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Judy Ledgerwood

Welcome to this issue of our annual newsletter, The Mandala. The Center thrived this year, running a wide range of programs and activities. We received good news in that our Title VI National Resource Center and FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) Fellowship funding from the US Department of Education was renewed. This funding is for just over $2 million for four years. This core grant allows us to continue to offer five major Southeast Asian languages (Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, Tagalog and Thai), and a full interdisciplinary menu of courses on the region, an undergraduate major and a graduate certificate.

This year for the first time we offered Vietnamese through a distance language-exchange program with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. CSEAS was also funded for another three-year cycle of the Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP), which brings high school students from ten SEA countries to NIU for a month in spring. NIU has run the parallel Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) for a decade – this was year 11. Both of these programs are funded by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This is the fifth year that CSEAS has hosted Indonesian PKPI (Sandwich-like) scholars, teachers at regional universities who have MAs and are working on PhD research. At NIU they are matched with mentors who help direct them to library sources in their fields. They attend a weekly seminar on preparing an article for publication (thanks to associate Trude Jacobsen [History] for designing this excellent training). This program is funded by the Indonesian Ministry of Research and Higher Education. This year we also received funding from DoE for a Fulbright Group Projects Abroad program to the Philippines this summer. Susan Russell and Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail took six community college teachers and six high school teachers there for a month this summer to learn about ethno-religious diversity and human rights.

Central to our Title VI activities are new collaborations with area community colleges, with a goal of increasing the engagement of community college teachers in international education and recruiting strong students with AA degrees to pursue Southeast Asian studies at NIU as undergraduates. We have established partnerships with Elgin Community College, Harper College, Waubonsee Community College and Triton College. This past year, we collaborated with Harper College on an International Education Summit on Peace Building. Two NIU Anthropology faculty presented on Southeast Asia: Susan Russell on “Global Peace and Conflict Studies: Making Non-violence Relevant for American College Students” and Andrea Molnar on “The Role of Peace Education in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building.” CSEAS also worked with College of DuPage on a Southeast Asia summit, providing several speakers (Jui-Ching Wang, Tharaphi Than and myself) and a performance by the NIU Gamelan Ensemble.

We continue to have a strong focus on Burma/Myanmar. Faculty associates Tharaphi Than, Catherine Raymond and Andrea Molnar conducted projects with universities in Myanmar in summer 2014. We sponsored a symposium and a museum exhibit on ethnicities in Burma, sent objects from the Burma Art Collection to an exhibit at Asia Society in New York, and hosted guests from the National Museum and Yangon University sponsored by Asia Foundation. During a February visit to Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia, I, along with Center for Burma Studies Director Catherine Raymond, and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Christopher McCord, signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mandalay University and had discussions with Yadabon University about our next steps. Melissa Lenczewski, director of NIU’s Environmental Studies program, visited Yadabon last June and through CSEAS returned with three colleagues this past July to help develop curriculum and research design, and discuss long-term collaborative projects with the science faculties there. The NIU team includes faculty from biology, geography, geology, and public health. We also signed new MOUs this year with the Center for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Studies at Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City and Bukindon State University in Mindanao, Philippines, and renewed MOUs with Thammasat University in Thailand and Pannasastra University in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

We have just begun a new program called Alumni Connect to help our current students learn about employment opportunities after graduation. Either during campus visits or via Skype calls, students have the opportunity to talk to alumni about their current jobs and their SEA training. These have included a professor in history, a business executive, an NGO director in SEA, a non-profit staff person in the US, and staff persons...
The Center bid farewell to retiring faculty associates Barbara Posadas (History) and Danny Unger (Political Science) and to associate Deborah Pierce, Associate Vice President for International Affairs, in 2014–15. Posadas, who officially retired in June 2015 after 40 years of teaching, returned to teach classes through spring 2015. A Center associate since 1984, she received her PhD from Northwestern University and taught courses on Asian American history and immigration and ethnic history among others. In 2011, she received a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Distinguished Faculty Award and the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Asian American Studies in 2008. Unger, who received his PhD from the University of California-Berkeley, was a member of the NIU Thai Studies Committee and taught courses in comparative politics, international political economy, Japanese foreign policy and international law and organizations. During his sabbatical year in Thailand in 2005–06, Unger taught at Thammasat University and the National Institute for Development Administration. Previously his research took him to Japan and Vietnam. While at NIU, Unger helped facilitate three grants totaling more than $200,000 to CSEAS from the Royal Thai Government to establish the Thai Teaching and Research Endowment Fund. The endowment supports funding for scholarships, library acquisitions, travel for visiting Thai scholars, and faculty and student travel to the country for research and language study. Pierce, who received her PhD in linguistics from the University of Michigan and came to NIU in 2002, grew NIU’s international education program, increasing the number of international students, training programs for international students and scholars, and faculty-directed study abroad programs. She also helped found NIU’s chapter of Phi Beta Delta, the international honor society, and received numerous awards for her tireless work on behalf of global NIU and international education in the US. On behalf of NIU and the Center, Pierce made numerous trips to Southeast Asia to foster connections with educational institutions in the region, and was a cheerful host to numerous international delegations to NIU.

Transitions: Posadas, Unger, Pierce

at the ASEAN Business Council and USAID. Clips from these interviews are now on the Center website (see Outreach News, page 16). Our biggest event of the year was associate Jui-Ching Wang’s wonderful Teaching World Music Symposium, which brought more than 100 scholars and performers to NIU in April, including Music Professor Emeritus Dr. Kuo-Huang Han, who was honored for his inestimable contributions to the NIU world music program. The symposium included a day-long forum on Southeast Asia and performances by the University of Illinois Gamelan and a Thai ensemble from Chicago. Dr. Wang also ran a summer field school in Bali in summer 2014, a field school she repeated in this past summer (see cover story). We have more departures and arrivals to report. Center associate Deborah Pierce, Associate Vice-President for International Affairs and a long-time CSEAS supporter, retired in April. Barbara Posadas retired last year, but taught one more year for the History Department, finishing in May. Danny Unger from Political Science left us in December for Bangkok. We want to thank Piyathida Sereebeenapol for stepping in to teach Thai language this year; and Prukspan Bantawtook (Thailand), Maw Maw Tun (Myanmar), and Riyani (Indonesia) our FLTAs who helped so much with our language classes this year. A new language faculty member joins us this fall: Kanjana Thepboriruk, who comes to us from finishing a PhD in linguistics at the University of Hawai’i, will be teaching Thai language and culture.

We welcome her, and we welcome all of you back from your travels to a new academic year!
The title of the study-abroad program was Experiencing the Arts in Bali, but for the students who accompanied CSEAS associate Jui-Ching Wang (School of Music) and NIU art professor Shei-Chau Wang to the village of Bangah in Bali, Indonesia, for three weeks in July, it was so much more.

“The highlight of the program was not merely learning about the arts,” said Jui-Ching Wang, who led the study-abroad program to the tiny mountain hamlet in western Bali for the second summer in a row. “It was the religious and cultural practices behind the arts that was most significant for the participants.” That and learning to live together in close quarters while adapting to Balinese village culture.

Five NIU students and one student from Emory University (who found the program on a Google search) participated in the 2015 program, meeting up with the Wangs in Indonesia before traveling to Bangah. While in the village, participants lived with a family in a traditional banjar compound, which consisted of several small houses that shared a common area including a kitchen and a yard. They followed the family routines for meals and laundry, waking up and going to bed early every day. They ate traditional hot and spicy Balinese meals of organically grown tropical fruits, vegetables and rice. No hot water meant cold showers every day.

“Most of the students did not know anything about Balinese religious practices. None had ever lived so intimately for three weeks with strangers. Nevertheless, the students quickly developed a bond not only with each other but also with the villagers,” Wang said.

The program curriculum included keeping a weekly journal (see sidebar) and lectures on traditional culture and religious practices, architecture and crafts, workshops on wayang kulit (puppet) making, and Balinese music and dance. “Our banjar was special in that it had an extension housing a stage where most of our music and dance lessons took place,” Wang said. It was also the center of village ceremonial life. “Being part of the ceremonies, preparing for them by making offering plates, and praying together with the family members and other villagers, allowed us to feel the genuine hospitality of the entire village.”

On their last night in Bangah, the students presented their own performance on the home stage. “It was not just the performance that showcased what we had learned in the three weeks that mattered; it was the collaborative preparation that was meaningful,” Wang said. “We not only helped to decorate the stage and put on our makeup and costumes, but also went together to the village temple with everyone involved to pray for the blessing of the performance that night. I think it was the sense of belonging to the community that really touched us.”

Participants in the 2015 Bali program were NIU students Longdi Chen (MM, piano), Pei-Han Lin (MM, piano and world music), Melissa Marciniec (BA art education, psychology minor), Brandon Woodhouse (BA sociology, photography minor) and Yusen Xia (MM, voice), and Emory University student Ryan Sutherland (BS biology and BM music).

Wang’s study-abroad group will reprise their Bali village performance at noon Oct. 30 in the Recital Hall of the Music Building in “How Far Did We Go? Way Beyond Tourism” in the Center’s weekly lecture series.
‘Grow where you are planted’: Weekly journal entry #3

By Brandon Woodhouse

My last week in Bali was very busy. We spent a lot of time working on our music pieces and dances. It seemed that with everyday passing by that the students and friends from the village were becoming sad. We’ve lived with this family for about a month and yet it feels like we’ve known them for an eternity. The saying is time flies when you are having fun, but it’s more like time flies when you are growing. I remember in one of the study abroad training segments it mentioned that sometimes you will feel a sense of “utopia” to a visiting country and you should not get too attached. But after living with these wonderful people, how could you not want to stay?

If there’s anything that I’ve learned from this experience, it is that there are a lot of things that I take for granted with my current life in America, versus my study abroad life in Bali. Hot showers, toilets, safe drinking water, etc. I feel if the majority of the people in our country tried even half of the things our group experienced then a lot of people would have a hard time adapting. This trip has changed me inside and out. I felt more at peace when I was within the village. I loved waking up every morning not expecting anything. I’m such a schedule-oriented person to where if I’m not following my schedule, then my entire day is upside down. With time in Bali, that slowly changed. I was less irritable and developed a more go-with-the-flow kind of perspective. I became more confident in myself, I wanted to do bigger and better things while I was there. I never turned a challenge down and I was very open to new things. It felt like with every new experience I had, I always took myself out of my comfort zone and conquered my fears and anxieties of this new world I was living in.

I truly lived the simple life while being in Bali. Art, music and religion seemed to be the biggest highlights of the village we stayed in. On the outside I’ve changed quite a bit. Since I’ve been eating a much cleaner diet here, I’ve lost weight. It is a positive, yet unfortunate situation because I bought some new clothes for the trip and now some of them barely even fit me! I’m inspired to eat cleaner and perhaps one day even adopting a fruits and vegetable-focused diet. I can tell my body has changed in how it reacts to some foods. While I was at the Seattle airport waiting for my flight, I tried to eat fruit snacks. My teeth and my stomach did not agree with the sugar that was in them and I began to feel sick after I ate them.

There’s a saying my mom always told me: “Grow where you are planted.” This basically means wherever your life is being molded in the universe, take very opportunity to learn, adapt and grow as a human being. I can truly say that I’ve grown from this experience, and I wish that I could have stayed longer. I look forward to seeing my friends who I now view as my second family soon. I sense many opportunities, good times and memories ahead of us. Until then, sampai jumpa (see you later), Bali.

Brandon Woodhouse is a junior at NIU majoring in sociology and photography. This is an edited version of his Bali journal.
Kenton Clymer (History)
- Is hosting two visiting Chinese historians at NIU this year: Dr. Wen Ronggang from Bohai University and Dr. Pang Hai-hong from Yunnan University. Both arrive in August.
- Traveled to China for several weeks during the summer where he gave a talk about his forthcoming book, *A Delicate Relationship: The United States and Burma/Myanmar since 1945* (Cornell University Press) June 29 at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies at Yunnan University in Kunming and later in Chongqing. On July 9 he gave a presentation on U.S.-Burma/Myanmar relations since 1988 at Xiamen University in Xiamen.

Kikue Hamayotsu (Political Science)
- Presented "Democratization, Regime Formation and Religious Minorities in Indonesia and Malaysia" in June at Religious Minorities in Asia, co-sponsored by CSEAS, Cornell University and City University of Hong Kong.
- Served as a discussant April 17 on a panel about religion and social movements at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies’ Asia Conference 2015: Power in Asia.
- Has been elected treasurer and executive committee member of the Association of Asian studies’ Indonesia and East Timor Studies Committee.

Trude Jacobsen (History)
- Served as the faculty host for 22 alumni on 12-day NIU Alumni Association trip to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in Cambodia and Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.
- Published “The Curious Case of Sherlock Hare: Race, Class, and Mental Health in British Burma” in the winter 2014 issue of *The Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, which was nominated for the American Historical Association’s Berkshire Prize awarded to women historians in North America.

Eric Jones (History)
- Returned in January from his sabbatical working on translating, interpreting and combing through Dutch East India Company archival material for a book-length treatment on the topic of slavery in Southeast Asia and its role in the social history of the region.

Judy Ledgerwood (Anthropology)
- Led off the College of DuPage’s annual symposium, Emerging Southeast Asia: Culture, History and the Arts, March 25 with “Southeast Asia as Crossroads of the World: Historically and Today.”
- Gave the keynote address March 14 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s annual Anthropology Student Colloquium.

Andrea Molnar (Anthropology)
- Taught faculty training sessions over the summer at Yangon and Yadanabon universities in Myanmar.

Grant Olson (Foreign Languages and Literatures)
- Edited and translated with CSEAS associate Chalermsee Olson (University Libraries) *A Sandy Path Near the Lake: In Search of the Illusory Khemananda* (Cambridge Scholars, 2015), the autobiography of Thai Buddhist artist and spiritual teacher Kovit Khemananda.
- Is serving as the CSEAS Council liaison with NIU Press.

Alan Potkin (CSEAS)
- Presented his new e-book on the aesthetic and cultural aspects of waterfalls hydropower exploitation at the June 4–7 South and Southeast Asian Association for Culture and Religion conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- Taught a summer course on social, political and ecological constraints of sustainable urbanization, fisheries management and water resource development in the middle and lower Mekong basin as a visiting professor at Yunnan University in Kunming, China.
- Presented “The Phralak-Phralam: A Previous Lifetime of the Buddha’: The Lao Ramayana at Vat Oub Mong and Vat Kang Tha and Vat Keng” Jan. 29 at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California-Berkeley and “Virtual Reality in Archiving, Interpreting and Replicating South and Southeast Asian Buddhist Artforms, Cultural Landscapes and Heritage Sites” Feb. 9 at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at UCLA.

Catherine Raymond (School of Art, Center for Burma Studies)
Faculty Spotlight: Kanjana Thepboriruk

With her appointment as the new Thai language instructor and assistant professor, Kanjana Thepboriruk returns to her Midwest roots from her most recent home in Honolulu, where she completed her master’s and PhD degrees in linguistics at the University of Hawai‘i-Manoa. Originally from Bangkok, Kanjana grew up mostly in Madison, Wisc., where she received bachelor’s degrees in linguistics and Southeast Asian studies. “But Honolulu feels the most like home to me with its predominantly Asian cultural practices but distinctively American feel,” she says.

Kanjana, who moved to DeKalb in July with her partner Ian, will be teaching beginning and intermediate Thai this fall. Her office is in 335 Watson. Get to know a little more about her below:

**Mandala: Where did you get your education and what is your teaching experience?**

I have the good fortune of being able to claim a few great institutions as my alma mater and many great scholars as my ajaan (teachers). I received my undergraduate degree in linguistics and Southeast Asian studies (Thai History post-1932) from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and continued on in Linguistics (Sociolinguistics, Thai phonetics) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. [Her dissertation was “Thai in Diaspora: Language and Identity in Los Angeles.”] Quantitative and qualitative analyses of Thai spoken by Thais living outside Thailand is her current research emphasis. I also attended a few semesters at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok to deepen my knowledge of Thai historical linguistics. I’ve taught Thai, introduction to language, introduction to linguistics, phonetics, and academic writing. I’ve also tutored immigrants in an adult English literacy program, mostly helping them to study for the citizenship exam. Privately, I taught Thai to professionals who needed to achieve specific skills for their jobs. There were the occasional cooking classes too when my family had a Thai restaurant.

**What is your educational philosophy?**

Learning is collaborative and never stops. There are always new people to learn from and new subjects to learn about. No field or discipline is an island. Everything is connected.

**What would you like people here to know about your teaching style and plans for your Thai classes?**

Language ultimately is the ability to communicate needs and ideas. I hope that the Thai language students leave my class feeling confident that they are able to communicate using the Thai language. I would describe my teaching style as interactive—with emphasis on active. There are a lot of activities that require everyone (me included!) to move around and interact with fellow learners. I find that if everyone is being silly and having fun, they are too busy to get embarrassed about making mistakes and can forget how hard learning a new skill or language can be! As the saying goes, nothing to it, but to do it.

**What do you hope to bring to the Southeast Asian studies program here at NIU?**

I am so honored to be a part of the great legacy at CSEAS at NIU and look forward to bringing transnational and diasporic perspectives into the mix. So many Thais live outside of Thailand and very little is known about the diasporic communities, even the one so close to NIU in Chicagoland. I already have projects in works with the Thai community in Los Angeles and hope to hit the ground running with the community here in Chicago. I am also looking forward to exciting collaborative work with other scholars at the center. It is all very exciting!

**Has anyone told you about below-zero wind chill?**

15 years in Wisconsin has taught me well. I have great stories of walking to school in knee-deep snow, uphill (just one way though!).

- Presented preliminary research on the reverse-glass painting tradition in Thailand and Myanmar in July at the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists’ 15th international conference in Paris. Following the conference, she traveled to Myanmar and Thailand to resume field work on reverse-glass painting with faculty and students from NIU and Yadanabon University (Myanmar).
in Granville, Ohio. The exhibit, which contained clothing and accessories representative of seven of Myanmar’s 135 minority groups drawn from both institutions, was on display at the NIU Art Museum August-November and moved to Denison in February.

**Susan Russell (Anthropology)**
- Conducted the 11th session of the Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) at NIU in May with International Training Office Director and CSEAS associate Lina Davide-Ong.

**Tharaphi Than (Foreign Languages and Literatures)**
- Presented “Burmese Women: Then and Now” March 25 at College of DuPage’s annual symposium, Emerging Southeast Asia: Culture, History and the Arts.
- Presented “Trajectory of Modernity through Cartoons and Commercial Ads in Burma, 1910s to 1950s” Jan. 12 and 13 at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and

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**Away to the Philippines**
Twelve area high school and community college educators spent June 20–July 20 in the Philippines for a Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad study tour led by CSEAS associates Susan Russell and Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail. Participants were Edward Davis (Malcolm X College); Sowjanya Dharmasankar, Timothy Draper and Kathleen Westman (Waubonsee Community College); Paul Edelman (Sauk Valley Community College); Michael Fauerbach (St. Anne Community High School); Jennifer Hasso (Harold Washington College); Clayton Henricksen and Anne Sharkey (Huntley High School); Annette Keca (Sycamore High School); Doug Koteleczyk (Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy); and Diane Regan (Freeport High School). The group studied cultural and ethnic diversity, geopolitical history, and human rights and education at Philippine Normal University in Manila and developed course modules and lesson plans.

**Caribbean Studies in Leiden.**
- Presented “Democracy and Its Alternatives” in five lectures to second-year political science students at Yangon University in December and January. While in Myanmar, she also organized two workshops, Myanmar History: Voices from Within, for junior faculty in the history and archeology departments at three Burmese institutions.

**Kheang Un (Political Science)**
- Received tenure and was promoted to associate professor.

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**Kudos: Ledgerwood, Thurmaier**
Center Director Judy Ledgerwood (Anthropology) and CSEAS associate Kurt Thurmaier (Public Administration) were named 2015 Presidential Engagement Professors (PEP) April 13 at the annual faculty recognition awards ceremony in Altgeld Hall Auditorium. For Ledgerwood, the award was especially sweet as she joined the PEP ranks with previous recipients and Anthropology colleagues Susan Russell and Andrea Molnar. PEP awards are given to professors whose work exemplifies a commitment to student engagement and reciprocal partnerships with external communities to “bring scholarship to bear on regional, national or international problems.” The awards are accompanied by a $5,000 stipend during each year of the four-year award. PEP professors also receive a special medallion to be worn with their academic regalia.
• Published “The Cambodian People Have Spoken: Has the Cambodian People’s Party Heard?” in Southeast Asian Affairs, ISEAS, 2015.
• Published “Cambodia’s Relations with China and the US: Norms, Interests, and a Balancing Act” in China’s Strategic Environment and External Relations in the Transition Period, edited by Jungho Bae and Jin-Ha Kim (Korea Institute for National Unification, 2015).
• Posted “Change Finally on the Way for Cambodia,” Jan. 15 in the online East Asia Forum.

Jui-Ching Wang (School of Music)

Robert Zerwekh (Computer Science)
• Completed development of two apps for Indonesian and Thai language study with funding provided by the Center’s US Department of Education Title VI grant with the assistance of with Indonesian language instructor Rahmi Hartati and 2014-15 Thai language instructor Piyathida Sereebenjapol.

Forty years later in Vietnam

Kenton Clymer and Lawrence S. Wittner, professor emeritus at State University of New York-Albany, were in Vietnam April 19–30 with a group of former anti-war and peace activists there to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War (known as the American War in Vietnam). “[We] spent much of our time speaking with high-level Vietnamese officials and also with the American ambassador,” Clymer said. The group came away “impressed,” Clymer said, with the level of concern that the Vietnamese have with China’s more assertive policy and actions in the regions, particularly in the South China Sea (or the East Sea, as the Vietnamese call it). “Partly for that reason, US relations with Vietnam are currently very cordial and cooperative,” Clymer said. “Seventeen thousand Vietnamese students are currently studying in the United States.”

While in Vietnam, Clymer and the group visited centers treating the victims of dioxin-laden herbicides like Agent Orange used by the United States during the war to clear jungle areas and which today are still affecting residents of those regions. A third generation of victims, children and grandchildren of the original victims, now requires much assistance dealing with physical and mental disabilities stemming from toxic exposure. “Fortunately, the United States government no longer denies that the spraying was harmless to people and is providing some funds to help remediate the situation,” Clymer said.

The impact of the war on Vietnam is still being felt in another legacy of the war: unexploded ordnance such as cluster bombs, landmines, and shells. Every day new ones are unearthed, and thousands have died as the result of these, Clymer said.

On their last day in Vietnam, Clymer and the group were honored guests attending a parade in Ho Chi Minh City marking the 40th anniversary of the end of the war. After the parade, they joined other delegations to meet Vietnam’s Deputy Prime Minister, Clymer said. The trip was sponsored by the Fund for Reconciliation and Development, a non-profit organization supporting efforts for reconciliation between the US and Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Cuba.
Seven students, six weeks, five countries and five intensive language programs. Those were the magic numbers for the NIU students who traveled to Southeast Asia this past summer as Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellows. For the first time, a Vietnamese language school hosted an NIU student. Graduate student Krista Albers (MA history, 2015) studied Vietnamese at Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City. Mao Lee (MA education) studied Thai at Payap University in Chiang Mai while Katrina Chludzinski (PhD history) and Karla Findley (MA anthropology) went to Yangon to study Burmese at the Win Language Academy. Graduate student Shannon Thomas (MA environmental studies) and undergraduate Colin Finnegan (political science) took Tagalog at the Christian Language Center in Manila. Undergraduate Andrew Waite (business) advanced his Indonesian at Wisma Bahasa in Yogyakarta. Summer FLAS fellowships cover tuition at an approved language school (with priority given to Southeast Asian schools) and provide a stipend for transportation and other expenses.

Nine NIU graduate students and four undergraduates have been awarded federal Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for the 2015–16 academic year. Graduate FLAS fellows are: Anastasia Boettcher (MA history) and Alexxandra Salazar (MA anthropology) studying Khmer; Samuel Bunting (JD School of Law) and Shannon Thomas (MA environmental studies) studying Tagalog; Anthonie Tumpag (MA anthropology) and Rachael Skog (MA anthropology) studying Indonesian; Karla Findley (MA anthropology) studying Burmese and Mao Lee (MA education) and Abbey Pieri (MA anthropology) studying Thai. Undergraduate FLAS fellows are Andrew Waite (business) and Caitlin Bemis (anthropology) studying Indonesian, Colin Finnegan (political science) studying Tagalog, and Cole Fraser (economics) studying Burmese. Academic-year FLAS fellowships provide for a tuition-fee waiver, health insurance and a monthly stipend.

FLAS fellowships are funded by a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education with support from the Graduate School for graduate tuition waivers. The application deadline for summer 2016 FLAS grants is Jan. 1. The deadline to apply for academic-year 2016–17 fellowships is Feb. 1.

While studying Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City this summer, the first NIU student to do so, Krista Albers visited the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi.

Fishing for fellowships

In addition to summer and academic-year fellowships funded by Title VI of the US Department of Education, there are numerous other funding opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students of Southeast Asian studies. Scholarships and fellowships are offered by the Blakemore Foundation, the Boren Awards for International Study, the Center for Khmer Studies, the Library of Congress’s Florence Tan Moeson Fellowship Program, the Fulbright U.S. Scholar and English Teaching Assistant Program, the Institute of International Education, the National Science Foundation, the National Security Education Program, and the US Department of State’s Critical Language Scholarship Program among others. For a full list of such programs, see the CSEAS website under Student Funding.
Yao Cui (MM world music) has been awarded the 2015-16 Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Scholarship for the Study of Southeast Asia. Yao, who plays the pipa, a Chinese string instrument that looks like a lute, received her bachelor’s in music performance at Nanjing University of the Arts. Wanting to pursue her studies in music education in the US, Yao said she found NIU through a Google search. “I contacted [CSEAS associate] Jui-Ching Wang about going to school here and learned about the world music program. She thought I would be a good fit,” Yao said.

Yao said she became interested in world music because she wanted to learn to play different instruments. Since coming to NIU in 2014, she has joined the Chinese Music, Middle-Eastern, Gamelan and Afro-Cuban ensembles and is also taking Burmese.

She spent this past summer in southern China and Myanmar where she studied music of the many ethnic groups near the border where there has long been shared musical traditions. “I expect to see traditional and popular music,” she said before departing for her field work. “I want to know what kind of music they are still playing and what young people are listening to. I also hope to hear some female singing groups.”

Upon completing her master's in 2016, Yao plans to apply to a PhD program in ethnomusicology and eventually teach at the college level. She is the fourteenth 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 External Programming Director emerita and CSEAS associate Arlene Neher. The $5,000 fellowship plus tuition waiver for the next academic year is awarded to one advanced-level graduate student planning research in Southeast Asia.

The deadline to apply for the 2016–17 Neher graduate scholarship is Feb. 1.
Fellowship Notes (cont’d)

Being a Boren: No word for ‘police’ in Karen

By Thomas Rhoden

Learning the Sgaw dialect of the Karen language over the 2014–15 school year on a Boren Fellowship grant along the Thailand-Myanmar border has been a great experience for many different reasons. I wish to summarize one experience here.

I knew that there would be various challenges to learning a language that is not sponsored by a national state. What I did not expect was how much this non-state aspect of language learning would affect both the way one goes about foreign language acquisition and my own thoughts on the idea of the state itself.

As someone undergoing training in an Anglo-American tradition of political science, our academic subject matter, in one way or another, is almost always about the state—that is, government, the people that are ruled by government, and all the multifarious relationships and bases of power that constitute a polity. There are more complicated ways to discuss this thing we call a state, but for here I want to focus on one challenge I stumbled across to all of this. Studying and living in a language community of around two million, which stretches over frontiers of various sorts—national, linguistic, economic, geographic, others—has provided me with more than a few opportunities of epiphanic, if perhaps naïve, clarity that otherwise would have been unavailable if one had remained stateside.

One of the more memorable Zen-like moments came as we were going over the Karen words for different professions. My vocabulary list, created by some hapless Baptist missionary from the middle of the last century, had the usual words for “farmer,” “worker,” “monk,” and so on. Being the annoying student that I am, I would then steer the teacher toward diction not on the list, words for state-like jobs like “politician,” “bureaucrat,” “government worker,” “mayor,” “police officer,” and so on. At this point I would receive the normal blank look, indicating either confusion, embarrassment, or some other culturally appropriate mixture of both.

When a response was given, the answer was more often than not provided in one of the two state-sponsored languages that divides the Karen-speaking population: Thai or Burmese. Never was a correlate word provided in the non-state language of Karen (or least not given without a polite deferral of time to either ask a friend or peer inside an outdated dictionary).

The word that got me rethinking my study of the state the most was the word for “police.”

This actually turned into something of an ongoing game with all the Karen I would meet. No matter the level of education, amount of wealth, age-level, or which side of the Thai-Burmese border I was on, the Karen speaker when queried “How do you say ‘police’ in Karen” would appear stumped. Sometimes she would answer with the Thai word: dtam-ruat. Sometimes she would answer with the Burmese word: yeh-thar. Sometimes she would just return the English word with a Karen accent: bpa!-lee.

I would they play-act as if I were frustrated: “What?! You mean there’s no word for ‘police’ in Karen? Surely there’s got to be a word, nah?”

Nine times out of ten, after a moment of inward brain cudgeling, the speaker would then respond with the Karen word for “soldier”: thue-poh. We would then laugh at the awkwardness of the situation I had provoked and, if on hand, a local variant of rice-based liqueur would be consumed to dispel any remaining uncertainty.

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Memoirs of an American playing a Thai bureaucrat in Thailand

By Aaron Johnson

While a J. William Fulbright-Hilary Rodham Clinton Fellow in Thailand from 2012 to 2013, I served as the special assistant to the Director of the International Affairs Division within the Ministry of Justice. This ten-month appointment afforded me the opportunity to work within the Thai government and gain exposure to its bureaucratic culture. My immediate responsibility was to research key challenges facing the Thai criminal justice community with respect to their custodial and non-custodial policies, in particular, prison conditions. In addition, I wrote speeches and presentations for the Minister of Justice, Princess Bajarakitiyabha Mahidol, as well as senior officials and helped translate official documents.

As a result of my research project, I believe I was able to make value-added contributions to the ministry in a number of respects. First, by providing an updated “snapshot” of the status of living conditions, my report illustrates progress made to date as well as remaining challenges that the government faces in order to comply with not only its own policy aspirations, but also those of the international community. Second, by making recommendations to improve the basic living conditions for chronically overpopulated correctional facilities and health services for those with psychological illnesses, my research sought to alleviate the more immediate obstacles. Furthermore, the recommendations were feasible to achieve because they were based on the availability of resources. Third, my research addressed the status of not only Thais in the criminal justice system but also foreigners.

My experience working at the ministry provided me with a better understanding and appreciation of the Thai public policy-making process and the politics therein. Institutionally, the Thai government is extremely fragmented in terms of intra-agency and inter-agency coordination and, as a direct consequence, this translates into a policy-making process that is incremental and in contradiction. In fact, even within a particular ministry, different departments are rather apprehensive towards communicating with each other despite the reality that most issues under their purview are multi-faceted and necessitate coordinated responses across several stakeholders. This was evident during my interviews with the Department of Corrections’ mental health staff where officials indicated that many times there are duplication of efforts amongst themselves, the police and the Department of Health in obtaining information about patients’ criminal and medical history. The duplication of efforts creates information request backlogs and results in precious time wasted. As a result, necessary medical treatment(s) for inmates usually occurs late. Informal relationships determine whether services are efficient. For example, because I knew the former director of the Department of Corrections personally, he was able to help with my research and provide contacts and access. Without this contact, using the official channels would have meant months delay in obtaining approval.

My fellowship also provided opportunities for cultural exchange. One element that stood out was the respect paid to one’s superior. While respecting seniority is not exclusive to Thai culture, the amount of ritualism involved and the commitment to the individual regularly superseded that of the institution. In many ways this discourages innovation and criticism both necessary to improve legacies of ineffective policies. In fact, one advantage of being a foreigner was that colleagues would ask me to suggest alternative perspectives to superiors because it would not be deemed offensive given the source. I

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Being a Boren: No word for ‘police’ in Karen

Of course, my on-the-spot language instructor was correct on this point. The only “police” that the Karen people had ever known were those that originally came via the late English Empire (bpa!-lee) or via the copycatting internal colonizers, the Thai (tam-ruat) and the Burmese (yeh-thar). The Karen themselves had never needed a bureaucratic obfuscation of coercive power between “soldier” and “police” within their own political society. Thus, in a cursory way, it makes sense that their non-stateness would require this term to be borrowed. And if we really get exact about it, I suspect that the Karen word for “soldier” (thue-poh) would probably better be translated as “warrior.”

It may also bear reminding that the etymology of “police” in English, either as noun or verb, was borrowed more recently (meaning six centuries or so ago) from the Old French police/policier—to mention nothing of the antiquarian Latin politia and Greek politeia. This is all to say that the state-like normalcy of “police” for the English-speaker of yesteryear was, similar to the Karen-speaker, once a foreign concept.

I think that more than a few other interesting examples could be provided here of what I mean about the non-state nature of Karen-speakers and how this affects their language and how it doubles back to reflect various Karen-speaking political societies (i.e., those exotic-looking green-wet villages hidden way up in the mountains). There isn’t room for that here, aside from to say that this has given me much to mull over as a student of political science at NIU. Though I chose to study Karen because of its utility in my upcoming dissertation research, I feel lucky to have had a chance to live with a population of speakers who are not (yet?) knee-jerk statists in the sense that I am describing here. Their language is evolving along with their political society, so I welcome being confused again and again as I learn their language.

One additional take-away from the past year is that I have started to take Foucault and his la gouvernementalité more seriously than I had in the past. I have been reminded of this every time I read on the Internet another saddening “police” incident happening stateside—something to do with a “militarization” of “police” (that impish side of me wishes to ask if we Americans still have that distinction). Regardless, that English speakers allow a Foucauldian distinction between “police” and “soldier” is one thing. But that I originally expected it to carry over into Karen effortlessly is quite another.

Thomas Rhoden is a PhD candidate in political science. His dissertation topic is “Burmese Refugee and Migrants: Overlapping Agency along the Thailand-Myanmar Border.” He has spent the past year studying Karen in Thailand on the Burma border on a Boren language fellowship, which funds US graduate students to study less commonly taught languages in strategically important areas of the world. Rhoden has previously studied Thai in Thailand and Burmese at NIU and in Yangon. The deadline to apply for 2016–17 Boren fellowships is March 28, 2016.

Memoirs of an American playing a Thai bureaucrat in Thailand

was even asked by superiors to give my perspective and that of my government even though I was not a representative of the U.S. government. To the curiosity of many, I was, to the contrary, an official ministry representative in a number of forums addressing Thai criminal justice challenges like the death penalty and the use of shackles for death row prisoners with officials from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Program, Amnesty International, the UK and US governments.

In sum, my experience was a success in every facet. I benefitted tremendously from this opportunity—more than I originally anticipated. In fact, in the closing months of the appointment, I was offered a position to continue working on criminal justice issues for the Thailand Institute of Justice, a public-private organization affiliated with the ministry. This appointment too allowed me to further diversify my professional interests by representing Thailand in forums like the UN Headquarters in Vienna, as well as in Mexico, South Korea, Japan and Vietnam. The opportunity to have contributed to an exciting new organization that is seriously committed to improving and solving challenges not only within Thailand’s criminal justice system but those of the international community was one for which I will be eternally grateful.

Aaron Johnson is a PhD candidate in political science. His dissertation topic is “The Judicialization Politics: An Examination of the Administrative Court of Thailand.” Fulbright-Clinton fellowships are offered by the US State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to provide opportunities for US citizens to serve in professional placements in partner foreign government ministries or institutions. For more information, see the Fulbright website. The deadline to apply for 2016–17 Fulbright-Clinton fellowships is Oct. 15, 2015.
Graduates, awards, and name recognition

Fourteen CSEAS-affiliated graduate and undergraduate students graduated from NIU during the 2014–15 academic year and summer 2015. Eight undergraduates received bachelor’s degrees with minors in Southeast Asian Studies: Michelle Annarino (BA psychology), Ruth Doyle (BA political science, public law), Eric Dragon (BA psychology), Taryne Heredia (BA anthropology), John Hood (BA anthropology), Cecelie Keys (BA English), Mark Kral (BA anthropology), and Ryan Schuler (BA international politics).

Six graduate students completed advanced degrees with a concentration in Southeast Asian studies. Congratulations to Krista Albers (MA history), Ryan Broce (MA history), Robert Bulanda (MA anthropology), James Dewitz (MA history), Scott Hanley (MA history) and Isabelle Squires (MA history).

Four graduate students who completed concentrations in Southeast Asian studies in 2015 are: Yao Cui (MM student, world music), Nicole Loring (PhD candidate, political science), Shawn McCafferty (PhD candidate, political science) and Alexxandra Salazar (MA student, anthropology).

In other news:

Scott Abel (PhD candidate, history) joins the Center staff in 2015–16 as a graduate assistant for SEAS 225. He will be working closely with Assistant CSEAS Director Eric Jones (History), who will be teaching the undergraduate survey class on Southeast Asia. 2014-15 graduate assistant Azri Agoes (MA student, political science) continues in 2015–16 as the Center’s coordinator for the PKPI program, which brings Indonesian doctoral students to NIU during fall semester to develop and advance their research projects under the guidance of a faculty mentor.


2014–15 Neher fellow Matthew Jagel (PhD history, 2015) was named the Department of History’s Outstanding Graduate Student.

Nicole Loring (PhD candidate, political science) received the Department of Political Science’s Russell A. Smith Memorial Scholarship, which pays for travel to Southeast Asia to complete field work. Loring, who is a graduate assistant in the department and serves as the undergraduate adviser, plans to travel in summer 2016 to continue her research on transitions from authoritarian regimes to civilian regimes in the region.

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Nay Yan Oo (MA student, political science), received the 2014 Outstanding Student Contribution to International Education award in fall. He also received a Prospect Burma Scholarship and funding from the Open Society Foundation’s Supplementary Grant Program Asia, and a conference travel grant from the NIU Thai Studies Committee.

Thomas Rhoden (PhD candidate, political science), who has been in Thailand for the past year on a Boren fellowship (see Page XX), presented “Yangon’s New Stock Exchange in Comparative Analysis” at the Burma/Myanmar in Transition conference July 24–25 at Chiang Mai University. Rhoden also will be publishing “Oligarchy in Thailand?” in Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 34(1): 3–25. Rhoden presented the paper at the 12th International Conference on Thai Studies in 2014 at the University of Sydney.

Cho Aye (MS student, computer science), graduate assistant for Center for Burma Studies and Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP), was inducted into Zeta Gamma chapter (NIU) of Phi Beta Delta, the honor society for international scholars. Also inducted was SEAYLP administrative director Maria “Rai” Nihei (MA history, 2011).

2014–15 FLAS fellow Cecelie Keys (BA English, 2015) will begin graduate study in the Department of English’s linguistics program in fall. Over her academic career, Keys has studied Chinese and Japanese and will continue to study Thai.

2014–15 FLAS fellow John Hood (BA anthropology, 2015) received the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean’s Award from the Anthropology Department.

Southeast Asianists took top honors at the History Graduate Student Association’s fall conference Nov. 7 in Swen Parson Hall. Presenting were history students Scott Abel, Krista Albers, Katrina Chludzinski, James Dewitz, Scott Hanley and Isabelle Squires and political science student Nicole Loring. Albers won the best paper award for “War against Land: Defoliation and the American Public” and Dewitz won the award for best presentation for “Be Some Place Else: Nuclear Testing Policy and Atomic Popular Culture.” Chludzinski also helped organize the conference. CSEAS History associates Kenton Clymer served as chair of the United States in the Cold War panel and Trude Jacobsen chaired the Government and Conflict in 20th Century Burma and Malaya panel.

The Southeast Asia Club has elected new officers for 2015–16: Andrew Waite, president; Abbey Pieri, vice president; Katie Willis, secretary; Shannon Thomas, treasurer; Iva Innaya, social/cultural event coordinator; Caitlin Bemis, conference coordinator; Andini Hertias, marketing coordinator; Cecelie Keys, events co-coordinator.

Afield in Indonesia

Iqra Anugrah

CSEAS said goodbye in May to 2014–15 Graduate Assistant Iqra Anugrah (PhD candidate, political science), who is spending the 2015-16 academic year in Indonesia doing his dissertation research. Iqra received a prestigious pre-doctoral fellowship from the Ash Center at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Washington, DC-based Results for Development Institute, the first NIU student to do so. He will be working part-time in the fall for the Transparency for Development Project in Indonesia as a researcher for the project’s commissioned research on the impact of community intervention on health-care service at the local level. The fellowship is one of several he has received for his year away, including a $3,000 scholarship from the American-Indonesian Cultural and Educational Foundation, his third from the group.

Iqra, who will be based in Jakarta as a visiting research fellow at the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information, has hit the ground running. He presented “Indonesia’s Agricultural History from Early to Late Colonial Era: Toward a People’s History?” at the July 29–30 International Indonesia Forum Conference at Sebelas Maret University in Solo, Indonesia. In February he will travel to Australia to be a visiting fellow for advanced doctoral students at the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) at the University of Sydney. While preparing a publishable article draft from his dissertation research there, Iqra said he is looking forward to working with SSEAC Director Michele Ford, professor of Indonesian Studies and a leading expert on social movements on Indonesia. Prior to going to Sydney, Iqra will present “Elite-Peasant Relations in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Decentralization, Dispossession, and Countermovement,” at the first Southeast Asian Studies in Asia Conference at Kyoto University Dec. 12–13. The Center thanks Iqra for his excellent work teaching the Center’s Southeast Asia survey course, SEAS 225, and for being an always cheery presence at Pottenger House.
Student conference success
Southeast Asia Club conference coordinators Elise Waite, left, and Alexxandra Salazar, right, with keynote speaker, University of California-Berkeley historian Penny Edwards, at the close of the club’s annual spring student conference April 25. The conference, which was held at Swen Parson Hall, drew 14 graduate and undergraduate student presenters from as far away as Princeton, N.J. Winning the award for best undergraduate paper was John Hood (BA anthropology, 2015 for “Nats Cults of Burma and Social Power: Exploring Marginalization within the Context of Gender Identity in Myanmar”; the award for best graduate paper went to Megan Brankley Abbas (PhD student, history, Princeton University) for “The First Muhammadiyah Chairman with a Ph.D.: Amien Rais and Muslim Religious Authority in late 20th Century Indonesia”. (Photo / CSEAS)

McKearn Fellow
Undergraduate business major and FLAS fellow Andrew Waite was named a 2014–18 McKearn Fellow, one of 10 Honors freshmen to receive the honor. The new four-year fellowship program, endowed by alumni John and Cassandra McKearn, provides for a paid summer research project on-campus, funding for a summer study abroad, and an internship placement. Waite spent six weeks over the summer studying Bahasa in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, before returning to campus. He presented his summer research, “The Evolution of Indonesia’s Economy and its Effect on Society,” Aug. 7 at NIU’s Summer Research Symposium.

Alumni News
Former CSEAS assistant Matthew Ropp (BA communications, 2013, a Fulbright English teaching Assistant (ETA) in Malaysia in 2014–15, has signed on for a second year. He will be posted as a senior ETA in SMK Usukan School in Kota Belud, Sabah, on the west coast of the island of Borneo. In addition to teaching, Ropp will also mentor new ETAs and complete a capstone project.

JoAnn LoSavio (BA history, 2012) is returning to NIU in 2015–16 to pursue a PhD in history.

Chamni Sriprraram (MM, 2001), former president of the Thai Cultural and Fine Arts Institute of Chicago and founder of the Thai music school, Thai Music at Chicago, will direct a TCFAI ensemble that will perform three Thai pieces. March 25 at College of DuPage’s annual symposium, Emerging Southeast Asia: Culture, History and the Arts.

Phillips Vermonte (PhD political science, 2014) stopped by the Center in December on his way back to Indonesia, where he has taken a job as department head at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a non-profit think tank based in Jakarta.

Former FLAS fellow Scott LaDeur (PhD political science, 2013) has accepted a position as an assistant professor at North Central Michigan University.

Ten Soksreinth (MA political science, 2014) is working as a reporter with the Cambodia bureau of Voice of America in Washington D.C.
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Three new donations enhance Hart Collection

By Hao Phan

In the last two months of spring semester, the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection at Founders Memorial Library received three interesting donations: Letters of Daw May Kyi Win, curator of the Hart Collection from 1990 until her death in 2002; materials from the Rev. James Beaversdorf, an NIU alumnus who served as a missionary in the Philippines, and books, recordings and printed matter from the late Marybeth Clark, Vietnamese language teacher and scholar.

The Daw May Kyi Win letters came to NIU from Burma language scholar Anna Allott of the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. The correspondence from Win to Allott covers the period between 1981 and 1988, when Win was living in Burma/Myanmar. In the letters Win talks about politics, censorship, and the events leading up to the 1988 uprising in Burma. She also writes about life in 1980s Rangoon (now Yangon), her work as a librarian in Burma at that time, friendships with foreign scholars, and events in her personal life.

Rev. James Beaversdorf and his wife Bonnie served as missionaries to the Lutheran Church in the Philippines from 1970 to 1982. The two were graduate students at NIU during a yearlong furlough during the 1975–76 school year. Beaversdorf donated five boxes of materials, which included 161 books and 19 journal titles as well as instructional materials, newspaper articles and postcards. Among the journals were 27 issues of Philippine Panorama from 1972 to 1982, a rare acquisition as only two other libraries in the world carry it.

The collection also received a donation of books and records on Vietnam from the estate of language scholar Marybeth Clark. Clark, along with Nguyen Long and Nguyen Bich Thuan, wrote the language text Spoken Vietnamese for Beginners. Spoken Vietnamese was first published by CSEAS’s Southeast Asia Publications (SEAP) unit in 1996 and soon became a SEAP bestseller used in colleges and universities around the country. Since the dissolution of SEAP in 2010, Spoken Vietnamese has been distributed by NIU Press. Clark taught in Vietnam from 1961 to 1967. After receiving her PhD at the University of Hawaii, she moved to Australia to continue her research into Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian languages. The Clark donation includes 323 books, six audio cassettes, and numerous papers, letters and other materials. The materials were donated by Clark’s nephew, Bob Arnold, who is handling her estate at this time.

Collecting on the road

Thanks to funding from CSEAS and Founders Library, I traveled to Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand in June and July on a three-week acquisitions trip. I purchased library materials from local book vendors, including commercial and academic bookstores, as well as government and NGO institutions. I also met with the Library of Congress offices in Yangon and Bangkok, which provide materials for us, where I discussed NIU’s acquisitions profile with the staffs there.

The other purpose of my trip was to formulate collaborative library projects with local librarians in Myanmar. I met with the Myanmar Book Center staff to discuss a Burmese newspaper digitization project on behalf of the Center for Research Libraries’ Southeast Asia Microfilm Project. I also visited the University Library and Central Library at Yangon University where I was warmly received by the librarians who trained at Founders in June and October 2015. Along with the University of Washington and Arizona State University, we have submitted a grant proposal to the Henry Luce Foundation for funding to continue the 2015 Myanmar library training program (a collaborative training program with Arizona State, Washington, and Rutgers) in 2016 and 2017.

Hao Phan is the curator of the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection.
Reliving, retelling a history left behind

Hmong American Exhibit*
November 2015–March 2016
NIU Anthropology Museum
*Final title to be determined

By Laura McDowell Hopper

The Anthropology Museum is planning a major exhibit in fall celebrating 40 years of Hmong history in America. Beginning with the history of life in Laos and continuing through the 1953–75 Laotian Civil War (known by Hmong veterans as the Secret War), the exhibit will prominently feature the stories and material culture of Hmong Americans as well as showcase the museum’s permanent collection of Hmong textiles.

The Hmong people are an ethnic minority originally from China. After migrating to Southeast Asia, most Hmong people settled in the mountains of Laos where they thrived as farmers. As the Vietnam conflict grew more intense, and in response to communist insurgencies in the region, the US Central Intelligence Agency covertly trained an estimated 30,000 Hmong men to be guerrilla fighters against the Pathet Lao, the communist forces in Laos. When Laos fell to the Pathet Lao, many Hmong were targeted for retaliation. Those who feared for their lives fled to refugee camps in Thailand and were, over time, resettled in several countries including the United States. Hmong refugees came to the US in three waves beginning in 1975, with some of them settling in northern Illinois where many were resettled with the assistance of a refugee-assistance program at Kishwaukee College.

To create this exhibit, the museum is reaching out to the Hmong American community in the region to form meaningful exhibit partnerships, receive loaned objects, and conduct original oral histories. With the help of a 15-member Hmong Community Advisory Council, who will essentially act as co-curators, the exhibit will tell the intriguing but little-known story of Hmong Americans from their arrival as refugees after the Vietnam War to today’s vibrant communities across the country. Visitors to the exhibit will hear original oral histories, see new acquisitions and loans of contemporary Hmong American material culture, and learn about the intersections of traditional and modern Hmong American life.

The museum hopes to introduce the campus and community to the incredible story of Hmong Americans.

Laura McDowell Hopper is the curator of the NIU Anthropology Museum.

Traveling treasures

In early February, Center for Burma Studies Director Catherine Raymond, curator of NIU’s Burma Art Collection, traveled to the Asia Society in New York where pieces of artwork from the NIU collection were featured in the critically praised “Buddhist Art of Myanmar” exhibition. The exhibition of 70 pieces was the first in the West to include Buddhist art on loan from Myanmar museums since the opening of the country to the outside world in 2009. It also represented the first time at a national level that a museum had been able to bring such pieces together, Raymond said.

The exhibition included sculptures, textiles, paintings and lacquer ritual implements created for Buddhist merit making, with some of the pieces dating back more than 1,600 years. Before the opening, Raymond oversaw the careful packing of ten pieces from the Burma Art Collection before they were shipped to New York where Raymond met them at the Asia Society. NIU’s pieces included four sculptures, three textiles, one vessel, one food cover, and a palm-leaf manuscript from the NIU Rare Book and Special Collection at Founders Memorial Library.
Outreach News

Building new connections, collaborations

By Julien Ehrenkönig

This year CSEAS staff, faculty and students worked hard at spreading the word about Southeast Asian studies on- and off-campus with new activities at NIU and new links to area community colleges.

Connecting on campus

Over the course of the academic year, we saw increased interest by students at open houses and admitted-student days in taking area studies courses and in participating in the Center’s on-campus events. Working closely with the Southeast Asia Club we hosted and participated in a number of well-attended student mixers, guest lectures, and events co-collaborated with the Asian-American Center and other campus student organizations.

Despite freezing temperatures in February, the Southeast Asia Club hosted its first Lunar New Year celebration, which attracted over 80 students, faculty, and community members to Cole Hall. The club was honored to have Bhikkhu Thich Phuoc Tri come from the Phap Lam Temple in Rockford to provide a Buddhist blessing to the evening’s guests. With support from the Anthropology Museum, the club arranged a red-envelope scavenger hunt in the museum’s gallery space, and also offered guests I Ching readings, an insightful lecture by CSEAS associate Trude Jacobsen (History) on Lunar New Year celebrations and traditions in Southeast Asia, and a plethora of celebratory foods to try.

Through our new Alumni Connect series, we reached out to former CSEAS students working in academia or fields related to SEA to discuss career possibilities with our current students. We hosted seven of these one-hour informal discussions, both on-campus and via Skype. Thanks to alums Shaun Levine (MA political science, 2006),

Shaun Levine (MA political science, 2006), center in front of fireplace, talks with students and CSEAS Assistant Director Eric Jones about his current job as a vice president for Met Life based in Hong Kong at the first Alumni Connect session last fall. (Photo / CSEAS)

Michael Hawkins (PhD history, 2009), Jenn Weidman (MA anthropology, 2005), SarahEmily Lekberg (MM music, 2013), Lyndy Worsham (MA political science, 2005), Colette Morgan (BS political science, 2011), and Punchada Sirivunnabood (PhD political science, 2010) for sharing their invaluable insights and experiences. We were able to record some of them. See the Careers page on the CSEAS website.

With a growing interest in cultural competency, NIU’s Department of Military Science invited us to speak with their Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) students. Associate Trude Jacobsen and I talked to two classes about Southeast Asia and the importance of understanding other cultures in an increasingly connected world. The cadets were very responsive to both the lectures and scenario activities we provided, and many commented that they would enjoy learning more about the diversity of the region. We hope to collaborate again with the program.

Taking SEAS on the road

With the Center’s new Title VI emphasis on community college outreach, Director Judy Ledgerwood and I met with four area institutions (Harper, Triton, Waubonsee, and Elgin) to discuss collaborations on Southeast Asia-themed workshops and conferences, providing distance-language learning in the near future to their institutions, and assisting both faculty and students in reaching their academic interests in regional topics such as human rights and peace and conflict studies.
This year, the Center collaborated with Harper College on its annual International Education Summit focusing on peacebuilding, global objectives, and peace and conflict studies in the classroom. Associates Susan Russell and Andrea Molnar gave lectures on making peace and conflict studies relevant to college students. Over 67 northern Illinois educators participated in the event, and gave wonderful feedback about the resources our attending faculty and CSEAS have available for developing curriculum and lesson plans in their classrooms.

Also during fall, I was invited to Moraine Valley Community College’s History of Asia course to give a guest lecture on British imperialism in Southeast Asia. Using selected works by Malaysian comic artist Lat, the students and I looked at the influences and effects of British colonialism in the region after Malaysia’s independence. The students had excellent feedback both about the presentation and materials used, and several have since contacted CSEAS about attending NIU and participating in our Southeast Asian Studies program.

As Ledgerwood notes (see Director’s Chair, Page 2), we collaborated with College of DuPage in spring on its annual Asia Symposium, which focused on Southeast Asian culture, history and the arts this year. Ledgerwood and professors Tharaphi Than and Jui-Ching Wang with gamelan instructor Ngurah Kertayuda gave presentations to faculty and students that provided a general overview of the region, the role of women in Burma, and instruction and a performance by NIU’s Gamelan Ensemble respectively. Over 100 students attended the event, and the Center received many warm comments regarding the program material provided.

The Center wrapped up its off-campus outreach in May with what is becoming a regular visit to Jefferson Elementary School in DeKalb to participate in its annual Multicultural Fair. Graduate students Basori, Abbey Pieri, Silvia Ginting, and Thai instructor Piyathida “Pooh” Serebenjapol joined the event to teach students about Southeast Asia, provide traditional dance instruction, and assist in helping the kids craft shadow puppets. As these young students’ enthusiasm for these activities aptly demonstrates, it’s never too early to learn about the many worlds of Southeast Asia.

Julien Ehrenkönig (MA anthropology, 2014) is the Center’s Outreach Coordinator.
SOUTHEAST ASIA LECTURE SERIES

Jennifer Goodlander, Indiana University
Department of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance
"Female Characters/ Female Selves: Gender and Tradition in Balinese Shadow Play"

Laura Junker, University of Illinois at Chicago
Department of Anthropology
"Ecological Changes Wrought by Economic Choices during the Development of a Philippine Chiefdom at Tanjay"

Helene Siebrits, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Theatre
"An Artistic Odyssey: A Look at the Role of One Family in Revival of the Performing Arts in Cambodia since the Fall of the Khmer Rouge"

Kanjana Thepboriruk, Northern Illinois University
Department of Foreign Language and Literatures
"Thai in Diaspora: Language and Identity in Los Angeles, California"

Alan Potkin, Northern Illinois University
Center for Southeast Asian Studies
"The Visualization Toolbox in Evaluating Pharaonic Chinese Hydropower Schemes in Yunnan, PRC and in Mainland Southeast Asia"

John Brandon, Director of International Relations
Asia Foundation
"Political Instability and the Role of the Military in Thailand: Historical Context, Current Events, and Outlook"

Eunsook Jung, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Department of Political Science
"Perverse Outcomes Through Strategic Interaction in Indonesia’s Democracy"

Sonja Downing, Lawrence University
Department of Music
"Flirting with Kebiar: The Intrigue of Dynamic Gender in Balinese Dance"

Jui-Ching Wang and the Bali Study Abroad Group, Northern Illinois University
Department of Music
"How Far Did We Go? Way Beyond Tourism"
* This lecture will be at the Music Building Recital Hall

Susan Russell and Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail, Northern Illinois University
Department of Anthropology, Department of Foreign Language and Literatures
"Fulbright Hays Group Project Abroad to the Philippines"

Thomas Rhoden, Northern Illinois University
Department of Political Science, PhD Candidate
"Boren Fellowships in Burma"

Ingrid Jordt, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Department of Anthropology
"Aspirational State Politics and Buddhist Collective Imaginaries in Newly "Democratic" Myanmar; Salvation and Burmese Buddhist Theories of Social Order"

NEW LOCATION
Fridays
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Indonesian box lunches available for purchase through the CSEAS website: www.cseas.niu.edu.
One last look

A Balinese comedian takes a selfie with NIU undergraduate student Melissa Marciniec (art education and psychology) during a local temple festival July 13 in Denpasar, Bali, during NIU’s Experiencing the Arts in Bali study-abroad program. “Melissa was asked all the time to have her picture taken while we were in Bali,” said CSEAS associate Jui-Ching Wang, who led the program with her husband, art professor Shei-Chau Wang. “We were invited to the festival in which the comedy show was a highlight. The comedians had no idea there were foreigners attending this event until they saw us from the stage. Their act was all improvisation, so some of our participants quickly became a part of the act, including Melissa.”

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Front cover photo:
Participants in July’s Experiencing the Arts in Bali study-abroad led by CSEAS associate Jui-Ching Wang and NIU art professor Shei-Chau Wang visit Pura Ulun Danu Bratan temple at Lake Bratan during their three weeks in Bali.