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INSTITUTE OF
ASIAN STUDIES

The Construction of Southeast Asia as an Academic Field of Study: Personages, Programmes and Problems

Victor T. King

Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Working Paper No. 49

Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Gadong 2019

Author

Victor T. King is Professor of Borneo Studies at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Emeritus Professor in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds. He was formerly Executive Director of the White Rose East Asia Centre, Universities of Leeds and Sheffield (2006-2012). He has long-standing interests in the sociology and anthropology of Southeast Asia, ranging over such diverse fields as social and cultural change, development, tourism and heritage, ethnicity and identity, multidisciplinary area studies, and museum and photographic studies. Among his recent publications are an edited book, *UNESCO in Southeast Asia: World Heritage Sites in Comparative Perspective* (2016, NIAS Press, Copenhagen), and co-edited books on *The Historical Construction of Southeast Asian Studies* (2013, ISEAS Press, Singapore), *Rethinking Asian Tourism: Culture, Encounters and Local Response* (2014, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle), *Tourism and Monarchy in Southeast Asia* (2016, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle), *Human Insecurities in Southeast Asia* (2016, Springer, Singapore), *Borneo Studies in History, Society and Culture* (2017, Springer, Singapore), *Tourism and Ethnodevelopment: Inclusion, Empowerment and Self-determination* (2018, Routledge, London and New York) and a four-volume reader, *Tourism in East and Southeast Asia* (2018, Routledge, London and New York). His recently published papers have appeared in the journals *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*; *South East Asia Research*, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *Journal of Human Security Studies*, *Suvannabhumi: Multi-disciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, *Asian Journal of Tourism Research*, and *Pertanika: Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities.* His co-edited book *Tourism in South-East Asia* (1993, Routledge, London and New York) has been re-issued with a new Preface (2019).

Contact: victor.king@ubd.edu.bn

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Abstract:

This paper explores critically and historically some of the popular academic views or 'myths' concerning the development of the study of Southeast Asia through the lens of the contributions of particular scholars and institutions. Within the broad field of Southeast Asian Studies the focus will be on the disciplines of geography, history and ethnology, and major scholars who contributed to the early study of the region. There are certain views concerning the development of scholarship on Southeast Asia which continue to surface and have acquired, or are in the process of acquiring 'mythical' status. Among the most enduring is the claim that the region is a post-Second World War construction primarily arising from Western politico-strategic and economic preoccupations. More specifically, it is said that Southeast Asian Studies has been subject to the American domination of this field of scholarship, located in particular programmes of study in such institutions as Cornell, Yale and California, Berkeley, and, within those institutions, focused on particular scholars who have exerted considerable influence on the directions which research has taken. Another is that, based on the model or template of Southeast Asian Studies (and other area studies projects) developed primarily in the USA, it has distinctive characteristics as a scholarly enterprise in that it is multidisciplinary, it requires command of the vernacular, and assigns special importance to what has been termed 'groundedness' and historical, geographical and cultural contextualization; in other words, a Southeast Asian Studies approach as distinct from disciplinary-based studies addresses local concerns, interests, perspectives and priorities, and it does so through in-depth, on-the-ground, engaged scholarship. Finally, and, more recently, views have emerged that express the conviction that a truly Southeast Asian Studies project can only be achieved if it is based on a set of locally-generated concepts, methods and approaches. In other words, Western ethnocentrism and intellectual hegemony encourages 'a captive mind' in local scholarship which must be replaced by a genuinely local research endeavour presenting alternative views of the region, its past, present and future.

Keywords: *Southeast Asian Studies, myths, personages, programmes, Western constructs, local approaches*

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The Construction of Southeast Asia as an Academic Field of Study: Personages, Programmes and Problems

Victor T. King

INTRODUCTION

This paper is prompted by a project in which I am currently involved with Professor Ooi Keat Gin on 'pioneers and critical thinkers' in Southeast Asian Studies and my earlier speculations about the construction of British scholarship on Southeast Asia (King, 2013; Park and King, 2013). It has provided the occasion to examine in more detail the careers and contributions of a wide range of scholars and to rethink some of our cherished beliefs and commitments. In this regard there have been persistent and powerful myths which have grown up around the attempts to define Southeast Asia as a region, discover the origins of this regional concept and develop appropriate concepts, methods and perspectives to study it. It has been argued very widely in the academy that (1) Southeast Asia is an externally-generated concept derived primarily from post-war American (and Western) strategic, geo-political and economic interests; (2) the multidisciplinary field of Southeast Asian Studies (and area studies more generally) has certain distinctive attributes which serve to define it separately from discipline-based scholarly work; (3) the study of the region should move from Western ethnocentrism to alternative, more locally-based forms of conceptualization, understanding and analysis. Given that Southeast Asia possesses no overarching and agreed upon characteristics (social, cultural, historical, political, economic) which serve to define it as a region in its own right, nor that it can be easily demarcated using nation-state boundaries and separated from China and India, then the attention of those who decided to devote themselves to the study of Southeast Asia or a part of it has been unduly preoccupied with attempts

to construct a region by using a range of criteria, some imaginative and some mundane, and none of which command general agreement.

The problems of regional definition are demonstrated in one of the most well-known attempts to provide Southeast Asia with an identity of its own. Based on his in-depth experience in Southeast Asia, specifically in what was then the British-administered Malay States, and subsequently in his exploration of the early history of Southeast Asia in the Universities of London and Cornell, Oliver Wolters discerned a distinctive 'cultural matrix' (1999; Reynolds, 2008). Not all the constituents of Wolters' Southeast Asia possessed these cultural elements, but in serial and polythetic fashion they demonstrated, for him, a cultural-regional coherence (and see Needham, 1975).

What I attempt to do in this paper is rearrange the categories local/non-local (foreign), insider/outsider, indigenous/exogenous, and Southeast Asian/Euro-American. These dichotomies require qualification and elaboration. I want to reverse them. So, the foreign becomes local, the outsider becomes insider, the exogenous becomes indigenous and the Euro-American (and others) becomes Southeast Asian, in certain cases and circumstances. I therefore, for example, place some European scholars of Southeast Asia in contexts in which the student of the history of Southeast Asian Studies might think they should not be placed.

An American-dominated enterprise?

The popular and widely accepted view is that 'The term Southeast Asia has been in use since World War II', and '[it] has been coined to designate the area of operation (the South East Asia Command, SEAC) for Anglo-American forces in the Pacific Theater of World War II from 1941 to 1945' (Wikipedia, 2019a). In addition, Milton Osborne, though searching for a locally generated concept of Southeast Asia, says that the 'general tendency' to think about the area as a region 'came with the Second World War when, as a result of military circumstances, the concept of a Southeast Asian region began to take hold' (2016: 4). Russell Fifield supports him: 'In the course of the Second World War Southeast Asia was increasingly perceived in terms of a region with military, political, and other common denominators' (1964: 188-194). Emphasizing the external construction of the region, Ariel Heryanto, in championing Southeast Asian scholarship on Southeast Asia, refers to Southeast Asia's 'exogenous character' (2002: 3). Donald Emmerson

depicted it as ‘an externally defined region’ (1984: 18), and Craig Reynolds has referred to the region as ‘a contrived entity’ (1995: 437). Commentaries in this vein are common, both from researchers based outside the region and from those within; in the latter case, Amitav Acharya proposes that ‘The problematic nature of the concept of Southeast Asia is not the least due to its “non-indigenous” origins as a convenient shorthand for Western academic institutions and as a geopolitical framework for Western powers in the form of the war-time Allied Southeast Asian [sic] Command’ (1999: 55).

In similar vein, Paul Kratoska, Remco Raben and Henk Schulte Nordholt (2005a) accept the view that Southeast Asia emerged as a regional concept primarily as a result of external involvement and interest (from the USA, Europe and Japan) so that these foreign powers could ‘deal collectively with a set of territories and peoples that felt no particular identification with one another’ (2005b 11). The editors conclude that attempts to define Southeast Asia have been ‘inconclusive’, the term Southeast Asia continues to be used ‘as little more than a way to identify a certain portion of the earth’s surface’ and that the question of whether or not the concept of Southeast Asia as a defined region ‘will acquire greater coherence in the future, or become increasingly irrelevant,….cannot be answered’ (ibid.: 14).

Returning to the construction of Southeast Asia as a post-war American artefact I wish to emphasize that there were few signs before the 1940s that the USA had arrived at the realization of Southeast Asia as a region (and see Reid, 1999). Their preoccupation, as with the Spanish before them, was with their colony, the Philippines, and its connections across the Pacific Ocean to the Americas. In addition, the fact that it was predominantly a Europeanized and Christianized colony, and that there was no substantial evidence of Indianized or Sinicized state formations in the islands, set the Philippines apart historically and culturally from the French, Dutch and British dependencies and independent Siam to the west and the south (but see Zialcita, 2007). The American tendency to ‘look East’ distracted them from the conceptualization of other neighbouring countries as sharing cultural and other features with the Philippines. It is therefore understandable that DGE Hall, in the first edition (1955) of his pioneering history of the region excluded the Philippines, both for the reasons given above and for the fact that, during the Pacific War, the islands were included within the Pacific Ocean theatre of war under American command, and excluded from the British-centred South East Asia Command based in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Subsequently Hall, in rethinking Southeast Asia, included the Philippines in his 1964 edition, and subsequent editions (1968, 1981).

Local/non-local; indigenous/foreign

Many of our difficulties in exercises of definition, delimitation and conceptualization turn on another persistent theme in discussing research priorities and interests, perspectives and styles, usually expressed in terms of dualistic frames of reference: local/non-local; indigenous/exogenous; internal/external; insider/outsider; Southeast Asian/Euro-American. These sharp distinctions are far from helpful in deciding on the origins of Southeast Asia and the ways in which it should be conceptualized, and we should be aware of essentializing 'the indigenous' or 'the local', just as we have retreated from positions that tend to stereotype and essentialize Euro-American ethnocentrism and hegemony (Park and King, 2013). In his paper on the 'saucer model' of Southeast Asian identity, Reid pursues 'an indigenous origin of the Southeast Asian idea' (1999: 8). But in this discussion, he includes some expatriate scholars living and working in Southeast Asia. For him 'indigenous' has a wide meaning.

The problem in differentiating the indigenous from the foreign which in turn morphs into internal and external, and insider and outsider distinctions is that academic activities do not operate in this way. Scholars have populated a globalized environment of information exchange for a considerable period of time. Significant numbers of indigenous scholars (and in the Southeast Asian case I would include in this category of 'indigenous', migrant Asian populations which have settled in Southeast Asia, prominent among them being Chinese, those from the Indian sub-continent and Arabs and others from the Middle East, and Eurasians and other mixed ethnicities) have been trained overseas, especially in the USA and other Western countries (in this category I would include Australia and New Zealand). Many local scholars travel abroad frequently and work in higher education institutions or have settled in the West; indigenous scholars also work closely with fellow researchers from the West and elsewhere in collaborative research programmes and publish together and/or engage in collaborative enterprises over the internet. Many Western scholars working on Southeast Asia have lived and undertaken research on a long-term basis in the region, are fluent in one or more local languages; some have married locally and have converted to local religions and embraced local cultures. In addition, given the various expatriate

retirement schemes in such countries as Malaysia and Thailand, senior Western academics who have contributed to the study of Southeast Asia, and are still actively engaged in research and publication, have more recently decided to spend long periods of time in the region. Some Western scholars have also adopted local research agendas and priorities (see, for example, Thompson, 2012, 2013), as increasingly did such historians as DGE Hall and OW Wolters; whilst many indigenous scholars continue to work with social science paradigms formulated in the West (Evers and Gerke, 2003; Ravi, Rutten and Goh, 2004). Having said this I do acknowledge that, though in several cases boundaries are blurred, there are scholars who are more clearly categorized as indigenous and exogenous, or internal and external or local and non-local (foreign).

Non-colonial external observers

Pursuing this theme, we might then ask what are the circumstances in which an academic or at least someone who is pursuing scholarly activities, might come to realize that, whatever their immediate research interests, ethnicity and location, they have to deal with the parameters of a wider region? Donald Emmerson (1984: 5-6) and Anthony Reid (1999: 10), in what I consider to be among the most significant contributions to our changing perspectives on Southeast Asia (though Reid has drawn heavily on Emmerson's work), have drawn attention to the importance of early Austro-German researchers in the construction of Southeast Asia as a region and the fact that as outsiders in European imperialism in Southeast Asia they were not bound by more narrowly colonialist preoccupations; in other words they were not focused, as the British were on Burma, the Malay States, the Straits Settlements, and British Borneo (but see below), or as the French on Indochina (again see below), or the Spanish and then the Americans on the Philippines and the Dutch on the East Indies. They tended towards a wider vision of region.

Robert (Baron) von Heine-Geldern (1885-1968)

The outstanding personage in this context was Robert von Heine-Geldern. He was an Austrian ethnologist, prehistorian and archaeologist who studied at the University of Vienna under Father Wilhelm Schmidt and, having visited India and Burma, wrote a thesis on *Die Bergstämme des nordostlichen Birma* (The Mountain Tribes of Northeastern Burma) (1914); it is noteworthy that he focused on Burma in his early work (Kaneko, 1970) and that a regional Southeast Asian perspective was also, in part, derived from this mainland sub-region (see below). Von Heine-

Geldern was responsible, among others, for the early use of the term 'Southeast Asia' (*Südostasien*) (1923); subsequently, as a prehistorian and archaeologist, he also developed interests in other areas of Southeast Asia to the south of the mainland (1942, 1946). Bridging the mainland-island divide was an important prerequisite in 'discovering' Southeast Asia. As we shall see he had a formative influence on the development of Southeast Asian Studies in the USA from 1938 to 1950 (Wikipedia, 2018a). Reid also refers to other early German contributions to the concept of Southeast Asia as a region and the use of the term by A.B. Meyer and W. Foy (1897) and F. Heger (1902) (Reid, 1999:10); and then later by Karl J. Pelzer (1935), who, like von Heine-Geldern, was subsequently to make a major contribution to the development of Southeast Asian Studies in the USA (1935).

Japan, like Austria-Germany, as an expanding industrialized power, also developed an early concept of Southeast Asia during the first two decades of the twentieth century, although there were no notable individual scholars who stand out in this process of construction. The conceptualization of Southeast Asia (or *Tōnan Ajiya*) as the south or the Southern Ocean (*nanpo, nanyo*) was part of the emerging Japanese strategy of expansion southwards (*nanshi-ron*) (Park and King, 2013: 11; Hajime, 1997).

Local European and indigenous observers

In my view, it is problematical to assert that Southeast Asia is an externally-generated concept derived primarily from post-war Western, especially American geo-political and economic interests, when we examine scholarly development in institutions of higher education in the region. Again Reid has already indicated that when he was engaged in writing a paper on trends and future directions in Southeast Asian Studies outside Southeast Asia and tracing 'the lineage of outside models', including that of Cornell University (1994), he began to think more deeply about the origins of the study of the region and what Southeast Asian Studies at universities like Cornell entailed. In the 1990s, in his own pathway to the discovery of Southeast Asia he says 'I had no contact with Cornell or any Southeast Asia program up to the point when I began to consider myself a Southeast Asianist' (1999: 9). Rather he pointed to the importance of the University of Malaya, where he worked from 1965 to 1970, in the construction of Southeast Asia (the University of Malaya was founded in Singapore in 1949 with the merger of the King Edward VII College of

Medicine [founded 1905] and Raffles College [founded 1928]) and then extended [with a semi-autonomous division] to Kuala Lumpur in 1959, and then, in the course of time, to the creation of two separate universities). Reid refers to many of the academic staff there (mainly British and Commonwealth expatriates, especially in the fields of geography and history, and particularly Australians and New Zealanders) who contributed to this process, among them, he lists: EHG Dobby, Charles A. Fisher, TG McGee, Robert Ho, James C. Jackson, Michael Leifer, Harold Crouch, David Brown, CD (Jeremy) Cowan, John Bastin, Jan Pluvier, Leonard and Barbara Andaya, Wang Gungwu, David K. Bassett, Shaharil Talib, Hans-Dieter Evers, Anne Booth and John H. Drabble (1999: 9).

Several of these scholars who returned from posts in Southeast Asia and formed the first and second generation of Southeast Asianists in the United Kingdom were my mentors (particularly David Bassett, James Jackson and Charles Fisher; I also attended lectures and seminars given by Michael Leifer, Wang Gungwu, CD Cowan, and Robert Ho). Singapore and Kuala Lumpur also became early training grounds for Malay(si)an and Singaporean scholars (Malay, Chinese and Indian) before the American programmes in Southeast Asian Studies were established. It is also important to emphasize that the nurturing of scholarly talent at the University of Malaya did not stop with Reid's list; other expatriates included Donald Fryer, Paul Wheatley, WD McTaggart, William Roff, JAM Caldwell, RD Hill, CM Turnbull, Anthony Short, Heather Sutherland, and Rudolph de Koninck, and, of course, Anthony Reid himself, among many others. But what is of greater significance was the emergence of local/indigenous scholarship within the University of Malaya from the 1950s, and aside from Wang Gungwu and Shaharil Talib, we should draw attention to Syed Hussein Alatas, Kernial Singh Sandhu, Jeya Kathirithamby-Wells, Chandran Jeshurun, Lam Thim Fook, Jatswan Singh Sidhu, Zainal Abidin Wahid, Zahara Hj Mahmud, Cheng Siok Hwa, Khoo Kay Kim, Hamzah Sendut, Shamsul Bahrin, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, Lee Boon Thong, Ooi Jin Bee and Voon Phin Keong (Lee, 2008; NUS, Department of Geography 2019; University of Malaya, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 2019). The fulcrum of the development of teaching and research on Southeast at the University of Malaya comprised the Departments of History and Geography which also introduced two internationally important journals to the academic world in the 1950s and 1960s: *Journal of Southeast Asian History* (1960-1969) which was renamed *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* from 1970, and the *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography* launched in 1953 which divided into the *Singapore Journal of Tropical*

Geography in 1980 and the *Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography* in 1987. It is perhaps significant that Cornell, one of the most prominent world centres of Southeast Asian Studies, launched in its early years, not a regional journal, but a nation-state-based one, *Indonesia*.

E (Ernest) G (George) H (Henry) Dobby was a pivotal figure in the early development of Southeast Asian geography at Raffles College and the University of Malaya (1950, 1961). Before the establishment of the University of Malaya in Singapore he held the Chair of Geography at Raffles College from 1947 and was appointed as Head of Department in 1946; he joined the College in 1939 (NUS, Department of Geography, 2019). After 1949, Dobby appointed to the department, among others, Donald Fryer, who wrote a major book on the geography of development in Southeast Asia (1970), and Paul Wheatley (see below) (1961).

Nevertheless, Reid does point to the early contribution of American scholars, not so much in the fields of history, prehistory, ethnology and geography, but, perhaps predictably in political science and international relations. He refers to the work of Kenneth P. Landon, Bruno Lasker, Cora du Bois, Virginia Thompson, EH Jacoby and Lennox Mills, and particularly publications that were produced by the New York-based Institute of Pacific Relations (1999: 9-10, 14-15).

In a little-known publication, Ralph Smith also pointed to some features of early post-war British scholarship on Southeast Asia and made some comparisons with American-based studies of the region (Smith, 1986; and see King, 2013) (and see below). In this connection it is important to note that not only is it problematical to define precisely what constitutes British scholarship on Southeast Asia in that it was not confined to the United Kingdom. Scholarship is seldom restricted by national boundaries, but in the particular case of British academic engagement with Southeast Asia, in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, we should take account of the contribution which was made by expatriate researchers and teachers, a considerable number of whom were not British, in centres of higher education in the colonies and dependencies. The same principle can be applied broadly to early French and Dutch research on the region.

Reid emphasizes the importance of a location for the recognition of a wider region, at a major meeting and exchange point in Southeast Asia, the Straits of Malacca (Melaka), which defines what he refers to as its ‘low centre’. Here the ‘communications hub’ of Singapore and the substantial presence of Chinese, who were themselves interconnected across the Southeast Asian

region and who looked out to the territories bordering the South China Sea and northwards through the Straits to southern Thailand and Burma, encouraged the development of a regional perspective (Purcell, 1951). In this connection Grant Evans also suggests that Southeast Asia was a region contrived by China as its 'watery internet'; for the Chinese it was a single stretch of ocean to the south, a field of communication, contact and exchange (2002), and Reid points to the Nanyang Xuehui (South Seas Society) founded in Singapore in 1940 as the first locally-based Chinese scholarly organization which focused on the Southeast Asian region (1999:11). Reid then goes back even further, as did Emmerson (1984: 5-6) to discover the seeds of this regionalism in early British colonial scholarship in Singapore exemplified in the work of John Crawfurd (1971 [1856]), JH Moor (1968 [1837]) and JR Logan (1847-1862); Russell Jones provides further details of their achievements and those of the seafaring George Windsor Earl (1973; Earl, 1837). Earl's designation of much of what is now Southeast Asia as the 'Eastern Seas' still survived in various circles some 100 years later (Parkinson, 1937).We should also note the important contribution which expatriate scholars at the University of Hong Kong, formally established in 1911, made to the study of Southeast Asia, among them Brian Harrison, Professor of History in Hong Kong, and formerly Senior Lecturer at the University of Malaya (1955).

Reid contrasts the positive perspectives of the region which emanated from the 'low centre' of Singapore and then Kuala Lumpur with 'a high periphery', characterized by 'the negative turning away of the "outer" centres of Southeast Asia from their neighbours beyond Southeast Asia – China for Vietnam, India for Burma, the Americas for the Philippines' (1999: 14). I agree broadly with this view, but there were important differences between these three sets of peripheral territories. The British were the only colonial power in Southeast Asia which had possessions stretching from mainland to island Southeast Asia, including Burma, and this gave a particular slant to their regional perspective.

An important pre-war training ground for British academics and scholar-administrators was the University of Rangoon, founded in 1920 based on a merger between University College (formerly Rangoon College) and Judson College (Selth, 2010; and see Cowan, 1963, 1981).

John Sydenham Furnivall (1878-1960) and others

It is very noticeable in the work of the British Burma-based scholars, notably DGE Hall (see below) and JS Furnivall, that they developed a positive and expansive view of Southeast Asia, in spite of their conclusion that Burma should not be seen as a mere extension of British India. Indeed, Hall, after his appointment to the Chair of History at the University of Rangoon in 1921, reorganized the history syllabus to focus on Asia, and in 1922 succeeded in recruiting Gordon H. Luce to the Chair in Far Eastern History (Reid, 1999:15), though John Luce and Griswold refer to Gordon Luce's appointment as 'a new Chair in Southeast Asian Studies' (1980: 115; Wikipedia, 2018b); Luce's career is often referred to in terms of his contribution to both scholarship on Burma and Southeast Asia. This was a more positive embrace of Southeast Asia rather than simply a rejection of India, and it occurred before the founding of the University of Malaya. After all it was Furnivall who was among the first to write general books using the term 'Southeast Asia', and interestingly published two volumes with the New York-based Institute of Pacific Relations (1940, 1943) before going on to write his major work *Colonial Policy and Practice* (1948; Wikipedia, 2018c). He was also developing a 'modern perspective' on the region, engaging with political economy and sociology, which pre-dated the American post-war social science approach.

Hall and Furnivall taught at the University of Rangoon in the 1920s and 1930s and arguably it was there that British academics began to discover 'the modern Southeast Asia' in scholarly terms (though see Emmerson on the emergence of the realization of Southeast Asia in a wide range of 1920s and 1930s writings [1984: 6-7]). Following the Pacific War and the independence of Burma in 1948 an interesting shift in the locus of British scholarship occurred. The British no longer had a base in Burma and the University of Rangoon, but they continued to have a presence in Singapore and Malaya and also Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s when we witnessed the making and consolidation of Southeast Asia as an internationally defined region for scholarly enquiry.

French scholarship

In the case of Vietnam, the expansive approach of Hall and Furnivall is not replicated. Prominent French scholars focused on Indochina (including Bernard Philippe Groslier, Charles Robequain, and Pierre Gourou), the major exception being George Coedès and to some extent Paul Mus who

looked to the south and the Indonesian islands, especially Java, for comparisons with mainland Southeast Asian 'Indianized states'. This widened the horizons of French scholarship, but only in a partial way with its focus on early states and the legacy of Indian culture in Southeast Asia, and the emphasis on classical studies (1944, 1948, 1968). Indeed, Coedès' *The Making of Southeast Asia*, despite its ambitious title, confined itself to the Indochinese states (1966). Interestingly Reid also refers to the work of a Vietnamese scholar, Nguyen Van Huyen, as an early indigenous champion of the concept of Southeast Asia (1934), but this local scholar came to this realization not in his homeland but outside the region, at a distance, in Paris (see Reid, 1999: 11, 19).

The Philippines

Finally, in the 'high periphery' Reid turns to the Philippines. He struggles to find a major contribution to the development of a concept of region, and manages only to refer to José Rizal's identification of himself as a 'Malay' (1999: 16-17). He presents no substantial evidence of American scholarship emanating from the Philippines which was adopting a regional perspective, though there were leading American scholars who were developing research agendas on the Philippines, including H. Otley Beyer. Therefore, in its commitment to a Southeast Asian region there are variations in Reid's 'high periphery', from a more decisive and positive contribution from Burma, to a partial one from Indochina, to a minor one from the Philippines.

Local and Non-local

Overall what this excursion into early scholarship serves to do is to lay bare the extraordinary difficulty in distinguishing between the categories of local and non-local (foreign), or indigenous and exogenous scholarship, exemplified in the close academic relationships forged between expatriate teachers and local students within Southeast Asia. In Syed Hussein Alatas' terms this might illustrate another example of Western academic hegemony and the imposition of models and priorities on local scholarly endeavour (see, for example, 1974). But I would suggest that this environment of scholarly engagement in the context of decolonization created a generation of local scholars, many of whom surpassed their mentors: Wang Gungwu, among others, is an obvious case in point. And in terms of the local/foreign divide, where would we place someone like Gordon Luce (1889-1979) who first went to Burma in 1912 as a lecturer in English at the Government College, Rangoon, married Ma Tee Tee in 1915, spoke fluent Burmese, and apart from a sojourn

in India during the Pacific War stayed in Burma until 1964 (Wikipedia, 2018b)? Or similarly John Furnivall who was appointed to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in 1901, arrived in Burma in 1902, married Margaret Ma Nyunt in 1906, spoke fluent Burmese, founded the Burma Research Society in 1906, which established its journal in 1910, retired from the ICS in 1923, taught at the University of Rangoon in the 1920s, founded the Burma Book Club in 1924 and the Burma Education Extension Association in 1928, retired to the UK and the Netherlands from 1931, returned to Burma in 1948, and served in U Nu's Administration in the 1950s, was awarded an honorary DLitt by the University of Rangoon in 1957, and expelled from Burma by General Ne Win's government in 1960, and died in the UK in 1960 as he was about to take up a post again at the University of Rangoon (Wikipedia, 2018c)?

An American construction?

Reflecting on the development of Southeast Asian Studies in the West in the late 1960s, in my case in the United Kingdom as an undergraduate student, I could not fail to be impressed by the achievements of my American colleagues in their multidisciplinary programmes at Yale, Cornell and California. Indeed, the United Kingdom, through its Hayter Committee in the early 1960s, established multidisciplinary Southeast Asian Studies centres based on the American model (King, 1990; and see Song, 2013). The programmes on Southeast Asia which the USA introduced at Yale (1947), Cornell (1950), and California (1960), undoubtedly led the way in the study of Southeast Asia in the West (Van Neil, 1964). The American model focused on postgraduate studies, Southeast Asian language training, grounded primary research, the support of substantial library resources, and the bringing together, in a multidisciplinary environment, of Southeast Asian specialists who continued to be located in their disciplinary fields of study. For me, it was in this important sense that the USA constructed Southeast Asian Studies in the post-war period. But who were the scholars who contributed to the programmes? Here we find a rather different picture. I argue that there was a significant infusion of expertise from Europe and the Commonwealth, and this makes sense in relation to the limited 'grounded' experience that American scholars had in the region up to the 1940s and 1950s. If one of the main rationales of Southeast Asian Studies was on-the-ground research supported by a knowledge of local languages, then, other than twentieth-century Philippines, American scholars did not have the opportunities to develop this expertise,

though they acquired it rapidly from the 1950s. And even when they acquired it, they kept to a disciplinary-based, nation-state-focused conception of Southeast Asia.

Yale University

Let us look at Yale University, which was the first major American programme in Southeast Asian Studies to be established in 1947 (Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 2019). There were several prominent American scholars who were appointed; in the pre-war period most notably Raymond Kennedy and John Embree, both of whom came to untimely ends in 1950 (Kennedy ambushed in Java, and Embree in an automobile accident), and also the linguist, William Cornyn. Then came Harold Conklin and Isidore Dyen in the 1950s, among others. But importantly the main driving forces were recruited from Europe.

Karl J. Pelzer (1909-1980)

Pelzer, a German émigré to the USA who took American citizenship, was born in Oberpleis in 1909; he taught at Yale for 30 years, from 1947 until 1977, and was appointed Professor of Geography. He also served for many years as the Director of Yale's Southeast Asia Studies Program (Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 2019). As in other German scholarship Pelzer was familiar with the term 'Southeast Asia' and used it in his doctoral research in the 1930s at the University of Bonn, which examined plantation labour migration in Southeast Asia, and the problems of land use, land use impacts and the migration of pioneer settlers (1935). On his arrival in the USA, after completing his doctorate, he held teaching positions at the University of California, Berkeley, which was to establish a Southeast Asia Studies Program in 1960, and Johns Hopkins. As a geographer he had a mature perspective on Southeast Asia as a region. His most well-known and widely quoted book is *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics* (1945). Prior to that he had written a general book on *Population and Land Utilization* (1941) which did not have a significant impact on the formulation of a Southeast Asian region but was a precursor to his later work. His wide-ranging interests in Southeast Asia also resulted in research and publications on Indonesia, the then Malaya, and the Philippines. Significantly he was inspired by the work of the American cultural geographer, Carl O. Sauer (see below).

Paul Mus (1902-1969)

Born in Bourges in 1902, Mus was a French scholar of Vietnam, who was appointed to a visiting lectureship at Yale in 1950 and then to a Professorship there in Southeast Asian Civilizations in 1951 (Chandler, 2009; Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 2019; Wikipedia, 2018d). He had long practical experience living, working, studying, and teaching in Vietnam and serving in the French military and administration. He arrived in Hanoi in 1907 and was educated there. After higher education at the University of Paris from 1919, he then secured a post at l'École Française d-Extreme-Orient from 1927 as a young researcher and for a time Director, then, in the late 1940s as a Professor in his early 40s at the Collège de France in Paris, and finally as a senior academic at Yale, continuing to visit the Indochinese countries to undertake research. His most distinguished work was produced on Vietnam and published in French, particularly his trenchant criticisms of colonialism and American imperialism (Goscha, 2012).

His early reputation was based on his knowledge of Cham, an island Austronesian language, and his study of the kingdom of Champa in Vietnam which then led, in the footsteps of his mentor, George Coedès, who was Director of the French School in Hanoi from 1929 to 1946, to comparative work on the Indian-based cultures of Southeast Asia, which he published in a series in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d-Extrême-Orient*, and then brought together as a book (1935).

Leopold Pospisil (1923-)

I include Leonard Pospisil, a Czechoslovakian, born in Olomouc in 1923 (Yale University, 2019). Though not noted for his contribution to the development of Southeast Asian Studies as such, he was one of a flow of East Europeans who found their way to the USA before, during and immediately after the Second World War. He studied law at Charles University, Prague, and then philosophy in Germany. He moved to the USA in 1948 when his interests switched to the social sciences, and he took a sociology degree at Willamette University, and then his Master's in Anthropology at the University of Oregon. He arrived in Yale in 1952, followed his doctoral studies, and from 1956 served as Professor of Anthropology and Curator of the Peabody Museum of Natural History from 1956 until 1993 (Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, 2018; Zelenkova, 2016). He taught in the field of the comparative anthropology of law, based on a wide range of field research, but especially among the Kapauku Papauans of Highland New Guinea.

His importance for me was that he presided over, among other things, the development at Yale of the ethnographic collections on Southeast Asia.

Harry (Heinz) J. (Jindrich) Benda (1919-1971)

Benda came from a Czechoslovakian Jewish family who sought refuge first in Java and then after the Japanese Occupation moved to the USA. Heinz (Harry) Benda eventually arrived in Yale in 1959 after completing his PhD at Cornell; the Cornell-Yale connection is important. John Richard Wharton Smail also undertook his doctoral studies at Cornell and then moved to Yale. Benda took responsibility for the successful Yale Southeast Asia Monograph series in 1960, and was appointed as a Professor of History in 1966 until his untimely death in his early 50s in 1971 (Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 2019; McVey, 1972; Sartono, 1972; Wertheim, 1972). Both Benda and John Smail marked a major turning point in the study of Southeast Asian history, though not 'indigenous' or 'local' they argued for an 'autonomous' history of Southeast Asia, from the inside. I would venture to add that senior scholars like Hall and Furnivall had already embarked on this locally-embedded route which Benda and Smail then took, but they gave it reasoned and evidenced support and a new impetus, free from any 'colonial baggage'. Hall, in particular, could never really shake off the criticisms of his Anglocentrism (Sarkisyanz. 1972). But, interestingly Benda and Smail chose to propose a new, autonomous way forward, not in an American-based journal, but in the *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, launched not in the USA but in the colonial heartland and origin of Southeast Asian Studies, the University of Malaya in Singapore (Smail, 1961; Sears, 1993; Benda, 1962a, 1962b). In those days the luminaries like Benda did not publish in quantity, but what they published was crucial in the development of scholarship on Southeast Asia.

Charles A. Fisher (1916-1982)

I hesitate to include Fisher in this narrative on Yale but he has to be there. He was another major figure in British Southeast Asian Studies who enjoyed American connections (Farmer, 1984; Fisher, 1979). Fisher was a visiting lecturer at Yale in 1953-1954. After finishing his degree at St Catherine's College, Cambridge in 1935, he joined the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 1964 on the creation of a new Department of Geography there, having held posts in Leicester, Aberystwyth, Oxford and Sheffield. In that year he was appointed as Professor of Geography with reference to Asia in the University of London. In the introduction to his major

study of Southeast Asian geography he says 'I certainly regard South-east Asia as a major part of the world, possessing a sufficient measure of overall unity to justify its being viewed first as a single entity' (1964: v). Moreover his military experience in Southeast Asia with the Survey Service of the Royal Engineers and in the Japanese POW camp at Changi in Singapore and then on the Burma-Siam Railway in Thailand, where he endured enormous privation and hardship, helped him, he says, learn 'in some degree to look at South-east Asia from within rather than, as I had hitherto done, from without' (ibid.: vii). Was he local or foreign, an insider or an outsider? I met him just before he retired from SOAS in 1982; his more than three years as a POW (1942-1945) had obviously affected him deeply and he expressed this passionately during our conversations. But though he had come to terms with this traumatic period in his life and managed to exorcize this life-crisis as a young man in the writing of his book *Three Times a Guest* (1979), I recollect that he was moved to tears one evening over dinner with me in 1982 when he recounted stories of some of his comrades who had died in Thailand.

Fisher firmly presents the view that it was the encounter with the Japanese that brought the Western colonial powers to the realization of the region as an entity in its own right (1964:3; and see Fisher, 1979). Having said this, as others have done before and since, he set out to demonstrate in compelling fashion, that this military-strategic-geo-political dimension merely served to give belated recognition to 'a distinctive region' in geographical, demographic, historical, cultural, racial, and mental-psychological terms (ibid.:7). Although I have been tempted to relegate Fisher's book to a rather old-fashioned tradition of regional geography, Michael Parnwell has argued for his recognition as 'one of the greatest Southeast Asian geographers' and particularly that 'he engaged with, and informed, the issues of the day'. Above all it was his dedication to the study of an area from 'a solid disciplinary foundation' which marked him out as a scholar of international standing (1996: 108, 122). In an obituary BH Farmer also proposes that 'Charles Fisher's work amply demonstrates that he had the pen of a ready writer perhaps more so than any other geographer of his generation. He deplored opacity and jargon' (1984: 252).

Cornell University

Similarly, in the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell, established in 1950, the infusion of European scholars was vitally important to its development. It is particularly significant that the doyen of

Southeast Asian Studies at Cornell, Lauriston Sharp, who was the Director of the Southeast Asia Program from 1950 to 1960, and Goldwin Smith Professor of Anthropology and Asian Studies, studied ethnology under Robert von Heine-Geldern in Vienna in 1931 (Wikipedia, 2019b). Sharp's main focus was on Thailand; he directed a research team working in Bang Chan, a Siamese rice village on the then margins of Bangkok (now fully absorbed into an urban agglomeration), a Cornell Thailand Project which he established in 1947. His contribution in publications to the conceptualization of Southeast Asia as a region was modest (see, for example, 1962), but his contribution to the establishment of Southeast Asian Studies as an internationally recognized and institutionalized arena of academic endeavour was substantial indeed. Sharp's scholarly contribution to the field of Southeast Asian Studies through studies of Thailand is perhaps not surprising in that American scholarship tended to focus on Southeast Asia as a collection of nation-states rather than as a region.

In 1951 George McTurnan Kahin was appointed to a post in Cornell and in 1959 to a Professorship. He founded the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project which he presided over until his retirement in 1988 (Wikipedia, 2018e). Indonesian studies was further strengthened with the appointment of John Echols in 1952. Then the programme was expanded using the nation-state template to the Philippines with the arrival of Frank Golay in 1953 (History, Cornell University, 2018). But it was done so on the basis of a nation-state framework.

Smith says of post-war Southeast Asian Studies in the USA that

> Language was combined with specialisation in one or other discipline, on the assumption that a group of scholars working on a single country would then be able to share one another's expertise. The countries which received most emphasis, at Cornell and in the United States as a whole, were Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines (1986: 16).

Oliver Wolters (1915-2000)

Cornell relied on immigrant scholars who had lived and worked in the region to boost the 'grounded' Southeast Asian dimension of their work. One of the most prominent among them being Oliver Wolters who 'By the 1970s… was unarguably the most influential historian of early

Southeast Asia writing in the English-speaking world' (Reynolds, 2008: 1). He had enjoyed a somewhat unconventional academic career (O'Connor, 2001: 1-7; Reynolds, 2008: 1-38). He did not complete his PhD in London until he was in his late 40s. After taking a degree in History at Lincoln College, Oxford, where among his fellow students he met Heinz W. Arndt, who was to become a leading figure in the study of the Indonesian economy at the Australian National University, his early career was as an officer in the Malayan Civil Service (MCS: from 1937 to 1957) where he learned both Chinese and Malay. There he met a number of distinguished scholar-administrators, including Victor Purcell, another locally embedded individual who, like Wolters, developed a regional perspective in his engagement with the Chinese (1951). Wolters was also interned in 1942-1944 in a Japanese POW camp in Singapore (first at Changi where he shared a cell with Carl Gibson-Hill [later to become the Director of the Raffles Museum], and then at the Sime Road Golf Course). Subsequently he resumed his MCS career until 1957 and served the colonial administration during the intense conflicts engendered by the Malayan Emergency.

On his departure from the MCS he arrived at the School of Oriental and African Studies under the supervision of DGE Hall, and was awarded his doctorate in 1962 (Wolters, 1962) which he then developed into two major publications (1967, 1970). Rather than a career in London, which was tempting, he went to Cornell in 1964 and stayed there until his death in 2000, where he was promoted to the Goldwin Smith Professorship of Southeast Asian History. Wolters' record of doctoral supervision at Cornell also reads like a Who's Who of prominent historians (Southeast Asian and non-Southeast Asian): Milton Osborne, Craig Reynolds, Merle C. Ricklefs, Anthony Milner, Barbara Watson Andaya, Leonard Andaya, Reynaldo Ileto, Taufik Abdullah, Charnvit Kasetsiri, and Shiraishi Takashi (Ileto, 2003; Reynolds, 2008).

The influences on his work were wide-ranging. During his early studies in London, Wolters visited George Coedès in Paris and Gordon Luce in Burma; he began to develop a regional perspective. In an important sense Wolters brought a concept of 'region' to Cornell, based on his long years of working and living in Southeast Asia, his command of early history and his familiarity with Chinese records on the region; Reynolds says Cornell needed Wolters 'because [at that time] in the United States Southeast Asian studies was always a younger and weaker sibling of the studies of Japan, China and South Asia' (2008: 22).

In this respect Wolters followed in the footsteps of his mentor, DGE Hall who had focused, in his early research, on Burma, but had then became exposed to wider regional perspectives in the writings of the Dutch on the East Indies and French research on Indochina. Wolters followed this regional pathway; after focusing on the Malay-Indonesian world, and particularly examining Chinese sources in early Southeast Asian history, he moved to research on Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

But what was Wolters's legacy? The ideas that he presented have stood the test of time: *mandala*, 'man of prowess', 'localization', 'cultural matrix'. These are enduring and provocative concepts in our study of the region, though they continue to be the subject of critical engagement.

DGE Hall (1891-1979)

DGE Hall also had significant connections with Cornell and it was through his influence and recommendation that Wolters secured an appointment there. The presence of both Hall and Wolters added an important regional perspective to the work of Cornell, preoccupied, as it was, with Southeast Asia as a collection of nation-states. Both Hall and Wolters, and before them Furnivall, bridged the mainland-island divide. Let me turn to Hall and his career (King, 2013; Wikipedia, 2017). He began his university life in colonial Burma when he was appointed to the Chair of History at the University of Rangoon in 1920; he took up his position in 1921. He returned to his homeland in 1934 to become Headmaster at Caterham School in Surrey until 1949. During the 1930s he had already expanded his interests in British relations with 'Further India' into Dutch trade and commerce and more general European commercial relations with Burma. Not only did he have a reading knowledge of Dutch but also French and German which provided him with a working basis for a history of the whole of Southeast Asia (Cowan, 1981:152-153). After the war and the expansion of government funding in area studies he was appointed to the Chair of South East Asian History at SOAS in 1949 and as Head of the Department of South East Asia and the Islands. At this juncture it is important to note that in the restructuring of the School's programmes in 1932 (and even before the term Southeast Asia came into much more regular use) six departments devoted to the study of regional languages and cultures were established. One of these was 'South East Asia and the Islands' which, given the long-standing British interest in the Malay-Indonesian world, recognized the Austronesian diaspora into the Pacific Ocean as well. But the

pre-war emergence of a clearly defined Southeast Asia programme was short-lived; it was discontinued in 1936 and absorbed into other departments until its resurrection under Hall in 1949 (Phillips, 1967: 23).

During the early 1950s Hall travelled to many parts of Southeast Asia, and following his retirement in 1959, he was appointed to a Visiting Professorship of Southeast Asian History in the American heartland of Southeast Asian Studies, at Cornell, which he held until 1973. The close links between Anglo-American Southeast Asian Studies was forged by Hall and others through the London-Cornell Project (1962-1972). Not only did Hall bring together an outstanding team of historians in London in the 1950s, including Charles Boxer, CD (Jeremy) Cowan, Hugh Tinker, Oliver Wolters and Merle Ricklefs, but he also presided over the development and expansion of the Department of South East Asia and the Islands (Braginsky, 2002: 16; Brown, 2016). The staff involved in the study of the languages, literatures and art of Southeast Asia during the 1950s reads like a 'Who's Who of British Southeast Asian Studies': Anna Allott, Johannes de Casparis, Anthony Christie, Patrick Honey, Christiaan Hooykaas, Judith Jacob, Gordon Luce, Gordon Milner, Harry Shorto, Stuart Simmonds and Cyril Skinner.

Hall, in the 'Preface to the Fourth Edition' of *A History of South-East Asia* re-emphasizes the point that he made in the 1955 edition, that his objective has been 'to present South-East Asia as an area worthy of consideration in its own right' and 'to understand its history in the context of local rather than external perspectives, and not just as a part of the world which in much previous scholarship has been depicted as being influenced, shaped, understood and given meaning from Indian, Chinese and Euro-American activities and perspectives' (1981: xvi; and see 1961, 1973). As Smith notes, Hall was also 'rebelling, above all, against the idea that Burma (of which he had most experience) was merely a part of "greater India"' (1986: 18). Also significant in understanding Hall's approach to regional history was the influence which other European scholars had on his work, including Dutch scholars: Jacob van Leur, Bernard Schrieke and Wilhelm Wertheim, and, from the French academy, Georges Coedès, whose study of the Hinduized states of Indo-China and Indonesia Hall regarded as 'a work of rare scholarship', but more than this 'for presenting for the first time the early history of South-East Asia as a whole' (1981: xxviii). What also interests me in Hall's prefatory statements is the broad experience that he had of the region; located primarily in Burma for much of his Asian career, his book was also based on university

lecture courses delivered in London, Rangoon and Singapore, and papers delivered in Jakarta and Bangkok (1981: xxix).

But he was dogged by his Anglocentrism (Sarkisyanz, 1965, 1972). 'Hall, [was] a man of his times'. Nevertheless, whatever evaluation we place on Hall's work as Anglocentric and in terms of historical narrative and analysis, old-fashioned, he was the pioneer; the man who put Southeast Asia on the agenda of historians of the region (many of them not working in spatial but temporal terms) who had not even thought about Southeast Asia as a region worthy of comprehensive historical treatment.

Hall also makes reference to the work of his colleague, Charles Fisher at SOAS to the effect that for both of them Southeast Asia has an integrity, distinctiveness and personality of its own in historical, geographical and cultural terms (1981: xvi-xvii). In his introductory chapter he also refers approvingly to the contributions of Victor Purcell and EHG Dobby to our understanding of the region (ibid.:3). Hall, in his *History* sets the grounds for the debate about the integrity of Southeast Asia as a region in uncompromising terms. Here the argument for the newly-created Southeast Asian programmes at SOAS was given its scholarly justification (King, 2005, 2006). Hall says

> The use of such terms as 'Further India', 'Greater India' or 'Little China' is to be highly deprecated. Even such well-worn terms as 'Indo-China' and 'Indonesia' are open to serious objections, since they obscure the fact that the areas involved are not merely cultural appendages of India or China but have their own strongly-marked individuality. The art and architecture which blossomed so gorgeously in Angkor, Pagan, central Java and the old kingdom of Champa are strangely different from that of Hindu and Buddhist India. For the key to its understanding one has to study the indigenous cultures of the peoples who produced it. And all of them, it must be realized, have developed on markedly individualistic lines (ibid.:4).

Nevertheless, and as has been pointed out on numerous occasions, in the first edition of his *History* Hall did not include the Philippines, which was seen to be part of an American-oriented Pacific sphere and not properly part of the Indian-influenced sphere of the largest part of Southeast

Asia (Smith, 1986: 12). In this regard Hall was still conforming not only to an Anglocentric but also to an Indian-centric perspective on the region shared by the French and Dutch. Furthermore, given the rather fluid character of British Southeast Asian Studies, when Hall was later to address an audience in British Hong Kong in May 1959 on the subject of 'East Asian History', he sometimes had the tendency to bring Southeast Asia under the umbrella of East Asian or Far Eastern Studies (1959). Nevertheless, what he did in his address, referring admiringly to the work of van Leur (1955) among others, was to return to one of his favourite Southeast Asian themes, and argued decisively for the understanding of Southeast Asian history 'from within' and in terms of local categories and perspectives (ibid.:7-9, 14-15).

The statement that Hall 'by the 1960s had already been christened the father of Southeast Asian studies' made by one of his doctoral students, the distinguished Philippine scholar Reynaldo Ileto, may well be disputed (2003:8), but there is no doubt that, with all the faults of his *History*, and specifically the criticism of his Anglocentrism, Hall had made, through his breadth of scholarship and his crucial institutional contributions in Rangoon, London and Cornell, a major contribution to the academic construction of Southeast Asia. In my view, there is no American scholar that could compete with him in his regional reach.

Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson (1936-2015)

Another internationally acknowledged scholar at Cornell was Benedict Anderson, whose background and experiences are captured in a memoir on which he was working when he died in Java, published a year later (Anderson, 2016). *A Life Beyond Borders* expresses precisely his approach to the understanding of Southeast Asia and the wider Asia, and his work on nationalism and 'imagined communities' drew significantly on his experience of the formation of Asian nation-states (1983/1991, 1998). Anderson was a global nomad. Born in Kunming, China, in 1936 of an Anglo-Irish father and an English mother, the family fled to California to escape the Sino-Japanese war. Then they moved to Ireland in 1945; subsequently, the young Benedict was schooled at Eton College in England; he graduated from Cambridge with a Classics degree in 1957. Eventually he settled in Ithaca, New York where he was awarded a doctorate in 1967 under the supervision of George Kahin (Wikipedia, 2019c).

Anderson died in Malang, Java in 2015. His main research focus had been Indonesia, and particularly Java. But he was not confined to one nation-state. In addition to speaking Indonesian and Javanese, he learned Tagalog and Thai and was comfortable with several European languages. Like others with whom I have chosen to engage in this 'compendium' Anderson was a 'Southeast Asianist' who worked in both island and mainland Southeast Asia. But unlike these others, his major works were global in their importance. His interests ranged from the sub-national, particularly Java, to the national level, Indonesia and Thailand especially, to the regional level of Southeast Asia, to the even wider area of Asia and finally to the global in his work on nationalism and 'imagined communities' (1983/1991, 1998). He died in Java, somewhat appropriately, given his contribution to Javanese society, culture and history (if we can say this of the deceased), as Aaron H. Binnenkorb Professor Emeritus of International Studies, Government and Asian Studies at Cornell.

University of California, Berkeley

The University of California, Berkeley does not fit precisely into my template of expatriate interventions. For a very good reason; it was established in 1960, and by then, with over ten years of training in Southeast Asian Studies, California could draw on locally-trained American expertise, which Yale and Cornell did not have access to a decade before. After 1960 the Center for Southeast Asia Studies enjoyed nine years of independence and was then merged with the Berkeley Center for South Asia Studies in 1969. It was separated from South Asia in 1990 and then some 27 years later in 2017 it became part of the Institute of East Asian Studies (Institute of East Asian Studies, 2017).

But even California's origins were not focused on Southeast Asia as a region, rather it concentrated on the Philippines. In its foundational history and the development of interest in Asia, it lists primarily American colonial scholar-administrators preoccupied with their American colony in Southeast Asia, not so much with the region: David Barrows, Robert Sproul, Alfred Kroeber, and Bernard Moses taught there, and Clive Day, Lawrence Briggs, Clifford Geertz and Daniel Lev, among others, held visiting posts there. But, in my view, they were not involved in developing a Southeast Asian perspective. Who did? Interestingly we have to go back first-of-all to the Dutch geographer, Jan Broek.

Jan Otto Marius Broek (1904-1974)

It tends to be forgotten that Broek was an early champion of Southeast Asia as well as scholarship on the then Netherlands India; he landed in California well before the university had even thought of a Southeast Asia programme. In the institutional memory of Berkeley and its development, Broek, a Dutch cultural and historical geographer, tends to be forgotten. Yet early on he was using the term 'Southeast Asia' and grappling with a theme which was to become familiar in the study of the region: unity and diversity (1943a, 1944b, 1944; Loeb and Broek, 1947). He graduated from the University of Utrecht with a first degree in geography (1924-1929) and then a PhD in 1932 (Prabook, 2019a; Wikipedia, 2013). He undertook his doctoral research as a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at the University of California in 1930-1931 on the cultural landscape of the Santa Clara Valley. His mentor in California was the distinguished cultural geographer, Carl O. Sauer. Broek returned to Berkeley in 1937 and remained there until 1946, first as Assistant Professor and then Associate Professor; he took American citizenship during this time. Following two years back in Utrecht as Professor of Social Geography, as the successor to his former doctoral supervisor, Louis van Vuuren, he was then appointed as Professor of Geography at the University of Minnesota (1948-1970); he spent time at the University of Malaya, Singapore, as a Fulbright Visiting Professor in 1954-1955. On his retirement from Utrecht he became Emeritus Professor there (1970-1974). During his retirement he also spent a period back in Berkeley as a Visiting Professor (1970-1972) (Prabook, 2019).

Paul Wheatley (1921-1999)

Paul Wheatley was one of a distinguished group of geographers recruited to the Department of Geography at the then University of Malaya in Singapore by Professor EHG Dobby (Wikipedia, 2019d). Professor C. Northcote Parkinson was Raffles Professor of History (1950-1958; Wikipedia, 2019e) during Wheatley's tenure (1952 to 1958); they had met previously at the University of Liverpool. During the 1950s Wheatley was studying for his PhD (completed in 1958 at London) and from which his now famous book *The Golden Khersonese* drew material (1961; Encyclopedia.com 2005; Forêt, 2000; Prabook, 2019b). In Singapore he was founding editor of the *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography* and acquired a reputation as a formidable historical geographer working on non-Western urban forms, their origins and development; as a skilled

linguist, he used sources in Chinese, Arabic and Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek. One of his later books examined the origins of Southeast Asian urban traditions (1983).

Berry and Dahmann, in evaluating Wheatley's achievements 'In Memoriam', emphasize that 'Wheatley's work has structured thinking about the premodern city since he articulated the cosmological paradigm. No serious student can proceed without acknowledging the immense debt owed him for the conceptual structure he has provided' (2001: 742). He therefore worked boldly across a range of comparative issues and subjects: social structures, urban origins, religions and cosmologies.

From Singapore Wheatley went to the University of California, Berkeley as Professor of Geography and History (1958-1966), and in 1960 was appointed as the Chair of the newly-established Center for Southeast Asia Studies. He returned to the UK to the Chair in Geography at University College London in 1966 (Wheatley 1969), and then moved back to the USA in 1971 to the Chair of Geography at the University of Chicago. In 1977 he was appointed to the Irving B. Harris Professorship and Chair of the Committee on Social Thought (until 1991 when he retired as Emeritus Professor of Comparative Urban Studies and Social Thought). It is no exaggeration to say that Paul Wheatley had a major intellectual influence on the direction of American-based research on Southeast Asia and the wider Asia in both California and Chicago, but he did this, as did Anthony Reid and others, in their engagement with the region within the region.

Conclusions

Interestingly my journey has gone full circle. There is still much more to do in the examination of the construction of Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Studies, particularly in our attention to the history and achievements of personages within this field of studies in the region itself. However, Anthony Reid who, among others, stimulated my interest in returning to the origins of Southeast Asian Studies (though drawing on Emmerson's work [1984]), and who 'discovered' the region in his tenure at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, later, in the course of his distinguished career, took up the post of founding Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (1999-2002) at a time when the Center had recently joined a national consortium with the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at Berkeley (Wikipedia, 2019f; and see Institute of East Asian Studies, 2017). Reid then returned to Southeast Asia and took up

the position of founding Director of the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore (2002-2007) where the story of the University of Malaya began, where I would argue one of the important origins of Southeast Asian Studies (and Southeast Asia) began, and where Reid's own story began in the second half of the 1960s (though at the Kuala Lumpur end of the original bipartite campus).

I now return to Ralph Smith, in a paper I continue to admire, who refers to the early development of Southeast Asian Studies, particularly in Britain, as primarily dependent on 'people whose experience of the region….has been acquired in an official capacity as members of the colonial or the diplomatic services' (1986:19) (we can say much the same for the study of Southeast Asia in the former Dutch and French colonies with their scholarly centres in Batavia and Hanoi; see King, 2013). In the British context we must include those who worked in higher education during late colonialism in Rangoon, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (and to some extent Hong Kong) and also emphasize the involvement of (mainly) young men in military campaigns in Asia, some of whom subsequently went on to academic careers (among them Fisher, Honey, Shorto and Simmonds at SOAS). In contrast to the American approach this route to scholarly activity was 'grounded'. It is unsurprising that many of the post-war British scholars in Southeast Asian Studies had seen military action in the East, and taken together with those who had served in the British dependent territories and colonies as administrators, it marked out a particular cast of mind in approaching the study of a region in which they had a personal, professional and undoubtedly an emotional involvement and an emerging sense of region, partly in combat with the Japanese. In the post-war period this also applies to those who worked in the University of Malaya and lived in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

In this respect Smith drew attention to the generally comfortable engagement of British scholars with the region – in that they were familiar with it and less prone to 'culture shock'; they were living, working and serving there, which helps to explain their 'highly pragmatic approach to the study of local histories, geographies and cultures (ibid.). Above all, for Smith the British approach, at least in its immediate post-war manifestations was strong on empirical matters and historical-geographical narrative and less prepared to engage in generalization (ibid.: 20). Smith contrasts this with the more 'conceptual orientation of American historians and political scientists' (ibid.:19).

There is a measure of truth in this: British academe (and, with very few exceptions, we can also say this of the French and Dutch contribution) did not produce a Clifford Geertz or a James C. Scott. It did, however, produce EHG Dobby, OW Wolters, DGE Hall, Charles A. Fisher and John S. Furnivall. What is more these scholars single-handedly wrote major books on Southeast Asia; Dobby: *Southeast Asia* (1950); Wolters: *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (1999); Hall: *A History of South-East Asia* (in four editions, 1955, 1964, 1968, 1981); Fisher: *South-East Asia: A Social, Economic and Political Geography* (1964, and then 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1969); and Furnivall: *Progress and Welfare in Southeast Asia* (1940), *Educational Progress in Southeast Asia* (1943) and *Colonial Policy and Practice* (1948). In addition, in the post-war period we had Benedict Anderson: *The Spectre of Comparisons* (1998); Paul Wheatley: *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asia Urban Traditions* (1983); and Anthony Reid: *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce: 1400-1600*. Vol. 1, *The Land Below the Winds*, and Vol. 2, *Expansion and Crisis* (1988/1993), and *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (2015).

From continental Europe I have referred to Robert von Heine-Geldern, Karl J. Pelzer, Paul Mus, Harry J. Benda, George Coedès, Jan Broek and Leopold Pospisil. With apologies, I have not had the space or time to examine the contributions of such home-grown scholars as Wang Gungwu, Kernial Singh Sandhu and Syed Hussein Alatas, among many others. Nor have I addressed the contributions of sociologists and anthropologists, including WF (Wim) Wertheim, Hans-Dieter Evers, Edmund Leach, Rodney Needham and PE de Josselin de Jong, all of whom bridged the mainland-island Southeast Asia divide, or indeed of other prominent historians, including Merle C. Ricklefs (2010).

As Reid says of regional perspectives in relation to American and non-American research, 'Cornell itself was rather slow to produce publications that covered the whole region…' (1999: 10). Given the anti-imperialist stance which the Americans adopted in post-war global affairs, it was the nationalist agenda which was of utmost importance, and, though the USA was important in the creation of Southeast Asia as a region, particularly in its institutionalization, organization and funding of Southeast Asian Studies, and its international profile in the development of multidisciplinary centres of study, there has always been a tension between the wider regional perspective and the view that expertise should be developed on particular countries.

It was therefore unlikely that in the first two decades of the post-war development of Southeast Asian Studies an American scholar could produce a regional text on Southeast Asia. As Reid also confirms, as an example, 'The George Kahin edited textbook on *Governments and Peoples [*sic: *Politics] of Southeast Asia* (1959/1964) was the most influential, but it consisted entirely of discrete articles on each country without any argument as to why they were put together' (1999: 10). Well before Reid's paper, Ralph Smith had reached the same conclusion. He suggested that it took Hall (and Harrison) to write a general history text on Southeast Asia; moreover, geographers outside the USA (Fisher, Dobby, Fryer) produced sole-authored regional geographies (1986: 16-18). The American approach, on the other hand, was to produce nation-state-based compilations. Smith refers to the major historical text edited by David Joel Steinberg in which there were contributions from David K. Wyatt, John R. W. Smail, Alexander Woodside, William R. Roff, and David P. Chandler (1971). The second revised edition added Robert H. Taylor to the list (1985, 1987). It then took Anthony Reid, schooled at the University of Malaya, to produce a major single-authored, two-volume history on Southeast Asia, primarily of the island world (1988/1993; and see 2015), and Victor Lieberman, a graduate of Yale (1967), but then a doctoral student at SOAS, London under the supervision of CD Cowan (1976) to provide another two-volume history of mainland Southeast Asia (2003/2009).

Therefore, though I still operate with the rough-and-ready distinctions between local and foreign, Southeast Asian and Euro-American, indigenous and exogenous, these are not sufficiently seductive in examining the origins and construction of the region and the field of studies designed to understand it. The claim that the region is an external, largely American-generated concept and that Southeast Asian Studies was formed in a particular geo-political and strategic context also needs considerable qualification. Finally, the elements which have been claimed to define Southeast Asian Studies in terms which have been characterized by external agendas and interests are also in need of rethinking both with regard to the overly simple dichotomy of local and non-local and the supposed distinctiveness of a multidisciplinary field of academic endeavour as against the contributions of disciplinary methods, approaches, concepts and perspectives (see, for example King, 2005, 2006, 2014, 2016). This is a work in progress, and there remains much more to say about the construction of Southeast Asia as an academic field of study.

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