung Maung Than and John Brandon from The Asia Foundation, with David Steinberg acting as moderator. The very presence there of a delegation of Myanmar dignitaries (let alone a representative from the Burmese military), and their willingness to speak candidly, was extraordinary by any measure. For the minority of conference participants who were Burmese citizens, it was the first opportunity in recent memory to directly pose questions to their own government officials.

U Ko Ko Hlaing began by affirming that the “country was ready for change” and that government will “turn our grand mission of peace into law.” He added: “We have to make trust among each other. Without trust, we cannot do anything. We need a lot of public education. We don’t have enough public policy. We need to nurture a political culture. Without sufficient development, democracy can lead to anarchy. We have to accept different ideologies, different identities.”

U Than Kyaw underlined the “country’s diverse political heritage” and the need for a strong constitution while Tin Maung Maung Than analyzed the country’s economic situation, calling it “a developmental state that tries, but which focuses too much on rice.” Steinberg criticized the United States’ decades-long “sanctions” approach as having been counter-productive and sought to diminish its possible influence towards prompting reforms. He also suggested that with U.S. sanctions now being lifted, Myanmar’s rapprochement with the U.S. is arguably the Obama administration’s only success in the East. He noted [now former] Secretary of State Hilary Clinton had personally intervened in assuring timely visa issuance to the Myanmar government delegation. “Democracy is a process,” Steinberg concluded, but “the true issue for Burma remains the minority problem. How do you try to define ethnicity?”

The closing minutes of the panel saw several poignant questions from Burmese members of the audience for whom the session was intensely personal. Most were directed at U Ko Ko Hlaing, who had made his career in the military, and who in response proposed “to forget the bitter past.” He pledged that he knew firsthand that the military was changing and agreed it “would take time to trust in the military and political leadership.”

The discussion was cut short by time constraints as the conference wound down. Historian Alicia Turner, editor of the *Journal of Burma Studies*, came on stage to thank conference participants and to announce that the 2014 Burma Studies conference would be take place at an Asia location (now set for Singapore in July 2014). And with that, the 2012 Burma conference officially came to a successful close.

Fanny Potkin, a graduate from the Sorbonne in Paris, will begin graduate study at McGill University in Canada in fall.
Graduates, awards, and name recognition

Seventeen CSEAS-affiliated graduate and undergraduate students graduated from NIU during the 2012–13 academic year, receiving their degrees in December and May. Thirteen undergraduates received bachelor’s degrees with minors in Southeast Asian Studies: Brandon Brown (anthropology), Colleen Coghlan (political science-public law), Sarah Daniels (sociology), Shannon Hart (anthropology), Raymond Hoffman III (political science-politics), Timothy Knollenberg (English), Derek Koegel (political science), Gregory Kramer (political science-international politics), Andrew Reum (sociology), Matthew Ropp (communications), Alexander Sobecki (organizational communications-sociology), Steven Yolich (English), and Justin John Yuson (nursing).

Three graduate students completed their advanced degrees with a concentration in Southeast Asian studies in December and May. Congratulations to Coral Carlson (PhD history), Ryan Keller (MA anthropology), and SarahEmily Lekberg (MM music). Former Center graduate assistant Srie Ramli also completed her studies, receiving a PhD in political science in May.

Kudos also to:

- **Ron Leonhardt** (undergraduate, history), who took away three History Department awards this spring: the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean’s Award, the Jeannie A. Hains Scholarship, and the James R. Shirley Award in Asian History. Ron, who is studying Khmer in Cambodia this summer, also received a Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship, a Provost’s Travel Grant for Study Abroad and a University Honors Program Enhance Your Education grant.

- **Undergraduate Glynnis White** (music education) and graduate student Scott Abel (PhD student, history), who won the awards for best undergraduate and graduate paper respectively at the Southeast Asia Club’s spring student conference April 13 in Altgeld Hall. Eighteen papers were presented at the daylong conference, which drew about 30 attendees.

- **New history PhD and former CSEAS graduate assistant Coral Carlson**, who presented “Powerless Pawns or Passionate Actors: British Women of the Pahang Corporation 1882–1900” on a panel rethinking the region’s colonial past at the Southeast Asian Studies Symposium held in March at Oxford University. Earlier in the year, Carlson presented “The Chinese Ceramics of Sir Percival: A Famed Ceramics Collection as an Expression of British Imperialism” at the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs in September at Western Michigan University.

- **POLS graduate students Thomas Rhoden and Nicole Loring**, who participated in a Jan. 14 Lewis University panel on issues with Burmese refugees, political prisoners, ethnic conflict and the country’s ongoing issues from closed military rule to democratization.

In other student news:

- **History doctoral candidate and former Center graduate assistant Laura Iandola** was one of eighteen PhD candidates and early-career scholars and professionals participating in the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations’ 2103 Summer Institute on the International History of Nuclear Weapons June 14–19 at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. Iandola’s dissertation focuses on Indonesia’s advocacy of nuclear proliferation during 1964–65.

- **Aaron Johnson** (PhD student, political science) has been a Fulbright Public Policy Fellow in Thailand during the 2012–13 academic year, working in the Office of the Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Thai Ministry of Justice. Prior to his enrolling at NIU in 2008, he worked as a congressional intern at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a policy analyst at the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and as a political science instructor at the College of Staten Island. He received his MA in international studies from the University of Sheffield (U.K.). After coming to NIU, he studied abroad at Thammasat University in Bangkok in 2009. As a 2011–12 Boren Fellow, he spent a year in Thailand conducting continued on next page

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Aaron Johnson
CSEAS graduate assistant Daniel Pojar Jr. (PhD candidate, political science) will be teaching the Center’s Southeast Asia survey course, ILAS 225, Southeast Asia: Crossroads of the World, during the 2013–14 academic year. Pojar, a U.S. Air Force veteran, has been both a FLAS fellow (2008–09 and 2010–11) and a Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Fellow (2011–12). Since coming to NIU, he has taught a variety of political science classes on topics ranging from Southeast Asian foreign policy and U.S. national security policy to global terrorism and international relations.

Pojar, who received his bachelor’s in philosophy from St. John’s University and his master’s in national security affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School, said he plans to structure the class drawing on his own experience working in academic and military capacities in seven of the eleven SEA countries. “Because this course is so multidisciplinary, I want to bring unity to it by fitting everything under two central themes: Southeast Asia people and lands,” Pojar said. “The course will draw upon not only formal academic writing, but also literature, film, documentary, visual and performing arts, as well as guest lectures by experts across various academic fields.”

The class will engage students’ reading, writing, critical thinking, speaking and creative skills through exploring the region’s many contexts, Pojar said. Through this approach, he hopes to impart not only the joy of learning about another region of the world, “but also the value of learning about other cultures and languages, the value of thinking outside a ‘U.S.-centric box,’” Pojar said.

“At the end of the day, college/university is not, and should not, be simply about preparing students for a job,” he said. “More importantly, it is about preparing individuals for life — to not only best face life’s challenges, but to make the most of life’s opportunities in order to live life to the fullest.”
Outstanding in their field
Center graduate assistant Nicole Loring (MA/PhD student, political science), right, was named her department’s outstanding master’s level graduate student by the Graduate School; Indonesian political science PhD candidate Sirojuddin Arif, left, was named the department’s outstanding PhD student.

Student clubs elect new officers
The Southeast Asia Club members elected new officers for the 2013–14 academic year in April. They are: Nicole Loring, president; Elise Waite, vice president; Rebecca Anthenat, secretary; Zharfan Irawan, treasurer; Anthonie Tumpag, culture night coordinator; and Brian Ventura, conference coordinator.

Dynamic duo
Two CSEAS students received the Outstanding Student Contribution to International Education awards from the Division of International Programs in November. Malay teaching assistant and former Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Jocelyn Sim (MA English, 2013), left, received the international student award. Undergraduate communications major and 2012–13 FLAS fellow Matthew Ropp received the U.S. student award. (Photo / Media Services)
The year (and summer) of speaking fluently

Thirteen graduate students and four undergraduates sharpened their Southeast Asian language skills at NIU over the past academic year as recipients of 2012–13 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships funded by a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Graduate FLAS fellows were: Robert Kollas (Tagalog), Nicole Loring (Burmese), Thomas Rhoden (Burmese), and Tiffanesha Williams (Indonesian) from Political Science; Lauren Bell (Khmer), Emily Dow (Tagalog), Julien Ehrenkonig (Indonesian), and Colleen Gray (Indonesian) from Anthropology; Ryan Broce (Malay), Scott Abel (Malay), and Philip Cerepak (Tagalog) from History; E. Peter Colina (Indonesian) from Business; and Aboud Agha (Indonesian) from Music. Receiving undergraduate FLAS fellowships were Gregory Kramer (political science, Indonesian), Matthew Ropp (communications, Malay), Elise Waite (environmental studies, Thai), and Glynnis White (music education, Malay).

Over the summer, nine NIU students traveled to six Southeast Asian countries to immerse themselves in intensive language study in-country. Julien Ehrenkonig (MA student, anthropology) will study Indonesian at Wisma Bahasa in Yogyakarta; Katrina Chludzinski (MA/PhD student, history), Nicole Loring (MA/PhD student, political science), and Thomas Rhoden (PhD student, political science) will study Burmese at the Win Language Academy in Yangon; Ron Leonhardt (undergraduate, history) will study Khmer at KSL in Phnom Penh; Scott Abel (PhD student, history), Ryan Broce (MA student, anthropology), and Matthew Ropp (undergraduate, communications) will study Malay at Universitas Malaysia Pahang in Pahang; Robert Bulanda (MA, anthropology) will study Tagalog at the Christian Language Academy in Quezon City.

FLAS Fellows 2013–14

Graduate students
- Scott Abel (PhD student, history), Indonesian
- Krista Albers (MA student, history), Tagalog
- Ryan Broce (MA student, history), Indonesian
- Robert Bulanda (MA student, anthropology), Tagalog
- Jesse Conrad (MA student, English), Indonesian
- Julien Ehrenkonig (MA student, anthropology), Indonesian
- Colleen Gray (MA student, anthropology), Indonesian
- Scott Hanley (MA student, history), Indonesian
- Nicole Loring (MA/PhD student, political science), Burmese
- Thomas Rhoden (PhD student, political science), Burmese
- Isabelle Squires (MA student, history), Tagalog
- Laurence Anthonie Tumpag (MA student, anthropology), Indonesian
- Tiffanesha Williams (MA student, anthropology), Indonesian

Undergraduates
- Janet Gatz (history), Tagalog
- John Hood (anthropology), Burmese
- Ron Leonhardt (history), Khmer
- Elise Waite (environmental studies), Thai
Matthew Jagel named 2013–14 Neher Fellow

History doctoral student Matthew Jagel didn’t start out to be either a Southeast Asianist or a historian for that matter, though Asia was in the background during much of his childhood. He grew up with parents who came of age in the 1960s when U.S. engagement in the region and Vietnam defined the times, and his father lived in Japan and traveled widely in Asia as a youth. Still, when it came time for college, Jagel went a different direction.

“My undergraduate career [at the University of Iowa] was spent in business school, if for no other reason than I was unsure what else to do. I always took history courses, but did not yet see it as a long-term field of study,” he wrote in his successful application for the 2013–14 Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Southeast Asia. Two years after getting his bachelor’s at the University of Iowa in 2003, Jagel came to DeKalb to pursue a master’s degree in history.

“I enrolled at NIU to reacquaint myself with history to see if it still held an interest for me. I knew immediately I had found my life’s work,” he said. “This was reinforced when I studied abroad in Malaysia with Eric Jones. My first taste of life in Asia and I was hooked.” He earned an MA in History in 2008 and plunged into the doctoral program with faculty advisor and CSEAS associate Kenton Clymer, taking up Khmer after spending time in Cambodia.

Jagel’s research interests are U.S.-Southeast Asia diplomatic history focusing on Cambodia. He spent the 2011–12 academic year in Phnom Penh on a Fulbright Research Fellowship delving in archival materials on Cambodian nationalist figure Son Ngoc Thanh, who influenced Cambodia’s push for independence before and after World War II.

 “[My] dissertation will add to both the existing historiography of Cambodian history and American relations with Cambodia,” said Jagel, now in his fourth year of study. “In analyzing this man, this period in time, one will have a better understanding of the geopolitical considerations that influenced American foreign policy.” The Neher fellowship, he said, will allow him to pursue future in-country archival work and to continue his study of the Khmer language, which is essential to translate documents as well as conduct necessary interviews in Khmer.

“Being immersed full-time in Cambodia gave me a newfound appreciation for the country, the people and the culture, and renewed my passion for my work,” Jagel said.

Jagel is the twelfth NIU graduate student to receive the endowed Neher fellowship, which was established in 2002 by NIU political scientist emeritus and former CSEAS Director Clark Neher and former External Programming Director and CSEAS associate Arlene Neher. He succeeds 2012–13 Neher Fellow Shawn McCafferty (PhD student, political science). The $5,200 fellowship plus tuition waiver is awarded in spring to one advanced-level graduate student planning research in Southeast Asia.
Alumni News

Maitri Aung-Thwin (BA history, 1994) and his father, historian and former CSEAS Director Michael Aung-Thwin, share the author credits for their new history of Myanmar/Burma, A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformations (Reaktion Books/University of Chicago Press, 2012). The book traces three millennia of the country’s history, including an examination of the 2010 elections. Maitri Aung-Thwin is assistant professor of Southeast Asian and Burmese history at the National University of Singapore. Michael Aung-Thwin is chair of the Asian Studies Program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa.

Tobias Basuki (MA political science, 2009) is teaching classes on political economy and international relations part-time at Pelita Harapan University in Jakarta while based primarily as a researcher with the Centre for Strategic International Studies (CSIS)-Indonesia. He is an active contributor to newspaper opinion pages, including the Jakarta Post. His broader research topics include but are not limited to: politics, good governance, human rights and the relation between religion and state. He is also planning to continue his academic studies and is searching for schools to pursue his PhD.

Alyssa DeLuca (BA Southeast Asian Studies, 2011) is a graduate student in the University of Illinois-Chicago’s graduate program in public health. DeLuca completed a contract major in Southeast Asian Studies in 2011.

Shay Galto (BA sociology, 2012) has taken a position as systems trainer/analyst coordinator in the Development and Advancement Information Services division of University Advancement at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Galto, who studied Khmer as a 2011–12 FLAS fellow, worked as a research associate at Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., for a year after graduating from NIU. “I have always wanted to live in Colorado so when I was offered this opportunity I jumped on the job,” Galto said. “I plan to start my PhD at CSU in the next year or two.”

Ryan Keller (MA anthropology, 2012) is living in Auckland, New Zealand, where he is six months into a three-year PhD research scholarship at the University of Auckland, where he will be based while conducting ethnographic research in the Eastern

Up to the challenge

Pisanu Savanajata (MA political science, 1989) has been busy since his appointment in February 2012 as the Royal Thai Embassy Ambassador to Myanmar. Savanajata, who began his service in the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1986, served in various positions at Thai embassies in Cambodia and Australia before being appointed Consul-General at the Royal Thai Consulate in Guangzhou, China in 2009. Thailand is celebrating sixty-five years of diplomatic relations with Myanmar in 2013. (Photo / Bangkok Post)
Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Keller was one of two students chosen for the Royal Society of New Zealand-funded project, “Food Security in a Rapidly Urbanizing Country: The Goroka Fresh Food Market, Papua New Guinea,” which will focus on understanding the Goroka market from the perspectives of the market’s participants rather than Western economic models. Keller leaves for Papua New Guinea in August on a nine-month research trip.

Joe Kinzer (MM music, 2012) is at the University of Washington, where he is pursuing a PhD in ethnomusicology. “My focus is still on Southeast Asia and the Malay world,” he said. “I have already had the chance to connect across disciplines within the Southeast Asia center and have been working with the historian Laurie Sears quite a bit. She will actually be on my doctoral exam committee. My advisor, Christina Sunardi, is a specialist in Indonesian music and dance. I also play with Seattle’s Gamelan Pacifica, a group that has been around since the 80s.” Kinzer will be in Malaysia over the summer as a FLAS fellow studying Malay at the University Malaysia Pahang.

Shaun Levine (BA political science, 2004; MA political science, 2006) is a Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore political risk analyst at the Eurasia Group in Washington D.C. “Eurasia Group is the world’s foremost authority on political risk. We advise clients on the risks politics pose for their investments and interests across the globe,” Levine said. A U.S. Army veteran when he arrived at NIU, Levine joined the firm in August 2011 after returning to the U.S. after several years in Jakarta, most recently as vice president of research for Chateau Asset Management, a private equity firm.

continued on next page
that invested in mineral resources and alternative and traditional energy.

**JoAnn LoSavio** (BA anthropology/history, 2012), now a graduate student in anthropology at Emory University, was in Kuala Lumpur this summer doing a pilot study in methods of visual anthropology.

**Leif Paulson** (BA anthropology, 2011) has been accepted into Georgia State University’s graduate program in anthropology.

**Jenifer Puetz** (BA political science, 2012) is working in Washington, D.C., as a Southeast Asia researcher for the U.S. government. Puetz, who spent summer 2012 as a FLAS fellow in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, credited her Southeast Asian Studies minor with helping her get her new job. “I can definitely say that the only reason I got this job was because I was a SEA minor,” she said. “I want to thank everyone involved in the Center for making such a wonderful program.” A Civil War buff, Puetz said she is looking forward to exploring the many historical sites in and around the nation’s capital.

**Jacob Ricks** (MA political science, 2007) graduated in May from Emory University with a PhD in Political Science. He is headed for Singapore, where he is taking a tenure-track position as assistant professor of political science in the Department of Social Sciences at Singapore Management University.

**Sarah Wiley** (MA history, 2011) has finished her first year toward an MA in Communications/Journalism at Iowa State University. She is also working as a science and technology policy intern with USAID/Indonesia through the Virtual Student Foreign Service program.

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**Cambodian alumni unite**

During an October 2012 trip to Southeast Asia, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Christopher McCord (back row, right), Associate Provost for International Program Deborah Pierce (second row, center), and CSEAS Director Judy Ledgerwood (left) met with a group in Phnom Penh, among them Pisith Plong, Sochent Nhean, Sedara Kim, Kok-thay Eng, Vichet Huey, Sovath An, and So Sokbunthoen.

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**Model professor**

Robert Dayley (PhD political science, 1997), professor of political economy specializing in Asian studies at the College of Idaho, led a team of students representing Malaysia at the national Model United Nations conference in April in New York City, an academic simulation drawing 1,500 students from 200 colleges and universities representing more than fifty countries. Dayley, who was named Idaho Professor of the Year in 2011 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, visited NIU a year ago to be the keynote speaker for the Center’s Teaching Southeast Asia to Undergraduates conference in April 2012.

*(Photo / College of Idaho)*
Alumni Essay

From Peace Corps to political science in Thailand

By Paul Chambers

CHIANG MAI, Thailand—I have long been interested in Southeast Asia. This fascination led me to live in Thailand, beginning as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer there from 1993 to 1995 after which I continued to work in Thailand (and also Laos) until 1998. After receiving my PhD in political science from NIU in 2003, I assumed I would settle down as a professor at a university, teaching and researching about Southeast Asia. In fact, for two years I was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Oklahoma.

But such a life was not to be. I longed to return to Thailand to conduct research on Thai politics and to study current socioeconomic issues in the Greater Mekong sub-region. So I moved back to Thailand in 2005, first with a Fulbright grant to study advanced Thai language at Chiang Mai University (in northern Thailand), then as a lecturer at Chiang Mai’s political science department. Eventually, in 2006, I joined the Thai and Southeast Asian Studies Program at Payap University, also in Chiang Mai. I became a political science lecturer, teaching about Thai politics, society, and culture to visiting university students from the United States, Canada, the European Union, Japan, and elsewhere. In the process, I became fascinated with the history, politics and peoples of Southeast Asia, so much so that I am still here.

Living in Chiang Mai has changed my perceptions of life, humanity, and development. Here there is an enormous gap between rich and poor, and a need for socioeconomic improvements. At the same time, northern Thailand has its own identity. It contains myriad ethnic minority peoples who on a daily basis suffer from discrimination and encroaching globalization. At the same time because northern Thailand stands at the hub of commerce between Bangkok and Kunming (capital of China’s bustling Yunnan province), it is fast growing in regional prosperity. Chiang Mai has also been home to a diaspora of Burmese refugees fleeing war, repression, and human rights abuses back in their own country. Furthermore, northern Thailand is a center for the ruins of the ancient northern kingdom of Lanna. Finally, the Golden Triangle (where Thailand, Laos and Burma/Myanmar meet), is not far from Chiang Mai. A longtime crossroads of the narcotics trade, the Golden Triangle is interesting as both a formal and informal sub-regional political economy.

Being based in Thailand has afforded me numerous research opportunities to study the country and the region firsthand. Early on, this included examining the political economy of riparian states along the Mekong River and conducting research about democratization efforts in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

In 2008 I moved to Heidelberg University in Germany to be Senior Fellow on a team of political science researchers (funded by the German Research Foundation [DFG]) focusing on civil-military relations in Asia. At this point, I began to develop some expertise in the militaries of Thailand and the Philippines resulting in several trips to both countries and interviews with senior Thai and Philippine military officers. By 2011, when my contract with DFG was finished, I had co-authored dozens of articles and books about civil-military relations or politics in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia.

In June 2011 I returned to Payap to become director of research at the newly inaugurated Southeast Asian Institute of Global Studies (SEAIGS). SEAIGS is an outgrowth of the Thai and Southeast Asian Studies Program.

continued on next page
Alumni Essay (cont’d)

Program (established in 1987) and the internationalization initiatives of Payap’s Office of Global Awareness.

This past January I moved to Chiang Mai University’s Faculty of Political Science to become director of research at the Institute of Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAA). ISEAA is a center for undergraduate and graduate students focusing upon different issues in mainland Southeast Asia today, including human rights, war and peace, international relations, and human security. There are also country-specific seminars on Lao PDR, Thailand, and Cambodia. ISEAA is committed to furthering global and regional awareness of challenges facing Southeast Asia, mostly in mainland Southeast Asia.

Aside from Chiang Mai University, I am also a research fellow with the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), which seeks to identify the causes of violent international and internal conflicts and the conditions which might bring about peace. My work with PRIF centers upon security sector reform and conflict resolution in Thailand.

My research on Southeast Asia has led me to other venues as well. In August 2011 I was a visiting research fellow at De La Salle University in Manila, researching and lecturing on Philippine civil-military relations. In April-June 2012, I was a Visiting Research Fellow at the German Institute of Global Affairs (GIGA) in Hamburg Germany, starting work on a project comparing the intra-party factionalism in Thailand, the Philippines, Myanmar and Indonesia. Another project, with Srisompob Jitpiromsri and Napisa Waitoolkiat, focuses on perceptions of war and peace in Thailand’s deep South. In the future, I am going to participate on a project about the political history of Chiang Mai city headed by NIU alumna and Payap colleague Ratanaporn Sethakul (PhD history, 1989).

All of these efforts reflect my abiding interest in the politics of mainland Southeast Asia (dating back to my Peace Corps days), especially in the area of democratization, demilitarization, human rights, human security, and political economy in Southeast Asia. My professors at NIU—Ladd Thomas, Clark Neher, Dwight King, Danny Unger, John Hartmann, and Saw Tun—were instrumental in shaping my focus as well as my future. I hope that in my teaching and research I can excite as much interest in the region for students as these Southeast Asianists did for me.

Paul Chambers graduated from NIU in 2003 with a PhD in political science, specializing in Southeast Asian studies. While at NIU he studied Thai and Burmese languages.

Chambers gives a lecture to students in the old city of Sukhothai, the first capital city of the Thai Empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and now a UNESCO World Heritage site in north central Thailand.
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Center Coordinator M. Ladd Thomas in front of the Center’s first home on College Street with one of the instructors from the Peace Corps training program, circa 1965. (NIU archives)

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