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The Development of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States

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The Contributions of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States

The intellectual development of a concept called "Southeast Asia" in the U.S. involved the coming together, under the influence of regional conflicts and the Pacific War, of three streams: island ethnography, contemporary political studies, and classical Indology. This convergence onto a new academic unit produced a particular configuration of subsequent writings, in which anthropology loomed relatively large, and classical texts on power and religion underwrote analyses of nationalist movements and societal modernization. This patched together field of study, of a region with no single dominant power, religion, or language, continues to lead many specialists to reflect questioningly on the identity of the region and the usefulness of "Southeast Asian studies" as a category.

Perhaps all world areas are the object of insecure reflections, but, for better or worse, some areas live under the felt dominance of a country or of a language--India, China; Spanish, Arabic. Regions with these rather strong center-periphery structures may be easier to identify as study areas, and there may arise stronger connections across disciplines on the basis of shared language competence--or, perhaps there arise "high culture" imperialisms that mirror their regional counterparts. One thinks of the resistance of some Middle Eastern specialists to Islamicists who know no Arabic, or the historical marginalization in East Asian Studies of specialists in languages other than Chinese or Japanese.

In the case of Southeast Asia, the decided lack of a single center in the region (or even a half-dozen centers), has allowed the flourishing of disciplinary and areal pluralism. (This decenteredness is ironic in a region where center-periphery relations have provided a major organizing trope for studies of history, politics, culture, and art.) The specialist on

upland Burma or Mindanao is not considered peripheral to the effort of producing areal knowledge, as the specialist on Chinese Muslims or Brazilian native populations might once have been. From an institutional perspective, this pluralism may also have been facilitated by the weakness of classical humanities disciplines in U.S. Southeast Asian studies.

Defining the Area and Developing Area Studies

Although some geographical features suggest themselves as the natural foundations for Southeast Asia, none of them imply the region as defined today. The South China sea links southern China with the region, and trade in those waters depended on Malay as a lingua franca, flung Chinese pottery to remote islands, and led some rulers to proclaim fealty to the Emperor. The Indian Ocean brought Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic ideas of power and salvation, as well as cloth, cuisine, and *dangdut* music. Taking either body of water as definitive of the region would stretch "Southeast Asia" either northward or westward. Alternatively, the very fact of islandness would group Indonesia and the Philippinese with their Polynesian and Melanesian neighbors, and apart from the mainland.

In a less boundary-obsessed way, perhaps we can see (with Wolters 1982) a willingness to adopt and adapt imported ideas as characteristic of the region. Southeast Asia then may be viewed as a geographical and cultural openness, toward all the seas, distributing throughout the archipelago and the mainland a panoply of cultural forms, including quite particular *stupa* constructions, images of Siva, Vishnu and Buddha, Perso-Islamic ideas of governance, and modernist Islamic critiques of ritual. This widespread distribution has been possible only because of the local adaptations of each cultural form: when the T'ang code was

brought into Vietnamese law, or the Arthasastra to Java, or Islamic teachings about death to archipelagic societies, these broader traditions were modified to fit local ideas and practices.

One could also highlight cultural contrasts between Southeast Asia and its neighbors. For example, the gender equality of Southeast Asia vis-à-vis East and South Asia plays a central role in Anthony Reid's (1988, 162-72) history of the region, as it also does in Amartya Sen's (1990) contemporary account of cross-regional differences in the survival of women.

Prior to the 1940's scholars were seldom concerned with fixing the region's boundaries. Most U.S. scholarship conducted in the area did not refer to a region called "Southeast Asia," but was part of broader research agendas, especially the ethnological study of Pacific cultures, and the analysis of current events and social problems in Asia. (European colonial powers carried out literary and historical scholarship, but usually limited to their own colonial possessions and not extending to a broad region.)

Early American ethnology was based upon fieldwork in the Americas and in the Pacific. The diversity of Pacific islands suggested the idea of a "natural laboratory" to Boas and his students. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson's series of studies in the Pacific, including Bali (Bateson and Mead 1942), were framed as experiments in cultural variability, particularly with respect to gender relations, personality, and life cycles. (Indeed, the Pacific continues to be a favored region for culture and personality studies, from Cora Dubois in Alor to current work on Tahiti, Samoa, and elsewhere.) U.S. possession of the Philippines led to much less research than did the other colonialisms in the region, and most of what was done was limited to uplands areas.

The two anthropologists who most effectively moved from prewar ethnology to

postwar area studies were Lauriston Sharp and Raymond Kennedy, whose particular research styles shaped postwar research at Cornell and Yale, respectively. Sharp undertook fieldwork in Arizona and in North Africa after his undergraduate years, and later referred to these experiences in regional contrasts as directing him toward the study of a region as a whole (Skinner and Kirsch 1975:11). After having decided to focus on Southeast Asia for post-graduate study, but realizing that possibilities for area-wide study did not exist in the U.S., on Robert Lowie's advice he studied German and traveled to Vienna to work under the historian Robert Heine-Geldern (Kahin 1994:2). His Ph.D dissertation, from Harvard in 1937, was based on research in Australia (because funding for Australian research was offered by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown). He took a position at Cornell in 1936 (initially in the Department of Economics), served as assistant chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs in the Department of State in 1945-46, and only began fieldwork in Southeast Asia in 1947, when he began a field project near Bangkok. This project grew to become the site for a succession of studies by students at Cornell and elsewhere on a wide range of topics--Skinner and Kirsch (1975:15) claim fifty doctoral dissertations grew out of the Cornell-Thailand Project! Sharp's combination of regional focus, government service, and multidisciplinary fieldwork established a pattern for subsequent teaching at Cornell and elsewhere. His early association with Harvard (beginning with his undergraduate colleague Clyde Kluckhohn) probably encouraged the development of a social science approach to area studies at Cornell.

Raymond Kennedy was the consummate compiler of ethnographic data. He worked for General Motors in Java and Sumatra from 1929 to 1932, and went to Yale in 1932, where he received a doctorate in 1935 and became Professor of Sociology in 1947. Kennedy took up the East Indies part of George Murdock's ethnographic bibliographic project (Kennedy 1945),

and also planned an extensive fieldwork project on acculturation in Indonesia, which he carried out in part before he was murdered in Java in 1950 (Kennedy 1953). His emphasis on long-term, linguistically sophisticated fieldwork aimed at classifying peoples and studying social processes characterized anthropology at Yale, as exemplified by George P. Murdock's Human Relations Area Files, and by the subsequent Philippines fieldwork of Harold Conklin and Charles Frake. Yale Southeast Asian studies also drew on a long tradition of linguistic study of the region, for example, Leonard Bloomfield's (1917) grammatical analysis of Tagalog texts, and Isidore Dyen's (1946) studies of the Malay language.

Other prewar anthropologists could be mentioned whose work might have led to the establishment of later area studies centers. For example, Fred Eggan's Philippine Studies Program brought together Eggan's own work with that of R. F. Barton (1949), Fay-Cooper Cole, and others at Chicago, but never developed into an area center in the postwar mode. Instead, Philippines studies developed at Yale, and emphasized fieldwork in linguistics, law, and economics.

The second line of prewar U.S. research focused on contemporary social issues in the area, and was in large part sponsored by the Institute of Pacific Relations, founded in 1925 in New York. These research projects concerned in particular matters of social welfare, such as labor relations (Tompson 1947) and human bondage (Lasker 1950), and questions of politics and nationalist movements (Emerson, Mills, and Thompson 1942; Thompson and Adloff 1950), all of which were undertaken with a general sense of international crisis and a look toward decolonization. Country studies were also produced (e.g., Thompson 1941 on Thailand), with the same "current issues" emphasis.

Researchers affiliated with the Institute tried to reach a broad public by organizing

international conferences, such as the 1931 meeting in China published as *Problems of the Pacific* (Lasker 1932), and by writing books about the area for the non-specialist (Lasker 1944, 1945). The special issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* devoted to the area (Mills 1943) may have been one of the first collections entitled "Southeast Asia". Karl Pelzer's (1945) active role both in Institute research and later at Yale gave a geographical and ecological dimension to these studies and to later Yale research--and provided an intellectual connection to contemporary French geographical work in Indochina (e.g., Gourou 1939).

European work during the same period had a broader dimension, including studies of prehistory and religion as well as culture and social issues. Of particular importance for later U.S. research was the study of the long historical ties with India, on which the major work was George Coedes's 1944 *Les Etats Hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (1948), which traces "the imprint of the Indian genius" across Southeast Asian countries. This scholarship was as often situated in the colonies as it was in Europe, as in the case of the Vietnam-born Paul Mus, who later was to figure in the French Indochina war, but who in the prewar years argued (1933) for a common substratum in India and Southeast Asia that facilitated Indianization. Robert Heine-Geldern provided a critical link between prewar European and postwar U.S. scholarship through his role at the Institute of Pacific Relations, his writings on the center-periphery structure of early states (1956), and his ancestral status as Sharp's teacher. A counterpoint to "Indianization" was developed by J.C. van Leur, who in 1934 (1955) emphasized local cultural and economic continuities underneath the "thin and flaking glaze" of Indian and Islamic presences. Van Leur's significance for later U.S. work lay both in his use of Weber to construct models of trade and culture, and in his argument for a

non-Eurocentric perspective on regional studies (see Smail 1961).

Southeast Asian Centers

The first U.S. academic institution bearing the label "Southeast Asia" was the Southeast Asia Institute, formed in 1941 in New York City, and with a branch in Berkeley. The Institute's Board included Margaret Mead, Claire Holt, Raymond Kennedy, Arthur Schiller, and as Research Associate the person who often acted as the group's driving force, Robert Heine-Geldern. In 1946 Institute members edited a special issue of the Far Eastern Quarterly (1946) on the Netherlands Indies.

Although academic work on the region predated World War II, publication and organized research activity flourished in the 1940's, coinciding with the war effort. Efforts to define the region were led by military concerns. In the flurry of wartime map-making, the National Geographic Society decided that Southeast Asia was to be labeled as a distinct region (Emmerson 1984:7). As the by-now standard story continues, it was the creation of the South-East Asia Command (SEAC) under Admiral Lord Mountbatten in 1943 that fixed the idea of the region (Steinberg et al. 1985: 5). But this command did not cover the Philippines or eastern Indonesia until 1945, and it did include Sri Lanka (Emmerson 1984:7-8). Fixing the region's boundaries on military grounds gave a political and strategic cast to subsequent research on the region as a unit--as opposed to research on particular countries, subregions, or problems.

Organizations in the region itself have also been defined around strategic concerns. The creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 was directed at containing Communism, though other strategic interests were confused therewith--Pakistan

joined the group as part of its own strategy to "contain" India. SEATO died in 1977, succeeded in a fashion by a locally-conceived organization, initially named the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), consisting of Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaya and lasting from 1961 to 1967, and then the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which in 1967 added Singapore and Indonesia to the ASA group, and which has since expanded to include the over time Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma of the strategically-defined region.

Because many of the most prominent postwar studies of the region in the U.S. were motivated by pro-nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments (Anderson 1973), taking current political boundaries as the basis for defining the region seemed "natural", but had the effect of drawing the attention of scholars and students away from those other linkages--to India, China, and the Islamic world--that had been pursued in Europe but that had not yet been established as central concerns in U.S. scholarship.

Debates about how and where to draw regional boundaries continue to surface in scholarship and in arguments about faculty appointments in the 1990s. Is a Vietnam scholar best situated next to his Indonesianist colleague or his Chinese ones? Funan and Champa are associated with the rest of Southeast Asia on solid scholarly grounds, but Vietnamese rulers borrowed much from China. Should we write histories of "Southeast Asia" as defined above (Reid 1993), or do the mainland states, on the one hand, and the trading parts of the archipelago, on the other, exhibit sufficiently distinct dynamics so as to be best treated separately (Lieberman 1995)?

Only after the war were academic units for the study of the region established at U.S. universities. Southeast Asia Centers appeared in roughly three rounds. First was the period right after World War II, when nervousness about Communism and enthusiasm about

nationalism combined to lead foundations and university administrators to support regional studies with emphases on politics, recent history, and other "macrosocial" issues. Centers were created at Yale (1947), Cornell (1950), and Berkeley (1960), with support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. Cornell's center came to dominate studies of the region more than is the case for any center devoted to any other world region (and is treated at greater length below). Both Cornell and Yale quickly attracted graduate students: in 1952, Cornell had 28 graduate students working on the region; Yale had 25, and each university had four graduate students in the field. Berkeley worked on a more departmentalized basis (Van Niel 1964).

The second round of center creation came during the sharp rise in funding for nearly anything in the mid-1960's (including the creation of NDEA funding for graduate students and greater activity by the Ford Foundation), the public attention to the Vietnam war, and the emergence of a new generation of professors who had been trained at the first-round centers. Southeast Asian studies probably enjoyed their greatest degree of academic visibility then, (marked by the creation of a separate section in the Association for Asian Studies). New centers in Southeast Asian (or South and Southeast Asian) studies developed at Ohio in 1969, Northern Illinois in 1963 as an extension of a Peace Corps program for Malaysia (Van Niel 1964:193), Wisconsin in the late 1960s as a development from the Program in Comparative Tropical History, and Michigan in 1960. These dates may obscure earlier training in de facto center fashion, for example at Hawaii in the History department after about 1964, when Walter Vella and Robert Van Niel joined the department, and at Ohio, where John Cady had been teaching Southeast Asian history for twenty years prior to the creation of a Center for International Studies (William Frederick, personal communication 1998).

By the early 1980's, there were eight centers, five of which were receiving federal (NDEA) funds. They were joined, in a (to date) final round of center-creation in the 1990's, by programs at Arizona State, and at an innovative Regional Consortium for Southeast Asia Studies, which includes the Universities of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

Of course, teaching the languages and literatures of Southeast Asia was not entirely absent from U.S. universities before and outside of Center development--Malay was taught at Cornell in the 1870's and 1880's, for example (Sharp 1976:2). George Kahin (1952) found that between 1943 and 1952, courses exclusively on Southeast Asia in U.S. colleges and universities had increased from 27 to 72, with Malay or Indonesian being the main language taught, and political science and anthropology the two major other disciplines. (However, 413 courses were found that devoted some time to Southeast Asia, overwhelmingly in history departments.) Moreover, collaborative research programs often focused on Southeast Asia without choosing the Center route--the "Modjokuto" project in East Java that provided material for several Harvard Ph.D students was coordinated by M.I.T.'s Center for International Studies.

Area studies centers usually got their start when an administrator and at least one faculty member agreed that the region was worth close study. Cornell, for example, had Lauriston Sharp and the sympathetic and influential chair of the Far Eastern Studies department, Knight Biggerstaff, plus the agreement by the Rockefeller Foundation to provide grant money (Kahin 1994:3). Yale had Raymond Kennedy, already teaching the civilizations of Indonesia in Sociology during the late 1930's and with field experience in Indonesia and the Philippines, who was influential in recruiting new faculty in the late 1940's (for example, Harold Conklin in 1948.) Wartime linguistics training for G.I.s also may have provided a

boost to the postwar efforts: at Yale, for example, both Bloomfield and Dyen were involved in creating suitable teaching materials in Ilocano, Dutch, and Malay. (My first course in conversational Dutch in the 1970's used Bloomfield's wartime tapes.) The addition of the historian Harry Benda, also with extensive Indonesia experience, and the geographer Karl Pelzer, gave the Yale program a high profile despite the eventual loss of internal Center support. Similarly, the loss of one or two key people could effectively disempower a center, as happened at Yale when, early in its history the center suffered the deaths of both Raymond Kennedy and John Embree.

The Centers have had varied degrees of success, gaining or losing funding over the years. Cornell maintained its high level of productivity. Berkeley and Ohio had periods of regional focus, but lost faculty or external support or both. Northern Illinois succeeded in part through a specialization on Burma, but then lost its key Burma historian.

The fragility of Southeast Asia centers is in part due to the most interesting feature of the region itself, namely its cultural diversity. Although a minor region of the world in terms of the numbers of U.S. scholars concentrating their activities there or the number of students taking courses on the region, Southeast Asia has far greater linguistic and cultural diversity than most other regions, with several distinct language families, no one or two of which are dominant in any respect, and with all the world's large-scale religions. Nonetheless, most universities that developed Southeast Asian programs tried to develop capacities for teaching several languages, about several countries, and across several disciplines. There have been concentrations--Berkeley specialized in Thai anthropology, for example--but by and large programs have tried to map onto the political area of Southeast Asia, with more or less effectiveness. Government funding criteria push centers in this direction, and may punish

those centers that overly specialize--Ohio, for example, lost its FLAS funding because it had only developed teaching of one language, Indonesian, according to William Frederick (personal communication 1998).

In recognition of the particular demographics of this area of study--cultural diversity but small numbers of specialists--the area centers agreed to pool some federal funds and create a Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute (SEASSI). The Institute began as a summer program in Indonesian Studies (ISSI) in 1975, but as additional languages were added, SEASSI increasingly came to "stand for" the region as a whole. The Institute rotates among area centers, and includes courses in history, literature, or social sciences, and has held conferences at the end of the session. In the early years, and particularly as ISSI, the conferences attracted a reasonably large sample of senior, junior, and protoscholars of the region. As the compass of the program expanded, and perhaps the pattern experienced fatigue, the conferences came to be put on by and for graduate students. But the cohort-building effect has continued.

The low profile of Southeast Asia in some disciplines has meant less than productive relations between some departments and centers. History seems to be the most difficult discipline in this regard, perhaps because little in the way of theory links specialists in different areas and periods. Berkeley, for example, made several attempts to hire a Southeast Asian historian--at least once in the late 1960's (to hire Harry Benda) and several times in subsequent decades, succeeding only on a third attempt with Luce Foundation support to help convince the History department that Southeast Asianists indeed could do sociopolitical history (as Lauriston Sharp had convinced Rockefeller to do for Cornell in the 1950's [Kahin 1994:4]).

It may be that those centers that initially tried to go their own way, with distinct degree-granting powers, for example, paid for that decision in the coin of little subsequent cooperation from departments. George Kahin (1994:3-4) argues that this early independence at Yale and Berkeley weakened those centers; whereas Cornell's (or rather Sharp's) decision that all students would major in a department and faculty would be hired through departments led to better cooperation and better success at placing students. And yet in the late 1990's this structure allowed certain of Cornell's departments to frustrate the efforts of the older generation of Southeast Asianists to hire those younger scholars they see as best positioned to invigorate (or even reinvent) regional studies.

The Case of Cornell

The problems noted above for Southeast Asian studies--a high degree of regional diversity, low numbers of specialists and students, difficulties retaining Federal support--certainly have facilitated the current role of Cornell as a kind of meta-center, from which many of the other centers developed and which continues to maintain the best library facilities, the major publications program, and an unmatched set of language and area courses. Although in some disciplines (anthropology, for example), most specialists in the region never studied at Cornell, nearly all have relied on the university's resources.

Sharp (1976) traces the Cornell program's genesis to the 1919 gift of a "South Seas" collection to the library that became the Wason collection. Sharp joined Cornell in 1936, began the program in 1951, and by 1954 had hired George Kahin in government, Frank Golay in economics, John Echols and R.B. Jones in linguistics, giving the program region-wide coverage. In 1954, Ford sponsored the Modern Indonesian Project, Cornell's major

subregional enterprise, and the source of the major journal on that country, *Indonesia*. Ford's overall plan had been to undertake a comparative study of Communism in 4 Asian countries headed by noncommunists, but agreed that the Cornell Project would encompass all dimensions of modern social and political life. The 1962-1972 London-Cornell Project allowed Cornell and the various University of London institutions to complement each other's strengths. For example, British experts on Burma and Malaya, such as the historian D.G.E. Hall, taught seminars at Cornell. ("The program with London relieved our guilt at not covering Malaya and Burma; we still had some guilt, mainly about history and the Philippines"; George Kahin, interview, 1997).

Cornell's trick to develop broad regional coverage was to make use of its "upper campus" [directionality in Ithaca is with respect to the flow of water, as it is in Southeast Asia], the public segment of the university dealing with applied topics, where the Rural Sociology department hired Robert Polson, Walter Coward, and Randy Barker. The anthropologist Milton Barnett also worked on development projects (Kahin had brought him from "the field"), and the group as a whole emphasized the Philippines and Malaysia, two countries not represented in the liberal arts segment. Economics, although in the "lower campus", had stronger intellectual ties to the sociologists. Kahin (interview 1997) recalls that upper and lower campus students mixed mainly in country seminars, which took up a different country each semester. All graduate students had to take one such seminar outside their research country, and many took two.

A strong intellectual gap eventually developed between the liberal arts, culturally-oriented faculty housed in the Southeast Asia Program building and the applied faculty. The subregional division of labor also has meant that the "lower campus" students have been

mainly of U.S. origin, with interests in history, politics, and anthropology, and working on Vietnam, Thailand, and Java, whereas applied students, who include many Southeast Asians, study topics with little intellectual overlap, such as hydrology and agriculture, and are more widely dispersed across the region.

Cornell's "field" system has promoted interdisciplinary communications by distinguishing between field committees and departmental affiliations. Anthropology graduate students, for example, need only have one member of the anthropology department on their committees; other members may be area specialists from various departments. The historian David Wyatt (interview, 1997) points to these committees as an important site for communication among Southeast Asianist faculty with very different intellectual orientations.

Cornell's first-generation faculty, teaching before Vietnam escalation and before the Indonesian massacres of 1965-66, were more likely to move between government service and university positions (in an role analogous to that of the colonial scholar-bureaucrat), and to encourage both applied and "basic" research. Sharp spent eighteen months after the war in the State Department, where he worked with several other major scholars of the region, including the anthropologist Cora Dubois and the political scientist Rupert Emerson (Kahin 1964: 2; Kirsch 1996:6-7). Stanley O'Connor came to the field of art history from a career in government (where he drew the map of Laos used by President Kennedy in a 1960 television appearance [Kahin 1996: 4]). The Vietnam war soured many scholars on developing any ties to the U.S. government; Sharp and others received strong criticism for their involvment in the Academic Advisory Council for Thailand during the days of counterinsurgency research (Wakin 1992)

Periods in Cornell research emphases correspond to the general periods I set out

below. Kahin (interview 1997) recalls that the baseline for graduate study in the first postwar decade was country history, "including how countries were emerging from colonialism." Comparative seminars stressed current dimensions of religion, treatment of ethnic minorities, Communism, nationalism. By the 1960's the emphasis was economic development in a political context, or modernization, and the research fashion was large-scale comparative studies, into which Southeast Asia was placed--Sharp collaborated with Morris Opler (India) and Allen Holmberg (Peru). Two "waves" of students were produced during these first decades, followed by a decline in job availability after the Vietnam War, and thus fewer students choosing graduate study of the region during the late 1970s and early 1980s, then followed by a surge of enrollments in the late 1980's, leading to a 1990's "third wave" of Cornell Ph.Ds on Southeast Asia, with renewed interest in Vietnam.

As of the late 1990's, Cornell faculty have been searching for new themes to replace those of nationalism and modernization that guided early faculty development.[1]

Trends within Area Studies

It is frequently said that the social sciences have played an unusually dominant role in U.S. Southeast Asian studies, and that this dominance has been at the expense of the humanities. But one must add that the "social science" in question has been of an unusually humanistic sort, in which the public forms of culture--ways of speaking, ritual events, performances--take center stage. The real dominance has been of cultural studies over both textual studies and behavioristic social science.

As of 1970 (reflecting training in the 1950's and 1960's), about 60% of all U.S. Southeast Asian specialists sampled by Richard Lambert (1973:109-110) were social

scientists, of whom about half were political scientists and one-quarter anthropologists.[2] [i]The social science percentage was the highest for any world area, with Africa close behind. The region was about in the middle (far below East and South Asia) regarding the percentage of specialists who worked on the arts, philosophy, or religion, but at the bottom in language, literature, linguistics, and history.

Data on Foreign Area Fellowship Program and Social Science Research Council funding applications between 1951 and 1982 (Szanton 1984)--which include a very broad range of disciplines but nonetheless favor "social science"-- show an overall temporal pattern that could be summarized as follows. Political science led in the postwar period, with nationalism and the development of new elites and political structures providing exciting dissertation topics. Anthropology surged ahead in the late 1950's, but with much of its research on topics of modernization closely allied to political science. Political science moved back into lead position during the Vietnam War period, 1962-70, when total numbers of applications peaked. Anthropology dominated the field thereafter, with students less often choosing those lowland communities that were taken as proxies for "new nations" in the 1950's and 1960's, and more often choosing small highland and island communities for their distinct cultural patterns, maintained in the face of state attempts to standardize social life.[3]

These shifts in discipline and topic bring with them shifts in place, from lowlands parts of Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia in the 1950's and 1960's, to "marginal" regions, especially in Indonesia, in the 1970's and 1980's. Studies of "Indochina" were of course most affected by the war: of relatively low frequency before 1969, they rose sharply in 1969-1974, and then declined to zero. They began to rise again in the 1990's as field research became possible. The demand for Vietnamese studies by U.S.-born children of Vietnamese

[i]

parents has meant that at Cornell, Berkeley, and the University of Washington (and perhaps elsewhere) the Vietnamese language program is the largest among Southeast Asian languages.

Differences in emphasis also distinguish country study traditions. Tugby (1968, 1970) asked anthropologists and sociologists in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia to describe the pressing problems faced in the study of their country (Tugby 1970:50-52). Thai specialists couched their replies in terms of exhaustively describing Thai society and its contemporary developments; Indonesia specialists stressed the relatively uncharted ethnological diversity of the country; Philippines specialists urged studies motivated by anthropological theory rather than comparative or ethnological concerns (perhaps because of the uncertainty some of them expressed as to what "Philippine culture" might be).

What is not revealed in disciplinary data is the rising importance of a cultural approach after 1969. Funding applications from humanists to the SSRC grew, and those from anthropologists (and some others) more often concerned indigenous conceptual systems than had those submitted by earlier generations. Even if "humanities" in the European sense of text study and philology continues to lead a subterranean life in the U.S., "humanities" in other senses, whether as broad as "studying other ways of life" or as specific as "studies of texts, performances, art, and music", arguably has been the central occupation of Southeast Asianists for some time. After all, in what other region would the two best-known political scientists be as oriented toward literature and ethnography as are Benedict Anderson and James Scott?

Some disciplines, such as paleontology and primatology, have had a close relationship with Southeast Asia without any involvment in "Southeast Asian Studies." Conversely, some central fields within Southeast Asian studies have had little impact on their

discipline. Southeast Asian linguistics, for example, shed light on early population movement, provided ways to study rituals and everyday lives, made translation a central and culturally sophisticated activity, and, through language teaching, made everyone's work possible. But Southeast Asianists are at best marginal to the discipline, even to the subdiscipline of historical linguistics. John Wolff (interview, 1997) argues that had historical linguistics started in Southeast Asia it would have taken a quite different turn, because language use in the region includes a greater command of different registers and different languages by a single speaker, and a higher frequency of people who speak different languages coming together routinely, and these features of the region imply different patterns of borrowing and language change than those currently occupying subdisciplinary center stage.

U.S. scholarship also has been shaped by what takes place elsewhere. A general division of labor in regional studies can be attributed to historical patterns of scholarship and different contemporary interests. Europeans, especially in Britain, France, and the Netherlands, continue to produce in the traditions of philology and text criticism, even when they draw on current literary theory. The colonial scholar-administrator, with a long residence in the colony and time to gather texts and study languages (see Anderson 1992), lives on in the long periods of residence granted researchers attached to one of the two French Southeast Asianist *equipes* funded by the *Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques* (CNRS) at Paris and Marseilles, and to their counterparts at Leiden's *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (KITLV), which devotes most of its funding to continued research on and in Indonesia (and other former Dutch colonies). Other Europeans, sometimes located at rival universities, focus on contemporary political-economic issues, as do most Australian researchers--Indonesianists wishing to follow rural as well as national-level economic

changes have come to rely on issues of the *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, published in Canberra, and on the occasional volumes written and edited by that journal's contributors. Southeast Asians figure increasingly prominently among scholars of the region who write in Western-language publications, and the Singapore-produced *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* has become a journal of note for regional studies.

Quite distinct from all the above, however, are the traditions of research carried out by Southeast Asians in their home countries and generally published in the country languages. These research complexes are generally segmented off from Western scholars, although this segmentation is changing to some degree as some of these scholars write in English, and as some Western scholars devote some of their time to translating or examining these works. The stakes are not simply the boundaries of collegiality, but access to the most expert scholarship on various topics. Anderson (1992) points out that Thai-language scholarship on literature and history now sets the standard but is inaccessible to all but a few U.S. scholars. Islamic legal scholarship in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines is enormous, of high quality, and of great interest to those seeking to understand law, politics, and social change in the region, but, again, is generally unread in the U.S. Overall, those sciences with the greatest indigenous purchase--law, literature, religion--are the most de facto closed to U.S. scholars, whereas those whose analytical centers are in Western countries--economics and anthropology, for example--are the most readily available. (History is probably somewhere in between.)

Politics, History, and Culture in Southeast Asian Studies

I have chosen to treat separately the studies of politics, history, and culture, and yet these fields are so closely related that under "politics" I subsume many themes that might

have been repeated in subsequent sections (but, I assure you, will not be).

Arguably, two major dynamics have shaped these fields. The first has been the coming together, in anthropology, history, and politics, of European humanistic and historical traditions of study--work by the philologists and literary specialists of Leiden, the epigraphers and archeologists of the French colonial service, and the British gentleman observers of culture and literature in Malaya--with U.S.-centered social sciences. Even by the 1960's, the processes of "Indianization" charter by European scholars had become integrated into U.S. studies of contemporary politics or village rituals.

The rise of the concept of culture faciliated this convergence (as did the vogue of structuralism), but so did the close ties between area studies at Cornell, where long-term history gradually became a more important part of the curriculum, and social sciences elsewhere, especially at Harvard and Chicago. Clifford Geertz, in particular, articulated a Boasian view of culture-as-pattern within a broader social science framework, thereby giving humanistically inclined studies- whether in art history, politics, or anthropology--a certain legitimacy within an otherwise largely behaviorist social science world.

The second overall dynamic (running somewhat counter to, and later than, the first) has been a movement away from uniform notions of "society" and "culture" toward emphases on disunity, conflict, and inequality--a shift that on a theoretical level might be traced to disillusionment with the Parsonian consensus model of society (with its heavy reliance on notions of function and a domestication of both Durkheim and Weber) and a rediscovery of the historical analyses carried out by Marx and Weber.

Politics and Political Economy

Southeast Asian studies hardly needed to "bring the state back in" (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol 1985) because the state always has been doubly central: cultural models of statehood were a major part of the intellectual inheritance from the Indologists, and postwar area studies focused on nationalism and political self-fashionings. These two themes were intertwined: even as one moves from the concern with Communism in the immediate postwar period, to the more explicit effort to build political science models in the 1950's and 1960's, to the attention to culture and conflict thereafter, the best writers on politics in the region argued that politics in the region was shaped by some very old ideas, and that this shaping meant that "politics" involved "religion" and "social organization." Even a model-builder like Fred Riggs (1966), avowedly not a specialist in the region, begins his analysis of Thai politics by invoking Robert Heine-Geldern and the importance of macro-microcosmic ideas to understanding political life. And one of the more important accounts of the background to the Vietnamese Revolution published in the U.S. (McAlister and Mus 1970) was coauthored by a man best known for his studies of prehistory and cosmology, Paul Mus.

This general insight, that long-term cultural patterns inform current political behavior, has rested on a handful of interrelated concepts. It is these concepts, and not the behavioristic-attitudinal notion of "political culture", that have most effectively directed Southeast Asian political studies. They include the local power-broker often called *datu*, the *mandala* or "circle of kings", patron -client ties, and the (patrimonial) "bureaucratic polity." Each of the institutions described by these concepts is found throughout the region, thus usefully knitting together its diverse parts, has had a long historical presence, and can be used to explain patterns of behavior not otherwise predicted. The centrality of these institutions to political studies has also facilitated close intellectual and institutional ties between students of

politics and students of history and culture.

One can, with the usual trepidation, identify successive emphases within Southeast Asianist political studies. During the first two decades of regional study, an initial focus on nationalist politics was followed by efforts to understand politics as part of general developmental processes in society. Beginning in the 1970's, students of politics refined each of these two lines of analysis. First, the ideas of "power" and "nation" that lay behind the early nationalism and its successor forms were explored. Secondly, what had been taken to be universal processes of modernization were subjected to a more fine-grained, critical, historically-based examination of central and local politics, bringing class analysis back into the picture.

Soon after its creation in 1950, the Cornell center began to produce country studies focused on current political developments, under the direction of George Kahin. These descriptive studies kept the exigencies of nation-building and nationalism very much in mind. A collection that appeared in two editions, in 1959 and 1964 (Kahin 1964), presented accounts of each country in a uniform manner; some of the authors then produced de facto third editions in monographic format.

Anderson (1982) refers to the "Kahinian" approach as historical in method and pro-nationalist in orientation. Some of the orientation of this school may come from George Kahin's own close involvment in the revolution, his acquaintance with the nationalist elite, and his opposition to American neo-colonialism as well as to the older Dutch, British, and French varieties. One feels in many of these works a sense of the excitement of "being at the creation" and a responsibility to give a clear account of events happening fast and furious in the heady days of the anticolonial struggles, revolutions, and efforts to form new independent

states. Theory and social science seemed distant concerns. As Kahin said to me in a 1997 interview at Cornell: "we had no paradigms". Even the early work of that very theoretical of social scientists, Clifford Geertz, including *The Religion of Java* and his articles on economic change, are written in this straightforward mode of trying to catch the sense of new and unfamiliar developments in the "new nations."

Of course theories and assumptions did shape these works. In Geertz's case, the Weberian framework set up by Parsons at Harvard, the approach to culture practiced by Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict (and taught at Harvard by Clyde Kluckhohn), and the ways of analyzing civilizations through ethnography just then being mapped out by Robert Redfield and his students at Chicago, all make their appearance, through style and structure rather than footnote and theory, in *The Religion of Java*, a book which has as much to say about the cultural bases of politics as it does about the historical roots of religions.

Most students of the region took for granted the idea that states should, and perhaps were, moving toward secular, liberal constitutional orders. Such was the brunt of Kahin's *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, and of the works of the others at Cornell. But that assumption also lay behind Geertz's writings throughout these decades, and behind the general approach adopted by the Committee for the Study of New Nations at Chicago, even as some of those social scientists also tried to move political studies in a more model-building direction.

As Anderson (1982) points out, the early Cornell focus on the heroic efforts of nationalist elites led them to pay less attention to other groups, including the Communists, the army, and, I would add, those Muslim groups not part of the more pro-Western orientation. (This last set of sympathies and dislikes continue to shape the foci and blind spots of regional

political studies, such that quite often the same set of Western-oriented, liberal Islamic leaders or regime critics are interviewed for their views, but not those leaders and scholars advocating other types of regimes or laws.) The first, Cornell-dominated set of political studies also paid much more attention to the capital cities, the repositories of "nation", than to regions or towns, and tended to downplay diversity in favor of the one-nation-state model. To support this style of analysis a particular idea of culture was employed.

David Wilson, for example, followed his chapter on Thailand in the two editions of Kahin's collection with a 1962 monograph, in which he justifies studying such a remote country as Thailand by pointing to its power in the region and ultimate importance for U.S. security. His goal is synthesis and overall description of the country, drawing on the field studies carried out after the war at the Cornell Research Center in Bangkok. But Wilson also incorporates, indeed takes as the foundation for his analysis, the long-duration history of Thai culture, from which he extracts in particular two elements: the cosmologically-based relations of center to periphery (based on Heine-Geldern), and the tenet that moral value determines power, from which follow both the idea of a single hierarchy of statuses and the institution of personalized bureaucracy that governs the country. Wilson makes extensive use of Thai-language texts.

In drawing on these elements Wilson's analysis resembles those previous and those to follow. But the nation-state format also leads him to describe Thailand in terms of a uniform culture, in which people accept their fate because of Buddhist teachings, and in terms of a more or less shared ethnic identity. Culture appears as a constant, and society as providing a uniform set of social norms. Political institutions follow from culture and society.

For some authors writing from outside Cornell an even stronger sense of anti-

Communism (and pro-democracy) served as the urgent motive for writing their books. Rupert Emerson's *Representative Government in Southeast Asia* is written in the middle of "the desperate eleventh-hour struggle to create a viable non-Communist state in southern Vietnam" (1955:v), and describes the efforts by Westernized elites in Southeast Asia to apply the constitutions of the West to very different societies. Donald Nuechterlein's Berkeley dissertation on foreign policy concerns Thailand's place in "the struggle for survival among the free nations of Southeast Asia" (1965:vii) and, although published by Cornell, makes no attempt to base the study on Thai concepts of power, borders, or other nations, concepts which might have been thought to be of particular importance for this study.

A somewhat later set of studies emphasizes model building and comparisons, and often draws on the emerging literature about "modernization". Almond, Verba, Colman, Pye and Apter are the demigods of this group (for example, Pye 1962). In describing some of these authors Anderson (1982) emphasizes their opposition to nationalism in the name of a smoother transition to democratic capitalism, but the liberal democratic vision remains unchallenged, only the taste had soured as nationalism showed other sides.

Political studies could still draw on older culture history even as they responded to the theory-consciousness of the 1960's. In his study of the Thai bureaucracy, Fred Riggs (1966) represents himself as a model builder (he had received an SSRC grant for comparative political studies) and not an area specialist, and yet spent considerable time "in country". Although not part of the Cornell program, Riggs benefited from the Cornell Bangkok field station. The Janus-faced nature of his situation--country focus yet analytical drive--troubled him (1966: 3-12), and one ought to read his musings when confronted by the more intolerant versions of this tension thrown up in the 1990s.

Riggs' aim is to produce a model of the "bureaucratic polity" by drawing on his Thai data. He examines at length the macro-microcosmic roots of political life (with due acknowledgement of Heine-Geldern's ideas), but can only use this information after he has inserted it into a comparativist vocabulary. All this cosmos stuff may seem insubstantial, he confesses, but when understood as "the legitimizing or ordering function" (1966:69) it becomes recognizeable as "politics." His main concern is typology, and Rigg tells a very Weberian story--but keeps the cultural roots present. Riggs's model was influential because it showed a way to remain true to one's areal sensitivities and yet also write in a comparative-analytic way, as required for respect in political science.

The modernization approach required that social phenomena be sorted into two categories, the primordial and the modern, and here other social sciences were perforce brought into play. The modern side had already been analyzed. On the primordial side were ethnic groups (hill tribes, island cultures) (Leach 1964; Keyes 1979), Chinese and Indian minority communities, and distinctions of religious and cultural orientation within the majority lowland populations on Java, Luzon, the Malay peninsula, in central Thailand, and southern Vietnam (such as Geertz's [1960] *abangan/priyayi/santri* for Java), or the puzzling absence of such "structure" in other lowland areas. Of note are the analytical axes not employed here: the Chinese could have been seen as a commercial bourgeoisie with historically-specific roles (Rush 1990); the three-way division in Java could have been seen as a reflection of the balance of power at the time between landowners and landless, and between state agents and others (Hart 1989). (A naive version of "the primordial" survives even after the social scientists have given it up--attacks on Chinese shops in Indonesia in 1997 and 1998 were generally described as motivated either by "ethnic hatred" or "religious

tensions", despite the fact that they were directed mainly against property, and that they were in response to specific economic measures or conditions.)

More recent political studies have taken two forms. One explores ideas and institutions of power in a more ethnographic and cultural, rather than comparativist and societal, fashion. Benedict Anderson's (1972) essay on "the Javanese concept of power" and Clifford Geertz's *Negara* (1980) are among the most frequently cited. But in the same vein are other studies on law and politics in Indonesia (Liddle 1997) and elsewhere. For Thailand, one could mention David Engel's (1975) explorations of the Thai *thammasat* legal code, derived from the dharmashastras, as the theoretical basis for King Chulalongkorn's reforms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and which gave Engel the foundation for his later (1978) ethnography of a Thai provincial court.

A second set of studies has emphasized the diversity of political ideas, institutions, and processes within a country, thus challenging the universal and implicitly teleological idea of modernity, but also challenging the idea of a unitary, stable political culture. Thus, John Girling begins his textbook on Thailand (1981a) by citing Coedes's history of the Indianized states, starts his analysis of politics with a discussion of Buddhism, and retains Weber as the major analytical source, but then (unlike Wilson in his 1962 study) subjects earlier ideas of political culture and structure to a historical critique. In discussing the Thai status hierarchy, Girling points to local challenges to that order--a line of study further pursued by Craig Reynolds (1987), who translates and analyzes Thai Marxist challenges to the "feudal" order (*sakdina*), thereby illuminating the field of political contestation within a Thai cultural domain.

Girling (1981b) points out two major problems with Riggs's earlier study, and his

criticism can be taken to signal a major shift in political studies. First, by assuming a single set of norms and values, derived from the *mandala* polities of the past, Riggs missed other norms, those based on ideas of constitutionalism and democracy, that in Thailand came to fruition in 1973. Secondly, the model of bureaucratic polity assumed more consensus across social strata than ought to have been assumed. One might add that Riggs also assumed a single bureaucracy rather than competing ones, a mistake often replicated in studies of "the state" in all these countries.[4]

Similar critiques have been launched regarding other states in the region. For Vietnam, debates about state-society relations are currently in the forefront: is the state bureaucracy the source of all decisions--a model of a powerful bureaucratic polity (Porter 1993)? Or are social forces powerfully causal on their own, with a "penetrating civil society" (Thrift and Forbes 1986) shaping local activities in defiance of state dictates?

Many distinct models of the state have been proposed for the region--indeed, each major political scientist appears to want to have his very own. Debates turn on the extent to which the bureaucracy is shielded from outside influences, or to which a pluralistic model is appropriate, or, rather, a model of "corporatism" such as has been developed for Latin America (for some of the debates regarding Indonesia, see Anderson and Kahin [1982]). (I myself find that "corporatism" captures very well the propensity of Indonesia's government to establish its own authorized interest groups, often called a "single container" [*wadah tunggal*] for "the people's aspirations").

But most of these models assume that "politics" is mainly about members of the bureaucracy, particularly those living in the capital cities. This idea of politics omits all those who work for the government in some capacity but who can hardly be thought of as part of a

single pyramid--religious judges, school teachers, village headmen. These actors are subject to state regulation but also conceive of power, interests, and values in ways not captured by any of these models. A focus on bureaucracy also ignores the "everyday politics" (Kerkvliet 1990) that has more to do with other political bases, such as landowning, control of rice mills, high rank in a local system of rank and prestige, and membership in local associations.

One line of analysis did focus on non-state actors, however; these studies turned on patron-client ties or the "entourage" (Hanks 1966), and may serve as an instance of the second general dynamic I mentioned earlier, namely, the movement away from accepting cultural categories as adequate descriptions of power relations, and toward analyzing them as tokens in highly varied discourses about power and legitimacy.

Patron-client analysis has had several lasting strengths. It ties political studies to historical and cultural studies of authority, including studies of figures Wolters (1982) terms "men of prowess", resembling Melanesian big-men and often referred to as *datu*, the local leaders who amass power through successfully claiming greater proximity to local spirits. It also provides a convincing analytical account of how norms of generalized reciprocity can provide a basis for social order without state intervention (for a theoretical development of this idea, see Taylor 1982). The framework also holds up well as it is translated across levels of society: patron-client ties in agrarian regions involve landholding and laboring; at court they involve status ranking; in bureaucracies they involve mentoring and patronage.

One can probably trace the development of patron-client analysis to those anthropologists of the Philippines (e.g., Lynch 1968) who used Tagalog reciprocity terms as labels for basic cultural values. These values were then used to provide cultural explanations for the acceptance and persistence of patron-client ties, especially in the plains societies of

Luzon (Lande 1965). The general theory of patron-client hierarchies was most elegantly set out by Scott (1972), who argues that in the absence of highly developed corporate kin groups, and against the general background of uncertainty and scarcity, patron-client networks naturally develop across Southeast Asia, imbued with and in turn promoting social inequality (see also Hanks 1966).

Patron-client ties and the moral vocabularies of reciprocity were quickly accepted into Southeast Asian studies. Not only did they appear to provide politics with a cultural grounding, they also met a strongly felt need for an analytical framework to study the plains societies of Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Whereas anthropologists working in highland Thailand and Burma, or east and west Indonesia, could draw on local categories of descent and exchange for instant analyses, scholars interested in social structure in the plains areas found no such home-grown kinship ideas. This apparent vacuum gave rise to ideas such as "loosely structured societies" (Embree 1950) that had little analytical or comparative import. "Patron-client" supplied an attractive new way of studying social life in these areas.

But do these culturally-elaborated ties of reciprocity and patronage indicate a generally-accepted system, or do they mask an imposed, and historically changeable inequality? One example around which these debates unfolded was the phenomenon of "agricultural involution" examined by Clifford Geertz for Java. In the best tradition of social science, the clarity of Geertz's (1963) argument for the ecological symbiosis of rice and sugar and the "shared poverty" ethos in contemporary Java set off a flurry of research projects, both historical and ethnographic. Some scholars argued that labor recruiting and harvesting practices on Java, far from embodying a communitarian ethic, work for the benefit of the better-off (Stoler 1977). Gillian Hart (1986) contends that the redistributive mechanisms

described by Geertz appeared only at times when state power was weak (including the period in the 1950s when Geertz did his original fieldwork). At times of greater state control, local elites have built ties to state officials, allowing these elites to reduce their reliance on the poor for economic and political support (Hart 1989). Parallel arguments (*mutatis mutandis*) have been made for the rice plains of Thailand (Turton 1989); Malaysia (Scott 1985), and Luzon (Fegan 1989; Kerkvliet 1990; Wolters 1983).

Moreover, the "clients" in question have often challenged the existing order, sometimes on its own terms and sometimes with concepts taken from alternative moral systems. Ileto (1979) shows how millenial movements in the Philippines fashioned their own ideologies from the same debt-reciprocity ideas that were used by the elites to justify ties of dependency. Furthermore, precisely because the relation of Mary to Christ (and that of Spain to the Filipino people) had been promoted through the cultural vehicle of *utang na loob,* the "debt of gratitude", Filipinos could safely, and effectively, use this term to critique the colonial relationship (Rafael 1988). Scott (1985) has made the same argument for Malaysia: that the very generality of the ideology of reciprocity gives the landless some basis for an effective public critique of the well-off (see also McLellan 1986). Scott contrasts the public statements about social relations (the kind of statements that had once been taken as "reality"), with the "offstage" and often very cutting remarks made by peasants about landlords and vice-versa. The surface appearance of allegiance to a dominant norm (here, patron-client reciprocity), may conceal a great deal of peasant dissatisfaction with the current terms of trade. Ironically, the rich ethnographic studies by Scott and Kerkvliet now place in question Scott's (1976) earlier argument that precapitalist villages were characterized by a generally accepted set of socioeconomic relations. Could it not be that just as much (concealed)

subaltern hostility characterized the precapitalist village?

Adding a new dimension to the problem, Kerkvliet (1990) stresses the multiplicity of values available to farmers. Luzon landowners and tenants value vertical ties of clientage and kinship networks, but they also value progress (including the capacity to "rationalize" labor use) and the right to buy and sell property (see also Wolters 1983). Though developing their ideas in complementary fashion, Scott and Kerkvliet present agrarian societies from slightly different angles: Scott, working in Kedah, assigns to "winners and losers" two clear and distinct points of view; Kerkvliet, in Luzon, emphasizes ambivalences and contradictions.

Reciprocity terms are thus better seen as constructing a field for political action rather than transparently revealing widely accepted values. The state also has an interest in the reinterpretation of reciprocity terms. The state may use these terms to mobilize labor or wealth for development programs (Bowen 1986). Laotian Communist officials tried to base collectivization efforts on local traditions of "mutual solidarity and assistance" (Evans 1990, 149). Communist cadres were able to build on existing labor-exchange arrangements in their efforts to restructure labor recruitment, but encountered widespread resistance when they attempted to collectivze land ownership. Yet many Western observers of Laos and Vietnam had confused the two types of programs, arguing that the region already had traditions of collectivism (Evans 1990). Here, as in the Philippines and Indonesia, social science assumptions that cultural categories reflected broad traditions highly internalized by actors unfortunately have converged with state efforts to control labor and dissent.

Political studies have benefited from Southeast Asianist research in a number of closely interrelated ways, including at least the following. First, the long tradition of attention to concepts of power, their religious foundations, spatial display, and ritual reproduction in

the region have produced a small number of studies read by political scientists (and others) with no special interest in the region including Clifford Geertz's *Negara* (1980), and Benedict Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*, which sees the idea of nation as the search for a national analogue to the village (perhaps due to a longing for the pre-1965 Javanese village). Secondly, the region is becoming known for a kind of ethnography-based political theory (or theory-based political ethnography?), associated with James Scott's studies of political consciousness. Finally, local texts have become the sources of choice for understanding the history of power. One can mention Tambiah's (1976) analysis of Thai politics, Keith Taylor's (1983) work on Ly Vietnam, and the use by political scientists of literature, cartoons, and popular theatre, and novels. These features not only contribute to political studies generally, but have led to an unusually close intellectual relationship among practitioners of anthropology, history, and political science. The footnotes in Girling's excellent 1981 textbook on Thailand includes far more references to historians and anthropologists than to political scientists: the older, expected references to Coedes, Heine-Geldern and Wales, but also the contemporary ethnographic references to Tambiah, Keyes, and others.

Conversely, many of the key analytical concepts used by anthropologists of Southeast Asia come from students of politics. Surely none are cited more frequently in the 1980's and 1990's than the ideas of "imagined community" from Anderson, "moral economy" and "forms of resistance" from Scott--but so was the case in the previous generation with "patron-client" ties.

The Vietnam War may have changed the direction of political and economic studies most sharply of any field. Some research was carried out on and during the war itself; for example Osborne's (1965) study of the failed strategic hamlet program. The war also gave

raise to later, more reflective studies, that drew on area specialist knowledge, such as Hue-Tam Tai's (1992) study of the Vietnamese revolution (Tai 1992) or Ben Kiernan's (1996) attempt to understand the success of the Pol Pot regime, and the continuing effort, now centered at Yale, to document the regime's murderous life.

The war sharply changed an entire generation's attitude toward how one acquired knowledge and what kinds of knowledge were worthy of acquiring. In the 1950's, social scientists could engage in field research while attached to an AID mssion, with RAND Corporation support, and discuss their work with State Department personnel with few if any qualms (see the discussion in Halpern 1964: v). The mere involvment in discussions and seminars with government staff was later to haunt some fieldworkers from the first two generations when government minutes of meetings were scrutinized for objections to the Vietnam War or to counterinsurgency research (Wakin 1992). CIA sponsorship of anti-Communist books in the 1960's, and covert military support for journals (*Vietnam Perspectives*, followed, after bombing broadened to include Cambodia, *Southeast Asian Perspectives*) (Kahin 1997: 41-2) added to a general mistrust of research on certain topics.

One result of this suspicion was that any involvment with issues of economic development or foreign aid, much less direct work for hire, now appeared tainted to many specialists. Before the Vietnam War, scholars moved with some ease between government and academia, and engaged in "development administration" as well (see Esman 1972). Thereafter, a sharp division of labor has separated academics, who largely work on the cultural and social side of things, and consultants, most of them economists, who work in the non- or quasi-academic sector. For example, Harvard (as the Development Advisory Service, later the Institute for International Development) has maintained a very visible presence in

Indonesia, and to some extent in Malaysia and Thailand, for several decades, and many economists and other social scientists have carried out studies as well as provided advice to the government through HIID's offices. But this research is published in development journals or as in-house reports. (Compare the wealth of studies on development-related issues in Africa or Latin America carried out by academics and published for other academics.)

The war led many U.S. political scientists and economists interested in questions of development or political economy to turn to other world areas for their research. Richard Doner notes "the relatively meager contribution of Southeast Asian studies to the political economy literature" (1991:821), and that most of what there is comes from scholars located in Australia. (Here the international division of labor is particularly important.)

Early work in political economy was dominated by two themes. First, students of the colonial economy emphasized the "dualistic economy" (Furnivall 1956; Geertz 1963). Under this system, natives played only the role of increasingly pressured deliverers of produce and self-sufficient, at best, peasants, while the Europe-oriented export sector--perhaps better named the extractive sector--employed Europeans plus native workers. Chinese served as middlemen, for example holding the monopoly on opium and thereby making it profitable to extend retail marketing well into the countryside (Rush 1990).

Secondly, economists lamented the postcolonial response of economic nationalism, the desire to place economic control in the hands of those natives who had been kept away from the benefits of development for so long. Golay et al. (1969) argued that so long as the new states gave economic nationalism priority over economic development--distribution of product over size of product--then economists had better tailor their policy advice to those priorities or risk having no effect at all on economic policy. Issues of economic nationalism

developed most intensely in the Philippines, with its strategies of import substitution (and which thus resembled Latin America), and studies of capitalists and nationalism continued to focus there, and made few if any connections with the rest of Southeast Asian studies. For the rest of the region, interest was in state structures and bureaucrats. As a result, "political economy" approaches, including studies of local entrepeneurs and Chinese capitalists, received little attention (McVey 1992).[5]

By the 1980's an approach stressing "agrarian dynamics" had coalesced (see Hart, Turton, and White 1989), drawing on long-term research into rural agricultural change, and adding more recent studies of multinational factories (Wolf). Business studies promise to expand idea of state power to include groups with independent power bases, such as the textile industry group studied by MacIntyre (1990), that successfully forced the Indonesian government to overturn a monopoly grant for the procurement of materials for the spinning industry.[6]

The Study of Southeast Asian History

History contributed to regional study the mandala idea, a "circle of kings", where datu-like claims that one has ties to local spirits become king-like claims that one has ties to Siva or Vishnu, and hence universal power.

But in the first two decades of U.S. historical writing the emphasis was on producing local, nearly-contemporary social histories. At Cornell these dissertations were written for both History and Government departments. Robert Van Niel's 1954 dissertation, the first in History, concerned the modern Indonesian elite, Harry Benda's the following year (in Government) was on Islam during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1958), while

Taufik Abdullah's (1970, History) examined recent developments in Indonesian Islamic education. John Smail's in 1964 (in History) and Benedict Anderson's in 1967 (in Government) both analyzed the Indonesian revolution on Java. History dissertations about the mainland focused on the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including David Wyatt's (1966) on modern education in Thailand, Milton Osborne's (1968) on Indochina, and Constance Wilson's (1970) on Thailand's King Mongkut.

Some of these historians felt themselves increasingly contrained to focus on their particular research problem and not to venture too widely into study of the region as a whole. Kept busy learning a field language and one or two archival languages, "we were not pushed to do comparative work or to see Southeast Asia in a world context" (Frederick, personal communication 1998). Nor have many historians become regional experts: for obvious practical reasons, few scholars in any discipline learn Thai and Indonesian and Vietnamese (which would also require knowing Dutch and French). The few who have made these linguistic efforts tend to be at regional centers and to see their readerships as not described by a single discipline--the best examples being (again at Cornell) Benedict Anderson, who works on Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, and Oliver Wolters, who moved from early Malay studies to Vietnamese history.[7]

Time focus recedes as the Cornell program ages: dissertations on earlier periods began to appear toward the end of the 1960's: John Whitmore's (1969) on 15th century Vietnam, Leonard Andaya's (1971) on 17th-18th century Johor, and Charnvit Kasetsiri's (1972) on 14th-15th century Ayudhya (Thailand). These backward progressions probably reflect the new appointments of David Wyatt and Oliver Wolters to the History faculty; Wolters was largely responsible for developing research interest in early archipelagic history.

The resurgence in premodern history in the 1970's probably contributed to a general heightened interest in reexamining the analytic categories used in history writing, from "source" to "center" and "state."[8] Indigenous writings about the past have always been mined for information about specific past events, but during the 1970's many historians turned to such local genres for information about the perceptions and perspectives of participants in those events, as well as for insight into ideas about the past that are found in the past or in the present. A number of collections from the 1970's and 1980's emphasize the importance of such "sources", especially for the writing of premodern history (Gesick 1983; Marr and Milner 1986; Wolters 1982; Wyatt and Woodside 1982), and the essays in Reid and Marr (1979) sought to establish a new kind of indigenous historiography for the region. A number of particularly fine examples of this approach regard early Vietnamese history (Taylor 1986; Wolters 1986), perhaps because such sources provide insight into Vietnamese ideas about authority and legitimacy that had been misleadingly overlaid with Chinese-Confucian terms.

Premodern studies also queried concepts of "center" and "state." Historians and anthropologists have taken up the concept of "Indianization" in various ways: in Tambiah's (1976) study of the "Galactic polity," which links the Asokan figure of the "wheel-rolling ruler," the *cakravartin*, to the *mandala* polity, and to current political ideas; Clifford Geertz's (1980) *Negara*; Paul Wheatley's (1983) study of the early cities, *Nâgara*, Michael Aung-Thwin's (1985) *Pagan*. At the same time, an awareness of problems in "Indianization" as a category (redolent of "Orientalism" to some), led some historians to propose substituting "classical" (see the results in Gesick 1983). Other work has undermined projections of modern centralized states back in time (projections perhaps aided by the mandala idea)--for example, James Siegel (1969) pointed out the relatively independent roles of religious

scholars, traders, and rulers in 19th century Aceh.

Other historians wish to deconstruct the notion that current state boundaries describe a single political and cultural entity. Taylor, for example, argues that even the idea that northern Vietnam polities resemble China; southern ones the Theravada neighbors oversimplifies the matter, because kings drew on different features for different purposes, giving locally distinctive forms to Theravada concepts (such as the *sangha*), and incorporating Confucian terms without creating Confucian-style bureaucracies,

Finally, the analytical usefulness of writing about historical developments in "Southeast Asia" as currently defined has become the subject of greater debate since the publication of Anthony Reid's two-volume study (1988, 1993) of the region in the early modern period. Reid saw two kinds of grounds for taking the region as the analytical unit: a single set of cultural materials and norms, and a single regional historical dynamic, as exemplified in the crisis of the 17th century (Reid 1993). Victor Lieberman (1995), among others, disagrees, arguing that the mainland and archipelago experienced the 17th century (and presumably other centuries as well) in significantly different ways, because of the increasing vulnerability of the latter region to fluctuations in overseas commerce.

Other historians (Day 1996; Reynolds 1994) have asked whether the interest in the state and a reliance on Indic models have not obscured the importance of family--a question that suggests a way in which the older anthropology of family and marriage could become reinvigorated as part of historical studies. Day argues that shared problems of competiton in families and the demands of controlling one's ancestors are what shaped the development of states in Southeast Asia.

This idea has been developed as a general theory of regional history by Oliver

Wolters, who, although he favors subregional analyses on grounds that they better capture distinctive local processes (and thus would probably side with Lieberman in the debate mentioned above), also claims that the region's histories have to be placed on a non-Europeanist footing. Wolters (1982) argues that in the cognatically organized, isolated societies of premodern Southeast Asia, some men ("men of prowess") successfully claimed to possess higher quality "soul stuff". As ancestors they continued to benefit the community, and their veneration would have served as the cultural receptacle for the *devaraja* cult esablished by the Cambodian ruler Jayavarman II in 802. Cognatic kinship ensured that all Cambodians could benefit from the ruler's prowess, but the operant concept of power also required that the ruler continually validate prowess through achievement. From this perspective, "Indianization" did not mean adopting, whole cloth, a new world view, but rather selecting certain specific ideas that fit with the ideas and interests of the adopters. In this case one such ideas was devotionalism, a powerful closeness to Shiva or Vishnu that depended on personal effort, especially ascetic practices.

This theory accords well with Keith Taylor's (1986) argument that from the Vietnamese perspective it was the moral qualities of the 11th-century Ly rulers that aroused the spiritual powers dwelling in the Viet realm and induced them become protectors of the realm. The role of the Buddhist monkhood then becomes one of urging spirits to conform to the royal order. Taylor argues that although Chinese texts and precepts were employed to explain this new order, its basis was the Southeast Asian idea of a sacred kingship: for example, the actions of "Taoist priests" were similar to those of Japanese Shinto priests, namely, dealing with local spirits (Taylor 1986:149). This line of analysis brings us back to the work in Europe and Southeast Asia of Paul Mus (1933) and others on local religious cults.

Viewed in this way, the passage from "prestate" to "state" is a gradual aggregation of similar powers, not a sharp discontinuity, and does not necessarily involve creating a bureaucracy or a large city. That which later makes the ruler look like the summit of Weber's "patrimonial bureaucracy" (in Angkor, Sriwijaya, Ayudhya, Majapahit, and probably elsewhere) was his role as mediator between spirits and the realm, and among the many client groups that made up his entourage. Southeast Asian classical states thus begin to look more like Hawaiian kingships, where distant siblings were brought into alliance against dangerous siblings, or the court at Versailles, where centralization of power was designed to reduce the power both of regional lords and of close relatives, and less like the Chinese bureaucracy or its European cousin--or for that matter Indian kingships.

The Humanities and Culture

Have humanities flourished within Southeast Asian studies? Cultural studies surely have; humanities, a different concept, arguably have not. "Humanities," of course, can mean many different things: a set of disciplines or departments (art history, literature), a very specific set of methods (philology), a set of objects of study (paintings, novels), or a certain approach to studying any topic (humanistic). I think that those who find humanities neglected in Southeast Asian studies have the first two meanings in mind. Humanities disciplines indeed have been less well represented for Southeast Asia than for other areas, as I indicated earlier, and those disciplines have been confined to a few area centers, principally Berkeley, Cornell, Michigan and Wisconsin. Classical humanities approaches, centering on the comparative, philological analyses of texts, are not practiced widely even at those centers that do have strong representation of humanities disciplines.[9] By contrast, social scientists concentrating on

the region are found in many universities.

Why the relative neglect of the humanities in the study of Southeast Asia? Perhaps a series of contrasts with other regional traditions would help explain the situation. For South Asian studies, the particular emphasis of British colonialism on English-language training and higher education created a relatively large number of superbly trained English-speaking scholars. These scholars then developed a strong critical study of colonialism and an important body of post-colonial fiction and studies of that (and other) fiction. For Southeast Asia it may only be the work of Pramoedya Ananta Toer that could claim a comparable position to that of so many South Asian writers--one lone figure!

The post-colonial studies of South Asianists fit with the current fashions in some comparative literature departments, creating jobs for South Asianists--but not for Southeast Asianists, where the initial training never existed. (The story is complex, of course, because some of the post-colonial interest is itself due to the extraordinary productivity of many of South Asian scholars in the first place!) A similar close relationship between colonial and postcolonial studies and developments in literary studies within the region could be described for the Middle East and Latin America.

Yet, if we take "humanities" in the second and third senses suggested above--as defining certain objects of study and a certain appreciative approach to those objects--then the situation looks very different, and the complaint about neglect is much less true. Consider, first, that studies of Javanese art, music, theater, and literature are on a recent rise (e.g., Florida 1993; Sears 1996), and popular enjoyment of Southeast Asian performing arts, in particular gamelan, has spread across the U.S.. Studies of contemporary art are also enjoying a vogue (e.g., Wright 1994). Perhaps growing regional strength in performing arts and

literature departments will follow suit. I suspect, however, that even if Southeast Asia achieved parity with other regions in these disciplines, the complaint about neglect of the humanities would still be heard, because it derives from the sense that given the salience of arts in the region (Bali, Java, etc.), Southeast Asia ought to have proportionally *more* humanities faculty than other regions.

More centrally, as I have said elsewhere (Bowen 1995), the striking feature of Southeast Asianist anthropology, the dominant discipline in U.S. studies of the region, has been its consistent attention to those performance forms that constitute the primary object of study for the humanities. Public cultural performances have been central to the anthropology of the region, from Bateson and Mead's (1942) work on Balinese character, to analyses of culture through dance (Ness 1992), shadow plays (Keeler 1987), and shamanistic healing (Atkinson 1989). Historical and political studies of lowland realms have emphasized the capacity of temples and royal performances to convey power from a sacred center (Geertz 1980; Hall and Whitmore 1976; Heine-Geldern 1956; Tambiah 1976). The study of local ways of speaking has been a critical point of departure for understanding processes of social change (Errington 1989; Kuipers 1990; Luong 1988) and religious debates (Bowen 1993), as has the study of how people read and understand novels (Banks 1987; Sweeney 1987) and enjoy popular music (Yampolsky (1989).

A general appreciation and enjoyment of Southeast Asian literature has also crossed disciplinary lines, such that specialists in all fields read works produced in the region. I would guess that my colleagues in government or social history of Southeast Asia are more likely to have read a novel in Indonesian or Thai than would be the case for their colleagues in African studies and even their colleagues in South Asian studies, if we limit ourselves to

indigenous languages.[10]

It may be that when discussing the "fate of the humanities" we ask the wrong questions. Why should the study of art in Southeast Asia look like the study of European art as classically practiced in Europe? The art historian Stanley O'Connor makes the case for "cultural contextualization" in studying art objects, arguing that the gradually learned ability in the U.S. and Europe to encompass art from all parts of the world as "art" has reduced our ability to see that, as he puts it, "the arts of much of the rest of the world, over most of human time, were actions embedded in community; that these works both sustained and disclosed the worlds from which they have now been pried loose" (1995:152).

At the beginning of this century, anthropologists were engaged in a vehement debate over the way to organize museums: were artifacts to be grouped in terms of a presumed universal function, e.g., as a progressive ordering of "the developing arts of warfare," as they had been, or, as Franz Boas and others urged, should they be exhibited as part of the specific cultural complex that gives the objects meaning? The latter position won as far as anthropology was concerned, but, as O'Connor laments (1995), it lost ground in art history. Perhaps the contribution of Southeast Asian art studies will be to resituate art as part of cultural life.[11]

The kind of fieldwork-based study of speech, texts, art, and performance I have been remarking has been particularly effective in cutting across older disciplinary divisions of labor. The study of large-scale religions provides a good example. At the time when the first Southeast Asia centers were established, the study of Islam, Buddhism, and other highly textualized religious traditions (what Robert Redfield [1956] called the urban "great" traditions) was largely controlled by historians of religion, while anthropologists limited

themselves to the study of illiterate, rural "little" traditions--"folk" stuff such as cults of ancestors, saints, and village spirits.

Breaking through this dichotomy was done largely through the study of how villagers read, recited, and listened to religious texts, and much of the break-through work was done in Southeast and South Asia. Stanley Tambiah (1970) showed that northeastern Thai village monks learned Pali texts as well as vernacular ones, and that ordinary folk considered it of religious importance to "listen without understanding" to Pali ritual utterances (1970: 195-214). Tambiah also turned the tables: it is not just that Buddhism also lives in the village, but that there is no Buddhism (or Islam or Catholicism) that is independent of any particular social realization of Buddhism (1976: 402)--although continued use by others of phrases such as "normative Islam" or "doctrinal Buddhism" implies that there is.

Islam has provided a greater analytical challenge, because Muslims inherit a tradition that urges them to construct all of their lives around Islamic norms. In the 1950's and 1960's this tradition itself was of interest neither to political scientists, for whom Islam was important only as a set of political forces or movements, nor to anthropologists, who found it unappealingly homogeneous next to fascinating local cultural diversities. The initial approaches were through the socioology of Islamic ideas, as in Clifford Geertz's *Religion of Java* (1960), written along Redfieldian lines, which convincingly situated "streams" of religion in the institutional contexts of market, school, and office, or in Clive Kessler's (1978) analysis of Islamic party politics in eastern Malaysia. Two studies from the earlier period stand out: Taufik Abdullah's (1971) history of Islamic education in Sumatra, and James Siegel's (1969) study of Acehnese religion and society.

Siegel's study perhaps represents the "breakthrough" analogue to Tambiah's, in that

he paid close attention to the ways that poetry, prayer, and economic life were interpreted through a single lens of religious reformism. More recent studies have examined the importance of novels, rural poetry, women's study sessions, and new religious schools and associations in transforming popular Muslim consciousness in the twentieth century (Banks 1987; Bowen 1993; Hefner 1994; Peacock 1978).[12]

Redfield's original call for the study of those "culture brokers" who mediate between what he called great and little traditions has in the end born fruit, by way of a closer study of religious texts and their modes of transmission, in effect a cultural contextualization of religious studies.

The diversity of Southeast Asia can be put positively, in terms of the multiplicity of its cultures, religions, islands, and language families, or negatively, in terms of the absence of a single dominant political power or literary tradition. In the context of academic institutions, the negative sense of this diversity often prevails, emerging as a decenteredness, a lack of clear identity, a choice of trying for thin coverage or risking thick partiality. In the context of academic inquiry, both the cultural multiplicity and the absence of a dominating central tradition have, ironically, produced a unifying analytical approach, that of comparative studies of culture in context. Cultural contextualization of politics, religion, language, or art requires attention to the local (how is it meaningful for *these* people?); the historical (what is preserved or transformed over time?); and the comparative (what does *this* place tell me about *that* one?). It sees theories as themselves local, and so facilitates conversations between model-builders and detail-absorbers. It works best when multiplicity, change, and conflict are taken to be the nature of things, rather as the sign of an incomplete research agenda. It has, for all these reasons, come to define the study of Southeast Asia at its best.

Endnotes

1. In conversations with me in 1997, Kahin hoped his colleagues would study upland peoples before they disappear; to realize that early history is still vastly understudied; and to turn to topics of labor movements and the environment. James Siegel advocated taking current analytical issues such as technological innovation and emphasizing the distinctive contribution of Southeast Asian studies.

[2] These data usually concern specialists either born or teaching in the U.S., and not specialists receiving degrees from U.S. universities. The majority of Southeast Asians receiving advanced degrees in the U.S. do so in applied fields such as education, and although their dissertations nearly always concern their home countries, many of them have little to do with the U.S. area centers.

[3] Other developments in the region arguably shaped the direction of research: the 1973 student uprisings in Thailand created a new (Romantic?) strain of anti-state thinking parallel to that created after the Indonesian massacres of 1965-66--both developments probably had their strongest intellectual effects at Cornell, and in particular among students working with Benedict Anderson.

[4] In Indonesia, rarely studied but very consequential are the deep rifts between ministries that have strong local effects, such as that between the technocratic Ministry of Finance and the nationalist Ministry of Cooperatives.

[5] Of course, economists with no particular areal expertise do write about the region; in general they find great interest in the combination of technocratic policies such as tax reform, devaluations of currencies, bank liberalizations, judicious use of windfall revenues to develop infrastructure, with corrupt and often monopoly-favoring governments, huge disparities in income, and widespread environmental destruction.

[6] One would like to see case studies of key political decisions, such as the Indonesian government's

decision to withdraw control over import duties from the bureaucracy and give it to a foreign enterprise, which may clarify the international dimensions of state-society relations; such studies would also provide a historical context for the decisions taken by the IMF or the World Bank.

[7] Nor, I would suggest, is it clear that a regional focus is always desireable: perhaps developing competencies in Indonesia and Morocco in order to speak comparatively about Islam, as did the Geertzs, or the Philippines and Mexico in order to do so about Spanish colonialism, or Vietnam and Algeria for the French version, are more productive historical research strategies for those with vast energies.

[8] Not that studies of colonial history have not also grown, reflecting a new generation's effective use of French and Dutch archives to examine processes of economic change in greater detail, and the cultural contours of colonial rule (Stoler 1985).

[9] Because classical humanities approaches have been maintained in Europe (for this region, at Leiden), and Europe produces many of the best young text specialists, there is a resultant lack of fit between the current fashion in U.S. comparative literature programs and the approaches taken by many of the best Southeast Asianist candidates for U.S. literature positions. The problem has plagued Cornell's effort to develop a Southeast Asian strength in literary studies.

[10] I make this claim despite the fact that as recently as 1970, Southeast Asianists reported the lowest levels of language competence among regional specialists, and rarely took courses in literature as part of their training (Lambert 1973:57). I believe that this situation has sharply changed.

[11] O'Connnor's own career exemplifies the contextualizing approach: it included fieldwork into material culture techniques and the study of metallurgy on Java and Borneo.

[12] For the Philippines one would mention recent studies of Catholic imagery and texts in local social history (Ileto 1979; Rafael 1993). Little has yet been done on Protestant movements in the Philippines.