

HISTORY, CULTURE, AND
REGION IN SOUTHEAST
ASIAN PERSPECTIVES

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O. W. Wolters

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In Memoriam
John M. Echols
1913-1982

The collection of essays reproduced in this volume was originally published in 1982 by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. Fifteen years later the Editorial Board of the Cornell Southeast Asia Program suggested that a new edition should be undertaken, and the Institute agreed to co-sponsor it. For this purpose I have written a postscript and prepared an index. I am grateful to my editors Triena Ong, Deborah Homsher, and Lorraine Nicholas Anastasio, and especially the latter two who carried the brunt of the editorial responsibility.

O. W. W.
1998

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INTRODUCTION

A shorter and somewhat different version of this paper was presented at a seminar held in Manila in June 1980. The seminar, organized by the East-West Cultural Learning Institute of the East-West Center in Honolulu and the Law Center of the University of the Philippines, focused on "Problems and Progress in Cultural Development in ASEAN," and the participants were asked to keep in mind the following passage in the 1976 Preamble to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia: "Conscious of the existing ties of history, geography, and culture which have bound the peoples together. . . ." Although the proceedings of the seminar have been published, I am grateful for being allowed to revise and enlarge my essay for separate publication. I thank Professor K. S. Sandhu, Director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, for accepting the revised version.

I have taught earlier Southeast Asian history for a number of years and I have chosen to chart my course through different parts of the region at particular times rather than try to demonstrate that "Southeast Asia" possesses some predestined regional and historical identity which is disclosing itself over the centuries. My approach probably began as a reaction against the general assumption when I entered the field that earlier Southeast Asia could be studied from the perspective of "Indianized states." More than enough evidence seemed available to indicate widespread Indian cultural influences, and this circumstance undoubtedly encouraged scholars to see the region as having a historical identity of its own. India-ward proclivities never satisfied me, and I increasingly eschewed efforts to organize my lectures around overarching regional-scale themes. Instead, I concentrated my attention on subregional histories wherever the materials made this possible. Thus, the Manila seminar, with its focus on ASEAN, gave me an unexpected opportunity to ask myself whether Southeast Asia was indeed something more than just a geographical space between India and China. I began to enquire whether a regional history could be distinguished in the shape of cultural communalities and intra-regional relationships.

The reader will decide whether my sudden change of approach has made a great deal of difference to my perception of Southeast Asia as a zone of subregional histories. For my part, the experience of writing this paper has convinced me of the acute problems that would arise if I were to attempt to write a textbook on the subject. Fernand Braudel, the historian of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century, refers to the "still unresolved debate" on the question of dividing history into the

slow- and fast-moving levels, structure and conjuncture."¹ How much more serious is the historian's predicament in my field, where a wide range of happenings is seldom disclosed anywhere, while the intellectual, social, economic, and political structures within which events at different times took place are still indistinct unless one seeks refuge, for instance, in the phantom of the *devarāja* or other generalizations supposed to do justice to this share of the world's earlier history.

Some may disagree that the difficulty of organizing an outline for a new textbook means that the enterprise should be shelved for the time being. Yet those who study and teach earlier Southeast Asian history may wish, once in their lifetime, to indicate the type of textbook that could take into account some of the themes and subject matter which seem, in our present state of knowledge, to endow the field with an appropriate shape and texture. This publication is not intended to be a miniature textbook but rather a gesture on these lines, and I hope that it may generate discussion of what is meant by earlier Southeast Asian history and the ways in which the subject could be presented.

In the meantime, the most helpful general surveys for me are D. G. E. Hall's *A History of South-East Asia*, first published in 1955 when the author had the responsibility of teaching undergraduates² and George Coedès's *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, a critical manual of current research, originally written in 1944 and revised under new titles in 1948, 1964, and 1968.³ Perhaps a serviceable new textbook could be written by someone willing to prepare a careful commentary, with ample footnotes and within Coedès's format, which could indicate new materials or revisionary views which Coedès was unable to consider before he died in 1969.

I offer this publication for classroom criticism. Teachers and students may soon detect errors, compromises, inconsistencies, and hesitance when I lurch in this or that direction in search of a shape to earlier Southeast Asian history. Not all may be interested in following the path outlined in chapter five where I discuss a particular manifestation of historical processes. Nevertheless, exploring processes rather than devising ways of stating the finished product of history in this region makes the field, in my opinion, exciting as well as difficult. I regret that I have provided too few suggestions concerning the important topic of continuities and changes, while my recourse to a synoptic approach saps the subject of its life and authenticity. Though I move beyond the fifteenth century when it serves my purpose to do so, my focus is on the earlier centuries. My neglect of Theravāda Buddhism, Islam, and Western involvement deprives me of opportunities for delineating the subject more sharply, but I believe that the time span I have chosen has a privileged status in the region's history. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese reached Southeast Asia, and the Spaniards, Dutch, and English followed them within the next hundred years. I do not for one moment assume that almost immediately afterwards sudden and

¹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 2, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, Harper Torchbook edition, 1976), p. 1242.

² The fourth edition has been published in 1981 by St. Martin's Press, New York. Hall's life (1891-1979) and career are described in D. C. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, eds., *Southeast Asian History and Historiography. Essays presented to D. G. E. Hall* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 11-23.

³ The 1964 French edition has been translated, with some additional materials, as *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968). For Coedès's life (1886-1969) and career, see J. Filliozat, "Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. George Coedès," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 57(1970): 1-24.

overwhelming changes got under way, but gradually parts of the region and also of the Asian maritime world in general, to which Southeast Asia had so profitably belonged, were no longer left entirely to themselves. The situation had been very different during the previous millennium and more, when what I shall refer to as the early Southeast Asian political systems elaborated their own style of intra-regional relations.

Some critics will bring their special disciplinary competence into play and enquire whether I could have developed alternative and more accurate perspectives. I would welcome this criticism most of all. Over the years my conviction has grown that the study of earlier Southeast Asian history is everyone's business. Not only historians but also anthropologists, art historians, linguists, and musicologists, to mention some obvious examples, must continue to make their contribution by showing ways in which the subject can be profitably studied. Only then will a more substantial rendering of the shape of regional history be gradually disclosed.

One way of defining the historian's responsibility, at least in respect of the earlier centuries, may well be learning how to study his subject. His colleagues in other disciplines can sometimes come to his assistance. The historian almost invariably finds himself asking what exactly he is looking at when confronted by a piece of evidence or, when he reads a published study, what its wider implications could be in a field where much is still obscure. Harry Benda, the first director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, saw the future as one of interdisciplinary cooperation when he argued the case for a "structural approach" to Southeast Asian history and proceeded to experiment with the tools of the social sciences.⁴ Uncertain whether an ancient regional infrastructure had as yet been established, he preferred to examine the structure of Southeast Asian history in the social, economic, and political relationships of the "classical period" and especially in more recent centuries.

I must hasten to add, however, that, although I gladly recognize the contribution of those who do not normally identify themselves as professional historians, I do not mean to imply that the historians' skills stem simply from the circumstance that they, and only they, can be expected to assume the responsibility of discovering and criticizing documents. Mary Wright, Harry Benda's colleague at Yale, wrote an essay which cowed historians can read to their advantage. She points out that social scientists and others "are dependent on historians to open up general ranges of [Chinese] experience as it is recorded before they can define important problems in their own field," and she goes on to insist that the historians' function should not be defined as "doing the dirty work with the sources and asking social scientists to do the thinking."⁵ I shall have occasion later to return to Mary Wright's defence of my profession.

I am grateful to friends for criticism of earlier drafts of this essay, particularly James A. Boon, Sunait Chutintaranond, Jonathan Culler, John M. EchoIs, Shelly Errington, Edward W. Fox, George McT. Kahin, Steven L. Kaplan, A. Thomas Kirsch, Stanley J. O'Connor, Craig J. Reynolds, and Harold Shadick. Not all of them read

⁴ H. J. Benda, "The Structure of Southeast Asian History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3,1 (1962): 106-38. Benda's scholarly contributions, cut short by his untimely death in 1971, are described by George McT. Kahin in, "In Memoriam: Harry J. Benda," *Indonesia* 13 (1972): 211-12; and Ruth T. McVey, *Southeast Asian Transitions. Approaches through Social History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 4-5.

⁵ Mary C. Wright, "Chinese History and the Historical Vocation," *Journal of Asian Studies* (hereafter cited as *AS*) 23,4 (1964): 515.

entire drafts, and none of them should be held responsible for what I have written. I also wish to thank Teresa M. Palmer for her typing assistance and for her patience.

The essay begins with some comments on what I believe are features of the cultural background from which the early political systems emerged. I shall then review the style of intra-regional relations which developed during the first millennium or so of the Christian era and begin to ask myself what we may mean by "Southeast Asian history." Thereafter I go my own way but not, I hope, into the wilderness.

SOME FEATURES OF THE CULTURAL MATRIX

A remarkable development in Southeast Asian studies since the Second World War has been the steadily improving knowledge of the region's prehistory.¹ The best known discoveries, made possible by scientifically conducted excavations and the tools of carbon dating, thermoluminescence, and palaeobotany, are signs of bronze-working and domesticated agriculture at certain sites in northeastern Thailand attributable to the fourth millennium BC. Iron-working, too, seems to have been under way at one of these sites by about 1500 BC. Moreover, by the second half of the second millennium BC at the latest, metallurgy had become the most recent stage in a local cultural process over a sufficiently wide area in northern Vietnam to permit Vietnamese archaeologists to broach sophisticated sociological enquiries.

For my purpose, the important consequence of current prehistoric research is that an outline of the ancient settlement map is beginning to be disclosed. The map seems to comprise numerous networks of relatively isolated but continuously occupied dwelling sites, where residential stability was achieved by exploiting local environmental resources to sustain what is sometimes called continually expanding "broad spectrum" subsistence economies. The inhabitants' original skills were those of "forest efficiency," or horticulture, although during the second millennium BC domesticated modes of wet-rice agriculture were probably appearing in the mainland alluvial plains.²

These tendencies in prehistoric research provide helpful perspectives for historians of the early Southeast Asian political systems, for they are now being

¹ For recent surveys of current prehistoric research, see I. W. Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: Reflections on Prehistoric Sources," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (hereafter cited as *JSEAS*) 8,1 (1977): 1-14; the "Introduction" in R. B. Smith and W. Watson, eds., *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography* (hereafter cited as *Early South East Asia*) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 3-14; Donn Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," *Pacific Affairs* 51,1 (1980): 89-114; Nguyễn Phúc Long, "Les Nouvelles recherches archéologiques au Vietnam," *Arts Asiatiques*, Numéro special, 31 (1975); Jeremy H. C. S. Davidson, "Archaeology in Northern Viet-Nam since 1954," in *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 98-124; and Hà Văn Tấn, "Nouvelles recherches préhistoriques et protohistoriques au Vietnam," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (hereafter cited as *BEFEO*) 68 (1980): 113-54.

² See Donn Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," p. 105, for an evaluation of the evidence of rice-cultivation techniques.

encouraged to suppose that by the beginning of the Christian era a patchwork of small settlement networks of great antiquity stretched across the map of Southeast Asia. For example, no less than about three hundred settlements, datable by their artifacts as belonging to the seventh and eighth centuries AD, have been identified in Thailand alone by means of aerial photography.³ Seen from the air, they remind one of craters scattered across the moon's surface. The seventh-century inscriptions of Cambodia mention as many as thirteen toponyms sufficiently prominent to be known by Sanskrit names. The multiplicity of Khmer centers, for there were surely more than thirteen, contradicts the impression provided by Chinese records of protohistoric Cambodia that there was only a single and enduring "kingdom of Funan."⁴ "Funan" should not, I shall suggest below, be invoked as the earliest model of an "Indianized state" in Southeast Asia.

The historian, studying the dawn of recorded Southeast Asian history, can now suppose with reasonable confidence that the region was demographically fragmented. The ethnic identity and remotest origins of these peoples are questions that I shall eschew. Before the Second World War, prehistorians framed hypotheses based on tool typology to argue that culturally significant migrations into the region took place from the second half of the second millennium BC. These hypotheses have now been overtaken by the disclosing chronology of much earlier technological innovation established by means of prehistoric archaeology. Rather than assuming migrations from outside the region, we can be guided by Donn Bayard's view that prehistoric Southeast Asia was a "continually shifting mosaic of small cultural groups, resembling in its complexity the distribution of the modern hill tribes."⁵ The focus of attention must be on what some of these groups could do inside the region and what they became.

The ancient inhabitants of Southeast Asia were living in fairly isolated groups, separated by thick forests, and would have had powerful attachments to their respective localities. I shall have occasion later to discuss the continuation of the prehistoric settlement pattern in historical times, and I shall content myself here by noting that in Java, for example, local scripts⁶ and local sung poems⁷ survived through the centuries. Or again, Malyāng, a small principality in northwestern

³ I am grateful to Srisakra Vallibhotama for this information.

⁴ Claude Jacques, "'Funan.' 'Zhenla.' The Reality Concealed by These Chinese Views of Indochina," in *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 378; O. W. Wolters, "Northwestern Cambodia in the Seventh Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (hereafter cited as *BSOAS*) 37,2 (1974): 378-79; and "Khmer 'Hinduism' in the Seventh Century," in *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 429.

⁵ Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," p. 92. Recent excavations at Ban Chiang in northeastern Thailand have suggested a movement of people into the alluvial plains in the millennium after the transition to wet-rice cultivation at Ban Chiang; *ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶ J. G. de Casparis, *Indonesian Palaeography. A History of Writing in Indonesia from the Beginning to c. A.D. 1500* (Leiden: A. J. Brill, 1975), p. 72.

⁷ Martin F. Hatch, "Lagu, Laras, Layang. Rethinking Melody in Javanese Music," (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1980), pp. 38-50. Old Javanese inscriptions show that those who called themselves "Mahārāja" retained the words "Raka of . . ." in their titles to indicate their home territory; see F. H. van Naerssen, *The Economic and Administrative History of Early Indonesia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) pp. 46-55.

Cambodia during the seventh century, disappears from the records after the late eighth century but reappears in the late twelfth century as a rebellious area when Angkor was sacked by the Chams in 1177.⁸ The modern names of villages and subregions are also often identifiable in early written records.

The multiplicity of settlement areas, each of which could go its own way, means that the historian should be cautious before he decides that any part of the region once occupied only a peripheral status in the general picture. Everything depends on what the historian is looking at in particular times in the past. For example, one still knows very little of the early history of the Philippines, but one should not conclude that these islands remained on the fringe of early Southeast Asia. Their inhabitants did not perceive their map in such a way. They are more likely to have looked outward to what is the Vietnamese coast today or to southern China for the more distant world that mattered to them. Every center was a center in its own right as far as its inhabitants were concerned, and it was surrounded by its own group of neighbours.

The ancient pattern of scattered and isolated settlements at the beginning of the Christian era would seem to suggest little prospect that the settlements would generate more extensive contact between themselves. The tempo of communication was probably slow even though linguists have been able to delineate major and overarching language families. The languages of the archipelago can be conveniently defined as belonging to the "Austronesian" language family. The language map of mainland Southeast Asia is much more complicated. In early times, the Mon-Khmer, or "Austroasiatic," family of languages stretched from Burma to northern Vietnam and southern China. The Tai and Burman languages were wedges thrust into the Mon-Khmer language zone. But the reality everywhere in Southeast Asia is likely to have been that the major language families were represented by numerous local and isolated speech variations. Only in later times did some variations take on the characteristics of neighbouring speeches, a development that gradually led to a more widely used standardized speech. Linguistic similarities were not in themselves cultural bridges. When, therefore, we enquire how these scattered settlements were able to reduce their isolation, we have to consider other cultural features with greater possibilities for creating more extensive relationships within the region.

There are, in fact, several such features, though we must bear in mind that not all societies can be attributed with identical features. Exceptions can always be found. Moreover, similar cultural features did not in themselves guarantee that extensive relationships would develop across localities as a matter of course, even if their inhabitants came to recognize that they had something in common.

One well-represented feature of social organization within the lowlands in the region today is what anthropologists refer to as "cognatic kinship,"⁹ and we can

⁸ Wolters, "Northwestern Cambodia in the Seventh Century," p. 358.

⁹ This generalization does not include important groups such as the Chams and Minangkabau. I am referring, for example, to the Burmans, Thai, Khmers, Malays, Javanese, and Tagalogs. I follow Keesing's definition of "cognatic" as meaning: (a) a mode of descent reckoning where all descendants of an apical ancestor/ancestress through any combinations of male or female links are included; (b) bilateral kinship, where kinship is traced to relations through both father and mother. See Roger M. Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., 1975), chapter 6 and the glossary. Sometimes examples are found of nuclear families and neolocal residence. The *Sui-shu*, referring to Cambodia in about AD 600, states: "When a man's marriage ceremonies are completed, he takes a share of his parents' property and leaves them in order to live elsewhere." See O. W. Wolters, "Khmer

suppose that this feature was present throughout historical times. In simple terms, the expression means that descent is reckoned equally through males and females and that both males and females are able to enjoy equal inheritance rights.¹⁰ The comparable status of the sexes in Southeast Asia may explain why an Indonesian art historian has noted the unisex appearance of gods and goddesses in Javanese iconography, whereas sexual differences are unambiguously portrayed in Indian iconography.¹¹

A notable feature of cognatic kinship is the downgrading of the importance of lineage based on claims to status through descent from a particular male or female. This does not mean that early settlements were egalitarian societies; prehistoric graves with sumptuary goods and status symbols reveal hierarchical distinctions evolving from before the beginning of the Christian era. Moreover, the principle of cognatic kinship by no means implies that kinship ties are unimportant. The contrary is the case. Kinship ties are the idiom of social organization in the region and part of its history. For example, when the Khmers founded or endowed religious cult centers, their commemorative inscriptions mention a variety of male and female kinship relationships over several generations. Nevertheless the forebears, members of the devotees' kin (*kula*), are not presented as a lineage. Certain forebears are singled out for their personal accomplishments but the focus of the inscriptions is always on those who are performing and commemorating their own acts of devotion. One inscription explicitly excludes the devotee's parents from enjoying the fruits of his devotion.¹²

The relative unimportance of lineage means that we have to look elsewhere for cultural factors which promote leadership and initiative beyond a particular locality, and I suggest that leadership in interpersonal relations was associated with what anthropologists sometimes refer to in other parts of the world as the phenomenon of "big men." Here is a cultural trait in early Southeast Asia that seems to offer a helpful perspective for understanding much of what lay behind intra-regional relations in later times.

The leadership of "big men," or, to use the term I prefer, "men of prowess," would depend on their being attributed with an abnormal amount of personal and innate "soul stuff," which explained and distinguished their performance from that of others in their generation and especially among their own kinsmen. In the

'Hinduism,'" p. 430. Excavations in Bali indicate burials of nuclear families; see R. P. Soejono, "The Significance of the Excavation at Gilimanuk (Bali)," in *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 195.

¹⁰ The nuclear family was the typical family in the Lê legal code, and both husbands and wives enjoyed property rights; see Insun Yu, "Law and Family in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Vietnam" (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1978). The Chinese census statistics in Vietnam during the early centuries of the Christian era purport to reveal an increase in the number of households rather than in the total population, and one would expect this evidence in a society practicing bilateral kinship. I am grateful to Keith Taylor for the information.

¹¹ I owe this observation to Satyawati Suleiman. For a discussion of female property rights and the appearance of women in negotiations with royal representatives, see J. G. de Casparis, "Pour une histoire sociale de l'ancienne Java principalement au Xème s.," *Archipel* 21 (1981): 147.

¹² A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, vol. 34, *Inscriptions sanscrites du Cambodge et Champa* (hereafter cited as *ISCC*) (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1885), p. 20.

Southeast Asian languages, the terms for "soul stuff" vary from society to society, and the belief is always associated with other beliefs. The distinctions between "soul stuff" and the associated beliefs are so precise and essential that they can be defined only in the language of each society.¹³ Nevertheless, a person's spiritual identity and capacity for leadership were established when his fellows could recognize his superior endowment and knew that being close to him was to their advantage not only because his entourage could expect to enjoy material rewards but also, I believe, because their own spiritual substance, for everyone possessed it in some measure, would participate in his, thereby leading to *rapport* and personal satisfaction. We are dealing with the led as well as the leaders.

The consequence of what Thomas Kirsch has referred to in the context of the mainland hill tribes of Southeast Asia as "unequal souls"¹⁴ was that men of prowess, after their death, could be reckoned among their settlements' Ancestors and be worshipped. Ancestors were always those who, when they were alive, protected and brought benefits to their people. Sometimes they were worshipped with menhirs, and a Javanese scholar has recently suggested that Javanese temples should be identified as the successors of the menhirs.¹⁵ No special respect was paid to mere forebears in societies that practised cognatic kinship.¹⁶ Ancestor status had to be earned. Sites associated with the Ancestors, such as mountains, supplied additional identity to the settlement areas.

Men of prowess in earlier times may sometimes have anticipated their future status as Ancestors. Pedro Chirino, a Spanish missionary of the early seventeenth century who was familiar with Tagalog society in the Philippines, tells us that those who had distinguished themselves would attribute their valour to divine forces and take care to select burial sites that would become centers for their worship as Ancestors.¹⁷ This is the conceptual framework in which I am inclined to interpret the meaning of the much discussed *devarāja* cult inaugurated by the Cambodian ruler, Jayavarman II, on Mount Mahendra in 802. The cult, established by tantric procedures of initiation and only after a long series of triumphant campaigns in

¹³ Anthropological studies about "soul stuff" in a regional context do not seem available at the present time. Indeed, James Boon remarks in respect of Indonesia that "the ultimate comparativist accomplishment would be to plot the various soul-power terms—*semangat*, *roh*, and so on—against each other across Indonesian and Malay societies"; see James A. Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597-1972* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 240, n. 7. See Appendix A: Miscellaneous notes on "soul stuff" and "prowess."

¹⁴ Thomas A. Kirsch, *Feasting and Social Oscillation: Religion and Society in Upland Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1973), p. 15.

¹⁵ Soekmono, "Candi, fungsi dan pengertiannya. Le candi, sa fonction et sa conception," *BEFEO* 62 (1975): 455. Soekmono believes that the significance of menhirs should be understood in terms that apply equally to the "continental" Southeast Asian menhirs.

¹⁶ Francisco Colin, a missionary in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, provides an excellent account of what could happen to undistinguished sons of distinguished fathers: "the fact that they had honoured parents or relatives was of no avail to them . . ."; see F. Landa Jocano, ed., *The Philippines at the Spanish Contact* (Manila: MCS Enterprises, 1975), pp. 178-79. In Bali, where kinship is very important, the achievement of founding a new line of descent is emphasized rather than that of perpetuating an old one; see James A. Boon, "The Progress of the Ancestors in a Balinese Temple-Group (pre-1906-1972)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1974): 24.

¹⁷ F. Landa Jocano, ed., *The Philippines at Spanish Contact*, p. 142.

many parts of the country, assimilated the king's spiritual identity with Śiva as "the king of the gods," a definition of Śiva that matched the overlord status that the king had already achieved. To this extent, Jayavarman's *linga* cult, except for its unique name, could not have been different from the earlier rulers' personal *linga* cults, to which I shall refer below. But his cult, I believe, was also something else. He realized that his achievements had guaranteed his status as an Ancestor among all those Khmers who were connected with his kinship group, which was bound to be an extended one because it was organized in accordance with the principle of cognatic kinship. He therefore made arrangements, as the Sdok Kak Thom inscription of 1052 describes, for the perpetuation of the cult to enable future kings to invoke additional supernatural protection from their deified Ancestor. The consequence he had in mind was that Cambodia would always have a *cakravartin*, as he had become on Mount Mahendra. And, indeed, the kings continued during the tenth century to venerate the *devarāja* according to the rite established in 802; they did this even though each of them had his own personal cult.¹⁸ Jayavarman's foresight can be likened to that of the Tagalog chiefs mentioned by Chirino.

What situation did the king foresee that would require the later kings to be protected by his cult? He would have assumed that, in the future, members of different branches of his extended kin would sometimes struggle to seize the kingship, and he intended his Ancestral cult to provide a focal influence in preventing Cambodia from being permanently torn apart, depriving the country, of a *cakravartin*. Feuds would be composed after the successful prince worshipped the Ancestral cult and thereby announced his claim to lead his kin in his generation and the right to appeal to their loyalty.

Sindok's cult may provide another instance of an efficacious Ancestral cult. Sindok was an eastern Javanese ruler in the tenth century. Erlangga, the conquering king of the eleventh century, worshipped at Sindok's shrine early in his career some years before he began his campaigns. Perhaps he was invoking additional divine protection and, at the same time, assuming the political initiative by identifying himself as the rising leader in his generation over all those who could claim descent from Sindok. In this way, he would have rallied distant kinsmen to his side in preparation for the adventures that lay ahead.¹⁹

The cultural phenomenon of "men of prowess" brings with it the possibility of mobilizing extended kinship ties within and outside a settlement or network of settlements. Those who had the highest expectations when they were attracted into a leader's personal entourage, whether as relatives or dependants, were those who believed that they, too, were capable of achievement. Characteristic regional attitudes towards "public life" would develop. Public life in a leader's service would become the only prestigious way of life for those who did not wish to remain anonymous. As the Bendahara of Malacca puts it, "work for the Raja" or "go and dwell in the forest, for shoots and leaves make a good enough meal for a man with a small appetite."²⁰ Public life would also be the stage for open competition for pre-

¹⁸ H. Kulke has shown that the *devarāja* cult must be distinguished from the personal cults of later Angkorian rulers. The cult declined in prominence after the tenth century; see Hermann Kulke, *The Devarāja Cult* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1978).

¹⁹ W. Stöhr and P. Zoetmulder, *Les religions d'Indonésie* (Paris: Payot, 1968), p. 291.

²⁰ "The Malay Annals," trans. C. C. Brown, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (hereafter cited as *JMBRAS*) 25,2-3 (1952): 119.

eminence. Leaders and followers alike needed to validate their status by continuous achievement, and achievement often involved adventures into neighbouring settlement areas. As signs of a leader's favour, achievement and meritorious deeds were rewarded with titles and other gifts. The leader established hierarchy in the public life of his day, and one consequence was that many of the Southeast Asian languages developed special forms of speech for addressing superiors. Finally, and very important in the extension of communications between networks of settlements, leaders in neighbouring areas would recognize the higher spiritual status of a man of outstanding prowess and seek to regularize their relations with him by means of alliances that acknowledged the inequality of the parties. In this way more distant areas would be brought into a closer relationship with one another.

Cognatic kinship, an indifference towards lineage descent, and a preoccupation with the present that came from the need to identify in one's own generation those with abnormal spiritual qualities are, in my opinion, three widely represented cultural features in many parts of early Southeast Asia. With this cultural background in mind, I shall now suggest a reification that lay behind a particular episode in the region's early historical experience and something that has attracted a great deal of attention for nearly a century.

I am referring to what is often called "the Indianization" of Southeast Asia. Rather than assuming that "Indian" influences introduced an entirely new chapter in the region's history, I prefer to see the operation of specific "Hindu" and therefore religious rather than political conceptions that brought ancient and persisting indigenous beliefs into sharper focus.²¹

The first inscriptions, usually in Sanskrit, show that there were numerous small territorial units, several of which a man of prowess could sometimes bring under his personal influence by attracting supporters and by developing alliances. But his overlordship did not necessarily survive his death. The earliest Southeast Asian polities, even when Sanskrit inscriptions were beginning to be written, were the personal and somewhat fragile achievements of men of prowess and had not been transformed by institutional innovations in the direction of more centralized government. A polity still cohered only in the sense that it was the projection of an individual's prowess.

Into this cultural situation—for political systems are expressions of culture—Indian influence arrived, travelling in specific circumstances which will probably remain unknown but which were certainly in the wake of expanding international trade in the first centuries of the Christian era. What is important to note is that, during these centuries when historical records begin to become available for a few

²¹ For a discussion of this question in a Khmer context, see O. W. Wolters, "Khmer 'Hinduism'" in *Early South East Asia*. The antiquity of the Southeast Asian connection with India may be greater than I have supposed. H. B. Sarkar has recently suggested that the *Niddesa*, a Buddhist text hitherto attributed to the second century AD, should be considered to be in existence not later than 247 BC, and that the Southeast Asian toponyms, such as Java and Suvannabhumi, which appear in the *Niddesa*, were known to some Indians by that time; see H. B. Sarkar, "A Geographical Introduction to South-East Asia: The Indian Perspective," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (hereafter cited as *BKI*) 137,2-3 (1981): 297-302. Sarkar's suggestion will not surprise those prehistorians who envisage sailing by Austronesian-speaking people in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean in general from the second half of the second millennium BC; see Wilhelm G. Solheim II, "Reflections on the New Data of Southeast Asian Prehistory: Austronesian Origin and Consequence," *Asian Perspectives* 18,2 (1975): 155-57.

parts of the region, the dominant impulse in Hindu religious beliefs was a "devotional" and personalized one (*bhakti*), organized around popular cults in honour of Śiva and Viṣṇu and also by means of élitist teacher-inspired sects whose members strenuously sought to participate in the grace of these great gods. The sects, the best known of which was the Pāsūpatas, insisted that an individual could with personal effort, which would include ascetic practices and the pious cultivation of his faculties of volition and imagination, achieve under a *guru's* instruction a close relationship with the god of his affection. Hindu sectarianism is the religious influence which, in my opinion, explains why the ascetic ideal—an ideal that exemplifies heroic prowess—is emphasized in the earliest Southeast Asian inscriptions written in the names of chiefs and overlords, all of whom would have performed heroic warrior roles in intra-settlement relations.

I believe that Southeast Asian constructions of sectarian modes of Hindu devotionalism contributed in two ways to the development of Southeast Asian notions of political authority.

In the first place, a heightened perception of the overlord's superior prowess was now possible. The overlord's reputation for ascetic achievement, no matter how it was gained, could be seen as exemplifying the closest relationship with Śiva of anyone in his generation. Śiva was the patron of asceticism and the Hindu god most frequently mentioned in the early inscriptions. In seventh-century Cambodia, the effects of the close relationship was expressed in two ways. The overlord Jayavarman I was said to be a "portion" (*aṃśa*) of Śiva²² while Bhavavarman participated in Śiva's *śakti*, or divine energy, which enabled him to "seize the kingship."²³ Both references to kingly prowess are framed in language considered to provide appropriate Sanskrit equivalences of spiritual achievement.

The second consequence of Southeast Asian constructions of Hindu devotionalism has a close bearing on the pattern of intra-regional relations in the succeeding centuries. Śiva was also the sovereign deity who created the universe. Thus, the overlord's close relationship with Śiva meant that he participated in Śiva's divine authority. His day-to-day exercise of power would have been constrained by the norms of his own society, but his spiritual authority was absolute because Śiva was its author. He participated in sovereign attributes of cosmological proportions, and his supporters could come to realize that obedience to their leader was a gesture of homage that implied religious *rapport*, or *bhakti*. Their leader, a sovereign, partook of divinity and could therefore offer them the means of establishing their own relationship with divinity. "Kingship," signified by the personal Śiva cult of the man who had seized the overlordship and not by territorially-defined "kingdoms," was the reality that emerged from the "Hinduizing" process, but this does not mean that widely extending territorial relations were not possible. On the contrary, there need be no limit to a ruler's sovereign claims on earth. The chief's prowess was now coterminous with the divine authority pervading the universe, and this is how I interpret Jayavarman II's spectacular achievement and significance. He never tried to institutionalize the royal succession; the down-grading of lineage in the Southeast

²² As early as the seventh century Jayavarman I, a Cambodian overlord, was described as a "portion" of Śiva; see George Coedès, *Les Inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, I (Paris: Boccard, 1937-1966), p. 8, v. 3. Kulke also notes Angkorian references to kings as being "portions" of Śiva; see H. Kulke, *The Devarāja Cult*, pp. 29-36. For a ninth-century Javanese identification of a king as a "portion" of Śiva, see J. G. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, II (Bandung, 1956), p. 272.

²³ A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 69, v. 5.

Asian cultures would have inhibited him from attempting to do so. On the other hand, his record of military success during a quarter of a century qualified him to institutionalize the contemporary criteria of leadership by proclaiming that he was a *cakravartin*. He formulated his status by means of his personal cult, the *devarāja* cult, and foresaw that he would be regarded as an Ancestor by his kinsmen. The criteria for kingship that he established were never upset during the Angkorian centuries.

A sudden reduction in the number of subregional centers was not the inevitable consequence of divine kingship, but more sustained efforts could be made to bring relatively distant subregions under the influence of particular men of prowess.²⁴

This sketch of the "Hinduizing" process is only one approach to the subject of Southeast Asian protohistory, but it may be closer to the realities behind the early political systems of the region than if the point of departure is the establishment of "Indianized states," with the assumption that a state should exhibit certain recognizable characteristics. Protohistoric change, as I interpret it, took the guise of heightened self-perceptions by the chieftain class in general rather than of far-reaching institutional changes in the status of a particular chief in a specific subregion, who now became a *rāja*. We need not imagine an almost conspiratorial manipulation of foreign ideas for promoting the interests of a few enterprising chiefs who were beginning to realize that their material resources were in world-wide demand, with the result of the conspiracy being that the royal beneficiary of "Indianization" was able to get permanently outside and above his own society and move closer to the gods who "legitimized" his new status.

Difficulties are bound to arise in studying continuities in early Southeast Asian experiences when one thinks of "states," as I have done for too long.²⁵ Even prehistorians, when they are correcting earlier misapprehensions about what happened during the several millennia before the beginning of the Christian era, may tend to reinforce earlier dogma about appearance of "states" during protohistory. Prehistorians are interested in "incipient state formation and political centralization" prior to Indian influence, but, while they can now show that Indian influence did not move into a vacuum when it brought a "state" like Funan into being,²⁶ they still cannot rid themselves of an awareness of discontinuity between prehistory and protohistory. The reason is that they take "Funan" as their model of the first fully-fledged state and attribute to it such features as "the ruler's strategy of monumental self-validation" and "time-tested Indian strategies of temple-founding, inscription-raising, and support for brahmanical royal cults."²⁷ A state, according to this line of

²⁴ In seventh-century Cambodia, the overlord Jayavarman I seems to have recognized the obligation of bringing northwestern Cambodia under his influence in order to make good his claim to overlord status; see Wolters, "Northwestern Cambodia," pp. 383-84.

²⁵ Virginia Matheson, writing about the inhabitants of the Riau-Lingga archipelago as they are described in the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, addresses this matter of terminology: "... I can find in the *Tuhfat* no evidence for the existence of the state as a concept, an abstract ideal above and beyond the ruler, which was to be sustained and protected. What does seem to have existed was a complex system of personal loyalties, which it was in the ruler's interest to maintain"; see Virginia Matheson, "Concepts of State in the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* [The Precious Gift]" in *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and Lance Castles (Kuala Lumpur: Monographs of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, no. 6, 1975), p. 21.

²⁶ Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," p. 106.

²⁷ Bennet Bronson, "The Late Prehistory and Early History of Central Thailand with Special Reference to Chansen," in *Early South East Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 316.

thought which owes much to Van Leur's ideas in the 1930s, must be distinguished from anything else in prehistory. The effect is that a new lease of life is given to the significance of Indian influence.

I suggest that a gap persists between prehistory and protohistory represented by "Funan" because different terminologies are used when discussing each period. An outline of "incipient state formation" depends on such Western terms as "fairly extensive trade relations," wet-rice, iron technology, and "probably increasing population density and political centralization in some of the alluvial plains of the mainland."²⁸ These terms, taken by themselves, signify economic developments that would be accompanied by the appearance of more complex political systems. Nevertheless prehistorians have to deny prehistory the achievement of "statehood" by indigenous processes because of what they believe is known of the fully-fledged "state of Funan." The elaboration of the features of a "Funanese" typology, however, depends on an altogether different set of signifiers that owe their origin to Chinese documents and are therefore influenced by Chinese preconceptions of a "state." The Chinese supposed, for example, that any state should be associated with rules of dynastic succession and be described by fixed boundaries. No such polity existed anywhere in earlier Southeast Asian history except, as we shall see below, in Vietnam. Yet the Chinese were unable to conceptualize "Funan" as being anything other than a "state," albeit an unstable one, and, because of this Chinese perspective, "Funan" has become the earliest Southeast Asian example of what sociologists refer to as a "patrimonial bureaucracy," a model that does not seem to fit the prehistoric evidence.²⁹

The two sets of signifiers—Western and Chinese—have precise meaning only in cultural contexts outside Southeast Asia, and the result of linguistic confusion is that the passage of the region from prehistory to protohistory reads in language that is bound to give the impression that the Southeast Asian peoples could graduate to statehood only with the assistance of Indian influence. The same reading may even lead scholars to postulate a lag in the process of state formation in some parts of the region, exemplified by the "impermanence" of certain polities,³⁰ or to assume that particular geographical circumstances influenced the pace of the graduation to statehood.

²⁸ Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," p. 106.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107. Karl Hutterer, studying how far the lowland societies of the Philippines had reached urban and state formation on the eve of the Spanish intervention, observes that "there is no evidence whatsoever for the formation of bureaucratic structure that would have been interjected between the chief and the daily affairs of politics, commerce and religion, as is usually found in state societies"; see Karl L. Hutterer, "Prehistoric Trade and the Evolution of Philippine Societies: a Reconsideration," *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History, and Ethnography*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 13 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1977, c. 1978), p. 191.

³⁰ See for example, B. Bronson, "Exchange at the Upstream and Downstream Ends: Notes Toward a Functional Model of the Coastal State in Southeast Asia," in *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History, and Ethnography*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 13 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1977, c. 1978), p. 51; and Bennet Bronson and Jan Wisseman, "Palembang as Srivijaya: The Lateness of Early Cities in Southern Southeast Asia," *Asian Perspectives* 19,2 (1978): 234.

In other words, the criteria for incipient and fully-fledged states are established by an arbitrary vocabulary drawn from an archaeology with an economic bias and from Chinese conventions transferred to a part of the world which was virtually unknown to them. The result is that one is in danger of looking for what could never be there in either prehistoric or protohistoric times. If, however, we think simply of "political systems"—a neutral expression—the way is open for considering other cultural phenomena such as religious and social behavior that can be expected to affect political and economic activities in both prehistory and protohistory. No evidence at present exists for supposing that unprecedented religious and social changes were under way in the protohistoric period that sharply distinguish it from late prehistory. For example, there is no evidence to suppose that a chief's small-scale entourage in late prehistory was different in kind from the large-scale entourages of the historical period that supplied rulers with practical means of exercising political influence. In both periods, services are likely to have been rewarded with gifts of honor, posts of responsibility, and produce from the land.³¹ All these gifts would be valued because the recipients knew that they participated in the donor's spiritual authority.

The territorial scale of a political system is certainly not the correct measurement for describing and defining it. Instead, we should think of sets of socially-definable loyalties that could be mobilized for common enterprises. This was the case in protohistoric times, and it would be surprising if these loyalties did not have their origin in prehistory. In late Balinese prehistory, for example, persons were buried according to their rank on earth,³² which indicates some kind of hierarchy, with one person in the neighbourhood perceived as the point of reference for distinguishing ranks. This prehistoric background may be reflected in a Sanskrit inscription from western Java in the fifth or sixth century. The inscription has been translated as referring to a ruler's "allies,"³³ but the term used is *bhakta* ("worshippers" or "princes devoted [to him]"). Khmer chiefs in the seventh century also frequently referred to themselves as *bhaktas* and venerated their overlord because of his spiritual relationship with Śiva which brought spiritual rewards to those who served him. The Javanese inscription may refer to a chief's entourage with "prehistoric" features but described in the Sanskrit language.

The peoples of protohistoric Southeast Asia retained, I suggest, much more than vestiges of earlier behavior, though their behavior would not have been identical in every locality. But their cultures are unlikely to be entirely illuminated by artifacts recovered from graves or by Chinese evidence of commercial exchanges in the protohistoric period. Tools and trade represent only fractions of a social system.

I have dwelt on definitions partly because I believe that the time is now promising for a re-examination of the passage of Southeast Asia from prehistory to protohistory in terms of continuities rather than of discontinuities. But I am especially anxious to indicate the origins of the early political systems that furnish

³¹ Van Naerssen suggests that the origin of the Javanese *raka* can be explained in ecological terms. The *raka* was responsible for the equitable distribution of water over a number of agrarian communities (*tanua*), and he therefore had the right to dispose of the produce and labor of his subjects; see F. H. van Naerssen, *The Economic and Administrative History of Early Indonesia*, pp. 37-38.

³² Soejono, "The Significance of the Excavation at Gilimanuk (Bali)," p. 198.

³³ B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion of the Indo-Aryan Culture* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Monhar Lal, 1965), p. 94.

the appropriate background to later tendencies in Southeast Asian intra-regional relations. I shall now glance at the style of intra-regional relations when evidence becomes more ample.

HISTORICAL PATTERNS IN INTRA-REGIONAL RELATIONS

The infusion of kingship by divinity was bound to contradict the assumption that all rulers were equal. Each ruler was acclaimed in his own country as one who had unique claim to "universal" sovereignty, which was derived from a single and indivisible divine authority. The map of earlier Southeast Asia which evolved from the prehistoric networks of small settlements and reveals itself in historical records was a patchwork of often overlapping *maṅḍalas*, or "circles of kings." In each of these *maṅḍalas*, one king, identified with divine and "universal" authority, claimed personal hegemony over the other rulers in his *maṅḍala* who in theory were his obedient allies and vassals. Thus, a Khmer ruler in the early seventh century could be eulogised as "the glorious sovereign of three kings,"¹ and the Angkorian ruler's polity in the tenth century could be rendered as "a pure circle of kings and brahmans."² The fourteenth-century Javanese poet Prapañca describes unambiguously the organization of space in earlier Southeast Asia:

All illustrious Javanese Kings and Queens, the honoured ones who equally are distinguished by their towns (*nagara*), each having one for his own or her own,

In one place, in Wilwa Tikta (Majapahit), they hold in their lap the honoured Prince-overlord.³

In practice, the *maṅḍala* (a Sanskrit term used in Indian manuals of government) represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable

¹ A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sacrées du Cambodge et Champa* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1885), p. 46, v. 2. The Sung period transcription of *San-fo-ch'i* [Three Vijayas] for "Sriwijaya" may be an attempt by Chinese officials to give effect to a Malay envoy's statement that his ruler claimed to be the overlord of three areas, each of which was known as "Vijaya."

² George Coedès, *Les Inscriptions du Cambodge* (hereafter cited as IC), vol. 1 (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), p. 115, v. 71.

³ T. G. T. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century. A Study of Cultural History. The Nāgara-Kertāgama by Rakawi Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 AD*, vol. 3 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960-1963), canto 6, stanza 4. A multiplicity of kings is also reflected in Mon tradition, where the term *smiti*, or "king," was not restricted to the ruler of Pegu. Shorto observes that no means seem to have been known in Pegu or Ava of extinguishing an extant kingdom; see H. L. Shorto, "A Mon Genealogy of Kings: Observations on the Nidāna Arambhakathā," in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 69.

geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security. *Maṅḍalas* would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals. Only the *maṅḍala* overlord had the prerogative of receiving tribute-bearing envoys; he himself would despatch officials who represented his superior status.

Sometimes a *maṅḍala* would include no more than, for example, the districts in the island of Java,⁴ but it could also be geographically extensive and contain peoples whose descendants today live in separate nation-states. The Malay rulers of Sriwijaya exercised some kind of authority in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula from the seventh to at least the eleventh century. The Angkorian kings at intervals during the eleventh and twelfth centuries had similar authority in the Chao Phraya basin and the Malay Peninsula and also in parts of what is today southern Vietnam, and known in earlier times as Champa. The *maṅḍala* of the Thai state of Ayudhyā was, to some extent, the same *maṅḍala* which the Khmer rulers had once claimed to control but with its overlord in a new center. The Javanese *maṅḍala* of Majapahit in the fourteenth century comprised Java, much of Sumatra, and no doubt parts of other Indonesian islands. Indeed, Prapañca claimed that his ruler "protected" most of mainland Southeast Asia. There is also evidence to suggest that similar *maṅḍalas* were in existence in the Philippines during the pre-Spanish period.

The *maṅḍala* organization of space was not, however, an invariably harsh reality in earlier Southeast Asia, though many wars have been recorded. One mitigating circumstance is that victories rarely, if ever, led to the permanent obliteration of local centers either by colonization or through the influence of centralized institutions of government. The *maṅḍala* perimeters continued to replicate court situations at the center. Centers of spiritual authority and political power shifted endlessly. For these reasons, two skills of government were emphasized and belonged to the tradition of public life in many parts of the region.

One skill was the gathering of what we would describe today as "political intelligence," or up-to-date information on what was happening on the fringe of a *maṅḍala*. This was of vital importance as threats could be anticipated. Thus, happenings on the *maṅḍala* fringes were as significant as those at the centers, and rulers who maintained communication with distant places were able to cultivate far-reaching geographical perspectives easily. In the early eleventh century, for example, the Angkorian ruler was in communication with the Tamil ruler in southern India and the Vietnamese ruler in Thāng-long. In 1592, the Thai ruler of Ayudhyā had surveyed the vast diplomatic space available to him when he proposed to the Chinese court an alliance to embarrass the Japanese prince who was attacking Korea in the face of Chinese armies sent to protect that country. The Thai ruler offered to invade Japan.⁵ One of the Pahang Shahbandar's duties was to seek out information about what was happening in the outside world. The Shahbandar who was in charge of the port had contacts with foreign merchants and was well qualified to provide this kind of information.

⁴ Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century*. "Ferry Charter," vol. 3, p. 158 (*Yawadwipamandala*).

⁵ O. W. Wolters, "Ayudhyā and the Rearward Part of the World," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, parts 3 and 4 (1968): 166-78.

The other governmental skill required of a successful *maṅḍala* overlord was one of diplomacy. He had to be able to dispossess his rivals of their claims to space in their own right, bring them under his personal influence, and accommodate them within a network of loyalties to himself, even though they often lived in distant areas.⁶ Administrative power as distinct from sacral authority depended on the management of personal relationships, exercised through the royal prerogative of investiture. The same skill had been attributed to men of prowess in very early times when the scope for leadership was limited to small tracts of settlement areas, and it continued to be the source of governmental experience within a large *maṅḍala*. No clear distinction was made between the purpose and conduct of "internal" and "external" relations. In practice all relations tended to be perceived as personal and therefore internal ones.

In the situation I have just sketched, the ruler was not an autocrat; he was a mediator, accessible and able to keep the peace and mobilize many disparate groups. He needed to attract loyal subordinates to his entourage and to satisfy their self-esteem. One way of doing this was by organizing exciting court occasions at which the entourage was made to feel that it belonged to his company of faithful servants. This system is sometimes described as "patrimonial bureaucracy." The personal type of government, indicated by Weber's term, made a virtue of improvisation, and an illustration is provided by the Angkorian rulers' creation of special posts with ceremonial functions and prospects of future favors in order to attract particular sections of the elite to their side.⁷ The rulers of the Angkorian *maṅḍala* had every reason to accommodate powerful kinship groups, each of which had its own network of relatives and dependants. Members of these groups could not easily be excluded from the royal entourage. They were normally invested with prestigious posts and shouldered administrative responsibilities; administrative power as distinct from divine authority had, to an important extent, to be shared. In Angkorian Cambodia, at any rate, large estates flourished in the countryside, and those who enjoyed the produce from the land were able to maintain their influence from generation to generation and to dispose of their customary land-use rights at will.

Ian Mabbett has suggested that "cliques, factions, personalities, clientage and patronage were essential elements in Angkorian politics," and I see no reason for supposing that this was not the case elsewhere in earlier Southeast Asia.⁸ In Cambodia, women folk born into powerful families would marry kings, and their kinsfolk would enlarge their political influence as well as their rights to the use of

⁶ In the nineteenth century the journey by elephant from Battambang to Siem Reap took five days in the dry season; see Wolters, "Northwestern Cambodia in the Seventh Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37,2 (1974): 371-72. Garnier left Ubon on 10 January 1867, and reached Angkor nineteen days later; see Milton Osborne, *River Road to China. The Mekong River Expedition, 1866-72* (New York: Liveright, 1975), pp. 73-78.

⁷ I. W. Mabbett, "Varnas in Angkor and the Indian Caste system," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36,3 (1977): 429-42.

⁸ I. W. Mabbett, "Kingship in Angkor," *Journal of the Siam Society* 66,2 (1978): 1-58, especially pp. 9, 13-27. Onghokham describes managerial skills necessary for regulating personal relationships in Java. The skills included mediating between higher and lower social levels and between the supernatural and men. A network of messengers and agents had to be deployed; see Onghokham, "The Inscrutable and the Paranoid: An Investigation into the Sources of the Brotodiningrat Affair," in *Southeast Asian Transitions. Approaches through Social History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 113-19.

land. The king's status was unique only because it was a religious one. In that sense alone he could confer but not receive, and his unique religious status helped to offset the disadvantages of the absence of a Chinese-style professional bureaucracy and of genuinely dynastic institutions that would identify the royal family and separate it permanently from all other families. Where lineage was not of importance in societies organized according to cognatic kinship, there could be no "royal family" in the strict sense of the term. There was only the ruler, and even he and his closest relatives would identify themselves with various kinship groups when the occasion required them to do so.⁹

Hierarchical structures were observed but informal personal relations and a highly pragmatic response to problems were not precluded. There was the minimum of bureaucratic procedures and the maximum amount of discussion, for consultation in societies knit together by webs of personal ties was bound to be a prominent feature of public life. Everything depended on man-to-man relations. Needless to say, the ruler had to be known to enjoy prestige in his home base if he wanted to exert influence in the peripheries. News of instability at the center travelled quickly and reduced his outreach. One can even venture to suggest that a stable polity had to show signs of an ability to extend its influence further and further afield. A successful king needed wide space in which to flex his muscles.

The style of *mandala* management meant that vassal rulers close to the capital as well as in distant places were treated with equal courtesy provided that they assisted the overlord in warfare and were not suspected of wanting to seek "protection" elsewhere. Moreover, the ruler often despatched travelling inspectors or agents to more distant subordinate centers in the *mandala* to remind his vassals of his presence. Errands would include offering marriage alliances, building or endowing temples, examining disputes or complaints, collecting the royal dues, and echoing the splendour of the royal capital. Travelling officials, for whom rest-houses were sometimes reserved in the villages, were probably a major feature of government. A Javanese text defines an efficient chief minister as one who is "making the rounds."¹⁰ The Angkorian *tamvrâc*, created after a tussle for the kingship, are a famous example of a special corps of trouble-shooters. The oath taken by these trouble-shooters in 1011 states: "If there is a matter of royal business on which His Majesty has ordered us to go afar because he has heard that something has happened, we shall investigate the matter in detail."¹¹

These are some of the expedients available to rulers in a region where geographical conditions and relatively small populations made for under-government. The sanction behind obedience was twofold. To serve the ruler was to

⁹ Cambodian genealogies were important not to justify a ruler's legitimacy but to distinguish those among his contemporaries—probably distant kinsfolk identifiable through their forebears—who he could regard as his supporters. A genealogy would resemble the ruler's order of battle; see Thomas A. Kirsch, "Kinship, Genealogical Claims, and Societal Integration in Ancient Khmer Society: An Interpretation," *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 190-202. For example of an exceptionally dangerous Cham brother-in-law, see Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 165.

¹⁰ Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 120.

¹¹ Coedès, *IC*, vol. 3, p. 209.

earn spiritual merit,¹² but the ruler had also to have a reputation for being able to pounce ubiquitously and unexpectedly when trouble broke out. Strong government was, literally, on the move all the time. The sinews of government were the ruler's personal energy and surveillance. Yet, other and more palpably religious aspects of his authority were also important. The rites enacted in his capital and religious activity in the fields of art and literature provided additional signs that people were able to read as verification that government was in the hands of one who was destined to be a prince among men in his generation.

One particular religious aspect of the situation was that the rulers participated in Śiva's authority and therefore in the authority of the god who was also the *guru* of the universe. For this reason the rulers were expected to protect all cults and encourage spiritual zeal, and especially ascetic practices. The rulers were educative influences, teaching their people the meaning of spiritual well-being. The role of the ruler as a teacher, who originally interested himself in all modes of worship and attracted congregations of devout followers, may have lingered long in the region. The Bangkok rulers of the nineteenth century took an active part in mediating the acquisition of European scientific knowledge in Thailand.

I shall now glance at some of the famous *maṅḍalas* which adorn the textbooks on earlier Southeast Asian history. The *maṅḍalas* certainly increased the flow of communication within particular subregions and seem to mitigate the multicentric character of the region. Yet, the political influence of these *maṅḍalas* was rarely sustained for long periods of time, and it is difficult to indicate with precision the enduring cultural communalities that came in the wake of intervals of *maṅḍala* vigor. The communalities are as likely to have been the result of independent developments in centers which from time to time were under the influence of a *maṅḍala* overlord.

The Thai kingdom of Ayudhya, founded in 1350, was close to Lopburi on the eastern side of the Chao Phraya basin, and Lopburi was at times part of the Angkorian *maṅḍala* in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Scholars have observed how the Ayudhya rulers assumed characteristics of Angkorian-style kingship. Yet these rulers did not bring all the other Thai rulers under their influence overnight. Although they were seeking to create a more centralized polity, a series of families occupied the throne, which means that there were frequent intervals of weakness in Ayudhya.¹³ Only in the nineteenth century was the Chakri family of Bangkok able to convert a somewhat loosely organized *maṅḍala* into a state where the component parts were much more responsive to the center. Nevertheless, an important cultural influence brought a sense of communality among the scattered Thai centers in

¹² According to a Cambodian inscription, "kingship should be honoured by those who enjoy good works"; see G. Coedès, "La stèle de Prasat Komnap," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 32,1 (1932): 94, v. 27. The Prambanan and Sewu temples in central Java are surrounded by small shrines built by the rulers' loyal supporters. Sukarto draws attention to a Balinese temple with sixty-four stone seats for the ruler's brave followers, which are reminiscent of the megalithic Ancestral stone seats; see M. M. Sukarto K. Atmodjo, *The Charter of Kapal* (Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Departemen P & K, 1977), p. 9.

¹³ For an analysis of the Thai *maṅḍala*, see Lorraine Gesick, "Kingship and Political Integration in Tradition Siam" (PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1976), chapters 2 and 3. Skill in internal diplomacy was part of the Thai political tradition. No discussion of the *maṅḍala* system in earlier Southeast Asia is complete without referring to S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), chapter 7. Tambiah sums up the *maṅḍala* system as "a hierarchy of central points continually subject to the dynamics of pulsation and changing spheres of influence"; see p. 113.

advance of institutional changes. From the thirteenth century onwards Thai princes were eagerly competing in seeking out famous Theravāda Buddhist monks and Pali texts in order to establish their centers at the forefront of Buddhist learning and piety. The unified Thai state at the end of the eighteenth century had long been a Buddhist country.

The Sriwijayan *mandala* existing from the seventh to at least the eleventh century, seems to have had more enduring cultural consequences, although the notorious uncertainty about its geographical span and political identity is a striking instance of the amorphous nature of the great *mandalas* in earlier Southeast Asian history. Unanimous agreement has not yet been achieved on where its capital was at different times or on the extent of its hinterland influence. Not all would agree that, from at least the end of the seventh century into the eleventh, the capital was located near Bukit Seguntang in the Palembang region of southeastern Sumatra and only thereafter on the Batang Hari river further north, perhaps at Muara Jambi. One can, however, bear in mind that an Indonesian archaeological survey in June 1980 recovered from the northern and western slopes of Bukit Seguntang a sufficient quantity of green glazed stoneware, including true Yüeh-ware, unassociated with later Chinese ceramics to establish beyond reasonable doubt that this area was in communication with China by the tenth century at the latest.¹⁴ Perhaps the sherds are the remains of ritual vessels used in local Buddhist circles. To the best of my knowledge, no other site on the east coast of Sumatra has so far yielded Yüeh-ware on this scale. Inscriptions of the late seventh century and miscellaneous religious remains have already suggested that the Palembang area was connected with Sriwijaya. Moreover, a recent re-reading of a 682 inscription from the same area has revealed the toponym "Upang," the present-day name of a fishing village downstream from Palembang.¹⁵

Though a confident identification of Sriwijaya with Palembang is still premature, it is generally agreed that, in its heyday, Sriwijaya was one of the major emporia of Asia, through which regional produce reached the markets of western Asia, India, and China. The Sriwijayan rulers controlled the Malacca and Bangka straits. The need for a major emporium in western Indonesia diminished only when Chinese trading ships in the twelfth century began to visit distant overseas producing centers frequently, and the last records of Sriwijaya show that numerous coastal centers were thriving as if Sriwijaya had never existed. Changes that took place in earlier Southeast Asian history are not always readily discernible, but the appearance of Chinese shipping in the southern seas deserves to be reckoned as one index of change in the economic and political history of maritime Southeast Asia.

The Sriwijayan *mandala* left a mark. From the Malay heartland on and behind the central and southern coast of eastern Sumatra, a Sriwijayan network of Malay-speaking centers developed throughout the Riau-Lingga archipelago of the so-called "sea gypsies" to the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. The process of Malay

¹⁴ The survey was organized by Satyawati Suleiman. For a discussion of Yüeh-ware found at Bukit Seguntang in 1978, see E. Edwards McKinnon, "Spur-marked Yüeh-Type Sherds at Bukit Seguntang," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 52,2 (1979): 41-46. I am grateful to Pierre-Yves Manguin for informing me, in a letter dated July 13, 1981, that Feng Xian-ming, a ceramics expert in Beijing, has dated this Yüeh-ware precisely at the later T'ang period (618-905). The items were made in the Yuyao kilns of Zhejiang province.

¹⁵ Boechari, "Report on Research on Sriwijaya," *Seomeo Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts. Final Report. Workshop on Research on Sriwijaya* (hereafter cited as SPAA), p. 5.

acculturation in this extensive area was probably assisted by the centripetal influence of the great Sriwijayan court, where services by the *datus*, attracted to it from outlying centers throughout the *manḍala*, took on the style of courtly hierarchy. The fifteenth century Sultans of Malacca were the heirs to much of this cultural tradition, and Malay royal traditions, expressed in the concept of loyalty and court organization, moved out to northern Borneo and the Philippines. This far-flung Malay political culture was reinforced by the profession of Islam, a widely circulating Malay-language literature, and frequent marriage relationships across the seas.

The conviction everywhere in this cultural zone was that busy harbors brought power and brilliance to the local ruler. In the western part of the zone, the determination to maintain such a harbor was fiercely defended when the Johore-Riau court, Malacca's successor, resisted the Portuguese and Dutch. The struggle for the Straits of Malacca ended only after the Napoleonic wars when the Treaty of London in 1824 artificially fractured the Malay world, but even in the second half of the nineteenth century the moral influence of the powerless Sultan of Lingga, recognized by Malays as the heir to the ancient Johore-Riau polity, was still to be reckoned with in the Pahang war on the Malay Peninsula.¹⁶

Early Spanish ethnographic rather than pre-Spanish written records assist us in conceptualizing the history of the Philippines in *manḍala* terms. Colin, writing in the early seventeenth century, states that in the past "there were no kings or rulers worthy of mention," but the model he had in mind was the king of Spain or the emperor of China. A more accurate perspective is supplied by his next observation: "there were many chiefs who dominated others less powerful."¹⁷ He is alluding to the dynamic force in *manḍala* relations. The earliest recorded *manḍala* center was in Mindoro island, southwest of Luzon, first mentioned in the second half of the tenth century as a trading center known to the Chinese as *Ma-i* (Mait), whose ships visited Canton.¹⁸ The disappearance of Chinese references to *Ma-i* in favour of Luzon may signify an important shift in Tagalog political centers on the eve of the Spanish arrival. But by then yet another *manḍala* was beginning to take shape, for the Spaniards arrived on the Luzon coast not long after this coast had become the extension of an Islamic *manḍala* based on Brunei in Borneo.

¹⁶ A. C. Miller, "The Malay Raja: A Study of Malay Political Culture in East Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula in the Early Nineteenth Century," ch. 5.

¹⁷ F. Landa Jocano, ed., *The Philippines at the Spanish Contact* (Manila: MCS Enterprises, 1975), pp. 175-76.

¹⁸ For a recent affirmation of Mait's location in Mindoro, see Joseph Baumgartner, S.V.D., "Cotton—a Pre-Spanish Cebuano Industry. Facts and Problems," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 3 (1975): 48. Father Antoon Postma, S.V.D., recently told me that he believed that Mait's likely location was at the extreme southeastern end of the island near the river Mait. See *South-East Asian Studies Newsletter* (Singapore, 3 April 1981), pp. 4-5 for news of a recent and proposed archaeological survey in the Pinamalayan and Mansalay areas of Mindoro. Mindoro was not the only important early trading area in the Philippines. A site occupied in the first and early second millennia has fairly recently been discovered at the estuary of the Agusan river in Mindanao, where a golden Tara image had also been found. The site is of unusual archaeological interest because the high water-table has preserved a considerable wealth of organic material, including a number of early boats. A wide range of ceramics has also been discovered, including high-fired Chinese ceramics from the T'ang and Sung periods. Glass of Islamic origin has also been discovered. I am grateful to E. Edwards McKinnon for this information.

In the southern Philippines, Islam had reached Sulu and Mindanao more than half a century earlier. On all these coasts marriage alliances, always of importance in the construction of *mandalas*, accompanied the advance of Islam. By about the middle of the sixteenth century the stage would have been set for a new and spirited chapter in *mandala* history if the Spaniards had not occupied Manila. In the event, the surviving southern Muslim politics held their own, sometimes entering into relations with European "country traders" to thwart the monopolistic plans of other Europeans. The struggle for the survival of the Sulu Sultanate, with its foothold in Borneo and with fleets that swept the seas, ended only in the later nineteenth century when Spanish steampower came on the scene.

The early history of the Philippines reminds us of an essential feature of the *mandala* phenomenon common in earlier Southeast Asia. The importance of a *mandala* did not depend on its geographical size but on networks of loyalties that could be mobilized to provide armed power to leaders whom I described as "men of prowess." On the map, the Pulangi river basin, in Mindanao does not resemble a large area, yet the rulers in this area were able to respond to Datu Uto's leadership so militantly that the Spaniards were kept at bay in the later nineteenth century.¹⁹ Similarly, the mobilization of loyalties is the salient feature in the Angkorian political system, for example. The ability of such rulers as Jayavarman II and Sūryavarman II to wage apparently massive warfare contradicts the impression that they lacked authority merely because their executive power in day-to-day government does not seem to extend far beyond the functions of securing the material means for supporting themselves and their religious establishment in their capital or of being umpires amid a multitude of private and often powerful interests. Umpires are not captains.

The last *mandala* that I shall mention is the Javanese one of fourteenth-century Majapahit. I have already alluded to the general circumstance that led to Sriwijaya's decline, which was the activities of Chinese merchants overseas. With the decline of Sriwijaya's emporium, Indonesian coastal polities outside Java were in no position to resist the Javanese ruler's claim to overlordship. Perhaps the claim was made to strengthen the ruler's prestige in Java itself. The island of Java was Majapahit's original *mandala*, as it had been for Singasari, Majapahit's thirteenth-century predecessor. A scholar has recently suggested that even in Majapahit's heyday a potential Javanese rival existed.²⁰ We need not doubt, however, that Majapahit was greatly respected in the archipelago. Except in western Java and Bali, its style of overlordship was normally a relaxed one. Vassal rulers would offer tribute and seek investiture from the overlord, and some could expect punishment if they ignored him. *Mandala* rulers coerced as well as wooed. The interesting question, however, is why these rulers should have been willing to acknowledge Majapahit's overlordship, and the reason may be another instance of the intra-regional associations which developed in earlier Southeast Asia with the minimum of force behind them.

One of the challenges awaiting historians, I believe, is the charting and evaluation of the extension of Javanese cultural influence outside the island. As far as

¹⁹ Nineteenth-century history in the Pulangi river basin has been studied by Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Magindanao, 1860-1888: The Career of Dato Uto of Buayan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1971).

²⁰ J. Noorduyt, "The Eastern Kings in Majapahit," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 131,4 (1975): 479-87.

Majapahit's influence is concerned, it can hardly be an accident that Majapahit was remembered in local chronicles outside Java rather than in Java.²¹ Zoetmulder states that, in the middle of the fourteenth century, "Bali entered the orbit of Hindu-Javanism . . . and in consequence Bali must be considered, from this time on, as belonging to the Hindu-Javanese cultural world."²² Later I shall suggest that this impression needs to be qualified; the Balinese did not become Javanese. Nevertheless Bali may have been more securely within the Javanese cultural *maṅḍala* than any other part of Indonesia. Other parts of the same *maṅḍala* should also be considered. In southern Kalimantan, elements of Javanese cultural influence have been identified in the *Hikajat Bandjar*.²³ Javanese court ceremonies were admired in southeastern Sumatra in the seventeenth century.²⁴ There are also references in Acehnese literature to sacral "Hindu" objects which, if not directly attributable to Javanese influence, bear comparison with similar objects in Javanese courts.²⁵

My surmise is that Java in earlier times already had the reputation of being a treasure store of sacred learning. The purpose of the ninth-century pilgrimage by a high Cham official from what is today the central coast of Vietnam was "to acquire the magical science,"²⁶ and the pilgrim's quest may epitomize Java's reputation for possessing esoteric knowledge. Central Javanese influence has been identified in Buddhist and Śaivite statuary and monumental art in southeastern Sumatra and as far afield in Sumatra as south Tapanuli. Javanese script has also been identified in southern Sumatran inscriptions of the tenth century. Panji tales may have been distributed abroad as wedding gifts to those who married Javanese princesses;²⁷ Panji tales are known in Thailand. Javanese shadow plays survive in Kelantan in Malaysia.

I have mentioned only a few examples of Javanese cultural influence beyond Java itself, and I have not attempted to discuss their significance. They serve to suggest that wider associations were possible even though the *maṅḍalas* themselves were, in comparison with the states of today, fragile polities.

My brief sketch of the *maṅḍalas* has not included examples from northern Thailand, Laos, and especially Burma. In every case, however, we are probably dealing with impermanent subregional associations which depended on the waxing and waning of particular *maṅḍala* centers and which never led to new and more enduring political systems. Cultural similarities may sometimes have been accentuated but not necessarily because of the *maṅḍalas*. Theravāda Buddhism

²¹ S. Supomo, "The Image of Majapahit in Later Javanese Indonesian Writing," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Published for the Asian Studies Association of Australia by Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1979), pp. 171-85.

²² P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 21.

²³ J. J. Ras, *Hikajat Bandjar* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1968).

²⁴ B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies, part 1* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers, 1955), p. 57.

²⁵ L. F. Brakel, "State and Statecraft in 17th century Aceh," in *Pre-colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Council of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975), pp. 56-66.

²⁶ G. Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 123.

²⁷ J. J. Ras, "The Panji Romance and W. H. Rassers' Analysis of its Theme," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 129,4 (1973): 439-40.

flourished in several Thai centers but as the result of local initiatives. Sumatran and Peninsular courts survived the decline of Sriwijaya. Javanese cultural achievements could be respected outside Java, but the centers in the other islands continued to go their own way. The single exception to an otherwise ephemeral political scene is that part of the Angkorian *mandala* which comprised the Khmer-speaking people. As early as AD 868, a center in the Korat is described in an inscription as being "outside Kambudeśa,"²⁸ and the geographical precision suggests that by this time Cambodia could be seen from a distance as possessing some degree of territorial identity. The authenticity of the identity is verified by the fact that descendants of Jayavarman II's entourage were at that time enjoying land rights in northwestern as well as in southern Cambodia. The Khmer elite had a vested interest in the territorial integrity of metropolitan Cambodia and, by the end of the ninth century, Angkorian Cambodia was at the beginning of half a millennium of virtually intact survival.

Was the *mandala* configuration of earlier Southeast Asia a divisive influence? I doubt it. Confrontations within and between the *mandalas* are unlikely to have brought persisting prejudices in their wake comparable with those associated with the history of European nationalisms. Perhaps in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Burmans of the Irrawaddy felt that those who lived on their perimeters in the Shan hills to the east or the Mon-populated coastal plains to the south continually threatened them and were an affront to proud memories of the centuries when the Burman overlord lived in Pagan.²⁹ The reality behind the generally relaxed pattern of intra-regional relations in most of Southeast Asia becomes credible and vivid, however, when we glance at one part of the region where a different form of neighbourhood attitude developed.

In Vietnam, from at least as early as the eleventh century, the organization of territorial space was closely connected with the concept of a permanent center at Thăng-long on the site of present-day Hanoi, from where action could be and was taken to eliminate other centers of Vietnamese power and to bind the countryside to the capital. The subregions of Vietnam became "provinces" and "prefectures," and the polity came to be seen as contained within mountainous borders preordained by Heaven and permanent in a manner that the porous borders of the *mandalas* discussed above never assumed. The origin of this unusual geopolitical situation understandably owes much to the circumstance that, for a millennium, the Chinese emperors had persistently sought to enforce their authority over Vietnam and that, in the early eleventh century, the Lý rulers of re-independent Vietnam adapted the Chinese dynastic institution for their own purposes. The Lý initiative is another and important example of a fairly sudden change in one part of earlier Southeast Asia. Sons were able to succeed their fathers without succession disputes, and a linear sense of history took root. Borders became a dynastic trust and could never be surrendered without calling a dynasty's right to rule into question.³⁰

²⁸ George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 6, p. 85, v. 2.

²⁹ G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 79. Harvey quotes an inscription of 1343. See also Paul J. Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree . . .*, pp. 11-20.

³⁰ The founding of the Vietnamese dynastic system is discussed in Wolters, "Lê Văn Hưu's Treatment of Lý Thần Tông's reign (1127-1137)," in *Southeast Asia History and Historiography. Essays Presented to D. G. E. Hall*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 203-26. De Casparis notes a further instance of institutional change in the form of the growing subordination of the Javanese village chiefs to the central government by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when compared with the situation in

This did not mean that the relationship between the Vietnamese center and the countryside, at least before the fifteenth century, was as tight as it might have been in China when the dynasties were at the peak of their authority. On the contrary, Vietnamese historians, aware that archaeology is recovering the cradle of Vietnamese civilization long before the Chinese connection began, are alert to detect persisting folk conceptions of ruler-ruled relations. The historians are emphasizing a high degree of tolerance and the rulers' closeness to the people which affected the day-to-day conduct of affairs and which enabled the country to be mobilized in times of peril. Court customs were simple and informal.³¹ Vietnamese historians are also investigating the Southeast Asian cultural matrix as a means of throwing further light on ancient Vietnamese society.³² But we must remember that the Vietnamese, alone among the Southeast Asian peoples, had always to take China into account in their regional relations and not for the reason that the Chinese market brought opportunities for commercial prosperity as it did, for example, to the Mahārājas of Sriwijaya. Chinese claims to suzerainty, never abandoned, and unremitting Vietnamese resistance to the claims, explain the Vietnamese stubbornly defended conviction that Vietnam and China, contrary to Chinese dogma, enjoyed comparable sovereignty.

This conviction was explicitly formulated as a repudiation of the Chinese claim to unique and central status in the world³³ and also as a Vietnamese restatement of the same claim in respect of Vietnam's immediate neighbors in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese emperors came to perceive a difference between those who lived within their borders under more or less permanent administrative control and those who lived beyond Vietnam's western and southern borders. Dynastic memories were long, and the rulers gradually became convinced that to the west and south were "un-Vietnamese-like," and therefore unstable, political systems. This was, of course, a cultural judgment. Their neighbors seemed unstable only by Vietnamese standards of government. The reality in the other parts of Southeast Asia was that energetic rulers appeared from time to time, reinvigorated earlier *mandalas*, and sometimes threatened the Vietnamese borders. Nevertheless, by the fourteenth century an

earlier times; see de Casparis, "Pour une histoire sociale de l'ancienne Java principalement au Xèmes," *Archipel* 21 (1981): 135. I have suggested that the frequent arrival of Chinese shipping in Southeast Asian waters should be reckoned as an index of economic change. An instance of ecological change is suggested by Van Liere: "by the tenth century, the floodlands of the Mekong delta and the original settlements in the Mun-Chi basin were almost entirely abandoned." Perhaps there was a change in the flood pattern of the major streams; see W. J. van Liere, "Traditional Water Management in the Lower Mekong Basin," *World Archaeology* 11.3 (1980): 271.

³¹ This statement is based on Trần Quốc Vương's paper presented at the Eighth Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, held in Kuala Lumpur in August 1980.

³² See the essays in *Studies on History and Culture of Southeast Asia* (Hanoi: Institute for South East Asian Studies, Social Sciences Committee of Vietnam, 1980). Earning a good reputation in royal service was as important a feature of Vietnamese public life in the fourteenth century as it was elsewhere in Southeast Asia. For example, the Vietnamese annals state that in 1335 Đoàn Như Hải, a senior official, died rashly in battle because he wanted "to obtain very distinguished merit, surpassing that of his colleagues."

³³ Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments arising out of Lê Văn Hưu's History, Presented in the Trần court in 1272," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), pp. 69-89.

uneasy Vietnamese attitude had crystallized towards the southern and western principalities immediately behind the mountains: they were regarded as a tangle of often disturbed lands.³⁴ The Vietnamese rulers were not, of course, beginning to arrogate to themselves a special role in the affairs of these countries. I am only describing the geopolitical situation as I believe they came to see it.

The Vietnamese view of neighbouring Southeast Asia can be distinguished from other earlier views of Southeast Asia as seen from within the region, where the rulers' limitless authority is expressed in terms of their personal and divine attributes. Claims to overlordship were always based on an individual's prowess and were not intended to prefigure a permanent extension of territorial influence. Rival rulers were often referred to as "evil" men because they were defying a divine overlord, and not because they were rulers of inveterately hostile populations. The view that royal authority was bound to be limitless is seen, for example, in the claim made on behalf of Yaśovarman I of Angkor (889-910) that he ruled the lands from the Bay of Bengal to China. Jayavarman VII of Angkor (c. 1180) claimed that he received homage from the Vietnamese and Javanese. In the middle of the fourteenth century Prapañca, the author of the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, even included the whole of Southeast Asia, with the significant exception of Vietnam, as being under the protection of the Majapahit king; Vietnam is called *Yavana*, a Sanskrit word for "Greek" or "foreigner," and therefore, as the poet says, a friend. Those who wrote these records were conforming to the literary iconography of the attributes of divine kings, whose glory, sung by bards, would reach the ends of the world. Southeast Asian textbooks today do not have to disavow a distant past that menaces the present.³⁵

I have now tried to distinguish some salient characteristics in earlier patterns of intra-regional relations. Exceptions will be found, but I hope that my sketch is not misleading. The *mandalas* seem to provide a convenient framework for subregional histories, but they do not take us very far in identifying a shape to the history of the region as a whole. *Mandala* history is a record of certain happenings inside the region and little more. The happenings were similar, and the reason, I believe, is that the political systems in question were no more than elaborated projections into history of some widespread cultural traits inherited from prehistory: cognatic systems of kinship, an indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore the significance attached to personal achievement in particular generations. These traits continued to be exemplified in many Southeast Asian societies but meant no more than that the élite's political behavior in neighbouring areas would be predictable. This degree of communality of experience did not by itself lead to closer associations within an ever widening span of territory, even though the cultural influence of court centers would sometimes spill into neighbouring centers as part of the flow of communication in societies where monumental art, religious literature, and courtly style were valued.

³⁴ See E. Gaspardone, "L'inscription du Ma-Nhai," *Bulletin de la société des Etudes Indochinoises* 46,1 (1971): 71-84. The inscription, dated 1336, lists several countries which submitted after the Vietnamese ruler's western campaign. The Vietnamese annals mention similar campaigns over the centuries in retaliation to raids across the borders. Sometimes the Vietnamese identified allied Khmer and Cham armies as their enemies.

³⁵ Little or nothing in earlier Southeast Asian history requires what Robert Schuman, one of "Europe's" founding fathers, describes as the "désintoxication" of history textbooks; see Robert Schuman, *Pour l'Europe*, 2e édition (Paris: Editions Nagel Paris, 1964), p. 49. Nothing prefigures a European-style contrast between a past that bristled with "national" rivalries and a present that is groping towards regional consensus.

More needs to be known, however, before this kind of cultural outreach can be regarded as a long-term consequence of *maṇḍala* history. One thing is certain. The cultural influence of the *maṇḍalas* did not preserve them or reduce the multicentric shape of history in earlier Southeast Asia.

Moreover, three general considerations should be borne in mind when one tries to ascribe a shape to the subject other than as the histories of numerous subregions.

In the first place, many people lived in distant highlands and were beyond the reach of the centers where records survive. The *maṇḍalas* were a phenomenon of the lowlands, and even there geographical conditions encouraged under-government. Paul Wheatley puts it well when he notes that "the Sanskrit tongue was chilled to silence at 500 metres."³⁶ One cannot assume that powerful overlords in the plains always ignored the natural resources and manpower in the hills and mountains, but the historian, relying on written records, has to remove vast territories from the historical map of earlier Southeast Asia.

Secondly, although there was an enduring multiplicity of centers, we have seen that the principle did not evolve that a ruler's sovereignty extended only over the territories under his influence. On the contrary, each ruler, an emanation of divinity, was likely to claim "universal" sovereignty. Thus, when the fourteenth-century Javanese poet Prapañca, supplies what may be a solitary vision of the whole region, he does so to eulogise the scale of his divine ruler's influence; only Vietnam is excluded from his magnificent *maṇḍala*. The centers he lists as "tributaries" or as being "protected" are probably compiled from commercial intelligence circulating in Majapahit's ports; the list is up-to-date because it includes Ayudhyā, founded only fifteen years earlier. No matter how relaxed intra-regional relations normally were, the paradox of a cluster of self-styled "unique" centers reduces the possibility that *maṇḍala* centers would accept each other on equal terms and gradually develop closer relations with each other. Far-reaching geographical perspectives probably came easily to the élite but did not permanently affect the geopolitical situation. Overlords, endowed with powerful personalities, required limitless space to leave their mark on their generation, but political space was rarely reorganized.

Thirdly, in the absence of linear history in earlier Southeast Asia, the conviction could not be sustained that the inhabitants of the region were moving through time into closer and therefore "Southeast Asian" relationships. Only the Vietnamese élite developed a linear sense of time, based on a sequence of recorded dynasties. The Theravāda Buddhist countries subscribed to the conception of linear history, beginning with the Buddha's birth and punctuated by the Councils, but they were unlikely to have given up the notion of the centrality of their own country in the Buddhist world or the priority of the merit-earning present. People were aware of recurring cycles of good and bad government, but it was the present that always mattered.³⁷

Such, then, are some possibilities and problems when one examines the proposition of "a history of earlier Southeast Asia." But an enquiry into the shape of

³⁶ Paul Wheatley, "Satyārjita in Suvarṇadvīpa. From Reciprocity to Redistribution in Ancient Southeast Asia," in *Ancient Trade and Civilization*, ed. J. A. Sabloff et. al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 251.

³⁷ See Wang Gungwu's "Introduction" to *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Published for the Asian Studies Association of Australia by Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), pp. 1-8. The essays in the volume amply illustrate this point.

the subject need not end here. Over the centuries other and not immediately obvious developments could have contributed to new experiences which were not only shared by many of the subregions but were also recognized by the elite as being common throughout much of the region. If this were so, history could have brought about consequences in the form of something recognizable as a "Southeast Asian mentality." The imprint of history could have been of greater significance in engendering a supra-*maṇḍala* and a self-conscious communality of outlook than could the independently held assumptions about political behavior that stemmed from social and religious traits in prehistory and tended to keep the subregions apart. The historian can therefore enquire whether regional-scale themes, with intellectual implications, should be written into the shape of earlier Southeast Asian history.

My thoughts on the possibility of a thematic approach to the region's history have been stimulated by an essay written by Henri Brugmans in 1960 and published on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Collège d'Europe in Bruges.³⁸ Brugmans was the Collège's Rector and also a historian, and his essay is a comment on the movement towards "European" integration from a historian's perspective. He sought to organize a general shape to European history around the notion of an always developing common cultural heritage. I shall summarize what he wrote and then consider how far he provides a model for helping us to discern a similarly overarching shape to Southeast Asian history.

³⁸ Henri Brugmans, "Un historien regarde l'intégration européenne," in *Sciences humaines et intégration européenne* (Bruges, Belgium: Collège d'Europe, 1960), pp. 18-36.

TOWARDS DEFINING SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY

Brugmans suggests that a historian could be expected to view "Europeanising" tendencies with scepticism; Europe is the continent where "nations" and "nationalisms" proliferated. Indeed, the historian should be surprised that these tendencies have been accepted with such indifference. Brugmans suspects that the technical aspects of the economic issues at stake are too complex for the general public and that political passion has declined in the European countries after the Second World War; people realize that conflicts today are global ones.

Brugmans is careful to emphasize that the formation of the "Six" (the original members of the European Economic Community [EEC]) is a recent development and the result of special economic considerations. He insists that the "Six" do not represent a predestined *cercle de culture*. Even the geographical definition of what is meant by "Europe" has changed over the centuries. "Nothing," he says, "is more dangerous or more improper than to justify the present state of affairs by the *posteriori* historical argument. Nothing is more risky than to interpret the past as a function of present political justification."

Having uttered this warning, Brugmans pauses, for he has to acknowledge that those who identify themselves as "Europeans" have been influenced over the centuries by certain happenings: Christianity, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and nineteenth-century experimental science. The consequence is that European history is the history of "perpetual variations on a relatively restricted number of themes." To this extent, he permits himself to envisage a "community of civilization," by which he means the community's sciences, arts, philosophy, spiritual life, and social and political institutions, and he always gives attention to the historical variations on these themes brought about by ethnic diversity, geographical differences, spiritual roots, and languages. This, then, is the "Europe" whose major characteristics of communality can be readily identified from a distance. "However," he adds, "when we look at it close at hand, we are struck by the differences in time and space. Do these variations, then, contradict our affirmations of unity? In no way do they do so, for they are also part of the common heritage and can be explained only by that heritage."

Here is a measured, modestly conceived, and dispassionate definition of a common cultural heritage, where an interplay of shared cultural influences and local variations always exists. With this definition in mind, can we discern something that can be called "Southeast Asian history" in Brugmans's sense of an interplay of shared themes and thematic variations?

The sea provides an obvious geographical framework for discussing possibilities of region-wide historical themes. The sea facilitates communication between peoples, and there is much of it. Indeed, Coedès characterizes the Southeast Asian seas as "a veritable Mediterranean formed by the China Sea, the Gulf of Siam and the Java Sea. This enclosed sea, in spite of its typhoons and reefs, has always been a unifying factor rather than an obstacle for the peoples along the rivers."¹ Coedès's impression of an enclosed sea has recently been reinforced by P. Manguin's demonstration that the reefs of the Paracels were avoided because of their navigational hazards, which means that ships had to keep close to the mainland coast when sailing to China.²

The peoples on and near the shores of the Southeast Asian seas were certainly in communication with each other from very early times. K'ang T'ai, a Chinese envoy sent to southern Cambodia by the Wu emperor on the Yangtze during the first half of the third century AD, heard of an emporium in western Java and knew that iron-laden ships were reaching southern Cambodia from an island out at sea.³ A case has been made for supposing that the Javanese obtained gold from Kalimantan.⁴ Again, Old-Javanese inscriptions mention merchants from mainland Southeast Asia.⁵ Early Chinese records also refer to similar shipbuilding techniques which were practised in widely-separated parts of the region.⁶ Manguin, the historian of Southeast Asian navigation, even suggests that shipwrights in southern China adapted features of the Southeast Asian ship.⁷

Maritime communications within the region did not, however, lead to permanent and substantial polities. The historical record, as we have seen, shows otherwise. The decline of Sriwijaya was accompanied by the revival of many independent coastal centers. Region-wide accessibility to the sea probably accentuated sub-regional tendencies by creating numerous and profitable landfalls. Chinese sailing itineraries from late Sung times plotted on the map some of the landfalls that were thriving on foreign and indigenous trade when the Chinese "tributary trade" fell into abeyance. Even the sea gypsies, the *orang laut*—a genuinely

¹ George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), pp. 3-4.

² Pierre-Yves Manguin, "La traversée de la mer de Chine méridionale, des détroits à Canton, jusqu'au 17^e siècle (La question des Iles Paracels)," in *Actes du XXIX^e Congrès international des Orientalistes*, vol. 2 (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1976), pp. 110-15.

³ I now believe that K'ang T'ai's *Ko-ying* should be reconstructed as "Kawang" in northwestern Java and is likely to correspond with the emporium known to Ptolemy as *Argyre*; see O. W. Wolters, "Studying *Sriwijaya*," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 52,2 (1979): 20. I now also believe that the iron-producing island of Tan-lan is more likely to be in western Sarawak than in the Philippines.

⁴ Brian E. Colless, "Were the Gold Mines of Ancient Java in Borneo?" *The Brunei Museum Journal* 3,3 (1975): 146-57.

⁵ Jan Wissesman, "Markets and Trade in Pre-Majapahit Java," in *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia. Perspectives from Prehistory, History, and Ethnography*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 13 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1977, c. 1978), p. 211, note 13; and N. J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis* ('s Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1931), pp. 264-65.

⁶ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Southeast Asian Ship. An Historical Approach," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11,2 (1980): 266-76. They used wooden dowels and not iron for fastening the planks of the hull, multiple sheathing for the hull, multiple masts, and not iron for quarter-rudders. Outriggers did not sail on the open sea.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

maritime population scattered over many of the shores and offshore islands of Southeast Asia—were absorbed into this or that *manḍala*, thus losing some of their original identity.

The contribution of the Southeast Asian seas was always to provide treasure for competing rulers, who even included some rulers living in an agrarian environment some distance from the coast.⁸ Maritime treasure consisted of trade goods, harbor dues, and tributary presents from visiting merchants, which were made available to attract foreign merchants to the ruler's harbors, to embellish the royal center, and to reward the ruler's entourage.⁹ Maritime trade does not seem to have stimulated the growth of an influential indigenous commercial class, with social status at home and regional-scale trading interests abroad. The tendency was otherwise. Rich merchants, often foreigners, aspired to rise in the local court hierarchies or were used by the rulers as an additional and reliable source of manpower for administrative functions.¹⁰ The proceeds of maritime commerce helped, above all else, to enlarge the resources of the *manḍala* leaders, and the *Sejarah Melayu* pithily sums up the connection between the ruler and trading wealth in the words of Sultan Mahmud: "where there is sovereignty there is gold."¹¹

When we compare the Southeast Asian seas with the Mediterranean, we should observe how Braudel perceives the Mediterranean in his classic account of it in the age of Philip II. Braudel suggests that the sea's unity was created by the movement of men over the sea routes. Movement certainly took place within the Southeast Asian "Mediterranean," but we should also remember the type of movement Braudel has in mind. He is thinking of the urban-based trading activities that predominated over all other activities. "Cities and their communications, communications and their

⁸ I sometimes wonder whether too much attention is given to economic differences between coastal and inland polities in the archipelago. Inland polities, such as Majapahit, possessed sources of treasure in the rice-growing villages but were not so isolated from the sea that foreign trading revenue was not also available. See Satyawati Suleiman, "A Few Observations on the Use of Ceramics in Indonesia," *Aspek-aspek Archeologi Indonesia* 7 (1980): 13, for a discussion of links between the central Javanese princes and harbor princes of the northern coast. The two types of polity should be compared in less narrowly defined cultural terms.

⁹ Milner, "The Malay Raja: A Study of Malay Political Culture in East Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula in the Early Nineteenth Century," (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1977); chapter 3 analyses the functions of trading wealth in a Malay court.

¹⁰ For Cambodia, see Kenneth Hall, "Khmer commercial development and foreign contacts under Suryavarman I," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18,3 (1975): 321-22; for Champa, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Études cam. II. L'introduction de l'Islam au Champa," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 66 (1979): 260; for the Malay courts, see Barbara Andaya, "The Indian *saudagar raja* [the king's merchant] in traditional Malay courts," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 51,1 (1978): 3-35; for Java, see Jan Wissemann, "Markets and Trade in Pre-Majapahit Java," in *Economic and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia. Perspectives from Prehistory, History, and Ethnology*, ed. Karl Hutterer, Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977), pp. 207-8. Pires refers to the way foreign traders aspired to princely style on the northern coast of Java; see A. Cortesão, ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, vol. 1 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), pp. 182, 199-200. In Malay Malacca, some prominent Javanese merchants had links elsewhere in the archipelago but, by and large, there is little evidence of an indigenous commercial class with region-wide economic interests.

¹¹ C. C. Brown, trans., "The Malay Annals," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25,2-3 (1952): 187.

cities have imposed a unified human construction on geographical space.”¹² Or again, he says, “the history and civilization of the sea have been shaped by its towns.”¹³ But the Southeast Asian cities were not Venices or Genoas. They were royal centers, with trading ports under their shadow, where maritime treasure helped to sustain an *élan vital* that had little to do with commercial enterprise in our sense of the term. Correspondence going out of such centers would not have been in the form of enquiries about trading prospects but of missives with demands for tribute or even religious statues from overlord to vassal. Another difference between the two inland seas is that in Southeast Asia the arrival of foreign trading treasure could be taken for granted because some of the major ports were on the trans-Asian maritime route from western Asia to China. Merchants from western Asia, India, and eventually China frequently visited the Southeast Asian ports *en route* to other centers outside the region. The Mediterranean, on the other hand, was a terminus for Asian produce in the sense that the Mediterranean merchants cornered the produce in order to be able to redistribute it at a profit. Certainly, a brisk redistribution trade was plied in the Southeast Asian hinterland in addition to the collection of raw materials, but the trade included goods that never failed to reach the region from centers of production outside the region. Only Sriwijaya may have had monopolistic concerns similar to those in Venice or Genoa and only when its overlord was benefiting from the “tributary trade” with China before Chinese merchants themselves sailed to the southern seas in their own ships.

Thus, when we examine the sea’s influence in shaping Southeast Asian history, we do not stumble on a helpful theme. The Southeast Asian seas fitted into the polycentric landscape.

On the other hand, the sea could also exert another kind of influence with possibilities for an intra-regional communality of historical experience. The sea to which I am now referring is not the Southeast Asian “Mediterranean” but what I shall describe as “the single ocean,” the vast expanse of water from the coasts of eastern Africa and western Asia to the immensely long coastal line of the Indian subcontinent and on to China. The sea, defined in this manner, was, I believe, a significant fact of life in earlier Southeast Asia not only because treasure from distant places always arrived but also for other reasons that I shall consider. I shall therefore digress for a moment in order to discuss the reality that lay behind “the single ocean.”

The historical reality is that, during the many centuries before the arrival of the Europeans, those who lived on its shores never had reason to suppose that maritime communications with the rest of Asia would be severed for long intervals by disturbed political conditions in any part of the single ocean. For example, changes outside Southeast Asia never affected the prosperity of the famous camphor exporting coast of Barus in northwestern Sumatra; Arabs, Persians, Nestorian Christians, Tamils, and Jews all made their way there.¹⁴

¹² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper Colophon Books, Harper Torchbook edition, 1976), p. 277.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹⁴ Rumbi Mulia, *The Ancient Kingdom of Panai and the Ruins of Padang Lawas (North Sumatra)* *Bulletin of the Research Centre of Archaeology of Indonesia* 14 (1980): 3. For the reference to Jewish merchants, provided by S. D. Goitein, see Wolters, *The Fall of Srīvijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 208, note 34.

The single ocean possessed a genuine unity of its own. The trading connections that linked the opposite ends of maritime Asia resemble links in a chain which would join together again even if one link were temporarily broken. The fundamental unity of communications is amply verified in the quick recognition by the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century (1506-1512) that, in order to control the spice trade of eastern Indonesia, they had to erect a chain of fortresses from the Red Sea to the Moluccas before they could dominate the far-flung Asian emporia and monopolize the spice trade. Their ambitious geopolitical strategy never succeeded, and spices continued to reach the Mediterranean through Muslim traders. Coens, on behalf of the Dutch East India Company, proposed a similar strategy a century later when he recommended that his Directors should control the Indian textile trade to deprive Asian merchants of purchasing power when they sought Southeast Asian produce.

From time to time in the pre-European centuries a trading center on the shores of the single ocean would temporarily seek to control two or more links in the chain. Sriwijaya seems to have done so in its heyday. Nevertheless, the seas remained open until the seventeenth century, and the Chinese imperial histories provide the evidence. The earliest Chinese records of the region in the first centuries of the Christian era disclose that the opposite ends of Asia were already in maritime communication with each other, and nothing happened in the next millennium to persuade the Chinese that the situation had drastically changed. The Chinese emperors, powerless on the high seas, were therefore glad to bestow marks of favour on their Southeast Asian "vassals" who had been attracted by the Son of Heaven's imperial virtue, were policing the seas on his behalf and were keeping the trade routes to China open.

In effect, the single ocean was a vast zone of neutral water, which rulers inside and outside Southeast Asia independently and for their own interests wanted to protect. The Macassar ruler in 1615 was echoing the ancient experience of unimpeded access to the single ocean when he insisted that:

God has made the earth and the seas, has divided the earth among mankind, and given the sea in common. It is a thing unheard of that anyone should be forbidden to sail the seas.¹⁵

Echoes of the same tradition reached Grotius when he wrote his *Mare Liberum*, published in 1609 to refute Portuguese monopolistic claims in the single ocean. Grotius, aware of maritime practices in the eastern seas before the sixteenth century, wrote:

The Arabians and the Chinese are at the present day still carrying on with the peoples of the East Indies in trading which has been uninterrupted for several centuries.¹⁶

¹⁵ Quoted by G. J. Resink, *Indonesia's History between the Myths* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers, 1968), p. 45.

¹⁶ I gratefully acknowledge R. P. Anand's paper on "Maritime Practices and Customs in Southeast Asia until AD 1600 and the Modern Law of the Sea," presented at the Manila seminar, June 1980; see "Introduction," this book.

The consequence of the freedom of the seas was a tradition of hospitality to foreign traders. All traders needed to be attracted by suitable port facilities, fair trading practices, and protection from sporadic piracy in local waters.¹⁷ The maritime rulers of earlier Southeast Asia were always anxious to prevent lawlessness on the seas from diverting traders to alternative ports.¹⁸ Piracy began to be a prominent historical feature in Southeast Asian history only when Raffles and his contemporaries were writing about the region, and the reason is that the withering of local economic power compelled seafaring peoples to eke out a living by violent means at the expense of the Europeans who had forced the local rulers to conclude restrictive trading treaties. In earlier times, piracy was chronic only in intervals between the fall of one important trading center and the rise of another in the same neighbourhood.

The single ocean is a significant fact of Southeast Asian historical geography, and continuous and lively commercial exchanges can be expected to have encouraged cultural communications that left a mark on Southeast Asian history. "The Indianized states of Southeast Asia" have, in fact, long been a conventional definition in the region's historiography.

News of developments in India certainly reached Southeast Asia fairly promptly and continuously. We have seen that Hindu devotional cults, appearing in India in the first centuries of the Christian era, were making themselves felt in Southeast Asia during the same centuries. The great Hindu philosopher Śaṅkara (c.700-c.750) is mentioned in a ninth-century Cambodian inscription. Bosch was able to identify part of the Barabudur bas-relief as the "Gaṇḍavyūha," the last chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, a Mahāyāna Buddhist text; the *Sūtra* circulated widely in the Buddhist world to which Java and other parts of Southeast Asia belonged. Again, a version of a Persian Muslim epic reached Sumatra not very long after it was written.¹⁹

Prolonged and extensive communication over the single ocean brings the particular possibility of an Indian-influenced shape to Southeast Asian history. I have indicated my doubt that the shape would be found in the transformation of indigenous political systems, but this does not mean that we need not take into account one consequence when specimens of Indian literature, travelling as manuscripts or by oral transmission, reached numerous centers in Southeast Asia. We can assume with some confidence that the élite in all these centers was gradually exposed to the epistemological assumption of Indian literature that statements in every branch of knowledge were valid everywhere in the world. The Indian manuals are organized to leave their readers in no doubt that their categorical statements had all incontrovertible claim to be the embodiment of universal principles.

¹⁷ The Bendahara of Malacca epitomizes the tradition. He was "exceeding just and humane, clever in his handling of foreigners and skilled in conciliating the goodwill of the populace" ("The Malay Annals," p. 134).

¹⁸ W. H. Scott substitutes "trade-raiding" for what the Spaniards called "piracy," and he observes that "what was reprehensible in Philippine morality was not the act of plunder itself, but doing it to those who had not done it to you"; see William Henry Scott, "Boat-building and Seamanship in Classic Philippine Society" (Manila: Philippines National Museum, 1979), pp. 26, 31. Scott's essay contains a thorough analysis of nautical and related vocabularies in the Filipino languages and is a marvelous example of linguistic study as a tool for cultural historians.

¹⁹ L. F. Brakel, *The Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 54-57.

Indian literature probably engendered a catholicity of outlook which should be assigned a place in the shape of Southeast Asian history. Because of the authority of the Indian manuals, standards of excellence would be recognized as universal ones, even if only few were expected to be able to exemplify them. And so the Javanese author of the fourteenth-century *Nāgarakērtāgama* claims that there are only two excellent countries in the world: Java and India. Their excellence is on account of the respect given to religious learning in each of these countries.²⁰

But India did not always have the monopoly of books. Whether in the form of improved Sri Lankan editions of the Pali Canon of Theravāda Buddhism, Muslim modernism from the Middle East, or the teachings of Spenserian Darwinism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,²¹ the Southeast Asian élite would, I believe, be alert to new possibilities for updating older statements of universal validity. I suggest that the élite always took modernity urbanely in its stride. All ancient preoccupation with the signs of the present, manifesting itself in an ability to hail genuine leaders in a particular generation in a particular area, would have contributed to a present-minded outlook which permitted the élite not only to expect the continuous flow of foreign merchandise but also to absorb the mondial perspectives of the continuously arriving Indian literature and sustain intellectually curious and outward-looking habits of mind for all time.²²

We can go further and suppose that, in the different élitist centers, familiarity with the Indian assumption that knowledge was based on universal principles meant that there would be a disposition to identify something common everywhere in the region or, at least, to assume that something common was likely to be found everywhere. This habit of mind was encouraged by a special feature of the general categories of knowledge laid out in the Indian books. Lists of examples of a particular phenomenon would be provided, and at the end of the lists the word "etcetera" (*ādi*) would be written, thus enabling Southeast Asian scholars to incorporate further examples from their own experience. Indian literature could therefore be seen as providing models for organizing local subject matter.

This in fact happened.²³ Indian-devised expositions of universal phenomena left their mark. For example, the *Lawu of Manu* state that "in the world eighteen points of litigation arise." A Majapahit law code modifies the substance of some of Manu's points to accommodate Javanese customary law but does not alter the number

²⁰ T. G. T. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century. A Study of Cultural History. The Nāgarakērtāgama by Rakawai Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 AD*, vol. 3 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960-1963), canto 83, stanza 2.

²¹ Akira Nagazumi, *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism. The Early Years of the Budi Utomo, 1908-1918* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1972), p. 185, note 80; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 227-28.

²² A very curious example of the updating of earlier conceptions is provided by a Burmese medium, who explained that the Lokapālas guarded the following four cardinal points: the Shan States, China, and Indo-china; India's holy sites; the Anglo-Saxons; and the Russians. See E. Michael Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24,3 (1961): 573.

²³ For two examples of the use of *ādi*, see Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 3, canto 9, stanza 1, line 4; and Mabbett, "Kingship in Angkor," *Journal of the Siam Society* 66,2 (1978): 34: "In five days from today, I shall begin to dig ... (*ādi*)."

eighteen. Everywhere in the world of books the number had to be eighteen.²⁴ A Javanese manual on the science of poetics teaches the subject within the context of Javanese prosody, but its model is derived from an Indian manual on poetics that had fairly recently reached Java.²⁵ And in Vietnam, too, where there was familiarity with the Chinese as well as with the Indian world-view as reflected in Buddhist literature, a thirteenth-century historian used a Chinese format for writing imperial history as his model for presenting Vietnamese history, and several later Vietnamese historians followed his example.²⁶ Religious statuary provides an obvious instance of communality everywhere in Southeast Asia. In all parts of the region the élite was bound to be able to recognize the attributes of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and the Buddha, for the iconographic canons had been laid down as universal norms by the Indian scholars. Southeast Asian workshops supplied plenty of local artistic embellishments, but the distinguishing features of the statues were obligatory everywhere. And so the élite in different centers could perceive ubiquitous signs of its beliefs.

Here is a detail of an *aire de famille* in the nineteenth century. A Chinese trader domiciled in Thailand visited Bali. During his voyage he had prayed to the *tedja* of the Buddha, though he was probably thinking of his ruler in Bangkok. *Tedja* is a Sanskrit-derived word (*tejas*) often used to signify a Southeast Asian ruler's divinely radiant energy. When the trader reached Bali, the local ruler entertained him with ritual dancing, and what he saw was sufficiently familiar that he could compare the performance with what he had seen in Thailand and discuss differences with his Balinese host.²⁷

Art, religion, and government are inseparable phenomena in earlier Southeast Asia, and we can broach a few more instances of what would seem to be a broadly based communality of outlook encouraged by the widespread circulation of Indian books. Indian books have much to say about "the science of government," and the Southeast Asian records reflect the same emphasis. Inscriptions tell us that Cambodian kings were "drunk in the ocean of the *śāstras*" or "versed in the science of politics." We find references to "the seven constituents of political organization" as they are laid down in Indian books. In all these instances we are dealing with material in Indian models that rarely made improbable demands on those who managed the Southeast Asian *maṅḍalas*. The Indian precepts frequently dealt with matters which would be common sense anywhere. For example, the need for consultation in Southeast Asian societies, knit together by many personal ties, was articulated in Indian works on politics by the injunction that rulers should consult their "ministers." Yet the fact that common-sense precepts were enshrined in writing that claimed universal validity would have enabled a Southeast Asian ruler to regard

²⁴ F. H. van Naerssen, "The Aṣṭādaśavyavahāra in Old Javanese," *Journal of the Greater India Society* 15 (1956): 111-32. "The eighteen points" were also acknowledged in Champa; see M. B. Hooker, *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 33.

²⁵ C. Hooykaas, *The Old-Javanese Rāmāyana* (Amsterdam: Academie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling voor de Taal-, Letter-, Geschiedkundige en Wijsgeerige Wetenschappen. Verhandeligen, 1958). Nieuwe reeks 65.1.

²⁶ O. W. Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments arising out of Lê Văn Huru's History. Presented to the Trần court in 1272" in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979).

²⁷ Elizabeth Graves and Charnvit Kaset-siri, "A Nineteenth-Century Siamese Account of Bali: with Introduction and Notes," *Indonesia* 7 (1969): 77-122.

his own conduct as *comme il faut* and expect other rulers to behave in accordance with the same precepts.

The prestige of Indian models is reflected in miscellaneous records from many parts of the region. For example, a Cham king in the twelfth century supported his accession to the throne by writing a Sanskrit treatise which purported to resemble a *smṛti*, an Indian treatise with the status of a *sūtra* or *śāstra*.²⁸ He was issuing a statement which exhibited the aura of an Indian book on good government. Again, an inscription states that the Javanese king Erlangga in the eleventh century subverted his enemy's power "by the application of the means taught by" the author of the *Arthaśāstra*, the most famous of all Indian treatises on the policies of a successful *maṇḍala* manager.²⁹ The *Arthaśāstra* also contains many precepts useful for a would-be conqueror. It recommends that a conquering king should ally himself with the king whose territories lay at the rear of his own enemy. This axiom is common sense but, because it was mentioned in an illustrious source, it also had the stamp of universal authority. Whether or not he was consciously invoking the axiom, the Ayudhyā king in 1592 was implementing the *Arthaśāstra's* advice when he proposed an alliance to the Chinese whereby he would assist the Chinese in repelling the Japanese attack on Korea by invading the shores of his own enemy, the piratical Japanese king, in order to relieve Japanese pressure on Korea. Diplomatic flair probably came easily to rulers in multicentered Southeast Asia.

I have now suggested that Indian literary models, circulating over the single ocean, could provide possibilities for identifying a common cultural heritage in Southeast Asia as Henri Brugmans was able to do for Europe. We are still, of course, dealing with multiple, concurrent, and competitive elite groups rather than with a single, coherent, and cohesive elite. Nevertheless, we seem to be closer to an intra-regional commonality of outlook, engendered by an intellectual predictability of behavior among leaders of the various *maṇḍalas*. These influences, products of historical experience, could contribute to the shape of a genuinely "Southeast Asian" history.

A sense of universal standards of excellence, a present-mindedness of outlook, and participation in a common fund of Indian-derived literature are "Southeast Asian" cultural features which occurred to me after trying to respond to Henri Brugmans's discussion of the "European heritage." This line of thought may be bringing me quite close to Coedès's historical perspective in *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. Although I, unlike Coedès, have included the Philippines and Vietnam in my survey, my approach is similar in some respects. I have been more specific in describing the cultural matrix, for Coedès could not take recent prehistoric research into account; yet he, too, has recognized ancient cultural similarities in the region.³⁰ He believes that each people possessed its own "genius," but he also insists that "their culture never lost the family resemblance that they owed to their common culture."³¹ We differ in our treatment of the "states," for I have come to reject the term as implying monolithic and uniform characteristics which the Southeast Asian political systems never exhibited. We also differ in the effects we are prepared to

²⁸ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champa* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient; depositaire: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1963), pp. 241-43.

²⁹ B. R. Chatterji, *History of Indonesia* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967), p. 183, v. 29.

³⁰ Coedès, *The Indianized States*, pp. 8-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

attribute to Chinese political influence in the region.³² However, in spite of these differences in content and emphasis, my survey supports the principal feature in Coedès's presentation, for I have envisaged a continuous flow of Indian literature into the region and suggested that an outward looking attitude and propensity for modernity were the consequences. This characteristic of the region's history seems to prepare the ground for Coedès basic proposition that the "states" of Southeast Asia were continuously shaped and sustained by Indian cultural influences. He even periodizes significant developments which were the result of an interplay of Indian cultural and Chinese political influences.³³

Yet I am unable to accept Coedès's presentation, and the passage in his book which distinguishes his perspective from mine is in his conclusion, when he explains the importance of studying Southeast Asian history in the "classical" period. After stating that "the study of Farther India" provides "very valuable documentation that cannot help but further our knowledge of ancient India," he goes on to say that the subject's importance "lies above all in the observation of the impact of Indian civilization on the primitive civilizations."³⁴ The study of Southeast Asia must surely be for only one reason: to improve our knowledge of the region for its own sake.

The historian then has to decide for himself what needs to be studied for this purpose. For my part, I believe that the goal of historical studies should be a better understanding of what we mean by the often invoked expression "cultural diversity" in characterizing the region. Until more is known in historical terms of this singular feature of Southeast Asia, the search for an overarching shape to the region's history will lack a satisfactory basis. In the meantime, the historian can interest himself in the numerous cultural ambiances beneath the multicentric landscape of "universal" sovereigns and study why the inhabitants of this or that center never looked out into distant space for evidence that contradicted their conviction that their own center was "unique" because there, and only there, did they experience the sensation that everything in relevant space was in harmony and had beneficent meaning. In their worldview there were no boundaries or comparable centers. The paradox of many "unique" centers ceases to be one; it dissolves in the cultural ambience of whatever center we are considering, for it is only there that the auspicious signs of good government could be recognized.

The study of various local cultures is, in my opinion, where the field of earlier Southeast Asian history is properly situated, and the study has to begin with the assumption that no two local cultures were similar in every respect. Only when we know more about them and how they changed over the centuries shall we be better informed about their similarities and dissimilarities and be able to resume enquiry into the possibility of a regional shape to earlier Southeast Asian history.

Anthropologists, linguists, and art historians may have overtaken historians in developing this perspective. Historians when they contemplate the shape of Southeast Asian history, tend to seize on general maritime features and the diverse terrain—upland, inland agrarian, and coastal—rather than on specific evidence of cultural diversity reflected in historical materials.³⁵ Yet, enough is already known to

³² *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 252.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 252-53.

³⁵ I hope that this is a fair comment. Osborne, who detects more regional unity than I do, acknowledges that "it remains important to give attention to the differences that do set

indicate that the cultures in different parts of the region were not the same in all respects.

I suggested earlier that Indian-devised expositions of universal phenomena left their mark in the region, but this is not the end of the matter. For example, M. B. Hooker has warned the legal historian to be "cautious because the mode of congruence of Indian law with indigenous laws has varied greatly throughout Southeast Asia."³⁶ The Vietnamese legal code, issued in 1042 and modelled on the T'ang code, reflects the adjustments that would have been made elsewhere in the region to accommodate local social norms. According to the Vietnamese annals, the ruler Lý Thái-tôn was grieved and ordered his officials to reform the laws. They were to be organized and presented so that the classes of subject matter would constitute a body of law that was clear and appropriate to the times.³⁷ Local considerations would also explain why the Burmese legal texts ignored Manu's notion that the object of marriage was to beget sons (in fulfilment of one's duty to one's ancestors)³⁸ and why in Champa and Cambodia local practice was reflected in rules concerning property and land.³⁹ Other kinds of deviations from Indian models have been observed in Javanese law.⁴⁰

Another example of cultural difference in earlier times is the varying status of the Sanskrit language as the language worthy of being inscribed on something as venerable as stone. The Khmers continued to use Sanskrit into the fourteenth century, and the Chams into the fifteenth, but the Javanese, from the tenth century onwards, usually preferred to use their own language. As Zoetmulder puts it, "it would be rash, therefore, to assume that the way in which Sanskrit exerted its influence on Champa life and culture, as described above, can be taken as a parallel for what happened in Java."⁴¹ The same reservation applies to Cambodia. Matters of significance for the cultural historian are concealed in all these instances.

Art historians have been prompt to identify cultural differences. The miscellany of art styles on the Malay Peninsula, with specimens of statuary resembling Javanese, Cham, Khmer, and local art, is being closely studied today.⁴² H. G. Quaritch Wales has for many years developed art history as a tool for studying comparative religion, and he has sponsored the term "local genius" to account for differences in art styles. He asserts that "it is in monuments that local genius can most manifest itself"⁴³ and argues that the Khmer preference for temples in the shape of stepped pyramids and the Cham preference for tall sanctuary towers can be explained by the fact that

geographical region apart from geographical region, ethnic group apart from ethnic group . . ."; see Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia. An Introductory History* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), p. 16.

³⁶ M. B. Hooker, *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia*, p. 17.

³⁷ The information is in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (hereafter cited as *TT*), *Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội*, Hanoi, vol. 1 (1967), under the date of 1042.

³⁸ M. B. Hooker, *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia*, p. 19.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-46.

⁴¹ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 16.

⁴² For a recent study, see M. C. Subhadradis Diskul, "Chedi at Wat Keo Chaya, Suratthani," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 53,2 (1980): 1-4.

⁴³ H. G. Quaritch Wales, *The Making of Greater India* (London: B. Quaritch, 1961), p. 229.

Khmer religion was rooted in the worship of the Earth, whereas Cham religion was rooted in the worship of the Sky.

Here is another historical example of cultural diversity. Most countries in mainland Southeast Asia practise Theravāda Buddhism. What is interesting, however, is that, within these countries differences appear in respect of the emphasis given to certain Buddhist practices. Burman monks, for example, have been more concerned with metaphysics than their Thai counterparts; the latter are concerned with questions of monastic discipline. Again, the Burmans have been concerned with the institution of the novice, while the Thai have been concerned with the monkhood.⁴⁴ These cultural particularities can be thrown into relief only because both Burmans and Thai are Buddhists.

Finally a distinct and contemporary example of cultural diversity is preserved in the Vietnamese annals in connection with the prince Trần Nhật Duật, who died in 1330. It is recorded that the prince had a remarkable reputation for his interest in foreign languages and customs. He was the only member of the court who could serve as an interpreter when Malay envoys arrived from Temasek. He was prepared to eat in the style of a chief in the Black River area. He could divert himself by visiting the village where eleventh-century Cham captives had been settled. Foreigners would welcome him according to their own customs.⁴⁵

These details from court records may reflect an unusual sensitivity to cultural differences.⁴⁶ The Vietnamese élite in the fourteenth century had special reasons for wanting to preserve the country's cultural identity; for example, in 1374 an edict was issued to warn people, presumably living in the disturbed border regions, not to

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Thomas A. Kirsch for this information. He has suggested another difference: the relative prominence and elaboration of the *nat* cult in Burma can be contrasted with the comparable but apparently less developed *phi* cult in Thailand. The *nat* cult had probably already achieved some degree of sophistication and elaboration before the adoption of Buddhism, whereas in Thailand the *phi* cult could have been much less developed when the Thai adopted Buddhism.

⁴⁵ These references to Nhật Duật are in *TT* under the dates of 1280 and 1330. I can think of no better rendering of *Sách-mã-tích*, mentioned in the Vietnamese annals under the date of 1330, than as "Temasek." The last two characters are identical with a fourteenth-century Chinese transliteration of Temasek, while the Chinese sound for the first character begins with *Ts'*. Temasek was flourishing in Nhật Duật's lifetime.

⁴⁶ In the early seventh century the inhabitants of the eastern archipelago were known by the term *rāksasas*; see O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 198-99. See also Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 4, p. 477, for a reference to "socially discriminated groups" in Java. Javanese villagers suspected someone of being descended from a Khmer; see Buchari, "Epigraphy and Indonesian Historiography," in *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, ed. Soedjatmoko et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), p. 69. On the other hand, outside Vietnam, ethnic identity and language differences have tended to be fluid in mainland Southeast Asia. A group could change both in a relatively short period of time as a result of being in close contact with other people. I am grateful to Thomas A. Kirsch for discussing this point with me. See Donn Bayard, "Comment," in *Early Southeast Asia. Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*, ed. R. B. Smith and W. Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 278-80. A notable example of ethnic and linguistic fluidity is mentioned by E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (London: G. Bell and Son, 1954), p. 40, where he maintains that various hill peoples in Burma, such as the Kachin, gradually became Shan. For a study of the contrasting ability of the Thai and Javanese to assimilate Chinese, see G. William Skinner, "Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java," *Journal of the South Seas Society* 16,1-2 (1960): 86-100.

"copy the speech of the Chams and Lao." But what is significant in the account of Nhật Duật is that the Cham prisoners were still recognized as culturally different after more than two centuries in exile. The exiles' retention of their customs and language is a reminder of two influences which, more than anything else, validate the proposition that Southeast Asia is a region of extreme cultural diversity: society and language.

I shall refer only very briefly to the variety of social structures in the region. When I sketched the cultural matrix, I indicated a few traits which I supposed would be widespread, but I am well aware of notable exceptions. For example, the Minangkabau and Chams practise matrilineal descent, while the Bataks, Balinese, and Muong practice patrilineal descent. Even where cognatic kinship exists, the societies are by no means similar in all respects: the nuclear family is not necessarily the basic group; marriage, death, and burial rites are not uniform. The attribution of "prowess" is explained by all kinds of personal and external forces. The least we can do is to take it for granted that society was variously organized in earlier Southeast Asia. Groups and individuals would not have behaved in identical ways. Manpower would not have been deployed on similar lines everywhere. There could also have been different rates of population growth.

But the clinching evidence of cultural diversity is provided by the many different languages used in the region, even though they can be grouped into several families. When we think of them, we have to bear in mind what de Saussure says of "language": "it is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise the faculty."⁴⁷ A language expresses a social collectivity in the form of idiosyncratic relationships and differences between its linguistic units.⁴⁸

Linguistic cultural identity becomes particularly visible when we note what happened to Sanskrit loan words. De Saussure is again helpful: "a loan word no longer counts as such whenever it is studied within a [linguistic] system; it exists only through its relation with, and opposition to, words associated with it. . . ."⁴⁹ For example, the Javanese naturalized the Sanskrit word *santosa*, which means "contemplation" and "satisfaction," to signify what was important to them: the ideal state of mind of "the completely unconcerned" man in control of all passions.⁵⁰ The Javanese language, expressing a Javanese social collectivity, has appropriated the word *santosa* and given it a non-Indian meaning. The loan word is now an Old Javanese word, for the Sanskrit word in question does not seem to have the same linguistic status in any other Indonesian language. J. Gonda observes that Sanskrit abstract words with religious and ethical significance were often expressed in "a specifically Javanese manner,"⁵¹ an observation which, in itself tells us something

⁴⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22. The Chinese word for "pavilion" or "Village" (*t'ang*), pronounced as *dinh* in Vietnam, became the word used for the Vietnamese village communal house and centre for worshipping local heroes and heroines. The god of an ancient volcanic mountain cult in Java was identified as Brahmā Svayambhū; see de Casparis, "Pour une histoire sociale de l'ancienne Java principalement au X^{èmes}," *Archipel* 21 (1981): 143.

⁵⁰ J. Gonda, *Sanskrit in Indonesia* (Nagpur: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1952), p. 203.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

about this culture and can help us to distinguish it from other cultures within the Austronesian family of languages.

Observing how Sanskrit loan words fitted into the local languages is one way of recognizing the presence of what Quaritch Wales calls "local genius." Loan words cannot be assumed to have similar shifts in meaning in every Southeast Asian language. In the Khmer language the Sanskrit word *siddhi*, or "success," could also mean "the exclusive right to village revenues"⁵² but Gonda's *Sanskrit in Indonesia* does not mention this usage. In Javanese, the Sanskrit word *śakti*, or "the creating power of divinities, etc.," came to signify "supernatural power," whereas in Toba Batak *sokti* expresses the idea of "whose pronouncements or predictions are borne out by the facts or verified (of a magician)."⁵³ In Bali, *śakti* is identified with "ancestral power."⁵⁴

So much for a few glimpses of the bewildering differences to be studied in this region of cultural diversity. Only one conclusion seems reasonable. Much more historical and anthropological research is necessary before sufficient is known about the geographical spans of the subregional cultures, their nuances, the extent to which they overlapped and influenced each other, and the ways in which they might have altered during historical times. In the meantime, historians can be alert to signs of distinctive cultural traits in the areas of their competence and, when feasible, make cautious comparisons with what is known of other areas. The concept of "earlier Southeast Asia" is helpful because it invites us to keep abreast of all subregional studies for comparative purposes. But detailed historical research in particular subregions is what is needed most, and broad generalizations about a "Southeast Asian" culture must be avoided. As Donald K. Emmerson notes, cross-cultural generalizations reduce "the capacity to distinguish Southeast Asia from other world regions."⁵⁵ Generalizations are even more unfortunate when they blur subregional differences.

I have attempted in this chapter to define the subject known as "earlier Southeast Asian history." Criticism may arise especially from my doubt whether, in our present state of knowledge, the subject is much more than a will o' the wisp. How can regional history be organized around the theme of cultural diversity when one cannot present the theme in more than general terms or explain its historical implications for the region as a whole? The same kind of difficulties arise even when one is attempting the less ambitious project of writing "national" histories in the region. Taufik Abdullah insists that what is studied in local history must depend on what is significant in the development of the area in question. In the Indonesian historical context, the difference between local and national history is one of orientation. A "national" history does not represent a less detailed and more generalized treatment of "local" history:

⁵² For example, see George Coedès, *Les inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, vol. 1-5 (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), p. 66.

⁵³ J. Gonda, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ James A. Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597-1972* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 133.

⁵⁵ Donald K. Emmerson, "Issues in Southeast Asian History: Room for Interpretation—A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 40,1 (1980): 51.

If national history seeks after a problematic which has as its aim the integration of the different localities, local history is unnecessary. A local problem is local, and all related matters revolve around it. Therefore the principal question [in local history] is simpler: can these matters, process, and structural tendencies clarify the development of a society in this area or this locality?⁵⁶

I agree. Whether in Indonesia or elsewhere, the locality or subregion should remain the focus for studying history in earlier Southeast Asia even though the region lay astride the communications of "the single ocean" and Indian literature reached its multiple land falls.

The question now, as I see it, is not how to define earlier Southeast Asian history but to consider what the historian can do to study its salient feature, which is cultural diversity. Each historian will go his own way. My point of departure will be what happened to Indian materials when they arrived in *these* congeries of subregions unaccompanied by Indian-style brahmins⁵⁷ and my approach is foreshadowed by my comments on what happened to Sanskrit loan words, represented in many of the local languages.

I believe, unless there is convincing evidence to the contrary, that Indian materials tended to be fractured and restated and therefore drained of their original significance by a process which I shall refer to as "localization." The materials, be they words, sounds of words, books, or artifacts, had to be localized in different ways before they could fit into various local complexes of religious, social, and political systems and belong to new cultural "wholes." Only when this had happened would the fragments make sense in their new ambiances, the same ambiances which allowed the rulers and their subjects to believe that their centers were unique.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Taufik Abdullah, *Sejarah Lokal di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press, 1979), p. 14.

⁵⁷ India was also multicentered, but the hereditary and mobile class of brahmins taught in the *mathas*, the equivalent of broadcasting stations, and were able to communicate new philosophical and devotional messages, originally articulated in southern India, and bring them to the most distant parts of the subcontinent. The brahmins, at least in theory, were a priestly society. Their *dharma* knew no boundaries on the map; *dharma* was wherever brahmin society was believed to be represented. In Southeast Asia space was organized under cover of personal relationships between rulers and subjects and the priests were also subjects. The Southeast Asian "brahmins" never became the independent custodians and teachers of sacred texts. A further difference between India and Southeast Asia was that, on account of the Bay of Bengal, the relationship between the Sanskrit centers in India and their adjacent tribal areas does not automatically furnish formulae for studying the relationship between India and Southeast Asia. For a discussion of the relationship between "high" and "low" cultures in India, see I. W. Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: Reflections on the Historical Sources," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 8,2 (1977): 158-61.

⁵⁸ I do not suppose that local cultural systems remained unchanged when they had localized foreign materials. My point of departure is what happened when foreign materials were originally localized. Even then, the host culture could not have been unaffected. For example, in the second section of the essay I suggested that in protohistoric times the chiefs' construction of Hindu devotionalism, based on local notions of "soul stuff" and "prowess," led to heightened self-perceptions among the chieftain class and prepared the ground for overlords' claims to universal sovereignty, based on Śiva's divine authority. In the lowlands, over the centuries local cultural features persisted in increasingly complex religious and social systems, and each society localized foreign materials and conceptions at particular points in

We can now take leave of Henri Brugmans, who stimulated me in searching for a shape to regional history. Brugmans writes of the perpetual local "variations" on a few common "European" themes, but the situation in Southeast Asia is reversed: "variations" becomes an inappropriate expression, while independent "localizations," under the influence of different subregional cultures, become the common theme. For Brugmans, the common European themes are more easily seen from a distance than close at hand. In Southeast Asia, what is seen from a distance is similar modes of *maṅḍala* behavior, with their origins in prehistory. What is seen close at hand is by no means clear but more significant: the product of history in the form of multifarious constructions of foreign materials that varied according to the part of the region we are studying and, because of the influence of the local cultures, would not have encouraged a region-wide awareness of a common "Indian" heritage.

In the following chapter I shall illustrate what I mean by "localization," but I want to give one example now. I have mentioned earlier that the *maṅḍalas*, which seem to offer a convenient framework for subregional histories, might, in some instances, have had a cultural outreach more lasting than their political influence. However, even this possibility for cultural outreach needs to be qualified. Not only did Indian materials have to be localized everywhere but those which had been originally localized in one part of the region would have to be re-localized before they could belong elsewhere in the same subregion. The process of re-localization is another opportunity for studying cultural diversity.

Zoetmulder describes the deep respect Balinese scholars in modern times have for Old-Javanese literature.⁵⁹ Yet, Old-Javanese "Hindu-Buddhist" traditions had to fit into a different cultural tradition even in this neighboring island. James Boon suggests that the Javanese courtly way of life was top heavy on the small island of Bali and that its influence spilled downwards to the "middling families." The Javanese emphasis on hierarchy had to make allowances for Balinese values, and the effect is what Boon calls a "romance" in the sense that "romance is a popularization that embraces vernacular concerns, a compromise between courtly standards and the

time and at particular stages in its own development. Changes in local cultural features are bound to have occurred. Phya Anuman Rajadhon suggests that an ancient Thai word for "soul" (*khwan*) shed this meaning in favor of the Pāli-derived term *vinyan*, or "consciousness"; see "The Khwan and its Ceremonies," *Journal of the Siam Society* 50,2 (1962): 120-22. In chapter 4, note 2, I mention Kirsch's suggestion of how local and foreign elements were "universalized" and "parochialized" respectively. Some of the examples of localization mentioned in Chapter 4 presuppose long periods of time when both local and foreign elements were changing. The processes behind the endless elaboration of new local-foreign cultural "wholes" is a subject for historians and anthropologists alike. However, I hold the view that local beliefs, operating under cultural constraint, were always responsible for the initial form the new "wholes" took.

"Adaptation," "synthesis," and especially "syncretism" are sometimes used to describe the process I refer to as "localization." These terms seem to shirk the crucial question of where, how and why foreign elements began to fit into a local culture. "Adaptation" and "synthesis" give an impression of the outcome of the process, while "syncretism" does likewise and also begs the question by conveying a dictionary sense of reconciliation of originally contradictory difference. The three terms smother the initiative of the local elements responsible for the process and the end product.

⁵⁹ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature*, pp. 36-50.

surrounding subliterate world."⁶⁰ The Balinese world where Old-Javanese materials were re-localized was influenced by its own processes of social change. Moreover, the Balinese sense of romantic adventure and the shifts and tensions in their religious and political hierarchy played their part in transforming Javanese influences.⁶¹ One consequence can be seen in the Balinese versions of the Javanese Panji tales which "articulate a distinctly Balinese marriage system and a perhaps Oceanic value on individual love."⁶² A similar study could be made of re-localized Angkorian materials in Ayudhyā, with its focus less on the extent of Angkorian influence than on the information the *re-localizing* process supplies about Thai culture.

I am not offering "localization" as a historian's gimmick or even as an original idea⁶³ but because the term seems to have a bearing on the subject of this essay, from which the attempt to define regional history has distracted me: culture, history, and region in Southeast Asian perspectives. I believe that the term is a helpful one in studying local cultural differences in historical perspective. I am not suggesting, of course, that what happened to foreign materials is the only central theme for historical enquiry. On the other hand, because foreign materials found their way to many subregions, the historian has the opportunity of asking himself questions about the local host societies, thrown into relief by the process of localization, and about differences between them. In Mary Wright's words,⁶⁴ here is one means of opening up "ranges of experience" in Southeast Asia, bringing them into sharper focus, and investigating different cultural environments in which every significant happening and, indeed, every sequence of happenings was generated.

The term "localization" has the merit of calling our attention to something else outside the foreign materials. One way of conceptualizing "something else" is as a local statement, of cultural interest but not necessarily in written form, into which foreign elements have retreated. I shall give a few examples of particular local statements bearing on lines of enquiry discussed earlier. In some local statements, however, the foreign materials have retreated so completely that they seem to have disappeared, and the processes by which they do so provide a special opportunity for studying the cultural mosaic we call Southeast Asia.

⁶⁰ James A. Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali*, pp. 3-4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶³ W. F. Stutterheim is the best known scholar with this perspective. His studies are outlined by J. G. de Casparis in "Historical Writing on Indonesia (Early Period)," in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 138-40. Benda was thinking on the same lines when he enquired whether one means of identifying a common Southeast Asian culture would be to identify "modifications in transplanted Indian and Chinese patterns respectively" which "could be traced to common, or at least similar, indigenous factors"; see Harry Benda, "The Structure of Southeast Asian History," *Journal of Southeast Asia History* 3,1 (1962): 111. I believe that Benda's approach would make us more sensitive to differences among the local cultures themselves.

⁶⁴ Mary C. Wright, "Chinese History and the Historical Vocation," *Journal of Asian Studies* 23,4 (1964): 515.

LOCAL CULTURAL STATEMENTS

When I discussed the self-perceptions of the chieftain class in the protohistoric period, I suggested that the "Hindu" evidence in the inscriptions revealed religious *rapprochement* between leaders and led which could be explained by pre-"Hindu" acknowledgement of different levels of prowess within the chieftain class. In Cambodia, where protohistoric evidence is relatively ample, an overlord's cult was the cult of the chief who was seen as having achieved the closest relationship with the god. This was why subordinate chiefs, with their own devotional cults, sometimes offered Śiva gifts that they had received from their overlord as tokens of their own devotion. Their "Hindu" devotion seems to have been heightened by their association with the overlord. The "Hindu" cults in honour of Śiva are therefore calling attention to a network of relationships in Khmer society.

The same evidence points to another local feature. Nidhi Aeusrivongse observes that a Cambodian inscription of AD 611 mentions a god whose name ends with *-īśvara*; the inscription is damaged, but the god is almost certainly Śiva.¹ The inscription records the merging of arrangements for maintaining the god's cult with those in honour of a sacred tree. Nidhi Aeusrivongse believes that this is an example of how a local spirit could find a place in the Hindu pantheon.² We do not know whether an overlord existed in 611, but later in the same century a ruler, who may have been the overlord Jayavarman I, ordered slaves to be conducted to a prominent chief and located among the ruler's sanctuaries in a certain area. The gods in question are described as sharing the "domain" of the tree spirit mentioned in the

¹ Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Devarāja Cult and Khmer Kingship at Angkor," *Explorations in Early Southeast Asia: The Origins of Southeast Asian Statecraft*, Papers on South and Southeast Asia, ed. Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, no. 11 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), p. 115; and George Coedès, *Les Inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), pp. 21-23. On *-īśvara* see K. Bhattacharya, *Les religions brahmaniques dans l'ancien Cambodge* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1961), p. 125. See A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sançrites du Cambodge et Champa* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1885), p. 388, for the possibility of a donation to an indigenous cult under the name of Sri Brahmarakās.

² Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Devarāja Cult and Khmer Kingship at Angkor," p. 115. Kirsch discusses this kind of situation in a Thai context, and suggests that locality spirits were long ago identified, by a process he calls "parochialisation," with the cosmological deities of Hinduism. The result was that "the deity is made less abstract and more on par with the indigenous system of beliefs. But such identifications simultaneously involve a process of universalisation. The familiar spirit, now identified with a more abstract and universal cosmological scheme, is upgraded to an entity more distant than previously"; see Thomas Kirsch, "Complexity in the Thai Religious System: An Interpretation," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36,2 (1977): 263.

inscription of 611.³ The tree spirit now has a direct relationship with an overlord as well as with "Hindu" gods. In this way, a local spirit could find its place not only in the "Hindu" pantheon but also in the network of social and political relationships around which seventh-century Khmer society was organized during periods of overlordship.

Here, then, is a possibility for studying a cultural statement into which foreign materials have retreated and begin to call attention to features of Khmer society. Quaritch Wales examines monumental art as an expression of "local genius" but doubts whether "social structure" can be similarly studied. The reason is that he agrees with Van Leur that "what expressions of Indian civilization there were in early Indonesia were without exception sacral."⁴ But can any single aspect of a society be isolated as "sacral"? The evidence of seventh-century Cambodia suggests that a sharp distinction did not exist between "religious" and "secular" behavior. No single Khmer had the monopoly of "Hindu" materials; the chieftain class as a whole was involved, and religious and political relationships between leaders and led overlapped. The foreign materials are bringing situations within this class to the foreground, and the class becomes a subject for further study.

Foreign materials were also dispersed in Malay society in southeastern Sumatra during the later seventh century. According to the Sabokingking inscription at Palembang, the Sriwijayan ruler feared a regrouping of personal ties and alliances, and one of his concerns was that his enemies—no doubt other Malay chiefs—had magical "tantric" means at their disposal which they could employ for subversive purposes.⁵ But tantric materials may tell us about more than stresses and strains in Sriwijayan society. The ruler, too, possessed tantric means to strengthen his influence. He promised a *tantrāmala* to those who did not break their oath of allegiance. The word used for "oath" is a Malay one (*sumpah*), and the oath's sanctions permeate the inscription's contents. Perhaps the ruler was offering something as familiar to Malays as the royal oath he was administering. J. C. de Casparis, who edited the inscription, suggests that *tantrāmala* should be rendered literally as "immaculate as a consequence of Tantra" and that it could be a specific object such as a metal plate or clay tablet on which sacred words were written.⁶ If sacred words were inscribed in this way, and even if the words were incomprehensible to most recipients, the localized foreign materials could be enhancing the value Malays were accustomed to attribute to royal gifts, so often mentioned in later Malay literature.

Outlines of cultural statements about two societies in action in seventh-century Cambodia and Sumatra are available but they could not be discerned without the assistance of Śaivite and tantric fragments. Another example of a localizing process is found in an almost anonymous society but one in which something happened under cultural constraint.

³ Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Devarāja Cult and Khmer Kingship at Angkor," p. 115; George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 2, p. 117. Coedès notes that the name given to the slaves corresponds to a modern word for an "aboriginal population"; *ibid.*, note 4.

⁴ Quaritch Wales, *The Making of Greater India* (London: B. Quaritch, 1961), p. 227. He goes on to say that "everywhere [in Southeast Asia] up to the end of the eighth century there was little scope for the local peoples to express themselves in their own way in the official art and religion"; *ibid.*, p. 230.

⁵ J. C. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, II (Bandung, 1956) pp. 15-46.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31, notes 55 and 56.

Tom Harrisson and Stanley O'Connor excavated a small tantric shrine in Santubong in western Sarawak.⁷ Santubong is one of several landfalls in this part of the Borneo coast, and iron-ore was being worked nearby as early as at least the seventh or eighth century. The shrine possesses a ritual deposit chamber and may be an instance of the Javanese *maṅḍala's* cultural outreach. The Brunei ruler was a Majapahit vassal in the middle of the fourteenth century, and the shrine is believed to have been constructed in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The shrine's interest lies, however, in the circumstance that it was found in an area where the cultural horizon is dominated by burial practices and the carving of rocks, which are outside Indian tradition. The shrine was clearly connected with tantric ritual prescriptions, yet it was covered by a random collection of shale which is reminiscent of the inhabitants' reverence for heaped pebbles. The shale cover had to be above the shrine in order to give what most of the population probably regarded as the stamp of sanctity on whatever religious associations the shrine had for those influenced by tantric notions. The shale and deposit chamber are fitting into a cultural statement in the same way that the *tantrāmāla* and the royal gift may be fitting in seventh-century Sumatra.

Boon, an anthropologist, provides the next example of a local statement; it concerns what eventually happened in Bali to the two major Hindu gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu.⁸ C. Hooykaas has emphasized a number of features of Balinese "Hinduism" which cannot be accounted for by Indian influences. For example, the Balinese believe that one is reborn within one's group of blood-relatives, that the gods live above the mountains and lakes and are not present day and night in the temples, and that cremation should be practiced only if one's social position justifies it. Above all, the Balinese attach a "preponderant importance to the Holy Waters."⁹ Not surprisingly then, Śiva and Viṣṇu, though they have not entirely shed attributes derived from their Indian origins, fit into a new environment in Bali. They now enjoy a Balinese complementary relationship.

Śiva continues to represent "sacralised and stable authority" or "kingly authority and religious purity." Viṣṇu's localization is more interesting. Boon believes that in Bali Viṣṇu represents the "rising prince," evidently an echo of the Indian perception of Viṣṇu as the god who periodically reincarnates himself to protect the world from crumbling. But the Balinese conception of Viṣṇu's occasions for reappearing is a local one. The god represents "infusions of new religious and status energies from the periphery." The Balinese cultural background is one in which new men appear from time to time from the fringes of extensive and ascendant ancestor groups, build up networks of alliances by demonstrating their capacity for leadership, and eventually become Ancestors in a particular generation by virtue of their achievements during their lifetime on behalf of their kindred. Localization in Bali means that Viṣṇu's

⁷ Tom Harrisson and Stanley J. O'Connor, *Gold and Megalithic Activity in Prehistoric and Recent West Borneo* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1970).

⁸ James A. Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597-1972* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 197-205.

⁹ C. Hooykaas, *Religion in Bali* (Amsterdam: Academie van Wetenschappen, 1958). Afdeling voor de Taal-, Letter-, Geschiedkundige en Wijsgeerige Wetenschappen. Verhandelingen. Nieuwe reeks. 65,1 (1958), p. 25.

periodic reappearances fit into a Balinese statement constrained by local mechanisms for social mobilization. Viṣṇu has thus retreated into Balinese society.¹⁰

Localized foreign materials do not have to be Indian to tell us something about a society. R. C. Iletto's study of Tagalog society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals that the associations of the Christian Holy Week were construed in terms of the Filipino concept of *loób*, the inner self and a force with power to attract followers.¹¹ Here, as in Bali, we have a cultural statement about the mechanism of mobilization and, in this instance, for a grave purpose. The Tagalog peasants believed that those whose *loób* was "pure, serene, and controlled, have special powers granted to them by Christ," and the result was that, towards the end of the Spanish regime, their leaders, who were perceived in this way, enacted the roles of Christ and His disciples and organized armed rebellion in defiance of the colonial authorities. Leaders were sometimes expected to appear as Tagalog "kings," for Christ was hailed as "King" during the *pasyon* week. "Surely," remarks Iletto, "the friars did not intend the *pasyon* themes of self-purification and renewal to amplify notions of concentrating the 'creative' energy of the universe in one's *loób*. But, in the end, the colonised had their way."¹²

The next example has a magnificence of foreign materials but the materials point to something else. Eleanor Moron has undertaken an extraordinarily detailed analysis of the celestial arithmetic which provides the spatial and temporal framework of Angkor Wat, built during the reign of Sūryavarman II of Cambodia in the first half of the twelfth century.¹³ Her exact and convincing evidence, based on the measurements within the temple complex, reveals that "Angkor Wat expands westward and eastward through the *kṛta yuga* time period. The visitor crosses into the *kṛta yuga* when entering the temple on the west and crosses out of it when leaving in the east. The visitor also walks into the *kṛta yuga* when entering the gallery of bas-relief."¹⁴ And so, when one enters the complex, one is turning one's back on the present and deteriorating age, the *kāli yuga*, and returning to the first or golden age, represented by the king's reign. The bas-relief around the galleries consistently depicts this happy dispensation from the time when Sūryavarman, still very young, seized the throne from two kings, one of whom was his aged uncle, quelled a civil war, and went on to regenerate a *maṇḍala* that eventually extended from Nghê-an in Vietnam¹⁵ to the Chao Phraya basin. On the southern half of the western face of the gallery we see the frightful battle scene of Kurukṣetra, borrowed from the

¹⁰ Donn Hart's study of ritual kinship in the Philippines illustrates how the Catholic institution of godparenthood was rapidly localized. Hart notes that "a sympathetic convergence occurred between indigenous cultural traits and the godparenthood complex"; see Donn V. Hart, *Compadrinazgo. Ritual Kinship in the Philippines* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1977), p. 50. He compares the situation with that in Latin America, where numerous differences can be found.

¹¹ Reynaldo C. Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution. Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1911* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹³ Eleanor Moron, "Configurations of Time and Space at Angkor Wat," *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture* 5 (1977): 217-67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁵ See *Dai Việ t sử ký toàn thư (TT)* under the dates of 1128, 1132, and 1127. Nghê-an was raided twice in 1128, and the Khmer king demanded that Vietnamese envoys should be sent to Cambodia. The demand was rejected. The raid in 1132 was by Khmers and Chams.

Mahābhārata. On the southern face we see the king's dead enemies and supporters; they are descending into the underworld to be judged. The eastern face shows the king as Yama, the judge of the dead, which is Viṣṇu's role in a passage of the *Mahābhārata*.¹⁶ Also on the eastern face, we see Viṣṇu's churning creative ambrosia to sustain the golden age after the dust of battle has settled. The northern face shows a constellation of planets, and Moron was able to calculate the date when the sanctuary image was consecrated; the ceremony occurred during the end of July 1131.¹⁷

Hindu cosmogony and the Hindu epic have supplied the great monument with its spatial and temporal frame, and Viṣṇu the reincarnating god, has provided what Moron calls a "divine metaphor, meant to exalt but not deify the king."¹⁸ In Southeast Asia as well as in India, the Viṣṇu metaphor was commonly used for eulogising the king.¹⁹ The Javanese king Erlangga and "the rising prince" in the Balinese ancestor groups were rendered in this way. Similarly, the view was held in Southeast Asia as well as in India that the king was the maker of his "age" (*yuga*). The Cham ruler who supported his accession to the throne by writing a Sanskrit treatise resembling a *smṛti* also claimed that Champa was in the *krta yuga*, or golden age.²⁰

The Indian conventions of Viṣṇu and the golden age, so exuberantly deployed in Angkor Wat, do not in themselves, however, comprise the monument's cultural statement. The conventions draw attention to something else that is Khmer. Some Khmer elements are unambiguous. The monument's short inscriptions refer to "Lvo" and "Syām," Khmer captives or vassals from the Chao Phraya basin. The dates Moron has been able to decipher are Khmer ones. The identification of Suryavarman with Yama, the judge of the dead, is in the Khmer and also the Southeast Asian cultural traditional, for obedience and disobedience to the king had consequences in the afterlife. As one Cambodian inscription puts it, "kingship should be honoured by those who enjoy good works."²¹ Merit-earning conduct on the ruler's behalf promoted the subject's prospects of spiritual rewards, and this was why seventh-century Khmer chiefs would transfer the king's gifts to Śiva. In 1011, the corps of inspectors (*tamvāc*) of Śūryavarman I took an oath which ended thus: "May we obtain the recompense of people devoted to our masters in this and the other world."²²

What, then, is the Khmer statement embodied in Angkor Wat? I believe the key is signified in the southern panel on the western wall, where the series of bas-relief

¹⁶ F. D. K. Bosch, "Notes archéologiques. IV. Le temple d'Ankor Vat," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 32 (1932): 16.

¹⁷ Moron, "Configurations of Time and Space at Angkor Wat," p. 233. "The astronomers apparently used Angkor Wat itself as a kind of observatory"; *ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221, note 7.

¹⁹ For example, see A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanrites du Cambodge et Champa*, p. 68, v. 2; George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 1, p. 15, v. 4; J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Visnuism*, pp. 164-65.

²⁰ L. Finot, "Notes d'épigraphie XI: Les inscriptions de Mi-so-n," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 4 (1901): 958, v. 16, and p. 961, v. 16. For Cambodian references to the golden age, see, for example, George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 4, p. 23, v. 8; and p. 227, v. 77. On the golden age in Indian literature, see U. N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas* (Madras and London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 164, 199.

²¹ George Coedès, "La stèle de Prasat Komnap," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 32.1 (1932): 94, v. 27.

²² George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 3, p. 210.

begins. The panel shows the Kurukṣetra battle. This battle in traditional Indian cosmogony introduced the last age of the world, and Bosch notes that in Java, and apparently in Cambodia too, the battle was considered to be an inauspicious event and was avoided as a topic for bas-relief.²³ In Angkor Wat, however, the battle has been localized to introduce the golden age and, in the eyes of those responsible for the monument, the golden age was still in being. The king was not yet dead. Angkor Wat is therefore a spectacular formulation of the privilege of living in Sūryavarman's generation, when internal peace was restored and Khmer military forces, with plentiful chances for personal achievement, marched to the extremities of mainland Southeast Asia. The monument, with its wealth of foreign materials, points to this privilege.

Angkor Wat resembles a statement one can envisage in a society that practiced cognatic kinship, where the relative unimportance of lineage and the attribution of special spiritual qualities to leaders inculcated an alertness in reading contemporary signs and, in this case, embodying them in stone. The signifiers visible at Angkor Wat are drawn from Indian literature, but they signify a Khmer formulation associated with the Khmers' expectations of being Sūryavarman's contemporaries. Angkor Wat is an example of a local statement into which Indian conventions of Viṣṇu and the golden age have retreated so completely that they have become, in a literal sense, decorative. The expression "cultural statement" can even be suitably replaced by the expression "text," or something that has to be read. The literary repertoire is certainly Indian, but the "literary" effect of the Khmers' combination of Indian decorative elements, beginning with Kurukṣetra, has to be recovered before the monument's statement can be read as a Khmer one.

Vietnam offers more straightforward instances of foreign materials retreating into local statements. Chinese literary materials were as familiar to educated Vietnamese as Indian ones were to the architects of Angkor Wat, and passages from Chinese literature, or even fragments, are frequently found in Vietnamese writings. So localized had Chinese literature become in Vietnam that it even supplied diplomatic weaponry against the Chinese themselves. The Vietnamese court had plenty of occasions for reminding the Northern court of the Chinese dogma that an ideal ruler should show a benign attitude towards distant peoples. Vietnamese memorials to China often alluded to the dogma as an argument for dissuading the emperors from infringing Vietnamese sovereignty.

A more interesting example of the way foreign materials could retreat into local statements as completely as they did at Angkor Wat is seen in 1127, when the dying ruler, Lý Nhân-tôn, chose to formalize his choice of an heir by reproducing, with only a few and necessary deviations, the death-bed edict issued by the Han emperor, Wên-ti (180-157 BC). The literary decoration of Nhân-tôn's edict is recognizably Chinese, but the statement itself, uttered in urgent circumstances, is his own. Childless, he intended to appoint as his heir a young nephew, whom he had earlier adopted as his son, even though the recently established dynastic system of government had hitherto depended on the succession of vigorous adult sons. The

²³ F. D. K. Bosch, "Notes archéologiques. IV. Le temple d'Ankor Vat," pp. 13-14. The Pandawas' kingdom of Amarta in Javanese *wayang kulit* provides another example of a localized rendering of Indian epic materials. The short period of Pandawa rule over the kingdom gets little attention in the Indian epic, but not so in Java; see James R. Brandon, ed., *On Thrones of Gold. Three Javanese Shadow Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 11-14.

impending crisis facing the dynastic institution required a special death-bed edict, and this was why the ruler enclosed his edict within a famous piece of Chinese literature so that it would call special attention to his message. Every member of his court would have been able to read the edict as *Nhân-tôn* intended, which was that the nephew was as qualified to succeed him as emperor *Wên-ti* had wanted his heir to be, as it is recorded in another famous piece of Chinese literature. *Nhân-tôn* was representing himself as being as conscientious as *Wên-ti*, in spite of the fact that his situation was different from *Wên-ti*'s in one respect; *Wên-ti* had sought a worthy heir early in his reign, whereas the *Lý* rulers always postponed the formal announcement of their intention until they were dying. Nevertheless, *Nhân-tôn* knew that his courtiers shared the Vietnamese literary convention that famous fragments of Chinese literature were endowed with timeless wisdom. *Nhân-tôn* was using literary authority to secure his young heir's succession to the throne, and his edict can be seen as a local cultural statement that calls attention to the novelty and perhaps fragility of the Vietnamese dynastic institution.²⁴

A similar literary convention can be found in 1258, when the Buddhist ruler *Trần Thái-tôn* wanted to protect the imperial succession at a time of danger after the first Mongol invasion. He incorporated the name of the Chinese sage and ruler Yao in his title to communicate his prescience in nominating an heir when he himself was still in the prime of life and his heir had reached the age of eighteen.²⁵ Yao was admired by Mencius for showing the same prescience, and the allusion to Mencius provides *Thái-tôn* with an eloquent equivalence and the same kind of authority that *Nhân-tôn* had invoked by alluding to *Wên-ti*'s edict. Again, in 1272 a Vietnamese official assembled several Chinese philosophical and historical fragments, some of which he took out of their original context, in order to demonstrate the antiquity of the Vietnamese imperial institution which *Thái-tôn* and his heir were defending against Kubilai Khan. The Chinese fragments are tailored to fit into Vietnamese history and show that Vietnam's tributary relationship with China was a fiction.²⁶

In these Vietnamese examples, as in the case of Angkor Wat's Indian fragments, Chinese materials provide a quality of "literariness" that helps to communicate local statements. The fragments do no more than contribute to the formulation of the meaning of the Vietnamese and Khmer "texts." The precise "literary" contribution of the fragments is a matter of interpretation. I have chosen to refer to their "decorative" effect in Angkor Wat. Chinese fragments in Vietnam, associated with the prestige of antiquity, were certainly rhetorical. In Java, Sanskrit fragments contributed to local texts in other ways. In Old Javanese *parwa* literature the quotations often occur "in the very middle of a sentence without being integrated

²⁴ O. W. Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments Arising out of Lê Văn Hưu's History, Presented to the Trần Court in 1272," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), p. 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

into it.²⁷ Sanskrit quotations may have provided "an atmosphere of solemnity" because they were often didactic maxims,²⁸ or lent an aura of "authoritativeness."²⁹

Foreign fragments, therefore, are fitting one way or another into new contexts. My inventory of examples is miscellaneous, but the vocabulary I, and those whom I quoted, have used to describe the localizing processes has not been unsystematic. The vocabulary is similar to that used for describing "literary" effects. The "literariness" of the localizing process is clearest in respect of Angkor Wat. Moron identifies Viṣṇu as a "metaphor" for exalting Sūryavarman. Hindu cosmogony and epic literature, supplying the monument with its spatial and temporal frame, provide "equivalences" of the golden age and also add "decorative" effects which enable the Khmers to "formulate" their privileged sensation of living in Sūryavarman's generation. The "signifiers" visible at Angkor Wat mean something else to the Khmers and enable them to communicate their own message. These ways of describing the monument belong to a mode of analysis which would equally well be used in analysing a written text. The Vietnamese deploy Chinese fragments for "rhetorical" purposes, and this is another term for describing a literary effect.

Even in the other instances of localization, the effect of the foreign fragments can be rendered in terms appropriate in literary criticism. The Sriwijayan ruler's *tantrāmāla* may have enhanced the value Malays attributed to a royal gift, while Iletto uses the term "amplify" when he brings the *pasyon* themes into relation with the Tagalog peasants' notions of *loób*. In both cases the term "intensify," used for language effects, would be equally satisfactory. The *tantrāmāla* can also be regarded as the "equivalence" of a royal gift. I suggested that the Santubong shale cover put a local stamp of sanctity on whatever religious associations the tantric shrine had. I could have said "intensified." Those who wrote the Old-Javanese *parwa* may have used Sanskrit fragments for the sake of their magical sounds; sound produces literary effect. In Bali, the difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu corresponds with the gods' relationship in India, but the one takes the form of an arrived leader (Śiva) while the other is beginning to arrive from the periphery (Viṣṇu). In Saussurian linguistics, to which I shall refer below, importance is attached to relationships and differences, and the same importance is reflected in literary studies.

The foreign elements in these examples tend to shrink to the status of quasi-"literary" devices, and in each case their effectiveness has to be identified before a local statement about something else can be discovered. The fragments have submitted to the influence of local cultural statements and need to be read alongside other elements in the statements just as one does when one reads words on a page. Indeed, I have referred to Angkor Wat as a "text." The Vietnamese examples are unquestionably texts; even Trần Thái-tôn's title is a text. Therefore, one way of thinking about the cultural mosaic we call "Southeast Asia" may be as a mosaic of local "literary cultures" in the sense that foreign and local features are fitting into various text-like wholes.

I have been broaching a process for restoring the effects of foreign fragments when they retreat into local cultural ambiances, but my examples do not shed light on instances of the cultural diversity sustaining the multi-centered landscape of

²⁷ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

earlier Southeast Asia. If literary terminology is to be helpful in studying how foreign elements functioned in different local cultures, the proper place for this approach must surely be the Southeast Asian literatures themselves, by which I mean epigraphic records as well as any other surviving specimens of writing.

I shall pause with this possibility. I had responded to a seminar invitation because it gave me an unexpected opportunity for doing something I had not attempted before, which was to reflect on the shape of history in the region. I began by suggesting that, when historical records first appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era, there were numerous scattered centers of population. The inhabitants spoke various languages but were likely in many areas to have independently exhibited a few similar cultural features associated with cognatic kinship systems. The salient feature was an ability to identify and rally behind spiritually endowed leaders in specific generations, which meant that local societies could be mobilized for intra-regional adventures. This situation projected itself into the historical period, when records commemorated the exploits of the well-known *mandalas*, or "circles of kings." The reality, however, was that those who lived in a *mandala* center were convinced that their center was "unique." Intra-regional relations were not conducted on the basis of equality among the centers.

I then enquired whether Brugman's rendering of Europe as a region of "perpetual variations on a relatively restricted number of themes" provided a helpful model for characterizing earlier Southeast Asian history. The continuous flow of foreign materials, especially Indian ones, over the single ocean's always open communications could have introduced regionally shared themes which, in historical times, offset the multi-centered way of life inherited from prehistory. I suggested several influences making for a region-wide communality of outlook, at least among the élite: an awareness of universal values, emphasized in Indian literature; the example of Indian models for organizing knowledge; and a propensity for modernity that came from an outward looking disposition encouraged by easy maritime communications, and predisposing the élite to expect the arrival of new and updated ideas with the stamp of universal standards of excellent behavior. In these ways the élite could gradually become impressed by what they seemed to share in common with the rest of the civilized world to which Indian literature addressed itself. In these ways something approaching a "Southeast Asian" predictability of outlook could have been engendered by the acknowledgement of a common fount of Indian conceptions.

This possibility was not very different from Coedès's presentation of "the Hinduised states of Southeast Asia," but I immediately rejected his presentation because it diverted us from the study of the region for its own sake. I preferred an approach which took as its point of departure the region's cultural diversity, concealed by *mandala* history. The nature and extent of cultural diversity were elusive, but there was sufficient historical evidence to justify the expression, though the clinching evidence was provided by language diversity. I therefore concluded that the shape of the subject must accommodate this conspicuous characteristic and that the subject should be studied as the histories of numerous cultural subregions. The historian's responsibility was the study of this or that culture without allowing himself to be preoccupied by the problem of organizing a regional shape to the subject.

The question now was how the historian should approach the study of cultural diversity. One approach was to enquire what happened to Indian materials

circulating in different subregions, and I suggested that they were "localized" in different ways to become part of the local cultures just as Sanskrit loan words were localized. I also suggested that the presence of foreign elements could interest historians because it was throwing into sharper relief the "something else" in the local cultures responsible for the localizing process. Foreign and local elements belonged to what I called "local cultural statements," though the pattern of localization could not be uniform throughout the region.

I gave a few examples of local statements, and this led me to compare them with literary statements. The function of foreign elements could be described in terms appropriate for identifying literary effects. The possibility therefore arose that the study of local literatures would itself contribute to a sharper definition of cultural particularities. An enquiry on these lines might be a step towards a comparative study of the literatures and a further elucidation of the cultural mosaic and shape of history in earlier Southeast Asia.

I have reached this conclusion after a roundabout discussion, and I could end here. I have not done so because I want to say something about what I mean by literary study or, more exactly, textual study. Perhaps the topic does not belong to an essay originally conceived on more general lines but, for two reasons, I have decided to extend its scope. Firstly, historians of Southeast Asia have always been hospitable to a variety of research tools. Textual study is another tool, and its orientations have, I believe, a close bearing on the study of cultural diversity. Language use is the foundation of any culture, and it deserves its place in a discussion of regional history where the focus has come to rest on cultural diversity. Secondly, textual study is concerned with literary processes. What is studied is how writers in particular cultures used language to produce meaning. The making of literature is one of the processes at work in earlier Southeast Asia, and all historical processes are the historian's concern.

LOCAL LITERATURES

The literatures of earlier Southeast Asia are not usually studied for textual purposes. Inscriptions, for example, are examined for documentary information referring to something outside themselves, such as an event which matches related information found in other inscriptions, monuments, or foreign sources. Documentary study is an essential activity for all historians, but it is not textual study. In textual study there is "no unseemly rush from word to world."¹ A body of writing, treated as a text, refers us to its language and not to outside events.

I mentioned de Saussure when I discussed what happened to Sanskrit loan words as evidence of the influence of language diversity. The focus in textual study owes much to de Saussure's insistence that a language is a system of relations between its constituent units, or between its words and combinations of words, and that all linguistic units are marked by relationships and differences among themselves.² Linguistic relations and differences provide the conditions which permit meaning to be produced. Figurative language, with its opportunities for options of meaning, feeds on linguistic relations and differences, and textual study pays particular heed to it. The study of a text, it has been said, is concerned "not with content, but with the process by which content is formulated."³

A crucial focus in this line of enquiry with special relevance for the study of the earlier Southeast Asian literatures is the investigation of what Jonathan Culler calls "literary conventions," shared by writers and readers alike within a particular culture. Conventions supply expectations of how meaning can be produced and communicated by literary effects. Culler defines "conventions" as "shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture..."⁴ and he approvingly quotes Gérard Genette's statement: conventions are "a body of maxims and prejudices which constitute both a vision of the world and a system of values."⁵ The vision and values, according to Culler, are what a text assumes as "natural"

¹ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics. Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 130.

² The following works provide a helpful introduction to de Saussure's theory of language: Jonathan Culler, *Saussure* (London: Fontana Modern Masters, Fontana Paperback, 1979); John Sturrock, ed., *Structuralism and Since. From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 6-10; and Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 19-28.

³ Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 158.

⁴ Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 140.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

within its culture.⁶ Or again, one reads a text as "the exploration of writing, or problems of articulating a world."⁷ I approached the Angkor Wat monument on these lines.

This mode of literary study is clearly and firmly placed within the orbit of cultural studies. Literary conventions are a window through which the local ambience of writers and readers in a particular Southeast Asian subregion can be glimpsed; we are glimpsing something local people could not disregard. Culler's term for a community of literary conventions is "literary competence." The historian is invited to consider how and why language could formulate literary meaning in various parts of the region and in what ways formulations differed. Manifestations of literary competence within a culture seem to be akin to what Quaritch Wales calls "local genius" in the field of monumental art, and they may be a more satisfactory object of study because in language nothing can be isolated; everything is interrelated.

Textual study is not a branch of intellectual history and therefore another kind of sequential historical enquiry directly concerned with the study of ideas. Textual study remains committed to the study of the use of language and can be regarded as intellectual history only in so far as it deals with activities of the mind when the mind is engaged in literary production. Some may suppose that I am invoking an austere approach to the study of literature, which, as Culler puts it, discourages the reader from yielding to the "adventures of his own subjectivity," though in the Southeast Asian field tormenting problems of translation require most of us to postpone this kind of pleasure indefinitely. On the other hand, textual analysis can bring historians increments of new knowledge. By examining "literariness," the historian develops perspectives inaccessible to those accustomed to regard everything written as having documentary significance or nothing at all and do not consider what a text's language formulations can tell them.

Moreover, textual studies have already provided several insights for monitoring changes during more recent Southeast Asian history, and change is something that interests all historians. James Siegel points out a consequence of Muslim influence in Aceh, and therefore of cultural change: the *ulamas* insisted on the presence of a message in texts, whereas the epic tradition, studied by Siegel in great detail, was that sense was suppressed in favour of the sounds of the voice. Authority, according to the *ulamas*, stemmed from the substance of what was said and done.⁸ Anthony Day, studying literary language in Central Java during the nineteenth century, isolates the time when the Javanese began to recognize and accept the impotence of kingship, which was after the Dipanegara war of 1830. But he rejects the view that post-1830 literature was "Byzantine," or involuted, and shows that the ancient poetic tradition of literary embellishment continued to produce creative writing, even though poetic language was now being used to render the end of Javanese kingship in Central Java. Benedict Anderson analyses the language of Sutomo's *Memories*. The author, founder of the Budi Utomo in 1908, does not describe his political life but rather how he discovered his Javanese cultural ancestry at the beginning of this century. The *Memories* end when Sutomo is nineteen and the Budi Utomo still

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 260

⁸ James Siegel, *Shadow and Sound. The Historical Thought of a Sumatran People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

unformed. Sutomo turns from Dutch or Indonesian to Javanese to express the nuances of his feelings, and episodes in his youth are often filled with sounds, not words. In spite of what has been subsequently written about Budi Utomo as marking the passage from "darkness to light," this imagery does not appear in *Memories*. Sutomo remembers change in his early life as the process of growing up by growing back. The language for describing the experience of meeting Dr. Wahidin in 1907 expresses the completion of the process of becoming aware of a Javanese ancestry: a moral purpose in life was now revealed to the author and also the possibility of setting an example of Javanese excellence in the modern world without having to imitate the West.⁹

These three studies, to which I have not done justice, are based on careful examination of language. Unsuspected cultural changes are discovered, but change is never straightforward and obvious.

Though the type of textual study I have been sketching in a rudimentary fashion should not be expected to offer rule-of-thumb procedures for unearthing meaning in texts, the literatures of earlier Southeast Asia are a promising field for experimentation. Most literary materials are anonymous, so that one does not need to be distracted by questions about a writer's situation or personal intentions. One does not immediately have to look outside the texts to account for what is inside. Instead, one has to learn to read groups of texts in the same culture and genre to discern the presence of a local social collectivity which is expressing itself in language usage. Textual studies can also highlight something which tends to be given short shrift in accounts of earlier Southeast Asia: elements of "strangeness" in the various cultures when compared with each other and with cultures in other parts of the world. Literary texts are bound to be "strange" because they depend on figurative language. Various forms of literary strangeness are part of the "ranges of experience" which need to be opened up to allow satisfactory general accounts of earlier Southeast Asia to be written.

My interest in the localizing processes to which foreign materials had to submit before they could belong to cultural statements has led me to a particular approach to the phenomenon of cultural diversity: the study of language usages in local literatures. Documentary evidence points to something else outside itself, but foreign materials point to something else inside the local cultural statement, and the statement that now interests me is the text where foreign materials are subsumed by literary competence within the culture in question. Literatures are one means of illuminating cultural diversity. Textual studies will not, of course, yield rapid results, and the present priority is more knowledge of literary competence in each of the subregional cultures so that one day the foundation will be laid for comparative literary studies.

I shall now try to practise in an experimental and elementary way what I have been preaching. I shall discuss two seemingly unpromising examples of texts in non-Southeast Asian written languages, namely, Vietnamese poetry written in Chinese during the fourteenth century, and Sanskrit inscriptions written during the reign of Yaśovarman (889-910), the founder of the first of the cities known as Angkor.

⁹ A. J. Day, "Meanings of Change in the Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Java" (PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1981); B. Anderson, "A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light . . ." in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Published for the Asian Studies Association of Australia by Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), pp. 219-48.

Differences between Vietnamese and Cambodian literary traditions are not my immediate concern; I am more interested in indicating a few considerations when studying literature in terms of literary processes rather than contents. I have also included in Appendix C notes on studies of the Old-Javanese *kakawins* and the Malay *hikayats* by P. J. Zoetmulder and Shelly Errington respectively. Zoetmulder's *Kalangwan. A survey of Old-Javanese literature* is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of one literary culture in earlier Southeast Asia, while Errington's article is a stimulating example of the direction textual study can take one. Both scholars have helped to make textual study less of a stranger in this field of history, and the reason I have relegated them to appendices is that I believe that I should practise what I preach rather than quote others.

When one studies fourteenth-century Vietnamese poetry, a major difficulty immediately arises. Can we even refer to "Vietnamese" poetry at that time? Poetry always calls attention to itself through its special language, and these poems seem to be explicitly calling attention not only to the Chinese language in which they were written but also to the complex rules of what is known as T'ang "new-style" prosody, with elaborate rhyming devices, couplets of parallel verse, and much more.¹⁰ A considerable body of this kind of poetry has survived even though the annals record that Vietnamese in the fourteenth century were also using a local script (*nôm*), based on Chinese characters, for poetic writing. Moreover, the poets did not hesitate to use conventional Chinese word-combinations. They used the Chinese poetic convention of writing about the landscape as though they were seeing a painting. They appropriated expressions made famous by Chinese poets and sometimes admiringly referred to their work. They also employed well-known themes in Chinese poetry. Trần Quang Triều, for example, had Tu Fu's poem in mind when he wrote on Ch'ang-an, the fallen T'ang capital.¹¹ Their poems seem to be so packed with the conventions and topics of Chinese poetry that they may sometimes be mistaken for the work of Chinese poets.

In spite of these similarities, however, Chinese poetic forms had been localized, and the success of the localization may itself be furnishing a local statement. I believe that the poets were deliberately proclaiming their mastery of Chinese poetry to demonstrate that their countryside lent itself as convincingly to the highest standards of Chinese-style poetry as the Chinese countryside did in the poems of the T'ang masters and their successors. And so Phạm Sư Mạnh, writing on the famous Báo

¹⁰ Some of these rules are noted in *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*, edited and translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. xxvii. On Chinese verse, see Hans H. Frankel, "Classical Chinese," in *Versification: Major Language Types*, ed. W. K. Wimsatt (New York: New York University Press, 1972), pp. 22-37.

¹¹ Quang Triều's first line reads: "the rivers and peaks survived but the ancient state was no more." Tu Fu's first line is similar. Tu Fu, writing shortly after Ch'ang-an fell, goes on to describe the unkempt spring vegetation and the sorrow of the flowers and birds. Quang Triều, writing from a great distance of time, responds by referring to the cypresses of the imperial graves and the burying of the rulers' ardour under the autumn vegetation. In his third line, Tu Fu writes of a startled bird "as if with the anguish of separation", while Quang Triều, in his fourth line, thinks of the butterfly (perhaps an echo of Chuang-tzu) flying away in autumn to extinction. Tu Fu's poem is in eight lines, but Quang Triều chose to make variations only on the first four lines. For Tu Fu's poem, see David Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) pp. 45-48. For Quang Triều's poem, see *Toàn Việt thi lục* (TVTL), HM 3139 in the library of the Société Asiatique, Paris, and a copy of Lê Quý Đôn's collection of Vietnamese poetry, compiled in the eighteenth century, q. 2, pp. 12b-13a.

Thiền pagoda which protected the country in difficult times, ends: "I come to soak my pen in ink to compose a special poem. For my pen I want the stream to serve as my inkwell."¹²

The poets were celebrating their landscape by adorning what they wrote with all the Chinese literary devices available to them. They may have seen themselves as subordinating Chinese poetic forms, for they were living in the century after the Vietnamese victories over the Mongols. Their poems would have been a gesture of homage all the more impressive because they were using the language which was the Chinese poets' preserve. Here may be an instance of poetic justice in the literal as well as in the figurative sense. Their behavior could have been as combative as that of the historian in 1272, when he appropriated Chinese literary fragments to defend his ruler's independent status in the face of Chinese imperial pretensions.

Nevertheless can poetry written in this style be regarded as Vietnamese poetry? One reason that the poems, in spite of their script, were Vietnamese and not Chinese is surely that they were vocalized in the local language. Scholars in the Hàn-lâm academy in Thăng-long could sometimes speak Chinese and were available for welcoming Northern envoys,¹³ but one should not assume that all literati were similarly qualified. Trần Nhật Duật, who was conspicuous for his interest in foreign languages, picked up some facility in spoken Chinese by mingling with Chinese envoys in the thirteenth century,¹⁴ but this does not mean that Vietnamese poets wrote with the Chinese sounds of the script in their ears; it is unthinkable that they did so when their poems named and celebrated the country's famous sites. The Chinese script had been used for administrative and educational purposes since the beginning of the Christian era and continued to be used for these purposes when the Vietnamese regained independence in the tenth century. The inevitable result was that many Chinese words were assimilated over the centuries into the Vietnamese language. But the Chinese characters were always pronounced in Vietnamese, and the poets would have effortlessly converted the Chinese characters into Vietnamese sounds. Thus, when Nguyễn Phi Khanh wrote that "he will chant a [T'ang new style] poem to teach my young boy," he must have intended to chant in the Vietnamese language.¹⁵ The emotive associations of Vietnamese speech-sounds and their relation to meaning are one of the many questions needing study before more is known about Vietnamese literature in the fourteenth century, but a safe assumption is that the poets sometimes chose particular Chinese characters for the sake of the sheer sound of the words when they were uttered in Vietnamese speech.¹⁶ One should not forget that the development of the *nôm* script as a vehicle for poetry in the fourteenth century was precisely to provide a script that could be sounded in Vietnamese.

The poems are "Vietnamese" in a more recognizable way, though here, too, further study is needed. The poets appropriated Chinese written characters to create

¹² *Thơ-văn Lý-Trần (TVLT)*, Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, vol. 3 (Hanoi, 1978), p. 115.

¹³ *TT* (the Vietnamese annals), under the date of 1324.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, under the date of 1330.

¹⁵ *TVLT*, p. 395.

¹⁶ I am alluding to Edward Sapir's enthusiasm for the "wild joy in the sheer sound of words" which he found in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and I owe the reference to Roman Jakobson and Linda R. Waugh. *The Sound Shape of Language* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 231. Chapter four ("The Spell of Speech Sounds") discusses research in this field of linguistics.

their own literary conventions. A straightforward instance is the language used to poeticize Tản Viên, a famous mountain about sixty miles west of the capital city of Thăng-long on the site of Hanoi. "Tản Viên" appears as a linguistic unit only three times in the "Chinese" poetry of the second half of the fourteenth century but always in a similar literary formulation. Phạm Sư Mạnh wrote:

The blue sky over Tản Viên shines down on Thăng-long.¹⁷

And again,

The appearance of the Tản Viên mountain is clear to the ninth heaven.¹⁸

Another poet, the prince Phủ and future ruler Nghệ-tôn, presented a farewell poem to the first Ming envoy in 1369. He wrote:

Annam's aged minister of state lacks the poet's skill.
He only offers a cup of tea to bid his guest farewell.
The Tản Viên mountain is green. The Lô river is blue.
May you have a favourable wind as you fly into the land of
many-coloured clouds.¹⁹

Phủ intensifies the clear colors of the mountain and river by suggesting a contrast between them and the colors of the clouds awaiting the envoy in southern China. In these three poems Tản Viên is always associated with fine weather, and the reason is that the poets are familiar with the folklore image of the mountain as the abode of the spirit who fights the rain spirit and protects the capital and rice plains from unseasonal flooding. The language used to adorn the mountain is a literary convention to signify the spirit's benign influence.

The Vietnamese also gave Chinese literary expressions nuances of their own. In Chinese literature "axles and script" is an equivalence of word "standardization" and a mark of ancient civilization in China, but in fourteenth-century Vietnamese poetry and prose the expression was used to refer to the glorious dawn of Vietnamese civilization in the first millennium BC. The nuance became conventional because "standardization" implied stable government, and those who used it were expressing their concern over the collapse of authority in their own day.²⁰

"Axles and script" is a figure of speech, and all Chinese historical and literary allusions in fourteenth-century Vietnamese literature should normally be understood as being no more than literary devices, whether they appear in the always ornate

¹⁷ TVLT, p. 121. Tản Viên's three peaks can be seen in the west from Hanoi in clear weather.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 217.

²⁰ I discuss this convention in "Assertions of Cultural Well-Being in Fourteenth Century Vietnam: Part II," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11,1 (1980): 77-78. A poem by the fourteenth century official, Nguyễn Phi Khanh, contains the same conventions; see TVLT, p. 453.

language of poetry or in the often ornate language of Chinese prose. The writer's literary intentions have to be borne in mind to avoid misunderstanding what he means when he refers to Chinese philosophers or uses special Chinese vocabulary to refer to Chinese political and moral values and the institutions embodying them. This kind of material should, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, be expected only to provide literary effects. The writers introduce figurative language even when they are referring to themselves; they are not announcing their allegiance to Chinese ideals. To approach Vietnamese decorative language otherwise is to run the risk of habitually looking for outside explanations of what was happening inside Vietnam. The Vietnamese writers' language can be likened to that of the Javanese poets, who wrote about their countryside and society under the guise of Sanskrit personal and place names.

We have seen in the previous chapter that the Buddhist ruler Trần Thái-tôn presented himself as a Vietnamese version of the Chinese sage and ruler, Yao. He did so because Yao signified a prescient ruler, and Trần Nguyễn Đán did likewise towards the end of the fourteenth century when he wrote in a poem: "it is easier to fly to Heaven in daytime than to serve a ruler such as Yao and Shun."²¹ His poem is no more than an expression of hopelessness at a time when the ruler was incompetent. In happier times Đán had written a poem, packed with Chinese imagery, to show his admiration for the famous fourth-century scholar, Chu Văn An.²² The language evokes the image of Han Yü, the highly motivated and irascible late Tang Confucianist who wanted to revive the teachings of the ancient philosophers at the expense of Buddhism. But, although in Đán's day Vietnamese monks, breaking free from their monastic discipline, were persuading villagers to join bands of armed peasants, Đán's poem was not intended to ascribe Han Yü's political philosophy to Chu Văn An. The latter is characterized in the annals as capable of anger when confronted by stupid students or corrupt officials, and Đán is using hyperbolic language only because he wants to metaphorize his hero by likening the impression An made to the impression made by the indignant Han Yü. Đán was giving literary force to his praise, just as Lý Nhân-tôn did when he enclosed his death-bed edict within the text of a Han emperor's edict. Both Đán and Nhân-tôn wanted to make their points as effectively as possible.

These poems must be read cautiously before one decides that they provide evidence of Confucianist influence and not simply of the poets' familiarity with Chinese materials for producing literary effects. The language is always that of poetry, and poetic language is liable to supply misleading information when read for documentary purposes. Nevertheless the poems yield their own kind of information. Tân Viên's bright sky and "axles and script" are opportunities for discovering the assumptions concealed by local conventions.

But poetry can reveal more than conventional language usage if we remember the essential question to be put to a "text": how is its content formulated by the use of language? To suggest what is possible, I shall make a few comments on Vietnamese landscape poetry in the second half of the fourteenth century.

²¹ TVLT, p. 207.

²² The poem is translated in Huỳnh Sanh Thông, *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*, p. 31, no. 75. For a translation of the first four lines, see O. W. Wolters, "Assertions of Cultural Well-Being in Fourteenth Century Vietnam: Part I," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10,2 (1979): 448.

When poets wrote about the landscape, they sometimes used the phrase "the mountains and the rivers." This is another Chinese expression and means "territory," but it refers to the territory identified in the annals as "our Đại Việt," or "our Vietnam." The local identity of "the mountains and rivers" is guaranteed by the frequent contiguity of two other words: "barrier" and "since antiquity." The literary associations of "territory" therefore signify successful and timeless protection provided by "the mountains and rivers." The ruler Minh-tôn (1300-57) in a poem about Bạch Đằng, where the Mongols were defeated for the final time in 1288, poeticizes the landscape in military equivalences and, in his second couplet in parallel verse, writes:

The mountains and rivers have been here since antiquity. They open their eyes in both directions.
The Mongols and Vietnamese, defeat and victory. Both depended on [natural] barriers.²³

The poets sometimes enlarge the associations of mountains and rivers to include heroism. For example, Nguyễn Sương writes about the Bạch Đằng victory:

Who could have known that this enduring achievement [in the 1285-1293 reign-period]
Depended equally on the barrier river and on men?²⁴

Vietnam's capacity for surviving required language of its own.

The Vietnamese landscape could also be contrasted with that on the other side of the northern border. To leave Vietnam on a diplomatic mission to the North required an elaborate language of dark and cold mountains, damp and unhealthy vapours, crude mountain settlements, and "screaming monkeys." Nguyễn Sương said of the envoy, Nguyễn Trung Ngạn:

You are following the geese across the mountain passes to face the northern snow.
But your heart is that of the Vietnamese bird longing for its southern branch.²⁵

"The Vietnamese bird" is the peacock, whose harsh cry was a Chinese metaphor for nostalgia.²⁶ Sương appropriates the Chinese use of the metaphor as a means of honouring his own country; Ngạn is going into temporary exile. Ngạn, a prolific poet, upsets the meaning of a Chinese poem when he borrows from Li Po the

²³ TVLT, q. 1, pp. 20b-21a. Some of the river stakes on which the Mongols' evacuation fleet was impaled at low tide are on display in the National Museum, Hanoi.

²⁴ TVLT, q. 2, p. 15b

²⁵ TVLT, q. 2, p. 14b. Sương is celebrating the Bạch Đằng victory.

²⁶ Edward H. Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird. Tang images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 237.

expression "it is better to go home" to refer to his unhappiness when he is on a mission to China.

Although Jiang-nan (southern China) is a happy place, it is better to go home.²⁷

The theme of exile may draw on Chinese poetry referring to service on the frontier but the land of exile is China.

Vietnamese poems about "the mountains and rivers" have provided some examples of local poetic conventions. Equivalences of defence, timelessness, physical discomfort in southern China, and homesickness belong to Vietnamese literary competence. But the language of landscape poetry written in the second half of the fourteenth century can tell us something more about literary formulation at that time. About fifteen poems by three prominent poets reveal a textual structure for articulating the experience of wandering in beautiful scenery.²⁸ These poems continue to include conventional elements in Chinese poetry, especially the way in which natural scenery, represented as the threshold of the supernatural world, becomes an escape from the pressures of daily life. Nevertheless, features of the language usage are Vietnamese.

The structure of the poems is revealed in the thematic similarities in each of the corresponding couplets. Some poems have four couplets, while the structure of those with only two couplets seems to correspond with that of the third and fourth couplets in the long poems. Although the poet conforms to the structure, he treats it in his own way. When a poem has four couplets, the first one situates the poet among the mountains. Sometimes he may note a cliff "thrusting itself into the blue heavens like a jade lotus" or that "a tall bamboo on the mountain top pierces through the cloud mist."²⁹ A poet may be leading a military patrol in the northern provinces, in which case his first couplet will convey the effects of bustle and movement, set in train by the ruler's orders.³⁰ Or again, he may be snatching a moment's leisure from his official duties, and this will enable him to contrast the affairs of the world with nature's solitude.³¹ The weather is always fine, and the poet can survey limitless space. Exciting scenery must be spacious.

The second couplets are in parallel verse and deliberately decorative in language. Poems written on patrol may allude to peaks and streams in the contorted landscape or may flourish flags, horses, and soldiers to convey the sensation of military influences operating in the scene.³² In poems written at leisure, another kind of

²⁷ TVLT, q. 2, pp. 40a-b. Bùi Bích, and eighteenth-century compiler of Vietnamese poetry, observes that Ngan, in his preceding line, adapts a line from a T'ang poet, Shu Yu, when he writes: "It is said that, in one's own family, even poverty is good"; see Bùi Bích, *Hoàng Việt thi tuyển*, q. 2, p. 8a.

²⁸ I have translated seven of Phạm Sư-Manh's poems in "Phạm Sư-Manh's poems written when patrolling the Vietnamese northern border in the middle of the fourteenth century," *JEAS* 13,1 (March 1982): 107-119. Number IV of these poems ("The Tam Thanh grotto") can also be grouped among the poems discussed below. See Appendix B for translations of six of these poems.

²⁹ Poem 4 in Appendix B.

³⁰ See Phạm Sư-Manh's poems in *JEAS* 13,1 (March 1982).

³¹ Poems 1, 2, and 4 in Appendix B.

³² See Phạm Sư-Manh's poems in *JEAS* 13,1 (March 1982).

influence is at work. The poets sometimes hear the sounds of nature or see a spirit-fashioned palace in the white clouds. In several poems they even glimpse the abode of immortal spirits through the distant haze, and they intensify the sensation of spiritual presence by alluding to descriptions in Chinese literature of the spirits' magical islands in the North China Sea.³³ The effect conveyed in second couplets is always that fine scenery becomes privileged scenery.

The third couplets, again in parallel verse, reveal that the influences referred to in the second couplets are actually occupying the scene. When poems are written on patrol, we read of "cavalry" and "brave troops" or of defensive points in the mountains and passes.³⁴ The theme of occupation is maintained in poems where spiritual influences appear in the second couplets. Spirit imagery may extend into the third couplets, or a poet may announce that he, too, has become a spirit.³⁵ Illustrious Vietnamese place-names can also emerge in the enchanted scene as a matter of course. The first line in a two-couplet poem mentions "the mountains and rivers" of Tiên Du, the ancestral home of the Lý dynasty, and goes on to compare the scene with one of the spirits' islands.³⁶ A third couplet in another poem mentions Vạn Kiếp with its "rows of chilled halberds."³⁷ Vạn Kiếp was a battlefield in the Mongol wars and the fief of the famous commander-in-chief, the Hưng Đạo prince. Another third couplet mentions Bạch Đằng, where the final victory took place in 1288. The poet wrote:

The world's most marvellous sight is the rising of the sun at Dương Cốc.
The purest air of the rivers and mountains is Bạch Đằng's autumn.³⁸

Dương Cốc, "the bright valley," was the place designated by the Chinese sage and ruler Yao for announcing the beginning of spring activities by the rising sun. The passage is from the Chinese classic *The Book of History* and the reference permits the poet to emphasize the unique atmosphere of this honoured part of the Vietnamese countryside.

The final couplet in each poem describes the poet's elation. He is carefree, sings and plays music, writes a poem, or rejoices in the invigorating air. He has put the world behind him. One poet observes that the spirits do not concern themselves with the past; they are in a realm where time is of no account.

The adoption of this basic structure leaves the poets free to concentrate on the use of poetic language. Peaks, grottos, mist, magical music, air, and, above all, spaciousness call for good poetry. Humans are consigned to the distant hurly-burly of public life unless they are soldiers on duty, a solitary monk in his mountain retreat, or the excited poet. Peaks, mist, and so forth help to signify the space, mystery, and timelessness of "the mountains and rivers." We seem to be dealing with sets of signifying associations that link the poets with their readers in a cultural

³³ Poems 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 in Appendix B. The islands' location is described in the *Ch'ien Han-shu, chiao-szü chih*

³⁴ See Pham Sư Manh's poems in *JSEAS* 13,1 (March 1982).

³⁵ Poems 1 and 4 in Appendix B.

³⁶ Poem 5 in Appendix B.

³⁷ Poem 3 in Appendix B.

³⁸ Poem 2 in Appendix B.

transaction. The poets knew that their readers would read these poems as expressions of elation, and the language of elation is associated with "mountains and rivers," together with "barrier," "since antiquity," and "heroism."

The structure and much of the language of these poems could have originated from Chinese poetry. What is interesting about them and gives them the texture of poetry written in the second half of the fourteenth century is the allusions to the distant islands of the spirits. Several islands are mentioned: Bồng Lai (P'eng-lai in Chinese), Phương Hồ (Fang-hu), Doanh Châu (Ting-chou), and Viên Kiêu (Yuan-ch'iao). These magical place-names do not appear in the poetry of the first half of the century,³⁹ but in the second half of the century no less than four islands are localized by three prominent poets among the "mountains and rivers" of Vietnam. A new literary convention suddenly appears, and the interest of the innovation is enhanced when we bear in mind that other literary changes also appear in the same vintage of poems. "Axles and script" and "Vân Lang," the site of Vietnam's golden age, appear in a poem by Phạm Sư Mạnh, who wrote of Vân Kiêu and Bạch Đằng in his poems of elation.⁴⁰ Moreover, even a cursory glance at the poems of the later fourteenth century shows that writers were drawing on a much wider range of Chinese literary allusions for metaphorizing the trials and tribulations of public life.

How should these literary changes be explained? The annals make it painfully clear that the Trần dynasty was being threatened by an usurper at a time when there was grave social unrest and the borders were defenceless. The poets were also officials deeply involved in the deteriorating situation. Moreover, although their traditional role had been that of court "servants," they were now becoming the unhappy monitors of public life.⁴¹ It is not surprising that they would steal some moments of leisure amid beautiful scenery, but their preoccupations accompanied them. What, then, does their poetic language tell us? The poems, and especially the allusions to the magical islands they fancied that they could see in the distance in order to highlight their elation, call attention to the special quality of the Vietnamese landscape — its timelessness and, by implication, capacity for enduring. The language of timelessness is conveyed by soldiers on the barrier passes and especially by the novel language of spiritual influences, metaphorized by the immortal spirits. Poetry provides the opportunity for these writers to celebrate their country's most precious quality. They were as concerned with poetical processes as the Javanese poets were (see Appendix C), but their purpose was to salute "our Đại Việt." Fine scenery elated them because it reminded them that the ancient "mountains and rivers" were now the single stable landmark in dangerous times. If we suppose that the Old-Javanese poems are our means of participating in yogic meditation, the happening in these Vietnamese poems is the poets' replenishment of hope for the future.

I shall now leave Vietnam in order to consider Yaśovarman I's inscriptions, written in Cambodia towards the end of the ninth century or in the first years of the tenth. I am not attempting to compare Vietnamese and Cambodian literatures. I am only suggesting another possibility for studying literature elsewhere in earlier

³⁹ See Nguyễn ũc, *TVLT*, p. 45. A variant reading of this poem gives Bồng Lai, but the editors of *TVLT* have properly preferred Bồng Vân, the name of a Trần palace.

⁴⁰ See Phạm Sư Mạnh's poem no. vii in *JSEAS* 13,1 (March 1982). On Vân Lang, see O. W. Wolters, "Assertions of Cultural Well-Being: Part II," pp. 74-78.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-87.

Southeast Asia. The undertaking is risky, for I shall be trespassing on the Sanskritists' preserve.

Yaśovarman I's inscriptions and many others before and during Angkorian times are all that survive of earlier Cambodian literature. The poems are packed with allusions to the same Hindu deities who appear in the Javanese *kakawins*, studied by Zoetmulder, but this does not necessarily mean that there were few differences between the two literatures. Indeed, in one respect the Cambodian inscriptions resemble the Vietnamese poems, for they were also written in a foreign language, Sanskrit, and those who study them insist that the poets were familiar with the prosody of Indian *kāvya* literature, with its highly organized forms, figurative language, and richness of metres, all of which were "aimed at producing methodically a defined aesthetic experience in an audience, hearer, or reader."⁴² The Vietnamese poets refer admiringly to Chinese poetry and, I believe, expected their own poems to be judged by the standards of excellence found in the best Chinese poetry. Likewise, the Cambodian inscriptions praise rulers and scholars for having an expert knowledge of the Sanskrit language and literature.⁴³ Just as Chinese literary forms did not stifle Vietnamese poets, so Sanskrit literary forms need not have done so in Cambodia.

The Sanskrit inscriptions of Cambodia, as far as I know, are not usually studied as "texts." The literary feature that catches their editors' attention is an apparently suffocating profusion of Indian materials used for eulogizing gods and rulers. The inscriptions of the later ninth century have been described as "over-refined"⁴⁴ and showing a propensity for "repetition" not common in India.⁴⁵ Coedès observes that the use of "decoration" (*alaṅkāra*) in some twelfth-century inscriptions exceeds the worst that the preceding centuries had produced. Of an early twelfth-century inscription he says that it exceeds in silliness the worst that the poets of the Angkor court had produced.⁴⁶ But we need not take his criticisms too seriously. De Casparis writes about an excessive use of "decoration" in an Old-Javanese inscription of 856, and he is identifying a distinctive feature of creative writing found in Java during the following thousand years.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the usual judgment passed on the poetic quality of the Cambodian inscriptions may have discouraged historians from searching them for more than documentary evidence.

Not all, however, have read the inscriptions in this way. Mabbett's essay on the "Devarāja," where he develops Jean Filliozat's views, is an important exception.⁴⁸ Filliozat insists that the poets were less intent on praising a king than on establishing his identification with divine models. "What is at stake is not royal vanity but the transference to the kingdom of sovereignty over the universe, a transference which the panegyrist does more than record—which he consecrates and reconsecrates in his

⁴² A. K. Warder, "Classical Literature," in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A. L. Basham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 171.

⁴³ For example, see A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanrites au Cambodge et Champa (ISCC)* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1885), p. 522, v. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁶ Coedès, *Les inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, vol. 6 (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), p. 301. Coedès notes an instance of gibberish; *IC*, vol. 3, p. 108, note 1.

⁴⁷ See Appendix C.

⁴⁸ I. W. Mabbett, "Devarāja," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10,2 (1969): 202-23.

poetic formula, even as the architect gives it effect in the symbolic monuments. . . . When the Sanskrit poets [in India and so in Cambodia] equate kings with gods. . . . they compose in a medium where gods are not simply literary themes but basically sovereign realities. . . .⁴⁹ In Mabbett's words, we are dealing with parts of an exercise "conducted according to a single set of rules to assimilate the kingdom to the heavens and thereby allow divinity to flow down. The exercise required the establishment in various ways of the equivalence of a king to a god."⁵⁰

Mabbett goes on to suggest that the language of Khmer religious symbols, including that of the inscriptions, should be regarded as "the language of a society, employed to formulate ideas that were important to that society, rather than as the propaganda of a succession of megalomaniacs."⁵¹ The symbols, "like words in a language," are manipulated to make statements. That the symbols are equivalent to the things they represent "is not itself a statement in the language; it is an initial convention that is necessary before any statement can be made."⁵² This last point seems to be critically important for understanding Sanskrit inscriptions in Cambodia.

Filliozat and Mabbett, when they read the inscriptions, recognize them as literary texts, replete with devices for literary statements about "the basic truths of the universe."⁵³ Mabbett's views are consistent with the approach to literature that I have been discussing. He does not hesitate to speak of "a society," "formulation," "equivalence," "convention," and "statement," and the result is that he throws the possibility wide open for textual study by Sanskritists.⁵⁴

By way of hypothesis, I shall suggest a specific sub-study. Even those whose access to the inscriptions is limited to translations cannot fail to observe that certain words appear time and time again. Perhaps the meanings of some of these words were conventionally interrelated and represented a set of signifying language associations familiar to the Khmer poets. One such set may appear in Yasovarman's inscriptions.

A verse purports to state the king's intention when he constructed the Yaśodharatajāka lake to the east of his new city. Its name is derived from the king's name, *Yaśas*, meaning "glory." We are told that the king wanted to "facilitate an outlet for his abundant glory (*yaśas*) in the direction of the underworld (*rasātala*)."⁵⁵ The "underworld" is the abode of the *nāgas*, aquatic and serpentine creatures associated with the soil's riches. Another inscription connects "glory" with the lake

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20. He is quoting Filliozat, "Le Symbolisme du Monument de Phnom Bakheng," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 44,2 (1954): 549 ff.

⁵⁰ Mabbett, "Devarāja," p. 220.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁵⁴ Louis Renou, in a study of the structure of the Indian *kāvya*, describes the ornate features of the autonomous strophes such as *double entredre*, synonyms, and by not means always self-evident comparisons, sometimes based on comparisons with grammatical analogies. He suggests that insufficient attention has been paid to "form" in Indian poetry, where form takes precedence over content. By "form," he is not thinking of grammatical categories but of "structure," which is the point where morphological questions come to an end and the "meaning" (*valeur*) of the style or structure begins. "Formalisme" would be a rewarding field for Indian literary studies; see Louis Renou, "Sur la structure de *kāvya*," *Journal Asiatique* 247,1 (1959): 61.

⁵⁵ A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 407, v. 54.

and also provides a metaphor for the lake. The king, "resplendent with glory," has built the lake, "beautiful as the moon to refresh human beings."⁵⁶ In Indian imagery, the moon teems with life-sustaining ambrosia (*amṛita*), and one of the king's inscriptions follows the convention: he has constructed a lake "equal to the disc of the moon and whose substance could come from water" and be precipitated on the earth.⁵⁷ The editor glosses the passage as meaning "whose *amṛita* could come from water."⁵⁸

The relationship between royal glory and ambrosia, implied in these references to the lake, is made explicit in other inscriptions of the reign. "He spreads everywhere and ceaselessly the *amṛita* (ambrosia) of his immaculate glory."⁵⁹ Or again, the king's glory is likened to a lotus stalk.⁶⁰ The lotus, and especially its stalk, has a special significance in Indian mythology. The god Brahmā, the Indian god of creation, was born in a lotus (growing from Viṣṇu's navel), and the lotus became an Indian metaphor for the created world; in Bosch's words, it is "the very symbol of life risen from the waters."⁶¹ Thus, one inscription compares the lake with "the lotus where the creator is born."⁶² In Indian mythology, the waters where the lotus floats came to be associated with the life-sustaining substance known as the germ of life or *amṛita* (ambrosia). The precious substance was released when the creator married Vāc ("Voice"), the goddess of the waters.⁶³ Vāc became the god's *śakti*, activator of his creative energy, and the lotus stalk, because it was absorbing Vāc's water, was regarded as signifying the essence of the germ of life, or ambrosia, which supported life in the newly created world. The statement that Yaśovarman's glory was to be compared with a lotus stalk is attributing to him the life-sustaining energy released when the creator married Vāc.

The lake, in poetic language, is a receptacle for the king's glory, which is his store of ambrosia. The relationship between the king and ambrosia is expressed even more strikingly. The royal voice is also associated with ambrosia. It is said that from Yaśovarman's mouth went out only "the ambrosia of his commands (*sāsanāmṛita*) for the prosperity of his subjects."⁶⁴ The water of his commands "purified the hearts" of the defiled.⁶⁵ Or again, one drank "the *amṛita* of his voice."⁶⁶

We must now return to Indian mythology to understand the reason. When Vāc became the creator's consort, the germ of life possessed her and she began to speak. Speech was thus instituted at the moment of creation, when ambrosia was released. Because the origins of ambrosia and speech were coeval, speech was associated with the mediation of ambrosia and was therefore a purifying influence. The purifying

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 473, v. 22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 502, v. 22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 502, note 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 426, v. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 466, v. 11.

⁶¹ F. D. K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ. An Introduction to Indian Symbolism* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1960), p. 82.

⁶² A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 525, v. 22.

⁶³ On Vāc, see Bosch, *The Golden Germ. An Introduction to Indian Symbolism*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 440, v. 20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 427, v. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 519, v. 4.

influence of Vāc's speech is eulogised in an early tenth-century inscription written not long after Yaśovarman's death, and the association would be known when the king's inscriptions were being composed.⁶⁷ Vāc, and also the king, release ambrosia when they speak, and this equivalence in speech strengthens the impression that the poets wished to portray the king as the source of life-sustaining energy.

The royal voice is sometimes metaphorized as the goddess Sarasvatī, another name for Vāc (Vagīśvarī). Sarasvatī is said to have "resided in" a king's mouth.⁶⁸ She is Brahmā's consort and honoured in India and Southeast Asia as the goddess of eloquence, writing, and music, though Zoetmulder remarks that she was much less prominent in the invocations (*manggalas*) at the beginning of the Old-Javanese *kakawins* than she became in Bali.⁶⁹ In Angkorian Cambodia more respect seems to have been paid to Sarasvatī than to her consort, and, as in India, she was also identified as the consort of Śiva or Viṣṇu.⁷⁰ A tenth-century inscription states that Vagīśvarī (Vāc) was Śiva's *śakti*,⁷¹ and an early eleventh-century one records sacrifices to Śiva and Sarasvatī.⁷²

The lake, linked with ambrosia-charged royal glory, therefore provides an opportunity for the poets to use the language of divine kingship when they are writing about their ruler. Divinity flows down from the heavens to permeate the king, and the effect is achieved by a cluster of related words which endow him with the capacity of dispensing and even voicing purifying ambrosia. The effect is possible because the Khmer poets were familiar with the Indian imagery of ambrosia as a result of their own literary competence. The poets' readers would know that the king was being described as a god with creative energy. Who, then, is the creator god who has descended to earth?

The inscriptions unambiguously identify Brahmā, Vāc's husband, as the god of creation. He is referred to when the lake is compared with "the lotus where the creator is born," and Cambodian epigraphy from the seventh century onwards leaves us in no doubt that Brahmā was honoured in this way. But in India, and also in Southeast Asia, Śiva's worshippers considered Brahmā as one of Śiva's manifestations, and the same relationship between the two gods is announced in invocations at the beginning of these inscriptions.⁷³ Thus, for them Śiva, and not Brahmā, is the creator god. During the king's lifetime Śiva was in "his heart," and to listen to his words was to hear "the mysterious words of Śiva."⁷⁴ When Yaśovarman died, he was described as having gone to Śiva's abode (*Paramasīvaloka*). The king's creative energy was certainly conceptualized as Śiva's, and nowhere is the model of the king's divine authority more confidently expressed than in the following passage:

⁶⁷ Coedès, *IC*, vol. 3, p. 108, v. 10.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226, v. 3.

⁶⁹ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 174.

⁷⁰ K. Bhattacharya, *Les Religions Brahmaniques dans l'Ancien Cambodge*, EFEO (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1961), p. 127.

⁷¹ Coedès, *IC*, vol. 4, p. 139, v. 1.

⁷² K. Bhattacharya, *Les Religions Brahmaniques dans l'Ancien Cambodge*, p. 127.

⁷³ For example, see A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 402, verses 1-2 and note 7; p. 487, v. 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 451, v. 14.

The creator is astonished and seems to say to himself: why then have I created for myself a rival in this king who is another Prajāpati (a name for Brahmā) and, moreover, why have I made a Parameśvara (Śiva)?⁷⁵

As the editor explains, the creator, Brahmā, finds that he has created a being not only equal to him but also to Śiva and, as a result, superior to himself.⁷⁶

These poets are using Sanskrit language worthy of a king whom they wish, though never explicitly, to associate with Śiva's authority on earth and to whom they are transferring the god's creative and purifying energy. The poets are not depicting royal creativity in figurative speech but are consecrating Yaśovarman with his own appropriate language in order to make their statement about the universe, which is the equivalence of Cambodia. To read of the king is to read of Śiva, and vice versa. The clearest expression of the poets' statement is that "he spreads everywhere and ceaselessly the *amṛita* of his immaculate glory." In this passage the king is allowed to stand alone without being metaphorized as an Indian god. He is not "like" Śiva but is Śiva-like. The passage stating that from his mouth went out only "the ambrosia of his commands" is similarly unadorned by metaphor; in fact, metaphor has been specifically rejected in the immediately preceding lines: "From the mouth of Prajāpati (Brahmā) went out formerly [here are illegible words] destroyers of the creatures, but from his mouth [the king's] went out only the ambrosia of his commands."

This brief discussion began with the verse that refers to the release of royal glory in the direction of the "underworld," and I conclude that the verse means no more than that the royal ambrosia was reaching the world of the *nāgas* beneath the soil. The passage appears naturally after a verse in honour of the king's military prowess and is equally naturally followed by a verse that compares his glory with that of the Indian epic hero Arjuna and his impetuosity with that of Bhīmā, another epic hero.⁷⁷ The lake is intended to provide a further instance of the same glory.⁷⁸

I have reached this conclusion after trying to recover the literary function of a particular cluster of words. The words seem to belong to the conventional language of the poets, but the statement they wished to formulate is not less important for that reason. They were formulating the meaning of royal authority at the beginning of the Angkorian period; the king was the source of creative and life-sustaining authority in Cambodia. The statement is as massively decked with localized Indian literary materials as Angkor Wat's statement about the privilege of living in Sūryavarman II's generation more than two centuries later. The inscriptions and the great

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 372, v. 26.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 372, note 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 407, v. 55.

⁷⁸ I had always assumed that this and other artificial lakes in the Angkor complex were also connected with the irrigation of rice-fields in the neighbourhood of Angkor. Van Liere's examination of the site contradicts this view. Nowhere are the temple-ponds or city moats equipped with distribution systems to water the surrounding rice-fields. Indeed, what he calls "theocratic hydraulic works" impeded drainage. The conclusion of his study is that "the service of the Gods had much higher priority than the service of man"; see W. J. van Liere, "Traditional Water Management in the Lower Mekong Basin," *World Archaeology* 11,3 (1980): 265-80.

monument seem to illustrate Mabbett's view that Indian symbols or, as I prefer to call them, "signifiers," were being employed in this society to express important local ideas.

Sanskritists would be able to undertake informed textual studies not only of Yaśovarman's inscriptions but also of those in earlier and later times, and new information on shifts in literary formulations might be discovered and be of general historical interest. How, for example, would a tenth-century Khmer account for every verse and trope in a long Sanskrit inscription in order to understand the force of its language, and would a twelfth-century Khmer have to be familiar with different conventions in order to read an inscription composed in his lifetime? My impression is that seventh-century inscriptions do not resemble Yaśovarman's even though they are in Sanskrit. Brahmā honours Śiva,⁷⁹ and Bhārafi (another name for Sarasvati) is in an overlord's mouth,⁸⁰ but the prominent cluster of words concerns "asceticism." Royal glory is inevitably eulogized, but in military terms and not in terms of "ambrosia" and "purification" I have found no reference to "ambrosia" in the seventh-century inscriptions.

Sacral language may have been different in the ninth century because new ideas, requiring new literary conventions, were in the air, as they were in Vietnam during the second half of the fourteenth century. We should not forget that the ninth century began with Jayavarman II's famous religious ceremony on Mount Mahendra in 802. Scholars have generally supposed that Śaivite tantric texts, known in India, were used to inaugurate the king's personal cult, the *devarāja* (the cult of "the king of the gods," who is Śiva).⁸¹ Tantric texts, by definition, provide initiation rituals for reproducing divine powers in the initiate, and the ritual on Mount Mahendra was said in an inscription of 1052 to be based on a "procedure" (*sādhana*) for bringing about "success" (*siddhi*). These words form the basis of tantric rituals. If I am correct in believing that the great conqueror Jayavarman II had established new criteria for kingly leadership in Khmer society, new rituals could have been required for identifying this remarkable man of prowess with divinity. The belief that the king was the most successful practitioner of asceticism was sufficient in the seventh century but not in the wake of Jayavarman's feats, and new religious rites and also new sacral language could have been necessary. Sacral language with tantric significance was being used in central Java in the ninth century,⁸² and there is no reason that it should not have been used in ninth-century Cambodia. The localization of tantrism, Śaivite and Mahāyāna, in different parts of Southeast Asia could provide one framework for periodizing earlier history in the region.

Tantric initiation ceremonies can involve ritual consorts, and later Sanskrit inscriptions refer to royal marriages of no ordinary kind. At the end of the twelfth century the king, presumably Jayavarman VII, is said to have married the city of Yaśodharapurī (Angkor) for "the procreation of the good fortune of the universe."⁸³ Again, a thirteenth-century inscription refers to the union of the Earth and "the

⁷⁹ A. Barth and A. Bergaigne, *ISCC*, p. 68, v. 1

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20, v. 2.

⁸¹ George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 101.

⁸² J. G. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, II, pp. 266, 275.

⁸³ George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 4, p. 250, v. 76. Jayavarman VII "possessed the purified earth, which could be said to be his home"; *IC*, vol. 2, p. 177, v. 70.

ardent vital principle of the king which produces numerous riches."⁸⁴ The metaphor of conjugal relations between the king and the Earth is also found in Indian literature,⁸⁵ and the Cambodian references to these extraordinary kingly marriages would be of no particular interest were it not for two reasons.

The first reason is that Chou Ta-kuan, the Mongol envoy to Angkor in 1296, recorded that the Khmers believed that their ruler slept every night with a serpent princess (*nagī*) and that the result of the union was the country's prosperity.⁸⁶ Bosch sees the union as replicating a god's ambrosia-producing marriage with his *śakti*.⁸⁷ Following J. Ph. Vogel, he also notes that Vāc's aquatic associations helped to shape the imagery of the *nagī*, while *nāgas* and *nagīs* have strong affinity to the imagery of the lotus.⁸⁸ Chou Ta-kuan's account of the royal union with a *nagī* was made only about a century later than the two royal marriage inscriptions I have just mentioned. Perhaps the "underworld" in Yaśovarman's inscription, though the poet's chance to illustrate royal glory, is another echo of an indigenous Khmer belief that the king enjoyed a ritually beneficent relationship with a *nagī* below the surface of the soil, from which fertilizing forces were released which guaranteed the earth's productivity. Folk religion may have complemented a royal tantric ritual that made the king the equivalent of Śiva and therefore of the supreme manifestation of creative processes.

The other reason that the twelfth and early thirteenth century references to royal marriages may have more than ordinary interest is that, according to Quaritch Wales, the basement of a royal mountain-temple in Angkor contains a representation of the underworld behind a wall. The "underworld" is adorned with bas-relief of its inhabitants, including *nāgas*.⁸⁹

The language of Yaśovarman's inscriptions may have been influenced by tantric conceptions of divine kingship in the ninth century. Unfortunately the Angkorian inscriptions tell us practically nothing about royal initiation rites.⁹⁰ References occur, however, to other forms of ritual and evoke the purification theme in Yaśovarman's inscriptions. Rulers are occasionally described as performing purification ceremonies, sacrifices, and recitation rites. In the ninth century an Indian came to Cambodia for the "purification of the country."⁹¹ Yaśovarman's lake was certainly a zone of purity in the neighborhood of the city; its banks were reserved for religious occasions.⁹²

⁸⁴ George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 4, p. 253, v. 25.

⁸⁵ Minoru Hara, "The King as a Husband of the Earth (*mahī-pati*)," *Asiatische Studien* 27,2 (1973): 97-114.

⁸⁶ F. D. K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ*, p. 92.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136-37.

⁸⁹ H. G. Quaritch Wales, *The Universe Around Them. Cosmology and Cosmic Renewal in Indianized South-East Asia* (London: A. Probsthain, 1977), pp. 117-18.

⁹⁰ On initiation rites at Angkor, see K. Bhattacharya, *Les Religions Brahmaniques*, pp. 72, 102.

⁹¹ George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 4, p. 42, v. 14. Epigraphic references to sacrifices and recitations are sufficiently frequent to suggest that the rulers performed these responsibilities very seriously. See, for example, *IC*, vol. 1, p. 213, v. 62 and vol. 3, p. 52, v. 17 (sacrifices); vol. 1, p. 213, v. 56 and vol. 4, p. 223, v. 40 (recitations).

⁹² See note 78 for the view that the lake was an instance of "theocratic hydraulic works" and no more.

A study of the ritualistic aspects of Angkorian kingship would be worthwhile. Michael Aung Thwin has recently mentioned a growing tendency among younger scholars to see changes of rulers not as events requiring the entire regeneration of all the links in the cosmic chain of power but rather as regeneration accomplished by rites of great antiquity.⁹³ His view has an important bearing on the study of continuities in earlier Southeast Asian history, though we need not attach too much weight to the disturbing influence of king-making adventures in societies where kinship systems gave more importance to personal prowess than to lineage claims. Performance rather than ancestry provided the criteria for evaluating behavior in public life and also for entrusting would-be rulers with ritualistic observances on which the well-being of all social classes, especially the farmers, depended. The issue of calendars, with auspicious dates for agricultural ceremonies was an obviously important annual ritual.⁹⁴

In this chapter I have not been concerned with subregional literary cultures as such, which cannot be discussed when only a single genre of writing in each culture is considered. Javanese eulogistic inscriptions, Vietnamese prose poetry (*phủ*) and inscriptions, and Malay Muslim literature would have to be taken into account. Instead, I have tried to look behind the scene at something which is actually happening: writing to produce meaning through literary effects. I have continually examined literary formulations that used conventions such as metaphors, equivalences, contiguous language, intensified language, hyperbole, sets of signifying associations, and structure. These are some of the devices which enabled literary statements to be made and be discovered by textual analysis. Obviously, I have not exhausted the possibilities for studying the Vietnamese poems and Yaśovarman's inscriptions and I am certain to have made mistakes.

I was interested in how prince *Phủ*, familiar with the Vietnamese poetic convention that the *Tản Viên* mountain was always visible, intensifies the effect by contrasting *Tản Viên*'s brightness with the wind-swept colors awaiting the envoy on his way back to China. I have also noted how the Vietnamese used a special language to embellish their "mountains and rivers" and distinguished their landscape from what lay across the Chinese borders. I observed that a number of landscape poems conformed to a structure and a set of signifying words, especially in describing the spirits' abode in the clouds. Space, mystery, and timelessness seemed to have helped the poets express their elation. Yaśovarman's Sanskrit inscriptions interested me for the same possibilities. The poets' initial convention of an equivalence between certain signifiers drawn from Indian imagery and what the signifiers could mean in a Khmer context enabled them to make a statement about their Śiva-like king. The inscriptions also contained divine metaphors for honouring the king's glory; his glory could be compared with Arjuna's. The king's Śiva-like status however, is unqualified by metaphor and therefore undiminished.

The two studies in Appendices B and C reflect their authors' concern with language usage. The Javanese poet seeks to embellish the natural scene with language so that he can animate the divine presence immanent in nature but concealed from the eye. The poet writes in a state of poetic rapture comparable with a yogic trance. Day, as Mabbett has done, gives guidance for understanding how the Old-Javanese poems should be read as texts. In Day's words, the landscape is "a

⁹³ Michael Aung Thwin's review of Wales' *The Universe Around Them*, in *JAS* 39,3 (1980): 663.

⁹⁴ George Coedès, *IC*, vol. 2, p. 23, note 4.

setting for poetic composition which does not refer to the natural world but to the processes of poetic writing." The autonomy of the literary process cannot be better demonstrated. The processes in question include maximum use of "verbal ornamentation" (*alamkâra*), the device in Indian poetics which Coedès thought was being used as bombast in twelfth-century Cambodian inscriptions.

In Errington's discussion of the Malay *hikayat* the point of interest seems to be the prominence given to sound effects in literature intended to be read aloud. The language of politeness and courtly speech is conveyed by the association of sounds. We can assume that every writer I have mentioned was interested in sound effects. In Java, the vocalization of the written word is certainly an indispensable contribution to good poetry.

I have tried to explain what I mean when I refer to the study of the earlier literatures of Southeast Asia. I have broached, and no more, a line of enquiry which may in time help to delineate particular literary cultures in the region and illustrate the phenomenon of cultural diversity.

Should a historian concern himself with textual studies? I can speak only for myself. The texts noted in this chapter strengthen my expectation that the approach I referred to earlier as "localization" requires one to give thought to the "something else" in local statements which contain foreign materials. The Vietnamese and Khmers were localizing nothing less than two foreign languages, but this need not mean that nothing else can come to light in their literary statements. On the other hand, my interest in textual studies may seem to create a distance between myself and what concerned me in the first half of the essay, where my focus was on assigning a suitable shape to history in earlier Southeast Asia. The distance does not make me uncomfortable. Historical processes are part of the historian's business, and, when one tries to study literary processes, one can be sure that one is dealing with things actually happening when the poet is writing.

I hope, however, that I do not create a distance between myself and fellow historians. I doubt it. Though I have been looking at the texts for their own sake, I have also considered possibilities of changing literary conventions and asked why this should be so. The localization of the Chinese magical islands to heighten the sensation of elation during the second half of the fourteenth century may throw additional light on the extent to which the poets perceived the peril engulfing their country and on the poignant situation of conservatives living in changing times. I am now more interested in what historians have to say about purification rituals and folk religion in Cambodia and elsewhere. I agree with Day's remark that "attending to how poems are written leads one further into rather than away from history."⁹⁵ Textual discoveries will always supplement knowledge obtained in other ways. Textual study, though time-consuming, can yield products of history whose processes have been susceptible to investigation and, for that reason, are themselves processed. The products are likely to be culturally more authentic than many types of evidence from the past because they reflect what Jonathan Culler calls "natural" in that they articulate the vision and values assumed to be natural in a culture.

⁹⁵ Letter to the author, dated February 12, 1981.

CONCLUSION

The essay has set forth difficulties which would arise if I were to attempt to write a history of earlier Southeast Asia. It also reveals what some may regard as tendencies diverting me from my obligations as a historian. Circumstances in the part of the world where I happen to study and teach are to some extent responsible for these tendencies.

The field as we know it today exists because teachers and students draw on the work of three groups of scholars. The earliest group worked for many decades before the Second World War when the field, by and large, was occupied by scholars in the archaeological departments of colonial governments in Southeast Asia, and seniority brought them the responsibility of programming research objectives in their respective territories. What Coedès wrote of them deserves to be remembered with respect: "They can scarcely be blamed for having followed the example of the Renaissance philologists and humanists in making the collection and publication of both textual and archaeological source material their first task, and proceeding from there to use the material for establishing a valid chronological framework. Only now can the possibility be envisaged of using the material for other purposes namely, for providing sociological and economic data with which to fill in the framework and present a more complete picture."¹ These scholars created the field, and we are all in their debt even though what they published may sometimes need to be verified today.

The second group comprises the ever-growing number of historians in the Southeast Asian countries since the end of the Second World War. As D. G. E. Hall observed nearly twenty years ago, "under the stimulus of nationalism the peoples of Southeast Asia have been history-minded as never before,"² and nothing that has happened since would have changed his mind. New materials and highly scholarly re-interpretations of old materials are frequently published in books and articles communicated to seminars, and incorporated in national histories. The western teacher is well aware that his lectures must be revised year by year to take this body of scholarship into account.

The third group, to which I belong, is represented by a very small number of teachers in the non-Southeast Asian universities where, in the United States at least, the so-called "classical" period of Southeast Asian history is usually treated as a brief

¹ G. Coedès, *The Making of South East Asia*, trans. H. M. Wright (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. vii.

² D. G. E. Hall, *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 2.

introductory background in courses which emphasize contemporary or near-contemporary Southeast Asia. The consequence is that hardly any students become interested in earlier Southeast Asia for its own sake.

Outside the discipline of history, however, the state of Southeast Asian studies, from which the past is not excluded, is dramatically different. Those who study and teach anthropology, art history, government, linguistics, and musicology have no difficulty in accommodating their interests under the rubric of Southeast Asian studies, and this development, more than anything else, is keeping interest in the region alive in American universities. The reason for the promising situation is that scholars outside the discipline of history are able to relate their particular expertise in a Southeast Asian subregion to their discipline's wider concerns and show how their discipline benefits from bringing Southeast Asian studies to the fore.

For example, Donn Bayard, drawing on the results of current research in northeastern Thailand and northern Vietnam, believes that prehistory in this part of the world has considerable significance in understanding prehistoric developments in general. Diffusionism, according to him, is now an insufficient explanation for agricultural and technological change.³ The discipline of anthropology has been enriched by the study of the kinship basis of Southeast Asian cultural systems. The study of settlement patterns and cultures in tropical riverine terrains and the unusual problems such terrains create for historical archaeology and cultural history will, as the SPAFA (Seameo Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts) seminar on Sriwijaya foresaw in 1979, require innovative interdisciplinary research, including the skills of the natural sciences.⁴

A hospitable approach to Southeast Asian studies has been demonstrated by a political scientist whose own field is outside the region. Quentin Skinner has reviewed a cultural anthropologist's study of the Balinese *nagara* in the nineteenth century and argues that the study is an opportunity for learning something of interest to a "wide range of social scientists and political philosophers." According to Skinner, the *nagara* offers an alternative conception of the meaning of political authority and exercise of power and challenges the parochial assumption in Western political theory that ceremonies in public life can never be the real basis of a state. He even enquires whether "our inherited tradition of political analysis may now be serving to inhibit rather than clarify our understanding not merely of alien cultures but also of our own."⁵

³ Donn Bayard, "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation," *Pacific Affairs* 51,1 (1980): 109-10. One should also bear in mind that Vietnamese archaeologists are throwing new light on folk memories of the past before the Chinese occupation and preserved in fourteenth century tales. Legends about the Hùng kings had their origins in the Vinh Phú area of northwestern Vietnam, where numerous sites of the early metal age are being excavated. This development provides new directions for cross-disciplinary research on the borderlands of prehistory and history.

⁴ *Seameo Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts. Final Report. Workshop on Research on Sriwijaya* (Jakarta, 1979).

⁵ Quentin Skinner's review of *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, by Clifford Geertz (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), in *The New York Review of Books* 28,6 (16 April 1981): 35-37. Benedict Anderson suggests that his analysis of the Javanese conception of Power and politics may be of some value for political analysis outside Java or Indonesia as it would help to elucidate Weber's conception of "charisma." Weber focused his attention on situations of stress and crisis in social, economic, and political conditions, in which charismatic leaders emerged. Anderson prefers to look for signs of Power in the character of particular

Southeast Asian studies are gradually establishing themselves as a necessary part of a liberal arts education in not a few American universities, and nowhere may the results be more immediate and exciting than in the fields of art and music, where very personal ways of seeing and hearing, inherited from Western cultures, can be improved. Art in Southeast Asia was never a socially marginal activity; instead, it thrives in communities where religion, work, and political life as well as art belonged to interrelated complexes of experience. For the undergraduate, brought up to assume that art is recreational and tends to be museum-bound, learning to see unfamiliar things through the eyes of the Southeast Asian artist and especially learning something of the processes of artistic production are bound to be educational benefits which may remain with him through life.⁶ Again, Javanese gamelan music is often heard in the United States, but its role is not just to provide enjoyment. Musicologists are interested today in the ingredients of music such as pitch, time, timbre, and form and in presenting and analysing the ingredients in the historical and cultural settings of musical traditions. The *laras* (harmony, key, tone modulations) of the gamelan offers a perspective on pitch organization other than what we are accustomed to call "scale," and Western musical experience is enhanced when the Javanese perspective is introduced to the classroom.⁷ Learning something of Southeast Asian art and music calls for an unusual degree of participation, and this is precisely why these subjects are beginning to be included as part of a liberal arts education. One day, textual studies in the field of the Southeast Asian literatures may make a similar contribution.

These are some examples of disciplines other than history which have an interest in Southeast Asia and its past. The historian can only be pleased that his field, seen from outside, is not entirely an academic backwater. But this promising situation is not in itself a case for studying earlier Southeast Asian history in a Western university environment. Can the case be strengthened in addition to the argument that, in a shrinking world, civility and the exigencies of the present require attention to be paid to the history of a substantial proportion of the world's population? The historian can bear a few things in mind.

He can remember that the field is still relatively young. Its foundations are not so firmly settled that a great deal of knowledge can now be taken for granted. Even modes of periodization present problems. Connections between causes and effects are still too hypothetical to be made with confidence. Guidelines for studying continuities and changes are speculative. New pieces of evidence can suddenly shake one's favorite reconstructions. The field therefore remains wide open for re-thinking, and here, in my opinion, may be its strength as a teaching subject. The historian is normally the only person who can linger over source materials in order to engage students in classroom discussion. Few teachers of earlier Southeast Asian history have the advantage of discussing their own research with students possessing the necessary language training for studying sources in depth, but my experience is that, even in translation, Pigeaud's *Java in the fourteenth century*, for example, stimulates

cultures, which have to be approached in historical terms. In Southeast Asia, asceticism may signify Power; see Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 64-69.

⁶ I have drawn on Stanley J. O'Connor's lecture on "Seeing with Southeast Asian art," delivered at Elmira College in 1980.

⁷ I thank Martin F. Hatch for this information.

the intelligent student to read source materials very carefully and ask sensible questions. This kind of participatory enterprise can, under guidance, endow the field with freshness and a vision of endless possibilities on a scale that no textbook can achieve.

The field lends itself to discussion rather than to teaching from the shoulder in the misplaced belief that a blurred record can somehow be knocked into shape. Moreover, because the field is essentially something to be discussed, students in a liberal arts environment have opportunities for bringing into play the various study tools to which their education in other classrooms is introducing them and especially tools acquired in courses on Southeast Asia within other disciplines. This is why I believe that the notion of local cultural statements containing "something else," to which foreign materials are calling attention, is a helpful one. The interests of historians and non-historians alike can converge on cultural differences which, though never divisive, preserved a rich span of subregional identities. The merit of the approach is illustrated in Japanese history, where students of the Mahāyāna know that their research is also bringing a "something else" that is Shinto into sharper relief and varies according to the part of Japan being studied.⁸ The search for the "something else" in the histories of the Southeast Asian subregions has far to go, and the historian will be in the centre of the undertaking because he, unlike his colleagues in other disciplines, is, or should be, familiar with the progress of studies in a number of subregions and can be alert in spotting scope for informed comparisons. Above all, if I may recall Mary Wright's words once more, only the historian can expect to open up "general ranges" of recorded experience in the Southeast Asian subregions.

And so I end by repeating what I said in the introduction. The interest of the field and also its educational justification is that it provides an opportunity for learning how to learn. In particular, the field is concerned with identifying and understanding historical processes, and here, in my opinion, is its pedagogical value. The historian John Higham neatly describes the style of the historian who is interested in the study of processes when he says: "The process-oriented scholar enjoys the pursuit of truth more than the possession of it." This type of scholar can be distinguished from his product-oriented colleague, who "cares more about the completeness or the coherence of his work than he does about its replication or extension by others. He is unappreciative of negative findings, intolerant of theoretical claims, and unwilling to risk the waste (for him) of time and effort that may be involved in methodological experimentation. He seeks to construct relatively self-sufficient finished products."⁹ The present state of earlier Southeast Asian historical studies is such that we are bound to belong to the company of process-oriented scholars, and this means that we and our students have to keep as close as possible to the subregional sources, treated as cultural texts, and forego efforts for the time being to delineate a shape to regional history.

⁸ I am grateful to Allan G. Grapard for discussing the evolution of Shinto-Buddhism in the Tendai tradition.

⁹ I quote from Michael Kammen, "On Predicting the Past: Potter and Plumb," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1974): 115-16.

But the reader will recall that my aim in this essay was to provoke discussion. I hope that my terms of reference have been sufficiently broad for this purpose and broad enough to bring what I have neglected into prominence.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES ON "SOUL STUFF" AND "PROWESS"

I became interested in the phenomenon of "soul stuff" when I was studying the "Hinduism" of seventh-century Cambodia and suspected that Hindu devotionalism (*bhakti*) made sense to the Khmers by a process of self-Hinduization generated by their own notions of what Thomas A. Kirsch, writing about the hill tribes of mainland Southeast Asia, calls "inequality of souls."¹ Among the hill tribes, a person's "soul stuff" can be distinguished from his personal "fate" and the spirit attached to him at birth. "Both the internal quality and the external forces are evidence of his social status."² The notion of inequality of souls seems to be reflected in the way the Khmer chiefs equate political status with different levels of devotional capacity.

I then began to observe that scholars sometimes found it necessary to call attention to cultural elements in different parts of the lowlands of Southeast Asia which seemed to be connected with the belief that personal success was attributable to an abnormal endowment of spiritual quality. For example, Shelly Errington in her forthcoming book, *Memory in Luwu*, chapter 1, discusses what constitutes a "person" in Luwu, South Sulawesi. In Luwu society, *sumangè* is the primary source for animating health and effective action in the world, and *kerrè* ("effect") is the visible sign of a dense concentration of *sumangè*. Potent humans and also potent rocks, for example, are said to be in "the state of *kerrè* (*makerrè*)."³ *Sumangè* is associated with descent from the Creator God and signified by white blood, but this is not always so. Individuals with remarkable prowess can suddenly appear from nowhere, and the explanation is that they are *makerrè*. *Kerrè* is not invariably contingent on white blood.

In Bali the Sanskrit word *sakti* ("spiritual energy") is associated with Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu represents *sakti* engaged in the world, and a well formed ancestor group is the social form required to actualize *sakti*.³ But *sakti* in Bali is not related to immobile

¹ Thomas A. Kirsch, *Feasting and Social Oscillation: Religion and Society in Upland Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1973), p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

³ Boon, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597-1972* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 204-5.

social situations, for Viṣṇu's preferred vehicle is "an ascendant, expanding ancestor group."⁴ Such a group is led by someone of remarkable prowess.

Benedict Anderson, in his essay on "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," does not refer to "soul stuff"; his focus is on Power, or the divine energy which animates the universe. The quantum of Power is constant, but its distribution may vary. All rule is based on the belief in energetic Power at the center, and a ruler, often of relatively humble origins, would emerge when he showed signs of his capacity for concentrating and preserving cosmic Power by, for example, ascetic practices. His feat would then be accompanied by other visible signs such as a "divine radiance."⁵ The Javanese notion of the absorption of cosmic Power by one person presupposes that only a person of unusual innate quality could set in motion processes for concentrating cosmic Power by personal effort. On the other hand, the Power this person could deploy in his lifetime inevitably tended to become diffused over the generations unless it was renewed and reintegrated by the personal efforts of a particular descendant.

Anderson's analysis may recall the situation I seemed to detect in seventh-century Cambodia. In both instances ascetic performance distinguished outstanding men from their fellows, and in Luwu as well as in Java visible signs revealed men of prowess and marked them out as leaders in their generation.

Again, according to Vietnamese folklore, the effect of a personal spiritual quality is suggested by the automatic response of local tutelary spirits to a ruler's presence, provided that the ruler had already shown signs of achievement and leadership. A local spirit is expected to recognize and be attracted by a ruler's superior quality and compelled to put himself at such a ruler's disposal.

I have introduced the topics of "soul stuff" and "prowess" in a discussion of the cultural matrix, and we can suppose that these and other indigenous beliefs remained dominant in the protohistoric period in spite of the appearance of "Hindu" features in documentary evidence. I take the view that leadership in the so-called "Hinduized" countries continued to depend on the attribution of personal spiritual prowess. Signs of spiritual quality would have been a more effective source of leadership than institutional support. The "Hinduized" polities were elaborations or amplifications of the pre-"Hindu" ones.

Did the appearance of Theravāda Buddhism on mainland Southeast Asia make a difference? Historians and anthropologists with special knowledge must address this question. I shall content myself with noting a piece of evidence brought to my attention by U Tun Aung Chain which refers to the Buddhist concept of "merit." The Burman ruler Alaungmintayā of the second half of the eighteenth century is recorded as having said to the Ayudhyā ruler: "My *hpon* (derived from *puñña*, or "merit") is clearly not on the same level as yours. It would be like comparing a garuda with a dragon-fly, a naga with an earthworm, or the sun with a fire-fly." Addressing local chiefs, he said: "When a man of *hpon* comes, the man without *hpon* disappears." Here is Buddhist rendering of superior performance in terms of merit-earning in previous lives and the present one, and we are again dealing with the tradition of inequality of spiritual prowess and political status. Are we far removed from other instances of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁵ Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt et al. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 1-69.

spiritual inequality noted above? The king's accumulated merit had been earned by ascetic performance; the self had to be mastered by steadfastness, mindfulness, and right effort, and only persons of unusual capacity were believed to be able to follow the Path consistently and successfully during their past and present lives. Such a person in Thailand would be hailed for his *pāramī*, or possession of the ten transcendent virtues of Buddhism. A Thai friend tells me that *pāramī* evokes *bhakti* ("devotion"), and the linguistic association suggests a rapport comparable with what is indicated in seventh-century Cambodia and in Vietnamese folklore about the tutelary spirits.

In all the instances I have sketched, beliefs associated with an individual's spiritual quality rather than with institutional props seem to be responsible for success. Perhaps de la Loubère sensed the same situation in Ayudhya at the end of the seventeenth century when he remarked: "the sceptre of this country soon falls from hands that need a support to sustain it."⁶ His observation is similar to that of Francisco Colin in the Philippines in the seventeenth century: "honoured parents or relatives" were of no avail to an undistinguished son.

Others may wish to develop or modify the basis I have proposed for studying leadership in the early societies of Southeast Asia. Explanations of personal performance, achievement, and leadership are required to reify the cultural background reflected in the historical records, and this in turn requires study by historians and anthropologists, working in concert, of the indigenous beliefs behind foreign religious terminology.

⁶ De la Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam* (reproduced by the Duopage Process in the U.S.A.), p. 107.

SIX VIETNAMESE POEMS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

1

Lines written when wandering on the Phật Tích mountain

Chanting and whipping his horse, the poet climbs the lofty ridge.
Treading the monastery grounds, I remove myself from the world's clamour.
Waves of pine sway in the wind and chill the grotto's mouth.¹
The primeval spirit draws a silken girdle around the mountain's waist.
Among the numberless peaks in the mist are the Three Islands of the spirits.
Among the myriad pipes and drums [of nature] are the nine parts of [Thiều's =
Shun's] music.
Let us talk no more of Master Từ's marvels.²
Roaming everywhere, I have stopped chanting and am now playing my flute.

Phạm Sư Mạnh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 93.

2

Lines written at the grotto on the Bão Phúc cliff in the Hiệp mountain

Bão Phúc, a magic grotto, is above the blue sea.
Today, with official leave, I have been free to roam.
Phường Hồ and Viên Kiệu appear through the clouds.

¹ Grottos signify supernatural mystery. See Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird. Tang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 114, on their Taoist associations in China. Grottos were "the ante-chambers of holy worlds and subterranean paradises." Phạm Sư Mạnh uses the word "grotto" to intensify the mystery of the Phật Tích mountain in his first couplet in parallel verse.

² Master Từ is Từ Đạo Hạnh, an eclectic twelfth-century Buddhist and also a magician. He lived for some time in the Thiên Phúc monastery on this mountain.

Tử Phủ and Thanh Đô are floating over the water.³
 The world's most marvellous sight is the rising of the sun at Dương Cốc.
 The purest air of the rivers and mountains is Bạch Đằng's autumn.
 As I versify I wish to ask old Cát Tiên.⁴
 Whether he will give me a half share of these green mountains.

Phạm Sư Mạnh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 106.

3

Lines written on the Hoa cliff in Đông Triều

It thrusts itself into the blue heavens like a jade lotus.
 A magnificent scene through the ages. This heroic coastal province!
 Bamboo shadows and blossom shade. A green-screened monastery.
 Immortals have fashioned and spirits carved a palace among the white clouds.
 To the north I am girded by Vạn Kiếp like a range of chilled halberds.
 To the south I am held by the Xuân river like a gushing crystalline rainbow.
 In the setting sun and leaning on my stick at the high look-out point,
 The invigorating air of the mountains and streams fills my breast.

Phạm Sư Mạnh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 108.

4

Visiting Côn mountain.

A tall bamboo on the mountain top pierces through the cloud mist.
 I glance behind me at the defilement of the World. The road has separated me
 from it by great distance.
 The sound of the spring after the rain is the flow of splashing water.
 The mountain air when the sky clears is transparently clear.
 Throughout lifetime in the fleeting world, men are all phantasms.
 After half a day of stolen leisure, I am indeed an immortal.
 After my elation passes, I want to make my way to the monk's courtyard and spend
 the night.
 The evening bell speeds on the moon and poises it in front of the peak.

Nguyễn Phi Khanh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 423.

³ Tử Phủ and Thanh Đô are references to the toponyms associated with the abode of the Celestial Emperor, where wondrous music, alluded to in poem 6, is heard. The references are from *The Book of Lieh-tzū*.

⁴ Cát Tiên (Ko Hung) was a Chinese Taoist of the fourth century who sought the ingredients of the elixir of life. See Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird*, pp. 87-88. Ko Hung is supposed to have hoped to find what he wanted in Vietnam but was unable to go there. Phạm Sư Mạnh is claiming equality with the Chinese magician; both have access to the supernatural forces of the universe.

5

The Tiên Du monastery

Thiên Đức's mountains and rivers. The former [Lý] emperors' capital.
The setting of this famous monastery is sublime. Indeed, it is a little Phương Hồ.
In the world of men where are there no traces?
In vain one asks of the immortals what has survived or disappeared.

Nguyễn Phi Khanh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 481.

6

Rising early at the Thiên Thánh Hựu Quốc monastery

This palace tower of the company of immortals seems near to Bồng Lai.
The ear hears the music at Heaven's zenith. I easily awaken from my dream.⁵
I rise from sleep on this spring morning without a care.
The wind from the east [the spring wind] is in the courtyard. I watch the blossom
open.

Nguyễn Phi Khanh, *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 3, p. 474.

⁵ "The music at Heaven's zenith" alludes to a passage in the *Shih-chi* about an invalid who dreams that he ascends to the heavens. When he reaches the Celestial Emperor's palace in the heavenly heights, he hears wondrously beautiful music.

KAKAWIN AND HIKAYAT

Zoetmulder has examined the *manggala* verses which introduce the Old-Javanese *kakawins*, or poetry written in Indian meters.¹ The verses were written as acts of worship in honour of a god and Zoetmulder is able to show that the poet's prayer for divine guidance is uttered in a Javanese cultural setting. The *manggala*s contain the word *devāśraya*, the literal Sanskrit meaning of which is "having recourse to a god." In Java, however, the loan word signifies "seeking union with the deity," and this is why the poet is writing. Poetry was a yoga exercise.² Thus, poets sometimes described their works as "literary temples"³ in the sense that a god would descend into a poem when the poet's mystical contemplation during the act of writing was intense enough to infuse his poetic language with divinity in the same way that intense worship animated a temple image. Here is a Javanese attitude towards poetry, and Zoetmulder remarks that, "as regards literary yoga, it should be noted that the characteristic form of the *manggala* in Old-Javanese *kakawins*, from which we have deduced its existence, seems to have been unknown in Sanskrit literature."⁴

The *kakawins* belong to a devotional genre of writing. They are written under the influence of a personal religious experience, and the poets use the language they deem "natural" for the experience. The linguistic evidence of what was "natural" is found in language used for poeticizing their wanderings in the countryside. According to Zoetmulder, the linguistic terms for "wandering" are often those normally used for ascetics "in quest of saintliness or supernatural power," and two of the terms have a double meaning: "to seek death by letting oneself be carried away by a stream" and also giving oneself up entirely to "aesthetic pleasure."⁵ Landscape can be rendered in religious language because divinity, no matter what name the god of the poet's devotion bears, is immanent in all forms of beauty. To experience beauty means to be in union with the divinity in a trance-like rapture, and the rapture is expressed in the language of landscape poetry.⁶ What is actually seen in nature does not reveal the immanent divinity. Only a poet can sense divinity, and his poem has to capture and celebrate what is concealed from the eye. He does so by

¹ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan. A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 177-78.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁶ On "rapture" (*langō*, etc.), see *ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

means of elaborate linguistic equivalences, and this is why the "literariness" of the *kakawins*, including their sound effects, strives to embellish the natural scene in order to produce the presence of its concealed divinity. The beauty of language rather than of nature itself reveals the vision and the ecstasy of the aesthetic experience. The language is of one who "is able to sense the approach of that mystical union with the divinity in which all consciousness of the self vanishes."⁷ And so one poet of the Old-Javanese period writes under the influence of yogic rapture that he is able "to bud forth sprouts of beauty because yoga unites him with the god who is beauty itself."⁸ In this state of rapture, poet hopes that his poem may be temple to receive the god of beauty. "May Kāma receive his *candi* (temple) from me when I pursue the quest for beauty at the tip of my writing-style [stylus]."⁹ Language and not scenery creates beauty.

A. J. Day, another student of Javanese literature, has defined very exactly how these texts should be read. The poet's literary purpose is not with what is natural about the Javanese landscape. Landscape is "a setting for poetic composition which does not refer to the natural world but to the processes of poetic writing."¹⁰

Day has recently examined the "ornamentation" and "embellishment" which continued to be distinctive features of Javanese literature into the nineteenth century.¹¹ He, as Zoetmulder does, notes that "verbal ornamentation," known in Sanskrit poetics as *alamkāra*, was already a prominent feature in the earliest Old-Javanese poetic text, written on an inscription from Central Java and dated 856. De Casparis, who edited the inscription, observes that the poet's description of a recently planted tree in a temple compound displays ornamentation that "goes far beyond the discrete limits fixed by the classical poets of India."¹² In 1365, almost exactly five hundred years after this inscription was composed, Prapañca acknowledges the same convention when he writes that the Majapahit king enjoyed reading and re-reading a temple's bas-relief which "is illuminating a language ornament, a *kakawin*."¹³ Prapañca himself may be practising the same technique when he refers to the crowds of women awaiting the arrival of touring princes:

Those whose houses were far away there tried to get at high trees.
Dangling in bunches from their branches were girls, old and young, [like]
luxuriant [fruit].¹⁴

Zoetmulder's study provides a vivid example of one genre of writing in a local literature. The attention he pays to the significance of words and to the use of

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁰ A. J. Day, "Meanings of Change in the Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Java," (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1981), p. 71.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² De Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, II (Bandung, 1956), p. 285; and Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, p. 230.

¹³ T. G. T. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century. A Study of Cultural History. The Nāgara-Kērtāgama by Kakawī Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 AD*, vol. 3 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1968), canto 32, stanza 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, canto 59, stanza 6.

language for producing the feeling of rapture rather than describing the external scene belongs to the apparatus of textual study. His chapter entitled "The world of the poem" shows a similar concern with language effects by means of metaphors and similes. For example, he is examining equivalences when he says that "under the guise of Sanskrit personal and place names the poet is presenting a picture of his own country and his own society."¹⁵ By considering figures of speech, Zoetmulder is able to make a general observation of considerable interest. The Old-Javanese poet's depiction of the relationship between man and nature shows "that he saw this world in a way that was connatural to him and his audience: namely essentially as one."¹⁶ Here is one way in which a cultural ambience can be explored.

When we study Javanese poetry we are, as it were, present when something is actually happening: the poets are creating divine beauty in a state of rapture. We know from other sources that tantric meditation was practised in Javanese society, though we cannot assume that tantric yoga meant the same to the Javanese as it did to the Indians.¹⁷ But being in the presence of those who are meditating, as we are when we study how they produced language meaning, is more worthwhile than merely knowing that yogic meditation was practised in Java. Zoetmulder's textual study makes this possible.

To the best of my knowledge, no other earlier Southeast Asian literature has been studied in this way. Shelly Errington's discussion of the Malay *hikayat* genre of literature should, however, be mentioned.¹⁸ Wilkinson defines *hikayat* as "a tale, a history, a narrative," while Errington defines it more precisely as a written text to be recited in court. Her study is based on the use of language.

These prose texts contain a great deal of material strung together paratactically and often repetitively. The paratactic effect is assisted by the absence of tense in the Malay language, and Errington cites A. L. Becker's observation that certain Austronesian languages do not use a "narrative presupposition" to produce coherence in texts. The *hikayats* were drawn from conventional stories and episodes, and Errington suggests that images from the visible world were brought into being simply by the use of words. The words were listened to for their sounds rather than read. *Hikayats* were written to be recited. Their contents therefore took the form of sounds, and they produced a particular effect. The effect was no less than the experience of listening to the spoken Malay language, a language (*bahasa*) which was essentially the language of politeness. Language defined the shape of human relations; polite behaviour was synonymous with addressing people properly. One result was that nothing induced self-esteem more than hearing one's name mentioned frequently, and so "name" (*nama*) also signified "reputation." *Nama* was nowhere more enhanced than when it was heard or acquired in the context of the ruler's service. Thus, the *hikayats* reflected a preoccupation with being spoken about not only in the present but in the future as well. Indeed, Errington suggests, "the

¹⁵ Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, pp. 187-88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

¹⁸ Shelly Errington, "Some Comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past," *Journal of Asian Studies* 38,2 (1979): 231-44.

desire to be spoken about, for one's *nama* to be mentioned in other countries and by people in the last age, becomes what we can only translate as a 'motive' for action."¹⁹

Errington's analysis was presented to a symposium on Southeast Asian attitudes towards the past, and her conclusion was that the *hikayat*'s purpose was not to record the past but to perpetuate it. "One begins to feel, in reading *hikayat*, that the idea that the world is real and words or language artificial is reversed in traditional Malaya where, if anything, *bahasa* was real, solid, present, and almost palpable, while the world was something which would not endure."²⁰

One can suppose that, because language registered social behaviour on the Malay Peninsula or in those parts of the archipelago where the language was spoken, the Malay raja in this cultural *mandala* would feel at home when he listened to Malay texts resonant with the sounds of polite language. If Old-Javanese literature is the product of meditative achievement and the poetry of nature is more beautiful than the landscape itself, Malay literature may be read as language schooling for raja society in an anonymous landscape.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242. The significance of *nama* in traditional Malay court society is discussed in A. C. Milner, "The Malay Raja: A Study of Malay Political Culture in East Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula in the Early Nineteenth Century," (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1977), pp. 206-18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

POSTSCRIPT

REVISITING THE "REGION"

The postscript should be read as an extended commentary on the 1982 volume, hereafter referred to as 1982.¹ The commentary spills into many footnotes to avoid overburdening the text. I take into account some developments in the field of earlier Southeast Asian studies since 1982 and also what has happened to me. I have not deserted my previous terms of reference or sequence of chapters. Obviously, I have been unable to comment on everything that others have written, but, fortunately, several valuable textbooks and historiographical surveys are available.² Obviously, too, my attention has nodded in the direction of studies that bear on my own interests.

I note passages in the earlier volume that I consider to be blunders and needing revision or retraction. I also broach additional perspectives, which I am able to do because of my singular good fortune to reckon among my friends anthropologists and other scholars not conventionally regarded as historians. I only "broach" this new ground. I am not qualified to do more than acknowledge, belatedly, the centrality of these topics when attempting a more credible study of the region that permits many more men and women of former times to come into the picture.

¹ I am grateful to the following for friendly criticism of all or parts of earlier drafts: Patricio N. Abinales, Curtis Anastasio, Barbara Watson Andaya, Timothy and Rohayati Barnard, Nancy Florida, Lorraine Gesick, Martin F. Hatch, Virginia Matheson Hooker, Hjørleifur Jonsson, George Kahin, A. Thomas Kirsch, Jennifer Krier, H. M. J. Maier, Pierre-Yves Manguin, E. Edwards McKinnon, Catherine McTighe, Ruth McVey, A. C. Milner, Rudolf Mrázek, Stanley J. O'Connor, Allen Riedy, Craig Reynolds, James T. Siegel, Keith Taylor, Nora Taylor, Erik Thorbecke, Allison Truitt, and John Wolff.

² Here are a few recent works furnished with abundant bibliographies: Michael Aung-Thwin, "The 'Classical' in Southeast Asia: The Present in the Past," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26.1 (1995): 75-91; Jan Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and the Data," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151.2 (1995): 235-288; Anthony Day, "Ties That (Un)Bind: Families and States in PreModern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55.2 (1996): 384-409; Craig J. Reynolds, "A New Look at Old Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.1 (1994): 419-446. As far as textbooks are concerned, I continue to value Coedès's *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* and returned to it when preparing this postscript; George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968). I still consider that an updated edition would be a worthwhile addition to the historiography. I wish that in 1982 I had recommended J. D. Legge's *Indonesia*, 3rd. ed. (Sydney: Prentice-Hall of Australia, 1980). This is a careful, lively, and always courteous conversation with himself, other scholars, and his readers. I should also have mentioned Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, 6th ed. (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995). Osborne challenges his readers with plenty of questions and has a feel for the landscape.

The postscript not only adds new perspectives. Today I become more adventurous in defining the span of time represented by the concept of "early" or "earlier" Southeast Asia. I am more ready to propose continuities extending over the centuries, and this enables me to think of "mandala" Southeast Asia and then of the "mapped" Southeast Asia of very recent times.³ I shall even feel justified in commenting, if only briefly, on situations as recent, for example, as contemporary Thailand on the eve of the events in mid-1997.

Moreover, I am no longer so fastidious in defining a "region" and can now recognize a more "regional" shape to the history of early Southeast Asia. This recognition has evolved out of a stronger sense of Southeast Asian continuities, though there is still no evidence that the inter-territorial relationships of the sub-regions impinged on each other as visibly and persistently as, for example, those of early Europe. Nothing in the history of early Southeast Asia is comparable to the sweeping influence of the Viking and Norman invaders and settlers or the outreach of the Popes, Holy Roman Emperors, monastic orders, Crusaders, and Italian Renaissance artists and writers. Further research may one day reduce this contrast between Europe and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, I now believe that in 1982 I had already gone a considerable way in substantiating early Southeast Asia's "regional" status by assembling what I proposed were "some widespread cultural traits."⁴ Here, surely, should be a sufficient basis for endowing the region with a distinctive shape, and the experience of writing the postscript has strengthened this opinion. I hasten to add, however, that I am as convinced as ever that the characteristics of sub-regional, or local, cultures are as significant as the shared cultural traits, though they need much more study before they can compare in clarity with the country cultures of Europe which John Hale has thrown into such sharp relief.⁵

³ I have, of course, been influenced by Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

⁴ The 1982 edition (henceforth cited as 1982) pp. 38 and 66. Page references are to those in the present volume. Also see my comment on page 11 in "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," *Indonesia* 58 (October, 1994): 1-17.

⁵ John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (New York: Touchstone edition, 1995). I return to Hale at the end of section IV of the postscript.

AGAIN A CULTURAL MATRIX

Perhaps in 1982 I was too anxious to preserve both geographical and historical distance between the sub-regions.¹ I certainly overstepped myself when, on the first page of that volume, I referred to "numerous networks of relatively isolated but continuously occupied dwelling sites" in prehistoric times. I was deservedly criticized by Charles Higham for this ill-informed statement.²

Higham's *The Archaeology of Mainland Southeast Asia*, published in 1989, is a landmark in early Southeast Asian studies and a measure of the extent to which our knowledge of some areas in early Southeast Asia has been transformed since the Second World War. A foundation is now available for better grounded discussion of the region's protohistory from, say, the beginning of the Christian era until about the seventh century AD. Higham's volume contains much that is indispensable: detailed descriptions of numerous excavation sites together with general accounts of the state of field research even later than the first millennium AD, assessments of demographic as well as geographical change, a cautious calculation of the chronology of the bronze and iron ages, the plotting of extensive trade routes that increasingly knit far from "isolated" settlements, and a discussion of the way in which what he calls very early "autonomous villages" became parts of more complex polities. On top of all this, he has provided a bountiful number of maps and diagrams.

I accept Higham's use of the Sanskrit term *maṇḍala*, or "circle of kings," to refer to expanding polities before there is any reliable knowledge of an extensive Indian

¹ I now realize that in 1982 I carried my concern for distance too far when I omitted references to the movement of Austronesian speaking peoples into the Pacific and west to Madagascar; C. C. Macknight, "Changing Perspectives in Island Southeast Asia," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, eds. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 215-227. Leonard Andaya recognizes resemblances between Malukan society in eastern Indonesia and the Pacific Islands and refers to "an older Austronesian heritage rather than a more recent Indianized one"; Leonard Y. Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 247. Rutherford, an anthropologist, has recently responded to Andaya; Danilyn Rutherford, "Raiding the Land of the Foreigners: Power, History and Difference in Biak, Irian Jaya, Indonesia" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, May 1997). Among much else, she examines how the valorization of the alien elements has served to keep alien orders at bay. She resourcefully draws on intellectual insights from Indonesian, Melanesian, and colonial studies. I should also have mentioned the presence of Southeast Asian language speakers in southwestern China. See the language map in Charles Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 6.

² Charles Higham, *The Archaeology of Mainland Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 187 and 358.

connection with the region. I unhesitatingly accept his definition of a *maṇḍala* as “a political apparatus fluid in terms of territory and therefore without fixed frontiers.”³

I am uneasy, however, with his frequent description of what was happening after 400 BC as the emergence of “centralizing chiefdoms” and “centralized” polities (“*maṇḍalas*”), characterized by the importance of lineage and social ranking and associated with exotic goods arriving along thriving exchange networks.⁴ Contradicting himself, he is quick to concede that, as late as the seventh century, the polities were not “durable”; “the overlord had rivals. This is the essence of the *maṇḍala*.”⁵

Higham’s references to “centralization” make me uneasy because, for me, “centralization” implies that institutional supports had been contrived for maintaining stability indefinitely. Naturally, a ruler, be he chief, or *rāja*, might wish to devise expedients that he hoped would maximize his personal authority and make it more likely that he could be succeeded by his favorite son—perhaps one of a number of disaffected half-brothers in societies where polygamy was practiced—but later evidence suggests that the “dynastic” institution, and the continuity the institution is supposed to guarantee, never took root in Southeast Asia except in Vietnam. Even there the institution was by no means stable.⁶ Higham’s argument that inscriptions mention “brahmans” and Indian law codes is not sufficient to convince me that Indian-style political institutions with centralizing tendencies were getting under way.⁷ I prefer to dismiss such language as figurative speech borrowed from Sanskrit literature in order to embellish a polity’s image.⁸

My unease springs from a further difficulty, which is Higham’s understanding of what he refers to as “Indianization.” Before, however, I explain my unease, I wish to pause and suggest three reasons why the present lively situation in pre- and protohistoric studies, exemplified by Higham’s volume, is important. First, ever more numerous excavations in mainland Southeast Asia may one day help explain a major issue, which is how, if at all, more complex social and political systems first developed in parts of the region, a development referred to by Higham as a trend towards centralization. Second, this issue has long been complicated by uncertainty

³ For example, Higham, *The Archaeology*, pp. 5, 30, 238.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁶ John Pemberton, writing about the bicentennial celebrations of the Solo Court in Central Java in 1939, comments that “never before had such a dynasty managed to live in one palace for so long”; John Pemberton, *On the Subject of “Java”* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 28. Such a feat would have been impossible anywhere in early Southeast Asia outside Vietnam. Claude Jacques has estimated that only eight of the twenty-six rulers of Angkor were sons or brothers of their predecessors; Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), p. 161. See Jane Drakard, “A Kingdom of Words: Minangkabau Sovereignty in Sumatran History” (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, March 1993), p. 270, on what the Dutch thought was a typical political situation in Sumatra—“thrown up kings” (*opgeworpen*).

⁷ Higham, *The Archaeology*, p. 260 thinks otherwise. Also see Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia*, p. 333 on “dynastic succession” in “Funan,” though it is unclear whether he associates himself with what Chinese envoys claim to have seen. On p. 334, however, he refers to a “ruling dynasty” at Angkor.

⁸ On pp. 79–84 of 1982, I described the elaborate use of Sanskrit imagery in the inscriptions of Yasovarman I, the first Angkor ruler, but on page 83 I made a distinction between metaphorical passages such as “like Śiva” and statements of fact such as “Śiva-like.”

concerning what should be understood by "Indianization." Were specific outside influences responsible for stimulating the social and political development of Southeast Asia⁹ or was the region already capable of taking such influences in its stride? Third, both issues impinge on yet another and major one: can one discern elements in those early times that indicate possibilities for charting far-reaching continuities or spotting discontinuities between situations in early and later centuries? In other words, do materials included in Higham's volume assist those who study early Southeast Asia in making better sense of what happened?

From time to time I shall use the expression "making sense," now a commonplace concept in cognitive psychology. By this expression I mean no more than the ability to organize what happens around one in terms of one's previous experience. "Making sense" is the mental process of understanding new things in the light of existing knowledge by spotting similarities. In this way one can make plausible assumptions. One familiarizes the unfamiliar by mapping the unfamiliar on what is already known. Fitting a new experience into a familiar and often flexible category is another way of "making sense." A new experience can also be rendered by using the devices of metaphor or allegory.

The problem of "making sense" of Southeast Asian protohistory has been obfuscated by the attempts of Chinese observers early in the Christian era to do so. Because of what they took for granted about their own country, they were constrained to assume that other polities, even "primitive" ones, were bound to exhibit a similar and irreducible minimum of features such as a "kingdom," a "dynasty" (and "usurpations"), "concubines," fixed space and borders, and an identifiable geographical location in the system of Asian maritime communications to and from China. These "kingdoms" would also have to be definable in terms of language, customs, and products. Their best documented foreign "kingdom" in the early centuries of the Christian era happened to be somewhere in southern Cambodia, and it had to possess a name under which it could be assigned a place in Chinese histories and encyclopedias. The name was "Funan," and this "kingdom" was inevitably attributed with features which the Chinese assumed it would possess. "Funan" was a "kingdom" in order to conform to the Chinese view of the world. The name has yet to be banished from the historiography.

But when the Chinese were making sense of the Khmers' territory, the Khmers and surely others in the region were making their own sense of their location in a wider world—the "Hindu world"—now being disclosed by expanding overseas commercial contacts and especially by Indian texts in the Sanskrit language, the written language of the "Hindu world." At more or less the same time, Chinese themselves were making sense of Indian Buddhism by adapting it so that it would be accessible and intelligible to them.¹⁰

I believe the Khmers and other Southeast Asians in positions of local leadership had no difficulty in finding their place in the disclosing "world," and the reason was simply that sooner or later it would dawn on them that they could recognize features they shared in common with the world described in Indian texts, perhaps often

⁹ Coedès describes the Indian cultural "legacy" in some detail; G. Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), pp. 33-34.

¹⁰ Arthur E. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), chapter two ("The Period of Preparation"). I prefer to avoid the expression "adapt" in a Southeast Asian context for the reasons I gave in 1982, p. 56, fn. 58.

orally transmitted by Indians endowed with the extraordinary memory Chinese pilgrims attributed to them.¹¹ And so they gradually construed their own milieu and way of life as verifying what Sanskrit literature, and especially the great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, assumed to be universal phenomena in the same way that the Chinese assumed certain political features to be universal ones and therefore represented in "Funan." The Khmers and others in Southeast Asia could then proceed by a process of "self-Hinduization" to ascribe Sanskrit names to themselves and to what they saw around them and then record these names on their inscriptions: for example, their mountains, rivers, sacred bathing pools, caves, stones, chiefs, overlords, and also those who did not belong to the "civilized" chieftain groups in society but were only *mlecchas*, "wild savages who lived in the forests." There was no limit to what could be rendered in the Sanskrit language. Even the rapid rise and fall of overlordships that bewildered Chinese commentators on "Funan" came to be seen in terms of the fourth and final era in world history (the *kāli yuga*), when from time to time heroes would emerge to ward off temporarily the forces of destruction and restore the golden age (*krta yuga*) for a particular generation. The process of self-Hinduization would be facilitated because the texts could often present matters of local common sense as examples of universal wisdom.¹²

In what has now become a familiar term, leaders of Khmer society and others like them would have had no difficulty in "imagining" that they belonged to a world-wide "community" which I choose to refer to as the "Hindu world."¹³ The notion of an imagined Hindu community is apt. In the Southeast Asian "Hindu world" Sanskrit was both the sacred language and the earliest written script. Moreover, living in this "Hindu world" was essentially a religious experience echoed in Hinduism's Sanskrit texts reaching Southeast Asia in the wake of foreign trade at unknown times in the early Christian era. I prefer to use the term "Hindu" to "Indian" because Hinduism, a religious concept, was the crucial Indian phenomenon on to which Southeast Asians latched. All kinds of texts could be associated with Hinduism, but nothing else of importance coming from India would have made sense and been acceptable if the Southeast Asian élite had not encountered and

¹¹ The pilgrim Fa-hsien, traveling in the early fifth century, obtained a manuscript of seven thousand stanzas that had been handed down orally without being committed to writing; *The Travels of Fa-hsien, or Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*, trans. H. A. Giles (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956 impression), p. 64. The pilgrim I-ching noted that in every generation some intelligent Brahmins could recite the hundred thousand verses of the Vedas; I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)*, trans. J. Takakusu (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p. 182. See O. W. Wolters, "A Few and Miscellaneous *pi-chi* Jottings on Early Indonesia," *Indonesia* 36 (1983): 52-55, for an instance of someone from Sriwijaya who could recite *The Peacock Sutra*.

¹² See 1982, pp. 48-49, for instances of Hindu commonsensical teaching. Also see 1982, p. 58, fn. 2 for A. Thomas Kirsch's view on the "upgrading" of local nature spirits to become part of a "Hindu" hierarchy and the "parochialization" of Śiva to become the Creator of this or that part of Southeast Asia. The *Mahābhārata* was recited in temples of seventh-century Cambodia, and this would have been an opportunity for the worshippers to identify themselves with what was being recited and learn something of ideal roles in the "Hindu world." On top of everything else, they would earn religious merit for doing so as the epic itself promised those who recited it. Here would be a ready means of "self-Hinduizing."

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 12-19 on "The Religious Community." The "Hindu world" was a selective appropriation and localization of materials, usually recorded in Sanskrit texts, to make local sense of what was originally "foreign." The materials now became familiar and valuable.

assimilated the dominant "Hindu" feature at that time: the "devotional" movement known as *bhakti*. While Higham lists "variables" that account for the trend towards centralizing polities, I suggest that a single factor, the religious influence of "Hinduism," initiated much that happened in Southeast Asian protohistory, though not an unmistakable centralizing trend.¹⁴

I believe that flamboyant *bhakti*-inspired Indian religious teachers arrived in Southeast Asia and proclaimed the message that supreme spiritual power could be taught and attained here and now by means of simple and unbookish ascetic and meditative techniques for giving access to the creator god Śiva's cosmic power (*śakti*). The successful practitioner would have been immediately acclaimed as being Śiva-like and at the center of the universe. Attaining something desirable here and now was expected of any efficacious religious rite.¹⁵

The religious techniques, probably seen as of heroic proportions, were aimed at strengthening will-power and self-control, and the teachers' eager pupils were, first and foremost, local chiefs or those of chieftain potential in societies where lineage was not particularly privileged. The result was that devotionalism and not Brahmanical rituals hit Southeast Asia's earliest epigraphic headlines. It was not the popular devotionalism of southern India but a Southeast Asian élitist construction that benefited themselves. Self-Hinduizing Southeast Asians would have localized the egalitarian mood of Indian *bhakti* to conform to their own élitist way of life. And so, in spite of what the Chinese supposed, Hinduism did nothing to bring a "kingdom" into being with its own permanent identity. Instead, a cult of kingship developed in the form of the personal cult of a Śiva-like person who had seized the kingship from someone else. Political allegiance would therefore be no more than the sum total of the personal religious concerns of other chiefs who believed that their Śiva-like overlord would provide them as individuals with additional means of earning merit if they submitted and served him and, at the same time, satisfy their wish for a superior status after death.¹⁶

Why, then, should the *bhakti* message have been heard in this way when it reached Southeast Asia? Nothing has happened since 1982 to make me change my mind about certain cultural features among lowland peoples in the region. They followed a bilateral system of kinship as they do today¹⁷ and were not prone to attach great significance to ancestry and lineage.¹⁸ Instead, they acclaimed signs of

¹⁴ Higham, *The Archaeology*, p. 319, on "variables."

¹⁵ The Paśupatas were among these teachers. For a note about them, see O. W. Wolters, "Khmer 'Hinduism' in the Seventh Century," in *Early Southeast Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*, eds. R. B. Smith and W. Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 431-433. Also see Wolters, "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," *Indonesia* 58 (October 1994): 4.

¹⁶ On "death status," see Wolters, "Khmer 'Hinduism' in the Seventh Century," pp. 434-5. Coedès discusses what he regards as examples of the "canonization" of four loyal officials who died on behalf of a prince; George Coedès, *Angkor: An Introduction*, trans. E. Gardiner (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ On bilateral kinship in early Java, see James J. Fox, "The Ordering of Generations: Change and Continuity in Old Javanese Kinship," in David G. Marr and Anthony C. Milner, *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, pp. 315-34. Also see articles in F. Husken and J. Kemp, *Cognition and Social Organization in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991) on the prominence of non-unilineal forms of kinship organization among Southeast Asian societies.

¹⁸ On pp. 19-20 in 1982 I distinguished between "Ancestors" and "forebears." The status of founder of a lineage was the reward for great achievement. On pp. 22-23 I suggested that

personal achievement and leadership attributable to a personality capable of attracting followers. All people were believed to be endowed with an innate spiritual property but in greatly varying degrees, and personal achievement and leadership clearly signified a superior and potent spiritual influence. I have dubbed as "men of prowess" those perceived as being so richly endowed as to be recognized as Śiva-like figures. But "prowess" was always a personal quality and not capable of being transmitted in order to perpetuate the existence of a particular *maṅḍala*. Here, then, was the crucial instance of Śivaite devotionalism's making sense in early Southeast Asia.¹⁹ A political commentator has said of the political culture in Washington, DC that "power is the perception of power," and so it was, I believe, in Southeast Asian history in *maṅḍala* times.

"Prowess" had to be spotted in every generation among a group likely to comprise a large number of persons from several related families bound by marriage alliances, though, of course, in special circumstances outsiders could also be perceived as possessing attributes of leadership and an ability to enlarge their entourage. Vietnamese sources do not record Śiva-like leaders, but they sometimes mention the presence in a particular generation of "extraordinary persons" with qualities that distinguished them from others. A text, probably written in the thirteenth century, relates how a future tenth century ruler, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh, was, while still a village boy, chosen by his playmates to lead their gang. When the village elders heard of this and decided that the boy was someone who would achieve much, they reflected that they would later have regrets if they did not submit to him.²⁰ The possession of "prowess," known in Vietnam by the Chinese term for *virtus* (Vietnamese, *đức*), explains why, in Vietnamese tradition, territorial spirits and even the God of Heaven were attracted to and served rulers who possessed this quality.²¹

For me, "prowess" signifies the spiritual and leadership resources of those responsible for mobilizing settlements and *maṅḍalas* in pre- and protohistoric mainland Southeast Asia, and no doubt elsewhere in the region. It was also the

overlord and Ancestor status would imply that one had succeeded in extending one's influence over at least the territories subdued by an earlier overlord.

The distinction concerning numerous forebears and rare Ancestors holds good in Southern Thailand. Lorraine Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995), p. 68. Anthony Day and Craig J. Reynolds seem to accept the distinction when, in the context of Śūryavarman II of Angkor and President Soeharto, they quote Pemberton's description of President and Mrs. Soeharto as destined for ancestral status; p. 13 in *Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia*, an unpublished manuscript to which they kindly allowed me to refer.

¹⁹ In Appendix I below I attempt to reconstruct a "Hindu" man of prowess as he is rendered in a Sanskrit inscription.

²⁰ O. W. Wolters, *Two Essays on Đại-Việt in the Fourteenth Century*, The Lạc-Việt Series - No. 9 (New Haven: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988), pp. xxii-xxiii. Hang Tuah, the hero of fifteenth-century Malacca, was another extraordinary person. "He excelled all others in cunning and strength," and, as Đinh Bộ Lĩnh had done, he began to distinguish himself when playing with other youths; "Séjarah Melayu or Malay Annals: A Translation of Raffles MS 18," trans. C. C. Brown, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXV.2-3 (1952): 76. "Men of prowess" have been proposed in nineteenth-century Bali and perhaps in pre-Hindu times there; Jean-Francois Gueronprez, "Rois divins et rois guerriers. Images de la royauté à Bali," *L'Homme* 95 (juin-sept. 1985) xxv (3): 65.

²¹ I have in mind tales in the *Việt-điện u-linh tập*. Spirits are invariably attracted to rulers whose leadership and admirable qualities they can recognize.

quality which justified likening to Śiva someone known to achieve mighty things.²² Such a person could be perceived as "Śiva-like" because his energy seemed to match Śiva's divine energy (*śakti*). There would have been men of prowess in various Southeast Asian societies long before any question of Śiva-like metaphors arose, and nothing that accompanied "Hinduization" would have represented a major discontinuity at the dawn of early Southeast Asian history except a differentiation between those who imagined that they belonged to the "Hindu world" and those who lived in forests and others who were unaware of that world. In the protohistoric centuries the movers and shakers would have resembled their prehistoric predecessors in character and performance; their behavior and relationship with the rest of their society would have been comparable.²³

Because a man of prowess would be spotted among others of his generation, there were several important consequences. First and foremost, the style of public life would be affected. By "public life" I mean no more than where and how things pertaining to government happened and also where a sense of personal well-being could be achieved in official service. The personal relationships that had combined to acclaim and elevate a man of prowess would be a persisting influence. The supporters now became their leader's entourage and maybe often relatives by marriage.²⁴ They would expect posts and privileges to come their way as the result of their personal ties with a leader bound to be concerned with the skills of man-

²² Arthur Wright, discussing the Chinese reception of Indian Buddhism, refers to the adaptation known as "matching concepts," or the matching of groups of Buddhist ideas with a "plausibly analogous grouping of indigenous ideas"; Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, p. 337.

²³ Manguin's study of the Malay word "*pawang*," meaning "ship-master" and also a practitioner of magic, may point to another "man of prowess"; Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Shipshape Societies: Boat Symbolism and Political Systems in Insular Southeast Asia," in Marr and Milner, *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, pp. 197-199.

²⁴ Few more important institutions existed in early Southeast Asia than the entourage; 1982, pp. 19, 25, 29, 43. For a statement about the meaning of "entourage" in a Thai context, see Lucien M. Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle," in *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, ed. G. W. Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 197-218. An entourage is a group of persons, each of whom is individually bound to the entourage's patron by personal loyalty. There is no such thing as group loyalty. An entourage lasts only as long as the patron is alive and continues to provide for each of his clients. In troubled times entourages are frequently formed and reformed. A member of an entourage may have an entourage, available to his patron. Chiefs in the Malay Annals are usually accompanied by their followers. The defection in 1888 of one of Datu Uto's allies, with five hundred fighting men, had a disastrous effect on Uto's fortunes; Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Magindanao 1860-1888: The Career of Datu Uto of Buayan* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1971), pp. 59-60. The Hurg-dao prince's followers were so dependent on him that he did not hesitate to browbeat and insult them for being indolent when the Mongol threat to Vietnam was looming towards the end of the thirteenth century; Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Interventions: 1858-1900*, Monograph Series No. 11, Southeast Asia Studies (New Haven: Yale University, 1967), pp. 49-54.

The royal treasure, the means of providing for an entourage, is a related institution; 1982 p. 43. For an analysis of the connection between commercial wealth in the royal coffers and the origins of "kingdoms" on the shores of the Java Sea, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Merchant and the King: Political Myths of Southeast Asian Coastal Polities," *Indonesia* 52 (October 1991): 41-54. Renée Hagesteijn notes ramifications of treasure and gifting in early Southeast Asia; Renée Hagesteijn, *Circle of Kings: Political Dynamics in Early Continental Southeast Asia* (Dordrecht and Providence: Foris Publications, 1989), pp. 116-121.

management. Moreover, the ruler's continuing sense of indebtedness to those who had originally supported him and to his allies in general—all of whom probably had their own manpower resources—would mean that, in spite of formal behavior when official occasions required and when different degrees of relationship with the ruler were exhibited at Court, personal relationships in public life could often be relaxed and permit informal discussion. Southeast Asians have the reputation of being able to switch roles.

What Higham refers to as a "centralizing" chiefdom was unlikely to be more than the chief's or *rāja's* person and entourage at the center of a *maṅḍala*. The pace of public life would be quickened when the ruler was able to enlarge and mobilize his entourage in sufficient numbers to enable him to mount adventures perhaps far afield and no doubt in territories endowed with rich natural resources.²⁵ But the *maṅḍala* always remained personal and impermanent; it was not a mapped territorial unit.²⁶ In Sunait Chutintaranond's words, *maṅḍalas* were "continuous networks of loyalties between the rulers and the ruled."²⁷

Another consequence of the habit of reviewing society for potential leaders and thereafter critically reassessing their performance would be the inculcation of a present-minded outlook, a concern with what was happening "now," such as a leader's faltering but also with news gathered from far off, omens, and a perception of the past that was concerned with its relevance to the present.²⁸ The ruler would share in this outlook and be very aware that his kingship was precarious. His response to problems would therefore be to seek short-term measures in order to attain goals here and now. He would prefer to improvise expedients rather than plan long-term solutions.

One may note a further consequence of a "this-generation and present-minded" outlook in a region endowed with abundant maritime communications which belonged to what in 1982 I referred to as "the single ocean"²⁹ and, from early historical times, with a sense of belonging to a "Hindu world" of universal norms. This is what I described then as a propensity for "modernity" (not fads) because of a concern to be up-to date in what could be construed locally as useful knowledge.³⁰

²⁵ Far-ranging campaigns, visits to famous pilgrimage centers, the movement of artists working in temples on common themes, and increasing inter-regional trade were factors that helped to engender a more extended sense of cultural identity.

²⁶ "A polity still cohered only in the sense that it was the projection of an individual's prowess," 1982, p. 21 I take this opportunity to correct what I wrote in the first paragraph on page 36 to read "cultural integrity" and not "territorial integrity."

²⁷ Sunait Chutintaranond, "Mandala, 'Segmentary State' and Politics of Centralization in Medieval Ayudhya," *Journal of the Siam Society* 78.1 (1990): 90. He is responding to 1982, pp. 25 and 30. Barbara Andaya describes the same situation in respect of the archipelago, where the so-called kingdoms "were in fact cultural-economic communities composed of a web of kinship-infused relationships"; Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 213.

²⁸ Wang Gungwu, "Introduction: The Study of the Southeast Asian Past," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978), p. 4 and quoting James Fox. The present was, of course, when opportunities for achievement were grasped.

²⁹ See 1982, pp. 44-46.

³⁰ 1982, pp. 47. The same outlook would encourage a propensity for updating knowledge and for hospitality to the outside world in general, a Southeast Asian cultural feature I emphasized in "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," pp. 4-6. Barbara Andaya

Not surprising, being up-to-date was a diligent ruler's responsibility, which he would discharge in his Śiva-like role of universal teacher.³¹

The nature of public life, managing one's entourage, an often relaxed mood at the top of society, an eye on the importance of "now," a preference for expedients, modernizing tendencies, and the ruler's teaching responsibilities are recurrent themes in the postscript and help to explain how things happened.

The major happening, of course, was an overlord's efforts to maintain his influence in his *maṅḍala*. This could be achieved by the threat of an ubiquitous use of military might, by alliances, and especially by ruling through and manipulating vassals. Alliances negotiated by marriage were probably habitual. A Chinese envoy to the Malay Peninsula in the early seventh century reported that the ruler he met had three wives from among "the daughters of neighbouring kings."³² Jayavarman II of Cambodia, of *devarāja* fame, is known to have had ten wives and seems to have promoted and demoted his chief queens according to his current political exigencies.³³

Over and above these expedients, the *maṅḍala* overlord had at his disposal something that would be his trump card to which I should have given more attention in 1982: various means of disseminating knowledge that he was a man of prowess with unusual and intimidating spiritual energy. Jane Drakard has supplied the adroit expression "culture of communication" to refer to this aspect of *maṅḍala* experience.³⁴ A leader's reputation, and his means of making that reputation known

has illustrated possibilities for studying a propensity for being "up-to-date" in earlier Southeast Asia but not at the expense of "tradition"; Barbara Watson Andaya, "Historicising 'Modernity' in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40.4 (1997): 391-409. According to a public lecture by Charles F. Keyes, Thai monks are updating their sacred duties to include protecting the natural environment. See 1982, pp. 31-32, for similar Thai instances. David K. Wyatt informs me that King Chulalongkorn considered building modern schools to be a new means of earning merit. In the later nineteenth century the Lingga sultanate tried through printing to present itself as a modern kingdom; Jan van der Putten, "Printing in Riau: Two Steps towards Modernity," in "Riau in Transition," eds. Cynthia Chou and Will Derks, *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153.4 (1997): 734. A text written in 1939 to celebrate the coronation of the Sultan of Perak presents him as a modern administrator; Anthony C. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 236-246.

³¹ The ninth-century Prambanan temple in Central Java depicts Śiva as the Great Guru, the teacher of the sacred texts that guide one to union with Śiva. The ruler would have commissioned the monument on behalf of his subjects' spiritual salvation. The early nineteenth-century *Hikayat Deli* was a teaching manual to instruct Bataks in the hinterland of northern Sumatra in the relationships that underpinned the coastal Malay government of Deli; Anthony C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), ch. V-VI. Milner notes references in the sources to the Malay rulers' educational role.

³² Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese. Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961), p. 27.

³³ O. W. Wolters, "Jayavarman II's Military Power: The Territorial Foundation of the Angkor Empire," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1973): 21-30. On Jayavarman, see 1982, pp. 19-20 and 22.

³⁴ Drakard, "A Kingdom of Words: Minangkabau Sovereignty in Sumatran History," p. 229: "This culture of communication is vital for an understanding of the nature of Minangkabau royal authority in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." Timothy Barnard calls my attention to the importance Malays attached to letter writing and receiving correspondence.

and felt, was a powerful influence in public life. I noted with interest Higham's conjecture that knowledge of bronze-working from copper and tin traveled quickly. This suggests that news about overlords did likewise along the same trade routes and fed into conversation among those who lived astride the trade routes.³⁵

The *Arthaśāstra* concedes that the ruler's reputation is critical to his success by cynically teaching the need for propaganda at home and abroad.³⁶ This text was known in eleventh century Java, and one need not doubt that its commonsensical advice was heeded in Southeast Asia.³⁷ Bards and poets were in demand in royal courts to sing and propagate the rulers' praises. The Court poet Prapañca wrote of Hayam Wuruk, the fourteenth-century king of Majapahit in eastern Java:

All the scholars of other lands compose the praises of our King . . .
Not to mention the scholars of Java, all who are expert in the scriptures and highly knowledgeable
Discuss and compose verses, and sometimes it is in prose texts that they depict him.³⁸

Royal officials were often on the move and carried their master's reputation. An efficient Javanese official was one who made "rounds in the country."³⁹ Poems written by fourteenth century Vietnamese officials refer to "their ten years" of traveling among the rivers and lakes; "ten years" is a figure of speech for long service on the ruler's behalf.⁴⁰ A special corps of inspectors, known as *tamrvác*, was created in Angkor at the beginning of the eleventh century. In their oath they declared:

If there is a matter of royal business on which His Majesty has ordered us to go afar because he has heard that something has happened, we shall investigate the matter in detail.⁴¹

They were trouble-shooters. Similarly in 1344, when revolts were breaking out in the Vietnamese countryside, the ruler Minh-tôn enlarged his provincial staff and established twenty military stations in the provinces.⁴² All these improvisations

³⁵ Higham, *The Archaeology*, p. 187. I owe the expression "conversation" to Lorraine Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood*, p. 48. This is a study of a manuscript from Phatthalung in southern Thailand composed about 1729; see page 41.

³⁶ *The Arthaśāstra*, ed., rearr., trans. and introd. L. N. Rangarajan (Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 1992), p. 730. I like the recommendation that gullible people should be made to believe that the conqueror was in direct contact with gods.

³⁷ See 1982, p. 49, in connection with Erlangga's appeal to the *Arthaśāstra*.

³⁸ Mpu Prapañca, *Deśavarnana* (Nāgarakṛtāgama), trans. Stuart Robson (Leiden: KITLV Press 1995), p. 93.

³⁹ *Natvanatya*, in T. G. T. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century. A Study of Cultural History: The Nāgara-Kṛtāgama by Rakawi Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 A.D.*, 5 vol. 3 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960-65), p. 120.

⁴⁰ See O. W. Wolters, "Chu Văn An: An Exemplary Retirement," *The Vietnam Review* 1 (Autumn-Winter 1996): 91, n. 24.

⁴¹ George Coedès, *Les Inscriptions du Cambodge* (IC), 8 vol. (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), vol. 3, p. 209. Also see 1982, pp. 30.

⁴² O. W. Wolters, *Two Essays*, p. 19. The convention in the *Việt-diện u-linh tập* is that energetic officials strike people with awe.

indicate a pragmatic approach to problems instead of an aptitude for long-term planning.

Officials were obvious agents in communicating their ruler's prestige. When a loyal official projected his ruler's prowess, he knew that his own reputation for achieving merit would be enhanced and that he would be successfully competing for status among his peers in the same way that his ruler, "a man of prowess," had done among his own peers. Public life appealed to ambitious men because it was the most accessible secular arena for establishing a reputation.⁴³ Rulers always needed resourceful henchmen. Malay texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries teach that "a subject improves his *nama* (reputation) by working for a Raja, and a Raja improves his *nama* by having many loyal subjects."⁴⁴ The same texts, commenting on the relationship between rulers and subordinates, echo notions voiced in early Southeast Asian inscriptions. For example, the Sanskrit-derived Hindu term *bhakti* represented "devoted service" in the Malay language as it had done in the context of the Śiva-like ruler. More interesting, the relationship between subject and ruler could signify a religious relationship similar to that between a "devoted" subordinate (*bhakta*) and a Śiva-like ruler.⁴⁵ A Malay text states that those who wished to enter heaven must die with a good "name."⁴⁶ On the theme of working for the Raja, the Malay hero, Hang Tuah, insists that "it is good to die with a name (*nama*) which is good."⁴⁷ An official's reputation earned in royal service can contribute to his status after death, and the same association is reflected in Cambodian inscriptions of earlier times.⁴⁸ Vietnamese writings take up the same theme when they record that loyal subjects who had achieved much in public life would become tutelary spirits after their death. An admiring and compassionate Heaven often promoted them to that status.⁴⁹ This exalted rendering of the personal relationships that comprised public life within a *maṅḍala* is not unexpected when a *maṅḍala* is understood to be a network of personal loyalties rather than a territorial unit.

Officials were bound to be important instruments for making it known that their master was a man of prowess. Another important instrument, noted by Higham, was available: the practice of raising inscriptions.⁵⁰ Inscriptions often hurled curses on those who defied a ruler's orders or damaged his inscriptions, which suggests that inscriptions were attributed with supernatural power. The supernatural power of inscribed words reminds one of what Gonda writes about the bards who sang an Indian ruler's panegyrics; bards, we noted above, performed the same service for the Majapahit ruler. A bard's service was no ordinary one. According to Gonda, the bard's songs strengthened the ruler's power to perform his royal duties because the panegyrics "have the effect of a magical performance, causing the exploits described

⁴³ See 1982, p. 20, for the Bēndahara of Malacca's view on public life.

⁴⁴ A. C. Milner, *Kerajaan*, p. 105. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ Milner, *Kerajaan*, pp. 107 and 109. *Bhakti* also appears in the Sabokingking inscription at Palembang at the end of the seventh century.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109. See Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*, pp. 289 and 294, for a persisting concern with *nama* in the twentieth century.

⁴⁸ Wolters, "Khmer 'Hinduism' in the Seventh Century," pp. 433-434. See 1982, p. 18, fn. 12.

⁴⁹ This is the convention in the *Việt-diện u-linh tập*.

⁵⁰ Higham, *The Archaeology*, p. 249. Inscriptions called his attention to "the adoption of Indian inspired religious and legal practices and language."

to spread their inherent power and to become active again in the person of the listener," the king.⁵¹

I shall now broach what I believe was a crucial fact of public life within a *maṇḍala*: the power of the word, spoken or written, and of the royal word in particular. The man of prowess could project himself and his omnipotence by means of his voice.

Naturally, the power of his voice would be deemed to be more efficacious than that of his officials or bards. In 1982 I examined the language of the "reservoir" inscriptions of Yaśovarman I (889-910) of Angkor at the beginning of the tenth century. The king is presented as the source of creative and life-sustaining authority. "The ambrosia [*amṛta*] of his commands" that enables this to happen is mediated through his speech, identified with the consort of the divine Creator, or Śiva himself. So Śiva-like was Yaśovarman that to read of him and his purifying speech was to read of Śiva. His voice was, as it were, the command post of a *maṇḍala* that "stretched from the Bay of Bengal to China."⁵²

Yaśovarman's inscriptions were in Sanskrit, and this would have enhanced their magical quality. When Zoetmulder discussed the function of Sanskrit verses incorporated in Old-Javanese *parwa* literature, he suggested that the verses, no doubt on account of their strange sound, conveyed to the Javanese an "atmosphere of solemnity." In some cases, too, Sanskrit formulae were quoted and would possess "supernatural qualities." The sound of Sanskrit called attention to a text's sacred or magical character.⁵³

Two related notions now emerge: the power inherent in the Sanskrit language and the power inherent in the royal voice. Perhaps the introduction from India of writing that happened to be Sanskrit—a sacred language—enhanced the power already associated with the ruler's voice.⁵⁴ A man of prowess's speech in pre-"Hinduized" times could plausibly have been revered as unusually authoritative, and later on it would make sense that writing gave it additional authority.

Three recent "Southeast Asian" studies, dealing with the communication of the ruler's spiritual authority in historical times, are consistent with the view that the written word possessed magical associations when it embodied the royal voice. The media in question are a Sumatran inscription (*prasasti*), a Sumatran seal letter (*surat*

⁵¹ J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 46 and 56. See V. F. Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), p. 19 for a reference to a panyayist in the Malay Annals in the context of the *bhat* in Gujerat.

⁵² 1982, pp. 38 and 80-83.

⁵³ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 91-92. See 1982, pp. 63-65. Vietnamese would often quote sentences or phrases from Chinese sources to lend rhetorical effect to what they wrote; O. W. Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments Arising out of Lê Văn Hưu's History. Presented to the Trần Court in 1272." in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), pp. 82-84. Also see Hendrik M. Maier, *In the Centre of Authority* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1989), p. 85, quoted by Drakard, "A Kingdom of Words" p. 298, on the dominant role of rhetoric in Malay culture. Maier defines "rhetoric" as "the use of literary devices in a way that warrants a superior command of the art of relevance." The Vietnamese exemplified this skill.

⁵⁴ The Saribas Ibans were convinced that writing was somehow the key to European power; Robert Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels: The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule, 1841-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 201.

cap), and Thai royal decrees (*tamra*).

Nicole Biroš, having recourse to hermeneutics, is concerned to illustrate what can be learnt by paying meticulous attention to *how* things were written as well as to *what* was written.⁵⁵ With these considerations in mind, she examines the late seventh-century "Sabokingking" inscription in Palembang of Sriwijayan times, with its multiple curses against those who, in spite of the oath recorded on the inscription over which magical water had been poured, threatened the ruler.⁵⁶ She examines such matters as structure, the use of personal terms ("I" and "you"), repetition, the meaning of the absence of the name "Sriwijaya," and especially the importance attached to the "word" (*parole*). Her conclusion is that the inscription seemed to read as the ruler's deliberate and elaborate act of self-assertion and designed to attract attention to his control over the words defining treason, punishment, and reward. "In a sense, the ruler had to appropriate for himself the word and its magic power to be sure of his own power, and he also had to publicize it."⁵⁷ The written word had an operative force; those who heard it reverently were loyal subjects. Thus, publishing the ruler's power by means of the text was tantamount to deploying it.⁵⁸ As she puts it, "the text affirms its conviction that it is by the word that men manipulate and are manipulated and that actions are brought to pass."⁵⁹ Similarly, when the ruler's foes used magical means to empower their own words, the ruler had to use a magical oath to counter his foes' words.⁶⁰ Finally, Biroš concludes that, because the Sabokingking site at Palembang was the center of the royal word, it would also have been the center of authority and therefore of Sriwijaya itself.⁶¹

By focusing her analysis on the tremendous force of the royal word, she argues that we should conceptualize Sriwijayan society and government in terms of a person (the ruler) and his influence and not in terms of physical space.

Sriwijaya would have consisted in the exercise of a personal authority by the Dapunta Hiyang (the ruler) and delegated by him as an emanation of his individual power, itself derived from sacralized natural forces. He would have relied on his relatives and related clans; on the armed soldiers of those who would rally around him; and on other chiefs who were willing to enter into alliances of mutually satisfactory convenience, were anxious to share prestige, material advantages . . . ⁶²

⁵⁵ Nicole Biroš, "Sriwijaya—Empire ou Emporium? Une Étude de Cas de L'orientalisme" (PhD dissertation, L'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, 1992).

⁵⁶ Biroš, "Sriwijaya," pp. 514-526. See 1982, pp. 59, on Sabokingking.

⁵⁷ Personal communication, November 1993.

⁵⁸ Biroš, "Sriwijaya," p. 519. See p. 239 below on Stanley J. O'Connor's reference to "performative action" in the context of a temple's bas-relief.

⁵⁹ Biroš, "Sriwijaya," p. 521. Timothy Barnard comments that Malay texts express the power of the Sultan's words by means of a special vocabulary such as "*titah*."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

⁶¹ Biroš, "Sriwijaya," p. 526. She supports J. G. de Casparis's judgment concerning Sriwijaya's headquarters. La Loubère, the seventeenth-century French envoy to the Ayudhya Court, wrote ". . . it seems to me that whatever is done in the King of Siam's Name has no Power if it is not done at the place where this king actually resides"; Lorraine Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood: Southern Thailand and the Meaning of History* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995), p. 32.

⁶² Biroš, "Sriwijaya," pp. 557-558.

This, in my judgment, is closer to the situation on the ground than Higham's "centralized polity."

In the second study, Jane Drakard argues that writing was an instrument of power strong enough to command royal authority in the Minangkabau polity.⁶³ In this instance, the power of language can be verified. She asks why seventeenth-century Dutch officials on the west coast of Sumatra were puzzled and alarmed by the apparently powerless polity, with its center high up in the Sumatran mountains. The Dutch knew that seal letters (*surat cap*) sent in the Minangkabau Sultan's name had, from their point of view, a subversive effect when they arrived in various parts of the island, and indeed in the Malay world in general, and could cause havoc to Dutch trade. Through painstaking textual analysis of the royal letters to show how the ruler addressed his subjects and the force of the words he communicated, Drakard is able to explain why the Dutch had cause for concern.

She identifies the literary conventions and devices used in the letters: juxtaposition, contiguity, repetition of Koranic imagery, occasional use of Arabic language recognizable as the language of prayer and therefore especially sacred,⁶⁴ patterned lists of royal attributes, formulaic language, and consistency of expression when referring to the ruler. This literary style adorned the letters' structure whether it focused on the language of space,⁶⁵ the language of abundance (the ruler's attributes and benefits), or the language of greatness.

She concludes that such letters effectively presented the ruler as the custodian of God's miraculous signs (*tanda*), and this would affirm his role as an intermediary between man and God and as the earthly representative of divine power.⁶⁶ The very sound of his letters, echoing the divine ruler's voice as he announced himself, would have an awesome effect because it signified that he "stood between man and God in this world. By showing obedience and devotion to the ruler, by remembering him in their prayers, subjects were told that they were acting in accordance with God's wishes and were following their religion."⁶⁷

Thus, the mere announcement in writing (Drakard's term is "broadcasting") of a ruler's existence and his extraordinary attributes, and even the material on which the writing was inscribed, could project the authority that could support the Sumatran *mandala*.⁶⁸ Likewise, Palembang rulers in the later times circulated their written "decisions"—their *piagem*—with pomp and circumstance.⁶⁹ Their communications

⁶³ Cited in note 6 above.

⁶⁴ Drakard, "A Kingdom of Words," p. 293.

⁶⁵ Drakard, "A Kingdom of Words," p. 278. Drakard notes, shrewdly, that, in the Acehnese seals, the names of the ruler's predecessors surround his name, whereas the Minangkabau ruler's name is surrounded by names of descendants who founded kingdoms in the frontier regions. The implication is that the latter's descendants were occupying space only on behalf of himself; *ibid.*, p. 278.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁶⁸ A captured letter from Amangkurat II, Susuhunan of Mataram, in connection with his receipt of Raja Sakti's letter, states that he bowed "reverently before the great Sultan of Minangkabau since we share the Islamic faith"; *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶⁹ O. W. Wolters, "Studying Srivijaya," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 52,2 (1979) 4, p. 17, note 64. In 1644 the Palembang ruler said that he planned to send upstream "a written document and a seal." Andaya comments on the seal's sacred powers;

would resemble traveling inscriptions.

In the third study, Lorraine Gesick further verifies the authority and respect commanded by the royal voice when committed to writing.⁷⁰ She does so by studying manuscripts (*tamra*) of southern Thailand on which royal decrees were inscribed. In 1902 a Thai prince had witnessed the reverence with which the *tamra* were handled.⁷¹ Gesick has tapped memories of the ceremonies accompanying the intoning of the manuscripts⁷² and come to realize that the manuscripts were revered because their words were believed to be charged with the supernatural power inherent in the royal voice. They were, literally, the receptacles of the king's voice.⁷³ The *tamra's* writing was therefore magical: "It captured the spoken word [of the ruler], not only so it could be read and understood later, but so that it could be re-spoken, reactivating the efficacy of the original utterance."⁷⁴

Gesick is able to understand the meaning of the manuscripts' magical import by paying heed to its textual aspects and conventions which made it "read" as a magical text. For example, the texts use the rhetorical device of deliberately calling attention to "speaking the past" so as to achieve, among other things, a "bridging" of time through writing or, rather, through re-writing because *tamra* incorporated earlier *tamra*. In this way the authority of the past could be reactivated in the present.⁷⁵ Needless to say, earlier *tamra* had to be accurately recopied into the latest one to multiply the royal voices in it and "compound" the effectiveness of its words and sounds.⁷⁶ Punctuation was an important device for setting apart genuine copies of actual *tamra*.⁷⁷

These three studies have common features. Their texts are assiduously examined to establish linguistic usage. "Repetition" is a shared usage. Each one shows a concern with the voice behind the written word. Drakard and Gesick testify to the effect on listeners when they hear what they can recognize as royal speech, while Biro's study invests the disregarded royal word with lethal consequences. In each instance the authority of the royal word is boosted by additional supernatural power: the Malay *prasasti* has magical water poured over its oath; the Minangkabau *surat cap* incorporate passages in Arabic; Thai royal *tamra* are rendered more powerful when earlier royal *tamra* have been copied into later ones. The territorial reach of the *prasasti's* and *surat cap's* influence extends as far as their rulers' claims to obedience and is intended to evoke loyalty even when other forms of coercive authority are not continuously applied. The Thai *ramra* mobilize the authority of voices heard in the past to reinforce the most recent voice. In various ways the ruler's voice would be an additional and important influence in his *manḍala* provided, of course, that he was known to possess signs of a man of prowess.

Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, p. 90.

⁷⁰ Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood*.

⁷¹ Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood*, p. 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26 and 30.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34. *Tamra* were treated with the same respect the region accorded *pustaka*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30. Here is a clear instance of the mobilization of the past—in this case a receptacle of magic power—for the sake of the present.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Higham's vision of a *mandala* as an arena where "centralizing" processes got under way in early mainland Southeast Asia has caused me to digress and consider how Chinese and Khmers as well as scholars today have made sense of happenings in protohistoric times. I also tried to improve on my earlier discussion of "the cultural matrix" by taking into greater account influences that shaped public life in *mandala* times. These included the subordinates' quest for merit in the ruler's entourage and expedients such as communicating his prowess and even his voice.

I conclude my comments on "the cultural matrix" by considering an alternative vision of prehistoric Southeast Asia unimaginable, I suppose, in 1982. Few developments excited me more when I prepared myself for writing this postscript. I seemed to have stumbled on a long-awaited launching pad in Southeast Asian prehistory. I refer to the concept of "heterarchy" in contradistinction to "hierarchy," the concept usually associated with the region. The concept of "heterarchy" is examined in Joyce White's contribution to a volume on *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, published in 1995 by the American Anthropological Association, in which she reevaluates evidence from some amply stocked prehistoric burial sites in northeastern and central Thailand.⁷⁸

Her analysis and argument are sufficiently thorough to convince me, at least, that she has established a promising direction for future prehistoric archaeological research and also for historical studies of early Southeast Asia. Though some of her technical vocabulary may be unfamiliar to historians, her essay provides insights in connection with continuities in Southeast Asian historical experience and contributes towards delineating the "regional" shape to Southeast Asian history.

She and the other authors in this volume define "heterarchy" as an organizational structure in which "each element possesses the potential of being unranked (relative to other elements) or ranked in a number of different ways."⁷⁹ In its Southeast Asian context from at least the second millennium BC, White understands the term to signify societies that exemplify

cultural pluralism; indigenous economies that tend to be characterized by household-based units of production, community-based economic specialization, and competitive, multi-centered, and overlapping mechanisms for the distribution of goods rather than monopolies controlled by a single center; social status systems that tend to be flexible in practice and include personal achievement even where ascribed systems exist in theory; conflict resolution and political centralization strategies that tend to have alliance formation . . . at their

⁷⁸ Joyce White, "Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Socio-Political Development: The Case from Southeast Asia," in *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, ed. Robert M. Ehrenreich, Carole L. Crumley, and Janet E. Levy, Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, no. 6 (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 1995), pp. 101-123.

⁷⁹ This is Carole L. Crumley's definition on page 144 in *Advances in Archaeological Methods and Theory*, ed. M. Schiffer (New York: Academic Press, 1979). See Elizabeth M. Brumfiel's comments in Ehrenreich, et al., *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, p. 125. Johnson also figures prominently in White's essay; Gregory A. Johnson, "Organisational Structure and Scalar Stress," in *Theory and Explanation in Archaeology*, ed. C. Renfrew (New York: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 389-421.

core, and that may be periodically renegotiated. . . .⁸⁰

Her analysis of the graves' contents suggests marked and enduring "localization" in material culture between 2000 and 200 BC in spite of evidence of long-distance trade. Localization becomes pronounced when bronze appears in the first half of the second millennium BC.⁸¹ She then proceeds to identify heterarchic tendencies: "craft specialization and long-distance exchange developed and intensified in a decentralized and multicentric manner that was not conducive to sustained hierarchical controls."⁸² Individuals or individual communities were able to intensify specialization to meet the demand of the market but not at the command of a hierarchical authority. This suggests that those who were capable of achievement (economic specialization is one form of achievement) could go their own way without being organized by anyone in their community.

According to this mode of analysis, the props of hierarchy—lineage and ranking systems—disappear together with models based on centralized chiefdoms.⁸³ Her analysis of the graves requires a new focus, and I cheerfully renounce what I wrote in 1982 on graves and status.⁸⁴ White looks at the same graves differently. For example, social differences are "often subtle" and "apparently expressed in a different manner at each cemetery."⁸⁵ The evidence is certainly too complex to permit rank-based conclusions. She concludes that, in spite of an overall increase in wealth, "there is not necessarily a marked increase in *differentiation* of groups by wealth over time."⁸⁶ Instead, there is a "continuum" in the situation into the early first millennium AD to just before the earliest historical evidence, and cultural localization continues to be reflected by localized value systems in respect of burial ritual and social status.⁸⁷ The evidence points to a number of roles apparently sufficiently important to deserve well-stocked graves. Distinctive burials "usually suggest differentiation in terms of the individual's social, ritual, or economic role. . . . These graves indicate that an individual's activities contributed to their role differentiation relative to others in the society."⁸⁸

The same evidence points to the pertinence of social and economic functions rather than of hereditary hierarchy. There were various achieved bases for social differentiation, which might be employed not only to distinguish a chief, but also other individuals of status. Heterarchy implies the possibility of a number of achievers in a single community. White sums up this complex situation as follows:

. . . I propose that the prehistoric cemeteries of Thailand are consistent with the

⁸⁰ White, "Incorporating Heterarchy," p. 104. See the top of p. 105 for evidence of factors such as flexibility in status definition, factors inconsistent with the chieftain paradigm.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁸³ She criticizes the way in which "chiefdom" has become a paradigm that assumes centralized political power; *ibid.*, p. 103. She also rejects the archaeologists' evolutionary paradigm; *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁸⁴ 1982, p. 18.

⁸⁵ White, "Incorporating Heterarchy," p. 109.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

existence of a flexible, complex, multifaceted, multilateral system of status and social differentiation. Personal economic achievements and social functions, as well as variation in family wealth and probably kinship rank, all operated simultaneously and hence combined ascribed and achieved factors. Furthermore, I suggest that avenues toward status were multidimensional and may have varied by microculture, with wealth as only one component of social differentiation.⁸⁹

White makes another interesting observation. The bronze age in Southeast Asia was relatively peaceful compared with that in other areas such as the Mesopotamia and Shang China. Bronze remains in graves, identified as status symbols, comprise personal ornaments and useful village implements but few weapons. The evidence even indicates that "the prehistoric societies in the core area of Southeast Asia [i.e., her sites in Thailand] had very little interest in developing *military might*" (her italics).⁹⁰

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of material data for the period immediately preceding the protohistoric period at the beginning of the Christian era, but White is prepared to take into account "later outcomes from historic times that can put the prehistoric archaeological evidence into clearer perspective."⁹¹ Her study becomes particularly interesting for historians when she makes the case for cultural continuities, one of the important issues to which contemporary prehistoric research can contribute. Thus, she cites historians who have argued for the region's cultural diversity, the prevalence of craft specialization, and also flexible social systems and economic activities that were not tightly controlled by a small group of the élite.⁹² According to her, the flexible social systems, described in Southeast Asian ethnography, do not conform to typical hierarchical models but, instead, are associated with alliance-focused political systems and the downplaying of lineage. This line of thought, reflecting a heterarchic situation in prehistoric and protohistoric times, is congenial to those who believe that the historian should pay more attention to cultural continuities if only to become more sensitive to the possibility of change. Evidence for change would need to be substantial and convincing.

A final feature of White's study should be mentioned. Cognatic kinship systems can permit considerable individual choice in responding to jural sanctions and social obligations, and here might be a *prima facie* basis for flexible response to tension-causing situations.⁹³ Flexible hierarchy and horizontal differentiation, expressed in different ways among different societies, characterize heterarchic societies and may "provide a basis for flexibility in response to challenges, be they environmental, economic, social, or historical, and alternatives to direct hierarchical mechanisms for regulatory control and integration."⁹⁴ The historian could add that one challenge

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112. The consequence is to place a responsibility on protohistorians who, as far as I am concerned, would prefer to be supported by Joyce White's research rather than *vice versa*.

⁹² White, "Incorporating Heterarchy," pp. 113-116.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117. White does not ignore "prowess." She sees it as an aspect of a flexible social system and as a centripetal influence in attracting manpower; *ibid.*, pp. 115-116. The heterarchic model would imply that a "Siva-like" man of prowess would have to be even

would be that of being up-to-date or "modern." And so heterarchic societies would possess mechanisms "to accomplish complex tasks and reduce social tensions." To this extent one would expect such societies to be relaxed unless they were being mobilized for prowess-testing adventures.

Obviously much more research on these lines is required, and the concept of heterarchy should, where feasible, be examined in other Southeast Asian contexts and especially in the archipelago. One awaits with interest the impact of White's innovative study on the field of Southeast Asian prehistory in general. In the meantime I am attracted by her redefinition of the "cultural matrix" because it eliminates the protohistorian's need to authenticate centralizing tendencies to support the view that evolutionary cultural processes were at work, which in turn leads to the hoary and time-consuming topic of "the emergence of the State." Heterarchic tendencies should be included in the cluster of cultural traits that makes one sensitive to possibilities for continuity in Southeast Asian historical experience and, at the same time, encourages one to believe that the region possessed its distinct historical identity.

The next section of the postscript attempts to update or revise my understanding of some of the early historical *mandalas*. When I sample what has been published since 1982, I shall appear to be sight-seeing rather than moving forward in any particular direction.

more convincingly recognizable among the numerous other achievers in his society. See the last paragraph on p. 115 for numerous instances of flexible mechanisms for defining status in Southeast Asian societies.

AMONG THE MAṄḌALAS

I have now amplified parts of what I previously wrote on "maṅḍala management" and do not wish to modify further my general remarks in the first pages of the second chapter.¹ I should, however, have stressed that early Chinese records about Southeast Asia often mentioned the detail that polities they designated as "kingdoms" had "dependencies" or "settlements."² Their rulers had probably been anxious to assure Chinese envoys and other visitors that they claimed overlordship over numerous vassals. These details remind us that a major feature of the early Southeast Asian landscape was, as Joyce White proposes, its multicentric appearance. The effect is conveyed by an inscription that describes what happened after the Angkorian maṅḍala temporarily collapsed in the middle of the twelfth century: "under numerous umbrellas [kings], the earth suffered from great heat, while under his reign, when there was only one umbrella, [Jayavarman VII] it was freed from all suffering."³

The phenomenon of persisting multi-centricism⁴ helps to explain such warlike passages in the inscriptions as "having with his disc killed the serpent who has

¹ Robson has retranslated the reference to the subordinate princes of Majapahit (1982, p. 27): "All the princes of Java who each have their own capital / Dwell together in Wilwatikta, holding the king in their lap"; *Deśawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)* by Mpu Prapañca, trans. Stuart Robson (Leiden: KITLV, 1995), p. 28.

² Here are a few examples from early Chinese sources. The name *Tun-sun*, probably a Mon settlement north of the Malay Peninsula, may be derived from proto-Mon for "Five Cities"; Paul Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 213. In the seventh century there were five centers in northwestern Cambodia; O. W. Wolters, "Northwestern Cambodia in the Seventh Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37,2 (1974), pp. 355-384. *Chên-la* ("Cambodia") in the seventh century ruled thirty cities; George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), page 74. Sriwijaya in the seventh or eighth century had fourteen cities; O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 239. Probably in the same two centuries *Ho-ling* in Java had "twenty-eight small countries on its borders, all of which owed allegiance"; *ibid.*, p. 216. This kind of information is likely to have come from Southeast Asian sources during tributary missions to China.

³ G. Coedès, *Les Inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, 8 vols. (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1937-1966), vol. 2, p. 175.

⁴ The territory in northwestern Cambodia known as "Malyāng" is an instance of an irrepressible local center. Inscriptions record that it was conquered by a future overlord in the seventh century, and by Jayavarman II, another future overlord, at the end of the eighth century. Thereafter it again rebelled and was not conquered again until towards the end of the twelfth century. The suppression of this rebellion was deemed sufficiently important to be

boasted of having enlarged his own territory [at my expense]⁵ or "he loves struggle. The noise of the fame of other kings caused him such wrath that the whirlwind of his arms made them blench and shrink."⁶ The multi-centric setting was accompanied by a stubborn conviction everywhere that there could be only one center that mattered and that it was the veritable center of the universe because it was understood to be the residence of a Śiva-like ruler. There was no scope for equality among such neighbors. Hendrik Maier provides an interesting illustration of this view of the world when he observes that the Malay words for the compass points "tend to conceive the world from the perspective of their own community and plotted space relative to their ruler's (and their own) compound."⁷ The same perspective, focused on a particular place, is signified throughout the region by a special function of clothing, with its profusion of elaborately patterned and richly dyed cloth. Clothing identifies the inhabitants of a locality when they participate in local festivals and affirm that they belong to the local corporate body.⁸ Stanley O'Connor considers that it would be only a slight exaggeration to describe the societies in *maṅḍala* times as "cloth cultures."

Srisakra Vallibhotama, more than any other scholar, has helped us to conceptualize early Southeast Asia as a region of many centers, thereby giving substance to Chinese accounts of the "kingdoms." In particular, he has been responsible for a spectacular demolition of what was once believed to be the ancient Mon-speaking "kingdom of Dvāravatī" in present-day Central Thailand. "Dvāravatī" has gone the way of "Funan," and Srisakra Vallibhotama invites us to think instead of a complex system of what were once river basins, each with its own network of competing polities and different cults. Villages, towns, and cities were grouped in their own river basins, with big cities as their centers.⁹

When in 1982 I compared the numerous ancient settlements in Thailand revealed by aerial photographs with "craters scattered across the moon's surface," I was

commemorated together with the expulsion of Cham invaders on the bas-relief of the Bayon, the royal cult temple of Jayavarman VII.

⁵ IC, 4, p. 247.

⁶ IC, 4, p. 225.

⁷ H. M. J. Maier, "The Malays, the Waves, and the Java Sea" in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*, eds. V. J. H. Houben et al. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Asie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), p. 12. Adelaar notes that the Malagasy also use an ego-centric orientation system; Alexander Adelaar, "Asian Roots of the Malagasy. A Linguistic Perspective," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151,3 (1995): 32.

⁸ I am grateful to Stanley J. O'Connor for this information.

⁹ Srisakra Vallibhotama, "Political and Cultural Continuities at Dvaravati Sites," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and Anthony C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 229-238. See M. L. Pattaratorn Chirapavati, *The Cult of Votive Tablets in Thailand (Sixth to Thirteenth Centuries)* (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1994), pp. 100-169, for an analysis of stylistic differences in "Dvāravatī"-style votive tablets found at several major centers in the Central Plain and also at some minor ones. Michael Vickery has discussed the status of those referred to in seventh-century Khmer-language inscriptions as *poñ* and often associated with man-made ponds. Perhaps they were originally of small communities living around their artificial ponds in the lowlands of southern Cambodia. He argues that the origins of the "kings" should always be found among the local elite such as the *poñ*. Perhaps here, as in "Dvāravatī," we are in the presence of small-scale but dynamic networks of competing polities; Michael Vickery, "Some Remarks on Early State Formation in Cambodia," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and Anthony C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 95-115.

recalling photographs Srisakra had shown me, and the vivid impression has never left me. But we owe him more than an exciting geopolitical perspective. He has proposed a "pluralistic and diversified" past in what today is known as "Thailand" and has gone so far as to argue that Thai are of mixed race.¹⁰ Joyce White's concept of "heterarchy" encourages me to suppose that, when rulers were not competing for overlord status or control of local produce and communications, the mood at the top of society was relaxed and relatively free from ethnic tensions. One sign of a man of prowess would be his ability to appeal to people regardless of their ethnicity. Srisakra Vallibhotama has left a similar impression on me.

There would, of course, have been many centers with modest pretensions and with continuous and often distant communication between them. One such center has caused me to reflect on how packed with happenings would have been numberless tracts of territory on or beyond the fringes of the *mandalas* discussed in this section. I have in mind, for example, the territory inhabited by the people of Sungei Tenang in the Moko Moko hinterland of southwestern Sumatra and their complex relationships among themselves and with others sometimes as far afield as the other side of the Straits of Malacca.¹¹ Their local history, far from being locked in permanent isolation, would be closely connected with the fortunes of their gold resources and cinnamon and coffee plantations, which would necessarily require far-flung interactions: raiding for manpower; plying trade up and down rivers, through jungle, and across mountain passes; an awareness that distant centers of international trade would sometimes shift and that alternative markets were necessary; contacts with cultural centers in the lowlands; religious messages reaching them from coastal towns or overseas. Jane Drakard uses the expression "culture of communication." Perhaps the context of areas such as Sungei Tenang justifies the expression "culture of movement." So much depended there on the physical transportation of local produce over sometimes difficult terrain, and supported by entrepreneurial enterprise.

Centers such as Sungei Tenang, probably typical units in early Southeast Asia, were anything but isolated. Nevertheless, contacts with the outside world would never smother the sense of a local identity which the inhabitants of Sungei Tenang express when they refer to themselves simply as *orang sini*, or "the people here." They are not an entry in a population census nor are they unique or better than others. They simply exist in their own right. They do not need to map themselves in relation with other peoples. They refer to *orang Jambi* and *orang Palembang* but not to *orang Sungei Tenang*.

¹⁰ See Thongchai Winichakul, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand since 1973," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 107-109, for a tribute to this path-finding scholar. David Wyatt refers to the earlier Mon, Khmer, and Tai population of the Central Plain as "Siamese" to convey a sense of ethnic complexity or, as he puts it, an "ethnicity-in-process-of-becoming." I am grateful to him for showing me a draft of a study of thirteenth-century Siam which will, among other things, highlight the complex relations among various centers in the Central Plain and their neighbors.

¹¹ I thank Heinzpeter Znoj for conversations that introduced me to southwestern Sumatra. An article on the subject is now available: Heinzpeter Znoj, "Sons versus Nephews: A Highland Jambi Alliance at War with the British East India Company, ca. 1800," *Indonesia* 65 (1998): 97-121.

The Central Plain of Thailand and Sungei Tenang and its neighbors illustrate what would be the multicentric character of earlier Southeast Asia, and I thought it proper that they should precede a discussion of its famous maṇḍalas.

I shall now glance at what has become better known since 1982 about some of the maṇḍalas I mentioned. The first of these is the Sumatran and maritime trading maṇḍala of "Sriwijaya." Orientalists in the eighteenth century became interested in the toponym identified much later as "Sriwijaya" because, centuries earlier, its fame had traveled over the trade routes and been recorded by Arab merchants.¹²

SUMATRA

In no branch of early Southeast Asian research had problems of historical geography been more controversial than in respect of Sriwijaya. No study of the region relied more on often ambiguous and even misleading Chinese written sources. For many decades the puzzle was "where" instead of "what" was Sriwijaya.¹³ But today the map of early Sumatran history, displaying Sriwijaya's location, is visible as never before, and better informed historical perspectives are becoming available.

For example, it is now known that the estuary of the Musi river in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was where it is today, though Upang on the Musi no longer deserves the prominence I accorded it in 1982.¹⁴ Excavations have been undertaken at the strategic post on Bangka island overlooking the Strait, where the 686 Kota Kapur inscription of Sriwijaya was found, and have revealed a Vaiṣṇavite temple complex, with statues attributable to the first half of the seventh century. The site must have been sufficiently important to justify Sriwijaya's subsequent control. Thereafter the site seems to have gone into decline.¹⁵ The seventh century in this part of the region was probably a lively time, though not necessarily unusually so. Able to show that the Malay and Javanese languages influenced the development of Malagasy, the Austronesian language of Madagascar, Alexander Adelaar proposes that Sriwijaya in the seventh century had a role in transmitting language and culture to the Southeastern Baritos from Kalimantan, now in Madagascar. He notes that a large element of the maritime vocabulary in Malagasy is borrowed from Malay.¹⁶

Two sites in the Kroon Raya Bay, east of the Bay of Aceh in northern Sumatra, each with plenty of sherds from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, may be the

¹² Wolters, "Studying Srivijaya," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 52,2 (1979): 1.

¹³ For short surveys of vagaries in Sriwijayan studies, see the note above; O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, pp. 21-23; Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Études Sumatranaises I. Palembang et Sriwijaya: Anciennes Hypotheses, Recherches Nouvelles (Palembang ouest)," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* LXXVI (1987): 337-342.

¹⁴ O. W. Wolters, "A Note on Sungang Village at the Estuary of the Musi River in Southeastern Sumatra: A Reconsideration of the Historical Geography of the Palembang Region," *Indonesia* 27 (April 1979): 33-50; Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Sumatran Coastline in the Straits of Bangka: New Evidence for its Permanence in Historical Times," *SPAFA Digest* 3,2 (1982): 25.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Pierre-Yves Manguin for this information and for helping me keep abreast of the changing state of Sriwijayan research.

¹⁶ Adelaar, "Asian Roots of the Malagasy," p. 328.

location of Marco Polo's Lambri. Unfortunately, this part of the coast has been subjected to tectonic movement.¹⁷ On the other hand, vast quantities of Chinese and other sherds at Kota Cina, south of Medan on the northeastern coast of Sumatra, have established the location of an international emporium that flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. The Paya Pasir harbor site at Kota Cina has now been destroyed, but the rest of the area is still largely unspoiled.¹⁸

But unquestionably the remarkable archaeological romance in recent times has been the contemporary research that establishes that there need no longer be any "notorious uncertainty about its [Sriwijaya's] geographical span and political identity."¹⁹ As the result of Pierre-Yves Manguin's indefatigable surveys and excavations during a decade and more, any doubt that Sriwijaya's center was at Palembang, where Groeneveldt in 1876 and Coedès in 1918 had situated it, should now be removed.²⁰ A great hoard of pre-fourteenth century material remains of all kinds and at various sites in and around Palembang has accumulated and revealed what is bound to have been a major trading center from the late seventh century onwards.²¹ The most dramatic episode so far in this marathon project occurred in 1990 and 1991 with, as Manguin puts it, "overwhelming" results. Over 55,000 artifacts were dug up in, incredibly, the compound of the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Museum in the heart of the modern city and close to the north bank of the Musi river. Ten thousand or so imported sherds and more than 38,000 sherds of local ware were identified there. This part of Palembang had been densely occupied in Sriwijayan times.²²

In 1982 I thoughtlessly accounted for "the notorious uncertainty" about Sriwijaya's location as a "striking instance of the amorphous nature of the great *mandalas*." I regretted its elusive shape. At the back of my mind was the notion that ground surveys of coastal areas in southeastern Sumatra had been too infrequent and based on the improbable expectation of finding the remains of monuments instead of humdrum signs of dense habitation on or in the soil and perhaps in rivers and canals too. My use of language was particularly inept because, even though in 1982 I had already come to understand public life to mean the personal relationships between rulers and subjects, I did not invoke this principle in the context of Sriwijaya but left it to scholars such as Nicole Biro's to propose that its society and government should be conceptualized in terms of a person, the ruler. She was arguing against Kulke's view that there was a strong territorial rather than a personal center.²³ Recently

¹⁷ I again thank Manguin for this information. Also see E. Edwards McKinnon, "Ceramic Recoveries (Surface Finds) at Lambaro, Aceh," *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations* 2 (1992): 63-73.

¹⁸ E. Edwards McKinnon, "Kota Cina: Its Contexts and Meaning in the Trade of Southeast Asia in the Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1984). I thank him for his letter dated August 18, 1997.

¹⁹ 1982, p. 32.

²⁰ P. Manguin, "Études Sumatranaises. . ."; "Palembang and Sriwijaya: An Early Malay Harbour-City Rediscovered," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 66,1 (1993): 23-46. Manguin's services include *A Bibliography for Sriwijayan Studies*, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (Jakarta, 1989).

²¹ Manguin, "Palembang and Sriwijaya," p. 29.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²³ Nicole Biro's, "Sriwijaya—Empire ou Emporium? Une Etude de Cas de L'orientalisme" (PhD dissertation, L'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 1990), pp. 540-544. For a full list

Manguin has, with a clinching linguistic argument, exploded the ill-considered notion of the "amorphous nature" of this or any other *mandala* simply by pointing out that Malay texts never emphasize territory but only the center of power, the center's outreach being vaguely described in terms of river basins.²⁴

Jan Wisseman Christie has developed an elaborate analysis of this polity by observing that the key Sabokingking inscription uses two sets of signifiers for describing it: Sanskrit and Old-Malay ones.²⁵ The former tend to be connected with geographical images and the latter with political relations and authority. Sriwijaya itself is usually referred to by the Malay word *huluntuhan*, or "lord's slaves," a term which emphasizes personal relationships rather than a geographical entity.²⁶ Christie goes on to suggest that Sriwijaya resembled Sumatran riverine port states in later times, where dependent chiefs served as intermediaries in trade between the interior and the coast. In similar terms, she looks ahead to Malacca in the fifteenth century and later Malay rulers elsewhere who "conceived of their states more in terms of populace and patron-client relationships than in terms of bounded territory."²⁷

Here is an example of the style of public life as I defined it in the previous section. Here, too, is a geopolitical continuity—trading ports and hinterland—that helps to endow Southeast Asia with a historical shape.²⁸

Traders are mentioned in the Sabokingking inscription, and the emporium's fame in Arab texts is proverbial. It is therefore curious that, though much is now known about early Southeast Asian coinage, coins were not issued in Sriwijaya until the eleventh century, when the center was at Jambi further up the coast and where the coins resembled those already used in Java. Wicks's explanation is that Sriwijaya lacked a "continuous centralized political administration."²⁹ Even in Java, with its much earlier coinage tradition, coins were originally for administrative rather than for commercial purposes.³⁰ Yet we need not be surprised by the absence of a "centralized administration" in Sriwijaya. What is noteworthy is evidence of the importance of the needs of public life in comparison with those of commerce.

of Kulke's articles, see Jan Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and the Data," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151,2 (1995): 284. On p. 268 Christie quotes Kulke's conclusion in 1993.

²⁴ *Anak sungei dan teluk rantau*, or "secondary streams (or confluents), bends and reaches" of a river. Manguin made this critical point in a letter dated June 21, 1997. See note 7 above on the Malay sense of space relative to their ruler's compound.

²⁵ Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia," p. 267.

²⁶ *Ibid.* *Huluntuhan* renders the polity in personal terms. In his letter dated June 21, 1997, Manguin tells me that Adelaar prefers to translate this term as "my senior servants." Christie, p. 272, suggests a reason for supposing that the ruler of Sriwijaya had risen from the *datu* class of independent rulers. See note 9 above for Vickery's similar view in respect of the Khmer *poñ*.

²⁷ Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia," pp. 271-272.

²⁸ Trocki, reviewing J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers, eds., *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), concludes that the port-polity is "a distinctively Southeast Asian complex of institutions . . ."; Carl A. Trocki, *Indonesia* 53 (1992): 179. Manguin refers to the harbor polities as a "trademark" for this part of the region in the pre-Islamic centuries as well. In view of the paucity of solid monumental remains in Malacca, one should not be surprised by a similar paucity in Palembang; Manguin, "Palembang and Sriwijaya," pp. 33-34.

²⁹ Robert S. Wicks, *Money, Markets, and Trade in Early Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1992), p. 241.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

In the previous section I introduced the notion of competition for superior status based on achievement. Sriwijaya illustrates this aspect of *mandala* experience.

I am now persuaded that Chinese merchant ships sailed to Southeast Asia as early as the tenth century and long before the Southeast Asian tributary trade was declining in the twelfth century.³¹ I have therefore had to reconsider the purpose of Indonesian tribute-bearing missions in the tenth and subsequent centuries. They would have been sent for some other reason than to gain access to the Chinese market, and I have concluded that, when Chinese merchants were themselves visiting the region, the missions had a diplomatic rather than an economic motive. Those Indonesians who sent missions sought to insist on their seniority vis-à-vis their Southeast Asian neighbors by asserting in the Chinese Court what they regarded as their superior status among China's "vassals" in order to entice Chinese traders to do business in their ports.³² Thus, when missions were frequent, one may suppose that the Indonesian background was disturbed and that the local hegemon, the ruler of Sriwijaya, felt it necessary to flaunt his pretensions as he did at the end of the tenth century when his missions were almost annual, his relations with Java stormy, and he was being encouraged by the new Sung government, which was urging its overseas vassals to send missions.³³ The same competitive mood would cause rulers to flaunt the number of their vassals.

Jane Drakard has discussed another Sumatran example of competitive communications displaying status. Both the "Raffles" and the "Shellabear" versions of the Malay Annals enunciate claims to Sumatran sovereignty. She removes these texts from the conventional scholarly discussion that seeks to determine the earlier and therefore the allegedly more reliable version and suggests that they competed to claim Sumatran sovereignty, exercised according to the "Raffles" version by the Palembang rulers and in the "Shellabear" version by the Minangkabau rulers. She argues her case by examining common literary themes in both versions of the Malay Annals which reflect their complementarity and the probable coexistence of their competing statements about the Malay past.³⁴ In this way she recuperates what she understands to be evidence of Sriwijaya-Palembang's persisting fame and a further instance of continuity in the Malay world.

Our knowledge of early Sriwijaya has been improved in another and unexpected way. After examining some Old Malay dated inscriptions of the late seventh century, Anthony Diller has proposed that their recorded dates are the earliest surviving physical examples of a graphic representation of "zeros" anywhere in the world.³⁵

³¹ Wolters, "Restudying Some Chinese Writings on Sriwijaya," *Indonesia* 42 (1986): 35-37.

³² In 1378 the Majapahit ruler was so angry with his vassal, the Jambi ruler, for having dared to develop independent relations with the Ming Court that he waylaid and murdered the Chinese envoys sent to invest the Jambi ruler as a Chinese vassal; O. W. Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 62.

³³ The expansion of Tamil trade with northern Sumatra from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, notably at Kota Cina, is an impressive comment on the unrestricted trading opportunities that would throw Palembang and Jambi on to the defensive; E. Edwards McKinnon, "Mediaeval Tamil Involvement in Northern Sumatra, C11-C14 (The Gold and Resin Trade)," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 69,1 (1996): 85-99.

³⁴ Jane Drakard, "A Kingdom of Words: Minangkabau Sovereignty in Sumatran History" (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 1993), pp. 300-309.

³⁵ Anthony Diller, "Sriwijaya and the First Zeros," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 68,1 (1995): 53-66.

Diller does not speculate on a possible commercial background to the innovation but prefers, as Biros, Drakard, and Gesick have done, to consider textual and therefore cultural aspects of the evidence and especially the sacred value attached in the Old-Malay world to what was being written as distinct from the importance attached to the spoken word in the Indian world.³⁶ Diller assembles a list of different textual usages that would reflect "sensibilities" registered in the local literary culture of Malays in the seventh century.³⁷ As he puts it, "how one must or must not write" is a line of inquiry that should concern the historian of early Southeast Asia.

Since 1982 an impressive range of disciplinary and trans-regional studies has invigorated Sriwijayan scholarship, and this is as it should be when one studies a polity with such a remarkable geographical outreach. Its historians can look over their shoulders in many directions: Africa, the Persian Gulf, India, Central Asia, and China as well as mainland Southeast Asia. At the historian's disposal are inscriptions in Old Malay, Sanskrit, Tamil, Chinese, and Arabic. Moreover, a number of disciplines are engaged: epigraphy, Malay literature, archaeology, aerial photography, art history, linguistics, numismatics,³⁸ literary theory, and the insights of anthropologists. Scholars, complaining that their chosen tracts of Southeast Asia offer only impoverished historical materials, may wish to ponder the example of Sriwijayan and also Philippines studies, while those who seek to situate Southeast Asian regional studies within a trans-regional framework can take heart.

THE PHILIPPINES

An eleventh-century Chinese source can now replace the early seventeenth-century Spanish one I invoked in 1982 to assist me in conceptualizing the early history of the Philippines in *maṅḍala* terms.³⁹ At the beginning of the eleventh century the Butuan Court in northeastern Mindanao sent five tributary missions to China.⁴⁰ In 1007 the ruler's envoys requested the emperor to confer on him the same style of flags recently conferred on the Cham ruler; return gifts were given but the request for the flags was turned down because Butuan was "beneath Champa." Whatever else this episode may mean, it is a convincing example of how a "vassal"'s

³⁶ For Gonda's observation, see note 51 on page 118 above.

³⁷ Diller, "Sriwijaya and the First Zeros," pp. 61-62. On page 61, when he discusses "inscribed properties" of texts, he calls attention to D. C. Sircar's comparison of how time was represented in Indian and Southeast Asian textual sources. The latter seems to have been dated meticulously.

³⁸ See Wicks, *Money, Markets, and Trade*, p. 226, n. 21, on the discovery at Fustāt, Egypt, of a twelfth-century small silver coin from Java or Sumatra.

³⁹ I can now go back even further in time and to a Southeast Asian source. A Malay inscription, attributable to the tenth century, has been discovered south of Manila; A. Postma, "The Laguna Copper-Plate Inscription," *Philippine Studies* 40,2 (1992): 183-203.

⁴⁰ In 1001, 1003, 1007, and 1011. See William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: New Day Publication, 1984), pp. 66-67; O. W. Wolters, "A Few and Miscellaneous *pi-chi* Jottings on Early Indonesia," *Indonesia* 36 (October 1983): 58 and n. 46. Basilan island off Mindanao is mentioned in a Chinese source of 1206; "Jottings," p. 63, n. 75. The suggestion has been made that the Cham Court did not want the Chinese to know of Butuan in order to keep Butuan's gold supplies a secret; Peter Burns and Roxanna M. Brown, "Eleventh Century Cham-Philippine Foreign Affairs," *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, international symposium on the ancient town of Hoi An (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1991), p. 566.

rank in the tributary system could be construed as status among one's Southeast Asian neighbors. The Butuan ruler, a trader, was evidently up-to-date in his knowledge about happenings on the opposite coast of the South China Sea as well as in his assessment of his own local importance, and being up-to-date is a cultural trait I associate with early Southeast Asia and *mandala* behavior.⁴¹ The 1011 mission is also interesting. The title of the ruler, whose envoys presented a written memorial engraved on a gold tablet, included the Sanskrit honorific "Śri" and is the earliest documentary evidence of a so-called "Indianized" ruler in the Philippines.⁴²

These Chinese sources, however, do not take us very far in reconstructing what could happen in *mandala* times. For glimpses of dynamic forces behind events, we can turn to an analysis of local responses when the Americans imposed their rule on the southern Philippines not long after the time when my earlier sketch of the Philippines ended.⁴³

In 1982 I observed that Sulu went under only when Spanish steampower came on the scene towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ But this did not mean that a *mandala* overlord's instincts were suddenly suppressed. Far from it. The Americans seemed to give what the astute Sultan of Sulu believed would be his opportunity for reactivating a diplomatic expedient available to those who aspired to control a *mandala*. He sought to negotiate what he hoped would be an alliance with the United States to permit him, among other advantages, to fly his new ally's flag from the masts of his ships as a precaution when they were trading on the high seas. In the event, his hope was unfulfilled.

In Magindanao, too, Malay leaders, Datu Ali and Datu Piang, responded in traditional ways when faced with difficult situations. Datu Ali, respected as a fighter against the Spanish on Datu Uto's behalf, is honored today as a heroic anti-colonial rebel who defied American authority, though what actually alienated him was the American ban on region-wide slave trading that eliminated a major source of traditional power. The ban meant an effective end to a profitable archipelago-wide trading network such as the *datu*s had known. Datu Piang, today denigrated for collaborating with the Americans, was a Chinese merchant's son with links with *datu* society. Both Ali and he built up local reputations from *parvenu* origins. Ali was reputed to be brave and Piang to have access to wealth. Both assets would attract entourages. They also had cultivated Spanish goodwill just before the Americans arrived, had formed a marriage alliance, and, no doubt, were poised to contest among themselves leadership over the Magindanao. But the Americans intervened and froze what should have been a fluid Southeast Asian situation just as the Dutch had done in Central Java.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See 1982, p. 28, on "political intelligence." Java punished its vassal Jambi for contumacy and daring to send a mission to China; see note 32 on page 132 above.

⁴² I restore his title as "Śri Paduka Haji"; see O. W. Wolters, "Jottings," p. 59, n. 46. See Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, page 72, for a reference to Chinese ceramics at Butuan.

⁴³ I refer to chapter three of Patricio N. Abinales's doctoral thesis, "From Orang Besar to Colonial Big Man: The American Military Regime and the Magindanao Muslims" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1998). I am grateful to him for granting me a preview of his work.

⁴⁴ 1982, p. 34.

⁴⁵ I have in mind John Pemberton's observation, cited in note 6 on page 108 above.

Abinales rejects contemporary judgments on the two men as being post-colonial in intent and unhistorically grounded. He sees them rather as coastal Malay "men of prowess" and interprets their behavior as conforming to what he calls an "ethos" developed during centuries of practical experience gained in a Southeast Asian trading zone where participants had attached importance to marriage and other forms of alliance, international-scale negotiations, attracting followers, exploiting rivalries among European traders, and making pragmatic choices. The outlook of Ali and Piang would have been influenced by these considerations, and they could be ruthless when making decisions. Indeed, Datu Piang chose to betray Datu Ali, his son-in-law and rival.

Abinales narrates their careers in terms of traditional expedients they felt confident they could employ even in times of great change, when Spanish influence was disappearing and the Americans were arriving. Ali quickly realized there was no future for him in the new situation, but Piang expected to secure his hold over the Magindanao capital, Cotabato, and be protected by the Americans against his Malay enemies. His hopes were not disappointed, and he was able to insinuate his entourage in the evolving local administration.⁴⁶ He even declared himself "Sultan of Mindanao." His social position was certainly stable. But he was to be ham-strung by new-fangled colonial boundaries and, above all, by being excluded from the Southeast Asian trading networks. Men of prowess need wide space within which to flex their muscles, and Piang's choice of ally deprived him of this crucial advantage. And so he ended up by becoming one more *cacique* in the Philippines, itself an unfamiliar territorial entity for the Magindanao in the twentieth century.

JAVA

In 1982 I suggested that the study of Java's cultural influence overseas was a challenge awaiting historians.⁴⁷ In 1990 a conference on Java and the Java Sea happened to be held in Leiden,⁴⁸ and a participant concluded that "Java played an important role in shaping some of the basic elements of the mentality of the Java Sea."⁴⁹ He detected in the literary heritage of adjacent non-Javanese areas several patterns and also echoes of changes in these patterns, though he insisted that comparative studies were needed to do justice to the nature and extent of the cultural transmission.⁵⁰ The Malay Annals, incorporating passages in the Javanese language

⁴⁶ Hanks notes that a Thai patron brings his clients (i.e. his entourage) with him when he changes his occupation; Lucien Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle," in *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, ed. G. W. Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 201. Datu Piang did likewise.

⁴⁷ 1982, p. 34-35.

⁴⁸ V. J. H. Houben, H. M. J. Maier, and W. van der Molen, eds., *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea* (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992).

⁴⁹ V. J. H. Houben, "Java and the Java Sea: Historical Perspectives," in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea* (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), p. 240.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240. The patterns were Java's economic function as a central entrepot and therefore as an exporter of Javanese cultural forms; during the tenth century-1450 period contacts with regions outside Java were controlled by East Javanese courts. Adelaar points out that Old Javanese texts contain many Malay loanwords and that from the ninth century onwards Old Malay inscriptions in Java exhibit Javanese lexical influences; Adelaar, "Asian

and familiar with Javanese musical and dramatic forms, reflects Malay contacts with Java and suggests to one scholar that Malay visitors to Java "propagated" Javanese cultural achievements in their own country.⁵¹

My remarks on the Javanese "*mandala*" had been in connection with intra-regional relations, and this may be why I said practically nothing about the island itself.⁵² Today my approach to *mandala* history is influenced by recent emphases in my thinking about the cultural matrix. I am now more interested, for example, in questions of public life, centralized or relaxed government, and the possibility of historical continuities, and I have learned much from Jan Wisseman Christie, whose numerous studies, in Craig Reynolds's view, "have breathed new life into early Javanese history."⁵³ Reynolds notes her study of foundation grants (*sima*) and, very important, the nature of Javanese society outside Court circles. On these topics, Christie writes in an authoritative tone and from the vantage point of someone possessing an enviable command of Javanese epigraphy.

She sheds valuable light on various aspects of Javanese social history. Her contributions include discussion of diffuse settlement patterns characterized by a marked tendency to settle in small villages and shift location of dwelling places, probably the result of population growth, and producing what she describes as a "rural sprawl"⁵⁴; lively village government, with legal responsibilities vested in the village elders, and, on account of increasing contacts with the royal court, a more stratified village society with elaborate signs of status; individual ownership of land; local management of water control; and a multitude of inter-village economic ties that enhanced a sense of being "Javanese" no matter where one lived.

She covers ground touched on in this postscript. I suggested that what Jane Drakard called the "culture of communication" would be an important aspect of *mandala* experience.⁵⁵ So it was, according to Christie, in early Java. She cites, for example, the policy of royal progresses and the Court's despatch of various forms of

Roots of the Malagasy," p. 342. He also notes that other languages have borrowed a Javanese vocabulary for items referring to statecraft, court life, and court administration; Adelaar, "Malay and Javanese Loanwords in Malagasy, Tagalog and Siraya (Formosa)," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 150,1 (1994): 50.

⁵¹ S. O. Robson, "Java in Malay Literature," in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*, ed. V. J. H. Houben et al. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), p. 37. This recalls the Cham quest for Javanese esoteric knowledge in the ninth century; 1982, p. 35. Timothy Barnard warns me against confusing Javanese hegemony with an evolving Malay-Javanese hybridity, characteristic of the region.

⁵² 1982, pp. 34-35 and fn. 30 on p. 36.

⁵³ Craig Reynolds, "A New Look at Old Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54,2 (1995): 429. Jan Wisseman Christie, "Raja and Rama: The Classical State in Early Java," in *Centers, Symbols, and Hierarchies: Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia*, Monograph Series No. 26, Southeast Asia Studies (New Haven: Yale University, 1983), pp. 9-44; Jan Wisseman Christie, "Negara, Mandala, and Despotism: Images of Early Java," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, pp. 65-93; Jan Wisseman Christie, "States without Cities: Demographic Trends in Early Java," *Indonesia* 52 (1991): 23-40.

⁵⁴ Christie, "States without Cities," pp. 31 and 36. The Javanese bilateral kinship system, placing no hindrance on movement away from one's parents' house, would contribute to this situation. Today Southeast Asians of the same kinship system cannot "rely upon the nuclear family as a business resource"; Robert W. Hefner, *Market Cultures: Society and Morality in the New Asian Capitalisms* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), p. 13. Husbands and wives today as in early Java have freedom of movement.

⁵⁵ See page 115 above.

drama into the countryside. The theater helped to communicate the ruler's role.⁵⁶ The steady increase in the numbers and categories of officials visiting the village meant that, in addition to more frequent communication between Court and countryside, more and more persons could enjoy self-esteem from participating in public life.⁵⁷ The elitist associations of officialdom, with its *kraton* allure, would be relayed downwards and reflected in the dignified Sanskritic names which some villagers gradually came to assume.⁵⁸ Again, I noted earlier that studies of the titles of Khmer (*poñ*) and Malay (*datu*) junior chiefs have suggested that rulers arose from these groups.⁵⁹ The Javanese situation, that of the *rakai*, seems similar.⁶⁰ Christie's discussion of related social features in early Javanese history, such as the soft-pedaling of genealogy, the absence of a clear division between the families of rulers and *rakais*, a proliferation of "upwardly-mobile wealthy families of lesser status," and the influence of bilateral kinship on marriage settlements and consequent fracturing of large land holdings (*watĕk*) may point in the direction of relaxed heterarchic tendencies.⁶¹ Joyce White's data, it will be recalled, came from the mainland.

Yet, in spite of Christie's wealth of information, I am confused when I seek to identify dynamics in the situation. Her ample materials resemble a slide show rather than a film and are therefore somewhat denuded of movement. I had a similar sensation when reading about "centralizing" developments in Higham's volume, though Christie never tries to persuade me that centralized regimes evolved in early Java.⁶² Instead, she refers to "centrifugal tendencies" that permitted the *watĕk* territories, even after being absorbed into a central domain, to retain sufficient power to challenge the central *kraton*.⁶³ Rules of royal succession are unclear,⁶⁴ which means that it would be inappropriate to infer "dynastic" succession rules.⁶⁵ She sums up unambiguously when she writes: "Java's aristocracy was too strong and its royalty too weak, its villages too hierarchical and its regions too well integrated, its economy too sophisticated but too decentralized . . . for any of its states to qualify as an 'Oriental Despotism.'"⁶⁶

⁵⁶ Christie, "Raja and Rama," pp. 33-35.

⁵⁷ Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotism State," pp. 83-84. This would be the administrative background to the development of Javanese coinage systems for fiscal rather than commercial needs; see Wicks, *Money, Market, and Trade*, p. 312.

⁵⁸ Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotism State," p. 83.

⁵⁹ See notes 9 and 26 on pp. 127 and 131 above.

⁶⁰ Christie, "Raja and Rama," p. 17 (in respect of the *ratu*); Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotism State," p. 70 (in respect of the *rakai*).

⁶¹ Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotism State," p. 73 (genealogy); *ibid.*, p. 71 (bilateral kinship); *ibid.*, p. 73 (upwardly mobile families); Christie, "Raja and Rama," p. 18 (fracturing).

⁶² J. G. de Casparis, on the other hand, is cautiously prepared to consider the possibility of "centralized control" over villages; "Some Notes on Relations between Central and Local Government in Ancient Java," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 49-51.

⁶³ Christie, "Raja and Rama," p. 20.

⁶⁴ Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotism State," p. 70.

⁶⁵ She rejects the notion of a "single tightly defined dynasty"; *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85. For another general statement, see Christie, "Raja and Rama," p. 35.

Yet I wonder what made this society vibrate. I was interested in what Christie had to say about the royal *śakti*, or spiritual power, and would have liked to know more. I agree with her that *śakti* had nothing to do with the notion of "god-king."⁶⁷ "God-like" is a more satisfactory rendering.⁶⁸ One can visualize the scene activated by such a person as comprising a network of his personal relationships with many disparate land-using groups, and the network would be available for keeping the peace and mobilizing the population for specific purposes such as collecting royal dues, raising levies for war, or building public temples. The more patch-like the scene, the more necessary it would be for the god-like ruler to be adequately represented by tax-collecting officials, whose numbers appear to have grown considerably over the centuries.⁶⁹

Christie argues that the scene changed during the period from the ninth to the fourteenth century and that the static *maṅḍala* model would therefore be unsuitable for describing Java.⁷⁰ I venture to ask two questions. How should significant change be measured? Are there any convincing "*maṅḍala*" characteristics discernible in early Java?

As far as change is concerned, I think that one needs to distinguish between genuine institutional change, designed to reform situations irreversibly and perhaps in the direction of more centralized rule, and improvisations in response to changing circumstances and in the form of time-honored expedients. I suggested earlier that rulers, born into Southeast Asian cultures, would realize how precarious kingship was and how unrealistic it would be to plan far ahead. Always concerned with the needs of the present, they would prefer to think in terms of handy and especially well-tested expedients. Genuine change may be represented by a permanent territorial absorption in the Javanese ruler's domain of some fragmented lands formerly in the possession of other chiefs, but other proposed instances of change seem to amount to nothing more original than the creation of new administrative units as an expedient for keeping abreast of demographic growth and new settlements or appointing additional officials for collecting additional categories of tax. Tax-collecting was already a familiar function of government. Appointing powerful landowners as officials or requiring them to live at Court would be further commonsensical improvisations to secure the obedience of possible rivals.⁷¹ But change certainly never led to urbanization or to the ruler's tight economic control of the large and prosperous ports on the north coast.⁷² Moreover, two related features of early Java were notably immune to change: successions to the throne were accomplished by means that did not accord with a "dynastic" system in any recognizable sense of the term, and the political center was characterized by what Christie calls "relative mobility," with its tendency to shift its location. I associate both features with *maṅḍala* experience.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73. On p. 33 of "Raja and Rama," she refers to "the mystique of royal power."

⁶⁸ Prapañca, Majapahit's Court poet, would surely agree. According to Robson, "Indeed he [the ruler] was simply a divinity descended as he roamed the world." *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁹ For example, Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotic State," pp. 83-84.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70 and 83-84; Christie, "Raja and Rama," p. 16.

⁷² Christie, "States without Cities," p. 37.

I have tried to distinguish between "change" and expedients based on experience. A particular expedient should be mentioned. It belonged to a time-honored tradition: the quest for invincible spiritual power within oneself by means of esoteric techniques. K. P. O'Brien has examined in detail the four Old-Javanese texts, statuary, and bas-relief arrangement adorning the East Javanese shrine of Candi Jago in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁷³ The shrine is attributed to Kṛitanagara and probably his father, the predecessors of the Majapahit rulers. Prapañca honors Kṛitanagara for holding "fast to esoteric doctrines and observances" for "he had realised how difficult it is to protect the world in the age of Kali."⁷⁴ The shrine is in the form of a *maṇḍala*, another use of the term and, in this instance, a geometric diagram as a meditational aid to worship intended to provide "a path by which the devotee will eventually dissolve the illusion of the phenomenal world and be drawn into cosmic space, symbolically represented by the innermost space of the *maṇḍala* . . ."⁷⁵ According to O'Brien, the shrine illustrates the power derived from tantric-inspired yogic meditation under proper instruction, and it therefore presents an expectation of the "ideal" Javanese king: "on the one hand an impassive, serene, disciplined, restrained, upholder of the law; on the other hand—powerful, wrathful and merciless towards his enemies."⁷⁶

Part of Candi Jago's interest is that it reflects two pervasive Southeast Asian cultural traits. The first is the priority accorded to immediate needs. All expedients are concerned with exigencies that arise "now," and in this instance the expedient's efficacy would be ensured by ritualistic techniques of a tantric persuasion.⁷⁷ The other trait is a Southeast Asian inclination for being up-to-date. Tantric teachings and rituals were *en vogue* in northern India, Nepal, and Tibet and also in Kubilai Khan's circle, and Kṛitanagara's recourse to tantric ritual would represent a well-informed counter-force to ward off a Mongol threat appearing over the horizon.⁷⁸ He was murdered in 1292 just before a Mongol army arrived to attack him. Being up-to-date and showing an aptitude for improvisation when facing grave problems are part of Southeast Asian historical experience.

Prapañca's poem in honor of Hayam Wuruk in the fourteenth century throws credible light on the style of government which I associate with the projection of the ruler's prowess in order to control his *maṇḍala*. "Every time at the end of the cold season he sets out to roam through the countryside,"⁷⁹ and the numerous things he does are significant. He shows the flag especially in restless areas. He displays the

⁷³ K. P. O'Brien, "Candi Jago as a Mandala: Symbolism of Its Narratives (Part I)," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 22 (1988): 1-61; O'Brien, "Candi Jago: A Javanese Interpretation of the Wheel of Existence? (Part II)," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 24 (1990): 23-85.

⁷⁴ *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, p. 55.

⁷⁵ O'Brien, "Candi Jago as a Mandala," pp. 3-4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷⁷ See, for example, 1982, p. 84.

⁷⁸ O'Brien, "Candi Jago as a Mandala: Symbolism Narratives (Part I)," pp. 33-34; O'Brien, "Candi Jago: A Javanese Interpretation of the Wheel of Existence? (Part II)," pp. 59-60.

⁷⁹ *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, p. 36. Worsley discusses the similar conduct of a royal progress described in the *Arjunawijaya*. The progress is associated with the "inseparableness" of the royal couple. The queen represents the natural fertility of the realm; P. J. Worsley, "Mpu Tantular's kakawin Arjunawijaya and Conceptions of Kingship in Fourteenth Century Java," in *Variation, Transformation and Meaning: Studies on Indonesian Literatures in Honour of A. Teeuw*, ed. J. J. Ras and S. O. Robson (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991), p. 173.

splendor of his Court; sometimes, perhaps for reasons of surveillance, he brings relatives with him.⁸⁰ He receives homage from all and sundry, collects tribute, visits village elders, checks land registers,⁸¹ and examines public utilities such as ferries, bridges, and roads. He confirms the charters of holy foundations and visits his family shrines and local holy places. He shows marks of the royal favor to safeguard his reputation for being a generous king. By bringing his land-grant archives up-to-date, he has the opportunity to behave as a mediator among the different groups of land users in his patchwork-like realm.

This relaxed style of government did not mean that Java would be chronically restless. In the relatively small area belonging to the royal domain in Central or East Java, an energetic ruler could protect his villagers from local territorial bullies and keep major trade routes open. In these ways he would maintain a balance between his own needs and the interests of independent and prosperous agricultural communities.⁸² The awareness that, for the time being, a strong ruler could protect villagers would help to inculcate a sense of being "Javanese."

Majapahit's loss of strength soon after its apogee in the second half of the fourteenth century is a convincing reason for rejecting the likelihood of permanent and stabilizing change in early Java. At the beginning of the fifteenth century a five years' war broke out between the Majapahit ruler and his brother-in law, a crisis typical of the kind that would confront Southeast Asian ruling families that lacked rules for orderly succession. The brother-in-law was the son by a concubine of the famous ruler whom the Court poet Prapañca served.⁸³

Should, then, early Java be regarded as a *mandala*? In Prapañca's language of homage to the ruler of Majapahit,

All the princes of Java who each have their own capital
Dwell together in Wilwatikta, holding the King in their lap.⁸⁴

For me these lines continue to describe a Javanese *mandala*. Christie, however, is not happy with the *mandala* label,⁸⁵ and I may be to blame because in 1982 I did not

⁸⁰ *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, p. 38.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82, for a reference to checking land-holdings and so forth.

⁸² See de Casparis, "Some Notes on Relations between Central and Local Government in Ancient Java," p. 61. On p. 51 he refers to a "social contract."

⁸³ Coedès, *Indianized States*, p. 241. Worsley wonders whether the *Arjunawijaya*'s questioning of the roots of royal authority reflects a pessimism about political order in Majapahit in the second half of the fourteenth century; Worsley, "Kakawin Arjunawijaya," p. 187. A particular source of weakness would be quarrels among kinsmen over the succession to the throne; *ibid.*, pp. 170-171. This problem was not confined to Java. A Cham inscription of 1149-1150 states that Kirātas (hill tribes) and *Mlecch'as* (other "barbarians") had been grouped under the command of the Cham king's disloyal brother-in-law. He also obtained Vietnamese soldiers for his purpose; G. Coedès, *Indianized States*, p. 165. This is likely to be a typical episode in *mandala* history.

⁸⁴ 1982, p. 27. I have now followed Robson's translation, p. 28.

⁸⁵ Craig Reynolds, "A New Look at Old Southeast Asia," p. 429, observes, correctly in my view, that "the problem with her dismissal of models is that it presumes historians can deal with epigraphic evidence without any recourse to word-pictures of the social entities that produced the epigraphy . . . My reading of the recent historiography is that historians have used the models to explore the cross-cultural dissonance that inevitably resounds when one tries to write in one language about something that is untranslatable from another."

make it clear that the term could have two secular usages. The first usage is as a metaphor for a territorially ill-defined but nonetheless recognizable sphere of personal influence, exercised by an overlord, knit by personal relationships between the center and beyond, and within which people could gradually become aware of what they had in common.⁸⁶ The second usage denotes a specific territory such as, according to I-ching, the royal residence and immediate environs of Sriwijaya.⁸⁷ I still regard Java's early history as a series of intermittent overlords, with a "concertina" or *maṅḍala*-like identity.⁸⁸ This type of identity need not imply that intervals of overlordship were invariably stable or, on the other hand, that they were chronically disturbed by conflict between rival aspirants to overlordship.⁸⁹ But the royal residence was never permanently sited and ruling families never evolved orderly rules of succession.

Because these things did not happen, early Javanese history can be defined as circular, though I dislike the term if it means a dreary absence of innovation in every form of activity.⁹⁰ Intervals of overlordship, marked by great personal achievements and royal patronage, centered on lavishly furnished Courts, could have released creative activities inspired by conditions that seemed to be a divine dispensation. On mainland Southeast Asia the gigantic Angkor Wat temple, built in the first half of the twelfth century, depicted the restoration of a "golden age" after a period of *maṅḍala* collapse.⁹¹ In eleventh century Java the *Arjunawiwaha* poem was written by Mpu Kanwa to honor his patron, King Erlangga, who was fighting a seven years' war (1028-1035) to bring eastern Java under his rule and is identified in the poem with the god Arjuna.⁹² The feat of holding a *maṅḍala* together was certainly understood and cherished as a spectacular achievement, worthy of a Śiva-like man of prowess. But eventually the conquering Erlangga divided his kingdom. His motive was to avoid a devastating family feud after his death; he knew that even his towering prestige could not guarantee an intact transmission of his authority. Here is another instance of the fragility of the Southeast Asian ruling family.⁹³ The division was remembered as a hateful thing, a comment on how keenly the benefits of overlordship would be valued.

In the fourteenth century, the division was temporarily brought to an end, and Java reached its zenith as a trading power with military clout as well. Houben suggests that in the Malay Annals and other classical texts "Majapahit" came to be a

⁸⁶ Christie notes that Erlangga is described as "an umbrella over the *maṅḍala* of the island of Java"; see Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotic State," p. 74. This would be a metaphorical expression for overlordship.

⁸⁷ See Wolters, "Restudying Some Chinese Writings on Sriwijaya," n. 75.

⁸⁸ In 1982, p. 28, I used the expression "concertina."

⁸⁹ I reject Christie's association of *maṅḍala* with instability; see Christie, "Nagara, Mandala, and Despotic State," p. 71.

⁹⁰ Christie associates "circularity" with *maṅḍala* history; *ibid.*, pp. 85-86. On p. 84 she sees Javanese change as "largely linear rather than cyclic."

⁹¹ 1982, pp. 61-63.

⁹² Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 244. Also see P. J. Worsley, "Mpu Tantular's kakawin Arjunawijaya and Conceptions of Kingship in Fourteenth Century Java."

⁹³ For Prapañca's account, see *Deśawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, p. 74: The king "brought [the division] about out of love for his sons, the two kings."

kind of metaphor for Java in general.⁹⁴ The Majapahit inscriptions of that time, with their evidence of "the sheer wealth of material culture," give, according to Christie, "the impression of a very prosperous society."⁹⁵ An art historian, Hildawati Soemantri, does not hesitate to refer to Majapahit as "an affluent society." She recently studied a hitherto neglected art form, the clay figurines characteristic of Majapahit, and believes that they catch the essence of Majapahit's culture.⁹⁶ The figurines illustrate the multifarious nature of society. They represent, for example, Court ladies, commoners, foreign traders, money banks in the form of animals, and plenty of animals for which this society seems to have had a great affection.

Hermann Kulke has understood differently what is known about Majapahit. He believes the evidence points to a centralized polity which he calls an "Imperial Kingdom" to distinguish it from an "Early Kingdom," or *mandala* polity ruled by a "man of prowess."⁹⁷ He also suggests that several "supra-regional powers" such as Majapahit emerged during the first centuries of the second millennium AD. One of them was Angkor until the early thirteenth century.⁹⁸ What he went on to write caught the eye of Sunait Chutintaranond: "About a hundred years later this role [of an Imperial Kingdom] was taken over by the Thai kingdom of Ayudhyā." Sunait took up Kulke's challenge and made an important contribution to the discussion of *mandala* history.⁹⁹

AYUDHYĀ

Sunait demolishes three assumptions responsible for the view that Ayudhyā was a strong centralized State. These assumptions are: "the cessation of political struggle between the two leading families in the lower Chao Phraya Valley (the Uthong and the Suphanburi), the Reforms of King Trilok (Borommatrilokanat, 1448-1488), and the political and military expeditions of the Ayudhyā kings from the early fifteenth century onward."¹⁰⁰

In respect of the first of these assumptions, Sunait argues that "kinship and marriage ties were not effective mechanisms for *permanent* [my italics] political control."¹⁰¹ The history of early Southeast Asia would provide abundant support for this judgment, which needs to be remembered whenever one finds oneself slipping into the habit of referring to "dynasties" founded by marriage alliances in early Southeast Asia. Such alliances were fraught with instability. He refutes the second

⁹⁴ Houben, "Java and the Java Sea," p. 216.

⁹⁵ Hildawati Soemantri, *Majapahit Terracotta Art* (Jakarta: Ceramic Society of Indonesia, 1997), p. 23 and quoting Christie's doctoral thesis, "Patterns of Trade in Western Indonesia" (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1982), p. 128.

⁹⁶ Hildawati Soemantri, *Majapahit Terracotta Art*.

⁹⁷ Hermann Kulke, "The Early and the Imperial Kingdom in Southeast Asian History," *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 1-22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁹ Sunait Chutintaranond, "'Mandala' 'Segmentary States,' and Politics of Centralization in Medieval Ayudhya," *Journal of the Siam Society* 78,1 (1990), pp. 89-100. Regrettably, in 1982 my single reference to Ayudhya was on pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁰ Sunait, 'Mandala' 'Segmentary States,' and Politics of Centralization in Medieval Ayudhya," p. 92.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

assumption by denying the importance of King Trilok's reforms.¹⁰² The regional governors' autonomy was not removed. "In actual practice, the king at the capital often had to make a compromise by selecting provincial governors from the family or families of their own *muang* (city)."¹⁰³

The third assumption was based on a mistaken view of the significance of the numerous military operations of the early Ayudhyā kings in neighboring territories.¹⁰⁴ According to Sunait, the conquered usually maintained their independence, and only some were regarded as tributary states.¹⁰⁵

Sunait concludes that those who ruled "the Imperial Kingdom of Ayudhyā" attempted "spasmodic bureaucratic improvisations" that have been misunderstood to represent the introduction of centralized institutions; these improvisations included the creation of Inspectors and commissioner-governors and the relocation of the offices of governors in order to exert direct control over provincial men of rank. Every ruler would naturally welcome such expedients if only to protect the succession of his favorite son or, maybe, the son of his favorite wife. But in Ayudhyā the hegemony of provincial governors was never successfully eliminated.¹⁰⁶ Multicentrism withstood efforts to change the situation. By seeking to see beneath what he calls "the smooth surface" of this "Imperial Kingdom," Sunait supplies helpful perspectives for studying other parts of the region.¹⁰⁷

VIETNAM

In 1982 I hoped that what I wrote about government in Vietnam would throw *maṅḍala* activities, by contrast, into sharper relief.¹⁰⁸ Today I do not discern so sharp a contrast between Southeast Asia and Vietnam, at least as late as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the Trần dynasty (1226-1400) ruled.

I first wish to correct a reference I made in 1982 to *Yavana*, or Vietnam, in order to acknowledge Robson's translation of Prapañca's poem. According to Robson, all

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98. As late as about 1884 Ernest Satow, British Minister-Resident in Bangkok, was preoccupied with the importance of "concentrating" the administration in the king's hand and the conversion of the monarchy "into a strictly hereditary one." One great "instrument of concentration" would be the electric telegraph; see *The Satow Siam Papers: The Private Diaries and Correspondence of Ernest Satow*, intr. and ed. Nigel Brailey, vol. I 1884-1885 (Bangkok: The Historical Society under the Patronage of H. R. H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, 1997), p. 107. One recalls the significance of the royal word which Biros, Drakard, and Gesick discussed; see pp. 118-121 above. Oral and written communication is a central theme in *maṅḍala* history.

¹⁰⁷ For example, Sunait's critique may be borne in mind when considering a claim made on behalf of Rājendrarvarman II (944-c. 968) of Angkor that he inaugurated the institutions of centralized government; Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), p. 100. "The teams of officials" in the provinces certainly did not supply a stability that could survive the disappearance of powerful rulers any more than an increasing number of officials did in Java.

¹⁰⁸ 1982, pp. 36-38.

the countries of mainland Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, were "always friends."¹⁰⁹

Much of what I wrote earlier about Vietnam remains acceptable to me. Vietnam was certainly not a *maṅḍala*-type polity in every respect. Its relations with its neighbors were not such that its territories incessantly expanded and contracted as the *maṅḍalas* of its neighbors did. Vietnamese history did not resemble a "concertina." Borders, once acquired, changed only to be pushed forward. Its center, Thành-long on the site of Hanoi, was a permanent one. The Chinese concept of an imperial dynasty was localized in 1009 when the Lý family began to reign. As a consequence, succession in Lý Vietnam was usually an orderly process; imperial heirs were nominated by the dynastic founder's descendants and free from dependence on allies, though it is significant that the early Lý emperors, fledgling dynasts, prudently adopted the expedient of appointing heirs, already proven competent, only when they themselves were dying in order to postpone the risk of succession disputes until the last moment.¹¹⁰ The Trần emperors did not need to rely on outside alliances to shore up their position because, as we shall see, their family was tightly organized and loyal to its head. Thus dynasties in decline were not prematurely toppled. In the second half of the fourteenth century there were still a sufficient number of loyal subordinates to prolong the life of the Trần dynastic family until an usurper in the wings (ominously a relative by marriage), having made his position secure, massacred the Trần family. With a sense of territorial identity and rules of family succession to the throne that permitted a relative degree of dynastic stability, Vietnam distinguishes itself from other Southeast Asian countries.

Nevertheless, since 1982 my conviction has grown that the government of this "empire" (for its rulers styled themselves "emperors") can also be seen as "Southeast Asian" in several respects. I have been influenced by the late fifteenth-century Vietnamese official historian, Ngô Sĩ Liên, and in particular by the significance of his condemnation of government under the Trần dynasty.¹¹¹ Liên lived not long after the fall of the Trần, was interested in the institution of government and the role of officials, and had strong views on what constituted good government. His numerous comments on the Trần Annals are peppered with such expressions as "improper," "incorrect," or "wrong," and sometimes "exceedingly" so, and the result is that he demolishes Vietnam's claims to resemble a Chinese-style imperial state as effectively as Sunait demolishes Ayudhyā's claims to be an "Imperial Kingdom."

Ngô Sĩ Liên, who unquestionably respected the axioms of good government laid down in Confucian literature and often invoked them in his comments, may seem an unlikely source for probing salient features of Trần political and social behavior. Yet

¹⁰⁹ *Desavarnana (Nāgaraktāgama)*, p. 34; 1982, pp. 31-32.

¹¹⁰ O. W. Wolters, "Lê Văn Hưu's Treatment of Lý Thần Tông's Reign (1127-1137)," in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays presented to D. G. E. Hall*, eds. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976). For further discussion of Lý rulers and their tardy appointments of successors, possible indications of the fragility of the dynastic institution, see 1982, pp. 63-64.

¹¹¹ O. W. Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean? A Matter of Distinctions in the Fifteenth Century," in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese in Honour of Jennifer Cushman*, ed. Anthony Reid (Sydney: ASAA Southeast Asia Publications Series, Allen and Unwin, 1996), pp. 94-114. In 1479 Liên was commissioned to edit the Trần Annals and took the opportunity of writing seventy-two critical comments on their contents. The Annals had been compiled by Phan Phu Tiên and completed in 1455.

his bias has the advantage of throwing aspects of Trần history into sharp relief. Studying the Trần annalist's text, he promptly emphasizes in his comments what he regards as Trần deviations from Chinese and therefore "correct" standards. In this manner, he calls attention to indigenous norms of public and personal conduct that he deplures. For example, he is especially upset by numerous instances of officials who were greedy for merit and favor in the ruler's eyes.¹¹² Yet their attitude towards public life was not all that different from that of Malays, concerned to serve their Raja and earn a "name."¹¹³ The Trần officials' quest for merit would be congenial to their emperors because they could be expected to be subservient and susceptible to a style of personal relationships that depended on flattery and generosity, gestures that would not tax a ruler's capacity for man-management. Liên noted with regret that Court behavior was relaxed and informal rather than disciplined by the rites and regulations prescribed in Chinese canonical literature.¹¹⁴ There were cliques and factions among members of a ruler's entourage and competition for his favor as was the case in the Angkorian Court.¹¹⁵

Liên was especially critical of the Trần dynastic system itself. Vietnamese historians, responsible for teaching lessons of the past, always attached great significance to signs of their country's strength or weakness. Liên blamed the Trần system's weakness on the shoddy "imperial" appearance of its ruling family even though the family survived for nearly two centuries except for a brief usurpation in 1369. One reason for his criticism was that its "imperial" style did not include setting a salutary moral example for subjects to follow. The Trần emperors, as did the Ayudhyā kings, bolstered their family's authority by improvisations and expedients that protected the imperial succession. Eldest sons were appointed "emperors" as soon as they came of age, while their fathers, now called "senior emperors" remained available in the background. But what disturbed Liên most was that in 1237 the first emperor, Thái-tôn, was persuaded by his uncle to marry his (Thái-tôn's) brother's child-bearing wife in order to guarantee an heir. Liên believed that this immoral act doomed the dynasty. Almost as scandalous was the Trần family's immoral expedient of marrying each heir to a descendant of Thái-tôn's aggrieved brother in order to patch up the family feud; unsurprisingly, in 1237 the brother had rebelled. Another expedient to protect the dynasty was the appointment of the emperor's brother or uncle to serve at Court as the senior official, or *thái-úy*. Other members of the imperial family were also given senior posts.

Elsewhere I have summed up the burden of Liên's case against the Trần system of government:

¹¹² Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean," pp. 106-107.

¹¹³ See page 117 above.

¹¹⁴ Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean," pp. 98 and 107. The Tran Annals under the date of 1357 record that Minh-tôn was unwilling to take action against disobedient vassal-lords; Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading of the 1293-1357 Period in the Vietnamese Annals," *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and Anthony C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 384. On p. 124 above I observed that Joyce White's case for heterarchy suggested a relaxed mood at the top of society. Also see pp. 113-114 above.

¹¹⁵ Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean," pp. 108-109. See 1982, p. 29, where I quote Mabbett on cliques and factions in Angkor politics.

a concern for immediate rather than future goals, reliance on personal relationships, relaxed public behaviour, the agency of "favour" and "merit," marriage alliances [within the Trần family], entourages, a hands-off attitude towards villagers unless taxes and conscription were involved, the pervasive influence of Buddhism—something to be taught—, and a universal respect for the spirits of the soil.¹¹⁶

In 1982 I lacked the advantage of Ngô Sĩ Liên's "Vietnamese" perspective. I also barely mentioned a major development—a watershed, I have suggested—in fourteenth-century Vietnam in the wake of rural unrest and rebellion, though I was interested in the phenomenon of change elsewhere in early Southeast Asia.¹¹⁷ Some educated officials began to recommend stern measures to correct what they considered to be social indiscipline in the form of flight by peasants from their families and villages in order to escape taxation and conscription or because their lands had been occupied by members of the Trần family.¹¹⁸ The officials believed that part of the remedy was to teach villagers the profusely represented Confucian theme of family responsibilities. Moreover, they invented a golden age, that of an ancient Vietnamese kingdom of *Văn-lang*, as a metaphor for good government and a means of comparing a supposedly disciplined Vietnam of antiquity with the disorderly present.¹¹⁹ An archaic Chinese language of conformity was mobilized with such words as "axles" (signifying uniform measurements), "script," and "village schools." I believe that these late fourteenth-century developments constitute an ideological watershed in Vietnamese history in the sense that henceforth there would always be some who were prepared to preach the need for "Confucian" social behavior in order to inculcate disciplined village behavior. The watershed was a genuine one; it did not resemble the alleged "watershed" in Ayudhyā history challenged by Sunait. What began as an "expedient" borrowed from Chinese classical writings became in the later fifteenth century and thereafter a permanent "change," though not a change felt always and everywhere.¹²⁰

Curiously, Ngô Sĩ Liên, though a successor of these would-be social reformers, does not applaud them. His animus against Trần Vietnam was so great that little

¹¹⁶ Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean," p. 111.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹¹⁸ On the collapse of authority, see 1982, pp. 73-74 and 77-78 in the context of Vietnamese figurative speech and poetic language. On other ramifications of the "watershed," see O. W. Wolters, "On Telling a Story of Vietnam in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995), pp. 69-72. Timothy Barnard reminds me that tax flight is a common occurrence in other Southeast Asian *mandalas*.

¹¹⁹ Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 118-128. On *Văn-lang* also see *Two Essays*, pp. 38-39; see also O. W. Wolters, "On Telling a Story of Vietnam in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," pp. 70-71.

¹²⁰ An interesting instance of a long-term effect of this change can be found in Nora Taylor's review of Phan Huy Chú's account of his visit to Batavia in 1833; "Phan Huy Chú, *Hải trình chí lược*," *Indonesia* 62 (1996): 133-135. He approved of the order imposed by the Dutch. The streets were watched by militia at night. This is reminiscent of the social discipline educated Vietnamese yearned for in the fourteenth century. There is no hint of the *aire de famille* reflected in an account by a Chinese trader from Bangkok of what he saw as cultural similarities between Bali and Thailand; 1982, p. 48. For an unfavorable fourteenth-century Vietnamese perspective on their Southeast Asian neighbors, see 1982, p. 38, n. 34.

found favor in his eyes.¹²¹ It is likely that he saw, in Trần Vietnam, dreadful examples of corruption that he feared would contaminate Vietnam in the future if the cultural influence that he, a Confucianist serving a Confucian-minded emperor, exerted were no longer available. He would have abhorred this possibility and piled on his anti-Trần invective to ensure that his warning would be heard and the acceptable social values of his own day maintained.

One reason why I was careful not to assume that Ngô Sĩ Liên's standards of good government were bound to prevail everywhere when Vietnamese gradually occupied lands as far away as the Mekong delta was because I was aware of a recent interest among historians in what actually did happen there,¹²² especially Keith Taylor's revisionist proposition that there were several distinct local Vietnamese presences extending from the Red River delta to the distant south, each with its own tensions and never to be confused with a single and expanding territory to be called "Vietnam."¹²³ Instead, as Taylor puts it, there were "quite different kinds of people whose view of themselves and of others was grounded in the particular terrain in which they dwelled and in the cultural exchanges available in that terrain."¹²⁴ Here is an unequivocal affirmation of a prevailing multicentricism, of one sub-region after another, with each supported by a sense of specific locality. This was the experience of a people with a political tradition commonly believed, as I unwisely did in 1982, to be quick to eliminate centers of power other than their capital in northern Vietnam.¹²⁵

Ngô Sĩ Liên's criticism of the Trần period and Taylor's understanding of how Vietnamese, moving south beyond the northern cultural ambiance with its nascent "Confucian" tendencies, behaved when left to their own devices encourage me to wonder whether Vietnamese historical experiences resembled other experience elsewhere in Southeast Asia.¹²⁶ Earlier in the postscript I suggested that some important "regional" cultural traits could be identified in Vietnam: recognition of signs of prowess, projection of a ruler's prowess, and the associations of public life.¹²⁷ A few more possibilities occur to me. In 1982 I wrote that "only the Vietnamese elite developed a linear sense of time, based on a sequence of recorded

¹²¹ In his comment under the Annals' date of 1370, he tells us that he could find only one instance of a talented subordinate in Trần times and only one in Lý times (1009-1225) who won his ruler's confidence; Wolters, "What Else May Ngô Sĩ Liên Mean," p. 99.

¹²² Keith W. Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Vietnam's Southward Expansion," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). See also Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1998).

¹²³ I refer to his 1998 conference paper called "Regional Conflicts among the Viet Peoples between the 13th and 19th Centuries." The paper is being published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*. See bibliography. I thank him for allowing me to read and quote from his manuscript.

¹²⁴ "Regional Conflicts," p. 10. Referring to contemporary Vietnamese historiography, Taylor contends that "the idea of cultural centeredness is a coercive ideological construction with clear political intent."

¹²⁵ 1982, p. 36.

¹²⁶ In "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," *Indonesia* 58 (October 1994), I suggested a similarity between Vietnamese and wider Southeast Asian attitudes towards the past (p. 3), in a sense of a wide world representing universal norms (p. 6), in men of prowess (p. 7), in entourage relationships (p. 8), and in the status of women (p. 8).

¹²⁷ See pp. 112, 113 fn. 24, and 116 above.

dynasties."¹²⁸ I am no longer certain that this is correct even though they adopted the Chinese convention of reign periods as a convenient dating system. In the thirteenth century Vietnamese seemed confident that everything would turn out well in spite of grave dangers. They knew that individual performance was crucially important and that Vietnam had plenty of heroes, including those recorded in tales of the tutelary spirits in earlier times whose accounts of their services in different generations are a monotonous sequence of identical exploits. As a result, experience could be seen as predictable and therefore timeless. What happened in the past—usually victories against the Chinese or Chams—could be expected to repeat itself to the extent that the possibility of change need not be contemplated. Time was a matter of no consequence, a notion especially familiar to those at the top of society who understood the precepts of the *dhyāna*, or meditational Buddhism.¹²⁹

The past in Southeast Asia in general and including Vietnam would therefore be perceived for its relevance to the present and not for its own sake. It was "now" and being "up-to-date" that mattered.¹³⁰ This was Thái-tôn's mood when, reluctantly, he agreed to marry his brother's wife; he wanted an heir as soon as possible. The same mood possessed Minh-tôn in 1328 when he executed his uncle and father-in-law, Quốc Chấn of the Trần family, because the latter was supposed to want him to postpone appointing an heir by a secondary wife until his senior wife, the uncle's daughter, was shown to be incapable of doing so.¹³¹ Another and well-known instance of an aptitude for being up-to-date is the Vietnamese rapid response to new sects of Ch'an Buddhism after they appeared in southern China.

Additional Southeast Asian features associated with Vietnam also occur to me. Vietnamese in the thirteenth century had a lively sense of their comparability with China whether in imperial protocol, in performance on the battlefield, or in literary accomplishments.¹³² Prapañca, the fourteenth-century Majapahit Court poet, had a similar sense of comparability between Java and India when he wrote:

The land of Java has become more and more renowned for its purifying power in the world:

It is only India and Java that are noted for their excellence as fine places.

¹²⁸ 1982, p. 39.

¹²⁹ Wolters, "On Telling a Story," pp. 67-68. Minh-tôn's poems, written in the first half of the fourteenth century, reflect the *dhyāna* sense of timelessness. For example, "things of the past are a flash in time"; Wolters, *Two Essays on Đại-Việt in the Fourteenth Century*, The Lạc-Việt Series, no. 9 (New Haven: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988), p. 87.

¹³⁰ See p. 114 above, fn. 30.

¹³¹ See Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 130-134, on the uncle's murder.

¹³² See Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments Arising out of Lê Văn Hưu's History, Presented to the Trần Court in 1272," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979), pp. 73-74, in respect of imperial style; *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 2 (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất-bản Khoa-học Xã-hội Việt-Nam, 1988), pp. 396-398 in respect of the Hưng-đạo prince's claims in 1300 on behalf of Vietnamese battlefield performance; 1982, p. 72, in respect of celebrating the landscape in poetry. Inspired by the sense that their own poems compared with the work of Chinese poets, Vietnamese poets in the fourteenth century self-consciously flourished in their poetry the Sino-Vietnamese word for "poem" or "elegant verse"; Wolters, "Chu Văn An: An Exemplary Retirement," *Vietnam Review* 1 (1966): 79.

Because of the numbers of experts in sacred texts . . . ¹³³

Another passage in Prapañca's poem bears comparison with attitudes of mind elsewhere in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam. In his account of the annual Court festival, he describes a large and representative gathering.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that none of His Majesty's subjects be undisciplined in what he does,
But follows the teachings of the Raja Kapa-kapa which is read aloud every Cetra
(March-April).¹³⁴

The Javanese ruler was a teacher as was Śiva, the foremost of *gurus*, and also the Buddhist deities with whom he could be identified. The ruler's image as a compassionate teacher was, I believe, an established tradition in Southeast Asia.¹³⁵ The Minangkabau Sultan, studied by Jane Drakard, was one. His letters taught his subjects that, by showing him obedience, they would act in accordance with God's wishes.¹³⁶ Of Yaśovarman I, founder of Angkor, it was said: "He, the supreme Lord of the Earth, is recognized as *guru* of the whole world: one must do what he wants."¹³⁷ Nor was Yaśovarman's teaching role an idle one; in 889, the first year of his reign, he built or repaired a hundred monasteries in all parts of the country and, in his capacity of *guru* king, laid down their rules. One rule was that more honor should be paid to scholars who taught than to those who kept their knowledge to themselves.¹³⁸ Jayavarman VII at the end of the twelfth century, "having understood that death was the great enemy of our earth, made in abundance a paradise of this land by indicating to the people this ambrosia, the cure of all evils, in order to give them immortality."¹³⁹ The "ambrosia" (*amṛta*) was the Mahāyāna doctrine he preached.¹⁴⁰ Among his public works were 102 "hospitals."¹⁴¹

¹³³ *Deśavarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, pp. 85 and 139. Pemberton suggests that Mangkunagara VII regarded *wayang* performance as evidence of "very high civilization" and no doubt wished to elevate his "Javanese" civilization to the status of Western civilization; Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 130.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87. See also the ruler's speech; *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

¹³⁵ 1982, p. 31.

¹³⁶ See p. 120 above.

¹³⁷ *ISCC*, p. 428, v. 1. Recognized as Śiva-like, his voice was similarly Śiva-like: "When he is in the world, one hears the mysterious words of Śiva," *ISCC*, p. 451, v. 14. His commands and therefore his voice, like Śiva's, would be a purifying influence; *ISCC*, p. 427, v. 14.

¹³⁸ G. Coedès, "XXX. A la recherche du Yaçodharacrama. II. La stèle de Prasat Komnap," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 32.1 (1932): 98. The Pāsupatas are mentioned; see above 1982, p. 22. When rulers repaired temples they were promoting religious well-being and indirectly helping to discharge their teaching responsibilities.

¹³⁹ L. Finot, "L'inscription Sanscrite de Say Fong," *Bulletin Française d'Extrême-Orient* 3 (1903): 30, v. 10.

¹⁴⁰ Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers*, p. 115, note a reason why Jayavarman VII's cult might have been the Viññānavādin school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, "which cleaves to the doctrine that the world is essentially nothing but mind-stuff." For "ambrosia" (*amṛta*), see Yaśovarman I's reservoir inscriptions, 1982 pp. 80-84.

¹⁴¹ Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers* p. 206. I doubt whether these expressions of religious concern were conventional. When rulers interested themselves in their subjects' spiritual well-

The majority of the Trần emperors were also religious teachers, though it is difficult to suppose that they had much influence on uneducated persons. They had probably experienced sudden enlightenment (recognizing their self-nature as a "void") according to the teachings of meditational Buddhism, referred to in Japan as "Zen." They were prepared to tolerate the Buddhist doctrine of *upāya*, or religious behavior within the capacity of ordinary people and defined by Thái-tôn as "undesirable supernatural methods."¹⁴² Jayavarman VII taught the "ambrosia" of Mahāyāna Buddhism, while the Vietnamese emperors taught, among other texts, the famous *Diamond Sutra*, whose message was that to attain enlightenment was to attain nothing. Trần Thái-tôn, Jayavarman VII's near-contemporary, composed and printed *A Guide to Meditation* as a means of "opening the door of the Dharma for coming generations . . ." and for making the *Diamond Sutra* better known.¹⁴³ His grandson in his old age traveled and preached as a monk. His great-great grandson, Minh-tôn (1314-1357) wrote a "Chant on the Mustard Hut" to allude to the ineffable experience of sudden enlightenment and to teach how one must behave when practicing meditation.¹⁴⁴

Teachers needed edifying texts which taught religious and "political" values. Texts imply a respect for writing, a topic mentioned earlier in the postscript.¹⁴⁵ Prapañca in his poems likens India and Java for their "purifying" influence in the world, and he proceeds to praise the contribution of "experts in sacred texts." In the previous section of the postscript I noted that texts communicated the royal voice, and in this section I have noted the spiritual efficacy of the texts illustrated on the bas-relief of Candi Jago.¹⁴⁶ Following this line of thought, we can now recognize another characteristic that Vietnam shared in common with elsewhere in the region, for Vietnam, too, acknowledged the crucial role of the written word. In the fourteenth century, Vietnamese scholars, shaken by social indiscipline, devised a means of comparing their own unhappy times with Vietnam's golden age under the *Vân-lang* rulers, when customs were of "pure substance" and "regulated by knotted cords."¹⁴⁷ "Knotted cords" signified a simple form of script and facilitated the

being, the assumption would be that obeying them, or, rather, worshipping them as god-like beings, was bound to benefit the obedient.

¹⁴² *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 2, pp. 31 and 33.

¹⁴³ See Thich Thien-an, *Buddhism and Zen in Vietnam in Relation to the Development of Buddhism in Asia* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1975), p. 209.

¹⁴⁴ Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 76-77. Other of his poems call attention to the same topic: e.g., *ibid.*, p. 88. Lê Quý Ly, who was to usurp the Trần throne at the end of the fourteenth century, professed to teach the correct succession of Confucian teachers in the face of neo-Confucian doctrine in China in order to provide ideological support for his status as "the Duke of Chou," protector of a young ruler; John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý 6, and the Ming (1371-1421)*, The Lac-Việt Series No. 2 (New Haven: Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1985), pp. 34-35.

¹⁴⁵ See pp. 118-121.

¹⁴⁶ See pp. 139.

¹⁴⁷ The expression "knotted cords" had been borrowed from an early Chinese text that explained that long ago "knotted cords" had made successful government possible. Success was also exemplified by uniform measurements, signified by "axles." The *Vân-lang* rulers were organized as a dynasty. The institution, localized in Vietnam in the early eleventh century, gave the *Vân-lang* rulers honorable status, another example of the Vietnamese sense of comparability with China. On the notion of a Vietnamese golden age, see Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 25-26.

practice of pure customs, meaning social discipline. Similarly, the Majapahit ruler held an annual meeting to "ensure that none of His Majesty's subjects be undisciplined in what he does."

The scholars who "discovered" *Văn-lang* intended to imply that notable cultural developments, comparable with what occurred in ancient China, had taken place in Vietnam long before there could be any question of Chinese influence. Asserting comparability, they deliberately appropriated passages from ancient Chinese texts in order to inaugurate civilized government ("pure customs") in their own country according to Chinese standards in high antiquity, albeit independently of China. These standards, made possible by the local invention of writing, were, they implied, observed everywhere in the civilized world (i.e., Vietnam and China). In protohistoric centuries some Southeast Asians had, in a similar mood, established a place for themselves in a "Hindu world" with its universal standards of excellence registered in Sanskrit writings.¹⁴⁸ Vietnamese, for their part, came to believe that ancient Chinese classical writing exemplified universal and not simply Chinese patterns of experience,¹⁴⁹ and therefore they did not hesitate to invoke Chinese literary passages as rhetorical flourishes to illustrate their lofty status in the world and to ratify whatever they themselves had to say.¹⁵⁰

In this section I have returned to *maṇḍala* history and do not wish to query my earlier view that the region exemplified two sets of widespread cultural features which give it a distinctive configuration. The first, inherited from prehistory, comprised cognatic systems of kinship, indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore attached significance to identifying personal achievement in each generation. The second set, reflecting historical experience, comprised an awareness of universal values reflected in Sanskrit literature and of the example of Indian models for organizing knowledge, and a propensity for modernity that came from an outward-looking disposition encouraged by easy maritime communications to the extent that the elite came to expect the continuous arrival of new and updated ideas with the stamp of universal standards of excellent behavior.

Today I have enlarged my list of common cultural features to include oral and especially written means of communication within a *maṇḍala*, and I have given more emphasis to present-mindedness, the style of public life, multicentricism, and the concept of "heterarchy," with its focus on cultural continuities and a concept introduced by Joyce White that offers possibilities for a better understanding of early Southeast Asia history. The notion of continuities has made me more alert to instances of what I regard as "expedients" for maintaining the *status quo* when

¹⁴⁸ See pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁹ The apologist for the independent Vietnamese dynastic institution, Lê Văn Hưu in 1272, was able to read an ancient Chinese text, *The Book of Mencius*, in a manner that enabled him to conclude that founders of empires such as the Chinese empire did not have to come from a particular part of the world (i.e. China), and his reading enabled him to formulate his case for Vietnamese independence in the face of Kubilai Khan's opposition; Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China," pp. 85-86.

¹⁵⁰ See Wolters, "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," p. 5. An educated Vietnamese, familiar with and using such Chinese cultural artifacts as poetic forms or Chinese-style coinage or references to reign-periods, could enjoy the sensation of participating in the "civilized" world on equal terms with the Chinese.

managing *maṅḍala* affairs or, in Sunait's words, "spasmodic bureaucratic improvisations."

A knock-out blow directed against an enemy's capital city, the seat of his divinity, was a particularly ruthless expedient. Crops in the neighborhood would be trampled under foot, captives and sacred objects stolen, and the enemy's territories fragmented and vassals appointed to rule the fragments. The defeated centers did not normally disappear, though sometimes the defeated ruler would resume his government elsewhere, as the Malacca Sultan did after the Portuguese captured his city in 1511. A center's recovery could also take time.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, even a devastating destruction of a capital city did not cause significant discontinuities. Too many entrenched features of *maṅḍala* Southeast Asia prevailed.

International commerce and cosmopolitan ports are probably the most familiar instances of regional continuities, even if the levels, conditions of exchange, sources of economic stimulus, and locations of prominent trading centers in different parts of maritime Asia varied over the centuries.¹⁵² The outside world was always on Southeast Asia's doorstep, and the expectation that trading opportunities would be available to bring advantages for those who controlled ports and hinterland products was a continuous and decisive one in the region's fortunes.

Expedients and continuities are what one would expect in a region whose peoples were prone to adopt a pragmatic approach to specific challenges. Their behavior would be consistent with Joyce White's view that cognatic kinship systems permit considerable individual choice and a *prima facie* basis for flexible response. Expedients and continuities should be included among the other shared Southeast Asian cultural traits to strengthen the case for a "regional" shape to early Southeast Asian history.

The postscript's trend may put me on collision course with those who detect change and especially change in the form of centralizing tendencies.¹⁵³ I have

¹⁵¹ Twenty-one years passed before Eastern Java recovered under Erlangga from the disaster of 1016. After the Cham sack of Angkor in 1177, Jayavarman VII had to fight for four years before gaining control of Cambodia. In 1391-1392 the Majapahit ruler, learning that his Palembang vassal had declared his sovereignty, destroyed the city and expelled his vassal, who later founded Malacca in about 1400. The devastation in Palembang was so great that local Chinese merchants eventually took over the government of the port; on these episodes see Coedès, *The Indianized States*, and Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*.

¹⁵² This is also Manguin's view; see Manguin, "Palembang and Sriwijaya," pp. 33-34.

¹⁵³ The issue of continuity or change in the direction of gradually more centralized political systems has been strenuously discussed in contemporary studies of more recent centuries in Southeast Asian history. Anthony J. Day, reviewing the work of Anthony Reid and Victor Lieberman, approaches the subject from a particular point of view; see Day, "Ties That (Un)Bind: Families and States in Premodern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55,2 (1996): 384-409. His article would enliven the duller classroom. Day observes that Reid and Lieberman share a common structural theme when in their work they suppose that there was a general "trend towards centralized, if personal government" in the region (*ibid.*, p. 397) and that their supposition requires them to use Western categories such as "structure," "absolutism," "centralization," and "administrative cycles" which bespeak the agenda they bring with them and preempt the possibility of identifying genuine continuity. Again we face the problem of settling for apt signifiers for Southeast Asian signifieds. Day asks a challenging question which cannot be asked too often: "What would the history of Southeast Asia look like, however, if we were to take the incoherence expressed in the turbulent relations between families as normative rather than as a departure from the putative norm of a rational, absolutist state which must 'deal with' disorder?"; *ibid.*, p. 398. Or again, "it is possible to reread Lieberman's detailed account in such a way as to turn the chief causes of 'decline' into

preferred to think in terms of expedients or improvisations as flexible responses to contingencies. Centralizing tendencies would have the effect of launching the region in an evolutionary direction, and I readily understand Michael Aung-Thwin's reluctance to read into Southeast Asian history evidence of linearity. To do so, he believes, would be to follow those who are accustomed to a western-oriented sense of linear history.¹⁵⁴ He even maintains that the strength of Burmese institutions discouraged the transformation of the system¹⁵⁵ and approvingly refers to Harry Benda's insistence that change cannot be assumed from the passage of time but has to be shown in the form of structural transformations, which Aung-Thwin understands to mean permanent ones.¹⁵⁶ I also agree with him when he rejects the question-begging concept of Southeast Asian "classical states,"¹⁵⁷ though I had not realized that it had become fashionable. I am sympathetic, of course, when he describes the Burmese polities as "expanding and contracting,"¹⁵⁸ though I would hesitate to equate "centralization" with "effective administration" by a strong ruler.¹⁵⁹ For me "effective administration" would amount to no more than the ability to reactivate a *maṅḍala* such as Aung-Thwin, in my opinion, vividly describes.¹⁶⁰

So much for revision or elaboration of the first two chapters in the earlier volume, and I reluctantly admit to the sensation of running myself into the ground and being in danger of always finding what I am looking for. What now seems to be important is that the range of "Southeast Asian perspectives" that had previously guided me should be expanded. In 1982 I was influenced chiefly by kinship systems and the role of achievers, geopolitical considerations including "the single ocean," the relevance of linguistic analysis to cultural studies, and the principle that whatever happened of significance had to make sense to those involved. Further

expressions of another kind of history about fluid relations of power and family ties in Southeast Asia"; *ibid.* At the end of his article he makes a statement which I read with enthusiasm, though I wish that it avoided the word "states." "Once states are redefined as relations of power, they do not have to be kingdoms, or have administrative and bureaucratic structures, or rise and fall in order to attract our attention"; *ibid.*, p. 495. I believe that what I wrote in 1982 is consistent with Day's axioms, and this is why I am a little puzzled that, when dealing with such matters as unstable royal successions, "entourage formations," and competing families, he only sparingly mentions these phenomena in the centuries that interested me though they were highly visible.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Aung-Thwin, "Spirals in Early Southeast Asian and Burmese History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21,4 (1991): 575-602; "The 'Classical' in Southeast Asia: The Present in the Past," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 75-91.

¹⁵⁵ Aung-Thwin, "Spirals," p. 592. Shorto describes the Mon concept of the world as a "stasis"; see H. L. Shorto, "A Mon Genealogy of Kings: Observations on the Nidana Arambhakatha," in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 67.

¹⁵⁶ Aung-Thwin, "Spirals," p. 584. Also see the bottom of p. 594.

¹⁵⁷ Aung-Thwin, "The 'Classical' in Southeast Asia," pp. 81 ff.

¹⁵⁸ Aung-Thwin, "Spirals," p. 597.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 598.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 598-599. I disagree with him on two more points. I think that, in light of what he wrote on Pagan, his use of the term "dynasty" is inappropriate if he means a stable institution; *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), pp. 157-159. Second, I would like to know a great deal about Burmese society before agreeing that it "did not progress in a linear fashion." "Wealth, glory, and power," his criteria, are value judgments; "Spirals," p. 600. Burma belonged to the Buddhist world and would surely have been no less up-to-date with texts than other parts of Southeast Asia.

perspectives, not necessarily depending on *mandala*-oriented approaches, require lines of inquiry which, though unlikely to be novel, may be developed by historians so that the perspectives in question can be assured a place in a more full-bodied study of the Southeast Asian past and become part of the backdrop to *mandala* history. Perhaps fresh ways of looking at the region could emerge.¹⁶¹

With this possibility in mind, I shall suggest a few topics that would find a place in a regional study which has made much of sets of relationships between those to the fore in *mandala* affairs such as leaders and followers, overlords and vassals, and allies and "in-laws."

¹⁶¹ Richard O'Connor, too, urges an approach other than that of "a few great courts," the lowland elite, or the "*mandala*-and-manpower" school; Richard O'Connor, "Review of Siam Mapped. By Thongchai Winichakul," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56,1 (1997): 280-281.

SOME FURTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN PERSPECTIVES

Although I have associated *maṅḍala* history with continuities as far as public life was concerned, to imagine that nothing changed anywhere would be very mistaken.¹ In prehistoric times a gradual awareness of ever-extending communications with the outside world would require imaginative adjustments that, for a few, eventually found expression in the sensation of belonging to the "Hindu world." Again, Coedès proposed that the "fall of the Indianized States" in the fourteenth century would have been a major change,² though I prefer to be guided by Thomas Kirsch on what happened at least in Cambodia. Khmers no longer needed to associate the disappearance of a god-like ruler with cosmic collapse. Instead, Theravāda monks were gradually able to offer a new kind of buffer between the cosmological and social orders.³

Richard O'Connor has recently supplied a challenging vision of various forms of agricultural adaptation that suggests a major discontinuity in mainland Southeast Asian history.⁴ His study, which can also claim to belong to the field of environmental history, may arouse considerable interest because it crystallizes thinking on several important themes. O'Connor, as Joyce White does, gives me plenty to consider.

O'Connor insists that the history, or, as he puts it, the "succession" of wet-rice agricultures is an essential part of mainland history. His framework is established by farmers' cultural preferences. Those inhabiting the lowland societies—the Pyu, Mons, Khmers and Chams—practiced rain-fed agriculture by managing floods by

¹ Richard O'Connor recalls Lauriston Sharp's argument for change by addition rather than replacement; R. O'Connor, "Review of Siam Mapped by Thongchai Winichakul," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56,1 (1997): 281.

² George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), pp. 235-246.

³ A. Thomas Kirsch, "Cosmological Factors in the 'Collapse' of the Khmer and the 'Rise' of the Thai in Southeast Asian History: An Interpretation." This paper was originally presented to the American Association of Asian Studies on March 22, 1985, and will be published by the Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications.

⁴ Richard A. O'Connor, "Agricultural Change and Ethnic Succession in Southeast Asian States: A Case for Regional Anthropology," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54,4 (1995): 968-996.

means of bunds, tanks, and ponds.⁵ He asserts that flood management techniques did not depend entirely on cooperation among households; each household was supported by a garden economy for its resources.⁶ When, however, cooperation was needed, not necessarily, I suggest, only for agricultural reasons, the tradition of household autonomy and freedom of action meant that would-be leaders had to compete among themselves. Competition in lowland societies is, as I understand it, a pervasive theme in *mandala* history, and O'Connor brings the phenomenon down to a grass-roots level. According to him, "leadership is likely to be less by elders claiming respect than by big men [i.e. men of prowess] commanding obedience."⁷

In the upland valleys, on the other hand, Burmans, Tai, and Vietnamese were able to manage the flow of water by weirs that diverted it into field-watering canals. Their cultivation had been shaped "to fit mountain valleys or a piedmont where topography ensured fast-flowing perennial streams."⁸ Techniques of flow management for growing wet rice, governed by communal rights, were Tai cultural features *par excellence* and preceded State initiatives; O'Connor does not feel obliged to introduce the chimera of centralization. Tai villages tended to form tightly integrated wholes and recognize communal rights,⁹ whereas rice-growing garden farms in the lowlands stressed private ownership.¹⁰ Perhaps it would have been difficult to mobilize farmers in the lowlands except in times of threat from outside or for the construction of temples or public works. There was always plenty of unused or forested land for refugees. O'Connor wonders whether, when the king was in the habit of granting private rights to his followers, as Jayavarman II of Cambodia did, "local lords" could be expected to rule their underlings in the same way and grant

⁵ See p. 127, fn. 9 for Vickery's comments on the Khmer *pon* and their man-made ponds. On the other hand, in 1982 I referred to Van Liere's rejection of the theory that Angkor's artificial lakes were for agricultural purposes. Recently Robert Acker has confirmed Van Liere's opinion with a wealth of detail. See Robert Acker, "New Geographical Tests of the Hydraulic Thesis at Angkor," *South East Asia Research* 6.1 (1998): 5-47.

⁶ Joyce White associates a self-sufficient family economy with heterarchic societies; White, "Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Socio-Political Development: The Case from Southeast Asia," in *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, ed. Robert M. Ehrenreich, Carole L. Crumley, and Janet E. Levy. Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, no. 6 (Arlington, Va.: American Anthropological Association, 1995), pp. 113-114.

⁷ O'Connor, "Agricultural Change," p. 977. O'Connor goes on to remark: "It is not that the latter's ambition is more 'natural,' but simply that their type is more likely where a culture's formative niche favored autonomous farming households. Traditionally, Mon and Khmer lived in such areas and even their Tai successors, the Siamese, often follow this pattern." Here is one explanation of "men of prowess" in lowlands and valleys alike. Jan Wisseman Christie describes the irrigation pattern in Java and Bali in somewhat different terms. Court initiative was again absent, in Java the management of irrigated rice was in the hands of village or sub-village officials, and in Bali the inscriptions mention trans-village technical officials; Jan Wisseman Christie, "Water from the Ancestors: Irrigation in Early Java and Bali," in *The Gift of Water: Water Management, Cosmology and the State in Southeast Asia*, ed. Jonathan Rigg (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992), pp. 7-25.

⁸ O'Connor, "Agricultural Change," p. 976.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 977. Dhida Saraya associates the expansion of rice cultivation with the Sukhothai government's initiative; Dhida Saraya, "Rice Cultivation and Politics in the Sukhothai State," *East Asian Cultural Studies* 24.1-4 (1986): 99-106.

¹⁰ O'Connor, "Agricultural Change," p. 977.

private rights that would preclude corporate claims.¹¹ If so, this would reinforce centrifugal forces within the *mandalas*.

So much for O'Connor's framework for mainland Southeast Asian history until modern times. It holds out the prospect of competition between the two wet rice systems and the eventual replacement of the original system in the lowlands.¹² What actually is likely to have happened is the most illuminating part of his essay.

He attributes to the Thai a technological initiative on a wide front extending from northern Vietnam to Burma but unaccompanied by waves of migration and not necessarily always implemented by violent and protracted means. Thai-linked wet rice complexes first appeared at the edge of hills in the first millennium AD, if not earlier, and subsequently made inroads into the lowlands. Empty niches or unused land enabled newcomers to settle down above or below the flood-farming niches.¹³ At first the Thai would squeeze themselves into lands further south.

But O'Connor denudes the episode of ethnic tension and proposes instead that a multilingual process leading to cultural pluralism gradually influenced the people and altered the countryside.¹⁴ From what is known in modern times of the Thai and Lao hinterlands, this is what seems to have happened to the previous population. In his view, the succession of agro-cultural complexes entailed co-existence rather than biological replacement.¹⁵ It was primarily a movement of techniques and language.

O'Connor has argued on behalf of a discontinuity that altered significantly the demographic map of mainland Southeast Asia. He describes the scale of the change in dramatic terms: "States and peoples rise and fall for reasons. Island Southeast Asia's first great states (Srivijaya, Majapahit) fell but their peoples (Malay, Javanese) did not. The mainland's first great states [the Khmer, Cham, Mon, and Pyu] also fell but their peoples went with them, never to rise again."¹⁶ Yet, on his own showing, what happened on the mainland need not have been so dramatic at least before the nineteenth century. Wet-rice techniques changed, but did the people? When he refers to examples of "assimilation," he cites the Wa, Palaung, Khmu, and Lua' who became Thai, Shan, Lao, and Tai Yuan, and argues against the theory that "ethnic waves" displaced earlier peoples.¹⁷ To counter the theory, he cites evidence that testifies in favor of ecological adaptation and the adoption of languages and agricultural techniques.¹⁸ And what, during times of demographic transition, would happen to the lowlanders' or Thai men of prowess? They would have welcomed

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 979.

¹³ Ibid., p. 981.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 984 and 986, where he refers to "cultural assimilation," though we shall see that he refers specifically to language and technology.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 984.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 987.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 984.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 987.

additional manpower,¹⁹ and the submission of the newcomers' leaders to a ruler's person would be seen as a further sign of that ruler's prestige and therefore of its attracting power.²⁰

O'Connor's downplaying of the importance of ethnicity in early mainland history is consistent with current thinking about Burman history.²¹ Michael Aung-Thwin observes that Burman chroniclers seldom depict ethnicity as a cause of major historical events.²² In the Cham context an art historian has supplied evidence of the extent to which ethnic identity was ignored in royal circles. An examination of the facial features on a wide range of sculptures in various periods of Cham art provides persuasive evidence for the multi-ethnic composition of Cham society and for the Mon-Khmer origin of some of its rulers.²³

Tucked away rather casually in one of O'Connor's footnotes is a key argument in support of the cultural assimilation of the garden-farming Austroasiatics by the Burman, Thai, and Vietnamese and also on behalf of the fluid nature of the early Southeast Asian societies. He states that "Southeast Asia's *polyglots* [my italics] readily pick up technical and ritual vocabularies."²⁴ This in fact is a crucial cultural feature of the Southeast Asian peoples, one that shaped their history and especially relations between different language groups. When ecological, economic, or political circumstances required close and lasting contacts, people were capable of learning each other's languages without abandoning their original language. Ethnically they remained the same, but they exercised a linguistic facility that over time gave them public access to another's society. They could speak their own language in private life as long as their public behavior was acceptable. Here is a further instance of a pragmatic response to the challenge of a changed social environment as well as an influence which promoted ethnic fluidity and mitigated the effect of demographic discontinuity. Though I must again modify what I wrote earlier about the many different languages of the region as clinching evidence of its cultural diversity,²⁵ I now suggest that polyglot proficiency, the phenomenon of multilingualism, helps historians to understand what could happen in *mandala* history and what was taken

¹⁹ This important feature of *mandala* history is discussed in A. Thomas Kirsch, "Cosmology and Ecology as Factors in Interpreting Early Thai Social Organization," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15,2 (1984): 264-265. Mangrai, founder of the Lan Na Thai kingdom in the thirteenth century, sought by means of just rule to attract newcomers in order to overcome the problem of limited population in terms of ecological capacity. Victors in war would move segments of the conquered population into their own polities.

²⁰ Because the State was defined by its center, all ethnic groups in Thailand could be personally loyal; Benedict Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State," paper submitted to the conference on *The State of Thai Studies*, Chicago, March 29, 1978, pp. 30-31. Personal relationships were always important in the world of the *mandalas*.

²¹ Michael Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the Three Shan Brothers' and the Ava Period in Burmese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55,1 (1996): 881-901; Victor B. Lieberman, "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," *Modern Asian Studies* 12,3 (1978): 455-482.

²² Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the Three Shan Brothers," p. 897 and n. 45.

²³ For this information I am grateful to Trần Kỳ Phương of the Vietnamese Archeological Department and to Nora Taylor. The "Mon-Khmer" images bear a strong resemblance to works of the Mon so-called "Dvāravati" polity of the eighth and ninth centuries.

²⁴ O'Connor, "Agricultural Change," p. 981 n. 8.

²⁵ 1982, p. 53.

for granted by those who wrote records, and is itself one of the region's cultural features.²⁶

There were probably few more influential cultural features in earlier Southeast Asia than multilingualism even though glimpses of the phenomenon at work are few and far between. Multilingualism, at least, helps to make sense of miscellaneous details. For example, Jayavarman VII of Angkor (1181–1227) appointed a Cham refugee prince to suppress the Malyang rebellion in northwestern Cambodia.²⁷ In what language did they converse? In 1374 the Vietnamese Court decreed that Cham and Lao speech should not be copied, and in the eighteenth century Vietnamese settlers in the southern territories were forbidden to speak Khmer.²⁹ In cosmopolitan trading ports many languages would be spoken and understood. Malay and Portuguese were indispensable trading languages. Sultan Kudrat of Magindanao in 1700 “wrote and spoke Spanish fluently as if it was his mother tongue. He also spoke, besides his native Magindanao, Chinese, English, and Dutch.”³⁰ He could assume a new identity especially when he was required to deal with foreigners. In Sultan Kudrat we have an illustration of a Southeast Asian aptitude for responding effortlessly to whatever came from outside. Sometimes the use of foreign words could be a status symbol.

Hendrik Maier emphasizes an important implication of multilingualism. Linguistic coexistence could be a benign influence.³¹ He quotes Tun Jenal as saying to Hang Tuah in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*: “We are playing relatives.” The context is what is real and hybrid Malay, and Maier’s gloss on this passage is that “Malayness” is “the desire to create a feeling of communality and kinship. . . .”³² Speaking correct Malay was not the issue. In fact, Hang Tuah knew many languages and styles of behavior and used them without fearing that he would lose his identity. Being a “real” or “impure” Malay was immaterial.³³

This episode reflects a flexible and relaxed attitude towards linguistic differences, and Maier again illustrates it in the cultural context of the Netherlands Indies before the Dutch government in the later nineteenth century tried to standardize Malay, the prevailing *lingua franca*. No matter what criticism outsiders

²⁶ For a detailed study of multilingualism in Thailand, a country with eighty languages, see William A. Smalley, *Linguistic Diversity and National Unity: Language Ecology in Thailand* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). On page 316 the author lists the numerous forces responsible for linguistic diversity. He says of the Mons who lived in that country in pre-Thai times that they “eventually replaced the Old Mon language with Tai languages”; *ibid.*, pp. 295–296. On pages 349–351 Smalley proposes a circumstance that paved the way for linguistic hierarchy in this multilingual society: oaths of allegiance and tribute paid to local Thai princes who gave protection. If they failed to do so, the non-Thai subjects would move elsewhere.

²⁷ The date of Jayavarman VII’s death is still unknown; O. W. Wolters, “Tambralinga,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 21,3 (1958), p. 606.

²⁸ Coedès, *Indianized States*, p. 170.

²⁹ 1982, pp. 52–53, in respect of the fourteenth century; *Histoire et description de la Basse Cochinchine*, trans. G. Aubaret (Paris: Imprimerie imperiale, 1863), pp. 91–92 in respect of the early nineteenth century.

³⁰ Patricio Abinales, “From Orang Besar to Colonial Big Man: The American Military Regime and the Magindanao Muslims” (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1998), p. 14.

³¹ H. M. J. Maier, “From Heteroglossia to Polyglossia: The Creation of Malay and Dutch in the Indies,” *Indonesia* 56 (1993): 37–65; Henk Maier, “We are Playing Relatives,” *Riau, the Cradle of Reality and Hybridity*, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 53,4 (1997): 673–698.

³² Maier, “We are Playing Relatives,” p. 675.

³³ *Ibid.*

might level at a "pidgin" style of communication, local people—Indonesian and Dutch alike—would reply: "We can say what we want. We may express ourselves differently yet we are perfectly understandable."³⁴ As Maier puts it, "somehow differences did not really matter."³⁵

The use of pidgin Malay, unregulated and available to all who felt comfortable using it, would, Maier proposes, permit a style of social behavior and mood that would not bristle when persons of different ethnic backgrounds communicated in a linguistic hotchpotch or a vulgarized version of one of their languages. It may not be unrealistic to attribute an accommodating approach to language to every part of Southeast Asia where circumstances brought different peoples into continuous contact with each other, as happened when Thai introduced their techniques of water control to the inhabitants of the mainland lowlands and settled among them.

The freedom associated with a multilingual tradition, a tradition which usually promoted marriage relations between speakers of different languages, would thrive in a region characterized by cultural pluralism, flexible social systems, conflict resolution strategies, and tendencies in the direction of continuities, features attributed to a heterarchic tradition.³⁶ Multilingualism suggests itself as a prominent part of the background during *mandala* history.

In 1982 I bypassed the topics of agriculture and multilingualism, with their possibilities for exploring additional sets of relationships and relaxed styles of life. I also glanced only cursorily at "those who lived in distant highlands and were beyond the reach of the centres where records survive."³⁷ Today, bearing in mind O'Connor's effort to study mainland agriculture in historical and ethnic terms, I need to define more carefully those to whom I shall now refer. In general, two broad groups were involved. The first were Thai-related peoples who had remained in valleys in the far north and were moving south only imperceptibly or not at all. The others were Austroasiatic peoples who lived on the forested fringes of the lowlands or in adjacent hills and at a distance from Thai farmers.

In 1982 I excused myself for neglecting the uplanders by remarking that historians had to depend on written records. Yet my reference to "distant highlands" was as ill-judged as were my references to "relatively isolated dwelling sites" in prehistoric times or to the "amorphous nature of the great *mandalas*" in the context of Sriwijaya. No doubt, the conceit of the lowlands's elite was that all others were, in the words of an early Cambodian inscription, "wild savages who lived in forests."³⁸ The elite came to understand that the "Hindu world," reflected in Sanskrit sacred literature, was multi-centered and patchy; a typical Southeast Asian stretch of multi-centered and often multilingual territory would be expected to comprise pockets occupied by those like themselves who imagined that they conformed to a "Hindu" style of behavior. Self-"Hinduizing" Khmers and others always made sense of their

³⁴ Maier, "From Heteroglossia to Polyglossia," p. 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

³⁶ During a conference of historians from Southeast Asian countries, held in November 1993, attention was given to the need to study how those living in pluralistic societies managed to fit in together; Wolters, "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," p. 10, n. 28.

³⁷ 1982, p. 39.

³⁸ See p. 110 above and note 83 on page 140 above. For the Sumatran Malay fear of the interior, see Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 19-20.

neighborhood. But the consequence was immense. The lowland elite defined the hinterland's lowly status in the world order from the perspective of those who saw themselves at the center of civilized "Hindu" society.³⁹ The same prejudice survives in a nineteenth-century Javanese text. A hermit tells his son: "Please don't behave in a rude way, like a mountaineer [*wong gunong*] but be flexible [*lemesena*] like a civilized person [*wong praja*]."⁴⁰

The lowlanders' prejudice is only one aspect of a relationship between the lowland elite and those in the interior, be they uplanders or otherwise, that was quite different from the nature of the relationship I presumed in 1982, when I had ignorantly described them as separated by distance. In a recent history of the Khmers, Ian Mabbett notes that Khmer civilization itself was originally "a civilization of the forested uplands. Before history began, it is likely that the closest links of the Khmers with neighbors were with the Chams of the Annamite Cordillera."⁴¹ Only in historical times, as Mabbett in a colorful passage reminds us, was there "a polarity of wild and tamed, of dark haunted bushland versus inhabited open spaces [that] runs like a leitmotiv through Khmer cultural consciousness."⁴² The reference in the seventh century inscription to "wild savages in the forests" is an example.

Having read the work of Hjørleifur Jonsson, an anthropologist familiar with upland societies in mainland Southeast Asia and a student of the upland-lowland relationship,⁴³ I realize that my notion of "distance" is illusory.⁴⁴ Even where there were differences in agricultural techniques, both populations shared assumptions about themselves such as the existence of innate prowess, the need to compete for personal prestige, the tendency for the less successful to affiliate themselves with the more successful by joining the latter's entourage, and familiarity with open social

³⁹ What I referred to in 1982, p. 50 as "unique" centers.

⁴⁰ W. van der Molen, "Wong Sabrang," in *Looking in Old Mirrors: The Java Sea*, ed. V. J. H. Houben et al. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Asie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), p. 168. For an expression of abuse, see "Sejarah Melayu, Raffles MS 18," trans. C. C. Brown, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25.2-3 (1952): 118: "You are a man of little discretion. You must be a jungleman not to know the rudiments of proper behaviour."

⁴¹ Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 8-9.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴³ Hjørleifur Jonsson, "Forest Products and Peoples: Upland Groups, Thai Politics, and Regional Space," *Sojourn* 13.1 (1998): 1-37; Hjørleifur Jonsson, "Shifting Social Landscape: Mien (Yao) Upland Communities and Histories in State-Client Settings" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1996). I have benefited from advice by A. Thomas Kirsch and Hjørleifur Jonsson, history-friendly anthropologists. Even when historical records are available, one should be alert to observations and trains of thought arising from anthropological field work that suggest persisting patterns of experience.

⁴⁴ 1982, p. 39. Jonsson argues strongly that "upland peoples were integral to the premodern Southeast Asian polities, and also that the lowland polities were in one way or another a part of uplands' worlds," "Forest Products and Peoples," p. 12. Osborne in chapter 4 of *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, 6th ed. (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995) avoids distinguishing upland and lowland peoples too sharply and describes examples of versions of the relationship. Hinterland peoples would have developed a sense of identity in terms of the others. In the context of southeast Sumatra, see Andaya, *To Live as Brothers*, pp. 13 ff. "I am not a Malay; I am a true upstream person," *ibid.*, p. 14.

systems. The uplands could also be a place of refuge when conditions in the lowlands were disorderly or harsh.⁴⁵

Uplanders were not without armed strength. In the first half of the eleventh century a Vietnamese emperor's son earned merit by subduing the tribal chiefs in the hinterland of Nghệ-an and "demarcating" the borders with stone tablets.⁴⁶ Lowlanders' notions of rank and courtly style were familiar to and emulated by vassal chiefs. Alliances could be formed between upland chiefs and lowland rulers, and the latter extended protection to the former.⁴⁷ Moreover, and perhaps more important than anything else, the forested uplands were, for lowland rulers, a source of great trading wealth, often in the form of tribute and captives.⁴⁸

O'Connor's and Jonsson's studies, written by anthropologists, complement each other. The story of agricultural change need not depend on continuous ethnic conflict and displacement. Instead, the emphasis could be on relationships influenced by technological and cultural assimilation, and historians have to be sensitive to these factors when *mandala* history was likely to involve large numbers of people. Upland or hinterland relationships with the lowlands should not be conceptualized in terms of ethnic hostility but rather in terms of self-images that evolve as a result of historical circumstances.⁴⁹ According to both O'Connor and Jonsson, human relationships were fluid rather than rigid.

A study of the *Orang Asli*, the so-called *Orang Sakai* of the Malay Peninsula, proposes a chronology of historical change that, *mutatis mutandis*, could be expected in "Southeast Asian" cultural contexts, where changes can be accounted for as the result of particular historical circumstances rather than by rule-of-thumb considerations based on ethnicity.

In a closely-reasoned study, Marie-Andrée Couillard argues that the *Orang Asli*, the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, were from early times an indispensable link in the international trade of Asia and Europe because they

⁴⁵ Jonsson, "Shifting Social Landscape," p. 216, quotes David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 103: "[Cambodian] chronicles are filled with references to [lowland] villagers running off into the forest in times of crisis." As Chandler puts it, this assumes "... 'civilization' ... [as] the art of remaining outside the forest." See Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1968), pp. 75-76 on instances of flight from oppression mentioned in Javanese and Dutch sources.

⁴⁶ After sixteen years in office there were rumors that he had assumed full control of the local government and he was recalled; Lý Tế Xuyên, *Việt điện u linh tập* (Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient "A" 47), p. 6.

⁴⁷ In earlier times upland-lowland relations would not be compromised by what Jonsson refers to as lowlanders' claims to "national space"; Jonsson, "Shifting Social Landscape," p. 39. Lý emperors occasionally married their princesses to tribal chiefs on their northern borders. In Trần times these chiefs provided intelligence concerning threatening Mongol movements.

⁴⁸ In 1013 four of the six published categories of taxation applied only to items of trade with the tribal people in the mountains; Keith Taylor, "Authority and Legitimacy in 11th Century Vietnam," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 151. For the variety of Southeast Asian upland and forest trading produce, see Paul Wheatley, "Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 32,2 (1961).

⁴⁹ As Jonsson puts it, "state culture has mapped its project of the civilized domain on cleared lowlands and 'made' the hinterlands in the process. Jonsson, "Shifting Social Landscape," p. 199.

collected valuable jungle produce and delivered it to middlemen, probably Malays from Sumatra, living at the estuaries on the Malay Peninsula.⁵⁰ They would have been respected by the Malays and sometimes assimilated into Malay trading society, where they would enjoy the honorable status of personal dependents or followers of local *rajas*, though subject to corvée labor. To this extent they participated in Malay public life and had a sheltered existence on account of their economic services.

So far their relationship with Malays was based on expediency, regardless of ethnic identity. But in recent centuries immigrants from the archipelago occupied the lands of the *Orang Asli*, and laborers from China and India transformed the local economy. The skills of the *Orang Asli* became marginalized, and the original inhabitants of the land were edged more and more into the interior and eventually falsely categorized in western scholarly literature as those who had always been backward tribesmen and "*Sakai*," or "slaves" in the western legal sense of the word.⁵¹

In this postscript I have from time to time retracted or modified my earlier opinions, and the fate of the *Orang Asli* provides me with another opportunity for doing so. I have come to suspect that my earlier perspectives on *mandala* history gave the impression that this was an unusually serene part of the world, unsullied by conflict.⁵² The historian should not forget that there were at least two kinds of violent behavior, even though one has to wait to find evidence from much later times. There would have been miscellaneous forms of violence and also institutionalized inequality.

In some parts of the region one may suppose that there had always been ritual violence in the form of headhunting as a sign of achievement or to avenge one's honor.⁵³ There would also have been violence when individuals lost self-control and outbreaks of collective wrath when thieves were discovered.⁵⁴ It has been argued that, because of the movement exerted when the *dhalang* hits with the puppet, the *wayang's* battle scenes enable one to enjoy the release of violent living forces, of energies, and "the human encounter at its best."⁵⁵

Perhaps these matters need not be introduced in a general account of early Southeast Asia unless they are illustrated on bas-relief. Two other matters can, however, be confidently documented in respect of certain parts of the region: legal punishments and warfare. In Cambodia, for example, punishments for ordinary people were cruel, including, for example, whipping, mutilation, pressing of the legs

⁵⁰ Marie-Andrée Couillard, "The Malays and the 'Sakai': Some Comments on Their Social Relations in the Malay Peninsula," *Kajian Malaysia* 2,1 (1984): 81-108.

⁵¹ See Couillard, "The Malays and the 'Sakai,'" p. 85 for the suggestion that in pre-colonial times "*sakai*" seems to have had connotations reflecting relations of personal dependence such as "subject," "dependent," or even "ally."

⁵² I show this bias in 1982, p. 38, note 35.

⁵³ See Janet Hoskins, ed., *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996); Kenneth M. George, *Showing Signs of Violence: The Cultural Politics of a Twentieth-Century Headhunting Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Puppets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 35-36.

⁵⁵ Jan Mrázek, "Phenomenology of a Puppet Theatre: Contemplations on the Performance Technique of Contemporary Javanese *Wayang Kulit*" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, January 1998), vol. I, pp. 347-356.

and head.⁵⁶ As for warfare, inscriptions and bas-relief refer to it continuously. Of Cambodia, Mabbett concludes that war was a "fact of political life."⁵⁷

Relations among *mandalas* would give rise to many occasions for fighting.⁵⁸ Ample causes would be supplied by a pervasive and stubborn sense of local identity, succession disputes, defending one's status in respect of other rulers, the need to demonstrate prowess or compete for merit, and the availability of armed entourages and dependents anxious to flaunt their loyalty towards their overlords. What is problematic are the intensity and frequency of warfare, and it is prudent to pay heed to Reid's view that the level of casualties was not high. Manpower was too scarce to be squandered, and the devastation of one's foe's crops was at least as effective as a large-scale victory on the battlefield.⁵⁹

So much for miscellaneous forms of violence. One must now also take into account a widespread and institutionalized form of social inequality, a state of affairs which, together with and often as the result of warfare, cannot be excluded from the story.

Anthony Reid, drawing on a major collaborative study of slavery, bondage, and dependency in Southeast Asia, has provided a detailed analysis of a subject he prefers to call "bondage."⁶⁰ His materials are usually drawn from western accounts written in later centuries, but the situation he describes can be imputed to much earlier times because of what I believe are two characteristic and enduring "Southeast Asian" patterns.

The first is that, because influence in *mandala* society would depend on manpower at one's disposal, manpower would be sought by all available means. A handy means was the seizure of captives in warfare or raiding uplands and forests and then enslaving the population. Second, Southeast Asian societies were organized in terms of personal relationships. As Reid puts it, "loyalty was more important than law, and everybody had a master."⁶¹ What happened of importance at the apex of a *mandala* was the result of mobilizing relationships between an overlord and his vassals, entourage, and personal dependents. In time of war there would be

⁵⁶ Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers*, pp. 168-169. Also see Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce: 1450-1680*. 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1988-c.1993), pp. 137-146 on punishment in Southeast Asia in general.

⁵⁷ Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers*, p. 157.

⁵⁸ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, pp. 121-129. Moertono, noting the casual way in which the *Babad Tanah Djawi* records the ruler's orders to subjugate a region or city, concludes that "warfare . . . was a usual affair," *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 70. Ricklefs takes a harsher view of the scale of warfare in the Mataram period; M. C. Ricklefs, "Unity and Disunity in Javanese Political and Religious Thought of the Eighteenth Century," in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*, ed. V. J. H. Houben et al. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Asie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), pp. 60-75. Śiva-like rulers needed weapons on a scale not vouchsafed for in Joyce White's graves.

⁵⁹ The low intensity of warfare in spite of its likely frequency could be a comment on the slow pace of shifts in territorial power until the Burmans and Vietnamese got into their stride in more recent centuries.

⁶⁰ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, pp. 129-136. On p. 132 he is sensitive to the need to define concepts with care: "Most of the Southeast Asian terms which early European travellers translated as slave could in other circumstances be rendered as debtor, dependant, or subject."

⁶¹ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, p. 136.

mobilization downwards in society to the humblest persons who had access to manpower in the form of entourages, slaves, and bondsmen.⁶²

The usual source of bondage was the failure to pay one's debts,⁶³ a circumstance that calls attention to a crucial aspect of the Southeast Asian cultures. The very fabric of society would be threatened if personal relationships were to be disregarded and left unpunished. In this instance the relationship was between lenders and borrowers.⁶⁴

But the relationship between bondsmen and masters could also be on "Southeast Asian" terms. In Southeast Asia it was not uncommon for freemen to seek voluntarily a dependent relationship with a powerful or wealthy patron. Bondsmen could serve loyally even though they were liable to be sold. Moreover, the passing of the generations could be kind to the descendants of bondsmen and even of slaves in societies with fluid relationships. Slaves could become bondsmen and eventually mere dependents and even marry into a master's household or simply be granted their freedom. Slaves of different ethnic origin would be culturally assimilated.⁶⁵

The additional topics so far proposed as a backdrop to *manḍala* history concern human relationships involving people as numerous as the Thai farmers who stretched across mainland Southeast Asia, their neighbors in the lowlands, uplanders and those who lived in the forests, speakers of more than one language, and slaves and bondsmen. But no relationship would comprise more people than that between men and women, the topic known as "gender studies" and a field of study which hitherto did not attract my attention. Other topics, of course, also deserve to be recognized such as education, health, and attitudes towards the environment, but I doubt whether any would contribute more to rendering early Southeast Asian societies credible or, to use my earlier expression, full-bodied. Can there be wholly convincing *manḍala* history without a consideration of ways Southeast Asian societies constructed roles for men and women? The exclusion of gender relations would, I suggest, distort a society's credibility as grievously as the exclusion of social distinction would do.⁶⁶

What Reid refers to as the "relative autonomy" of women and especially their role as traders had already caught the attention of early western visitors to the

⁶² Lucien M. Hanks discusses the "circle," an entourage's extension. "A patron who summons his clients may also find the clients of these clients responding to the summons"; Lucien Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle," in *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, ed. G. W. Skinner and A. T. Kirsch. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 202.

⁶³ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, p. 131.

⁶⁴ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, p. 131 cites Galvao as stating: "They never deny their debts . . . Whoever does not avow his debt and is caught is punished by death." Reid regards "debt as a determinant of social obligation" as a "fundamental and distinguishing Southeast Asian cultural trait," *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

⁶⁶ I thank Barbara Andaya for taking trouble in introducing me to an unfamiliar field. I have incorporated some of her observations in footnotes. As she wrote in a letter dated April 30, 1997, "gender issues and the nature of male-female relationships are basic to the evolution of human societies." My correspondence with her has shown me how important it is to choose one's words with circumspection in order to avoid giving unintended offense. She queried the male-oriented terminology of my remarks on "masters" and "bondsmen," which suggested that this was only a masculine topic. I never intended to give this impression.

region,⁶⁷ but the scope of gender studies in historical perspective should not be limited to registering, encyclopedia-style, specific details and maybe stereotyped comments about females and their activities. It is not enough simply to be better informed about what women did. Gender studies should throw as much light on men as on women. Gender studies, as I understand the project, are primarily concerned with investigating how men and women thought and talked about each other, what they did to each other, how their relationships affected them, and also with the construction and understanding of masculinity and femininity in different historical contexts. The historian can then reflect on what he or she believes would contribute to a better understanding and, maybe, to an extensive revision of history in general. But one must always be aware of the danger of projecting one's own notions of gender relations backwards into earlier and still insufficiently explored cultural contexts.

Gender studies require the historian to cultivate sensibility in order to unmask male interpretations of female behavior and *vice versa*, and it is worth remembering what Suzanne Brenner has written when making a case for gender studies in fields that had hitherto neglected them: ". . . to the extent that women's and men's interpretations of gender guide and give meaning to their social actions, they deserve attention. The key is not to give so much weight to one set of interpretations that one overlooks others because they are not voiced as formally or as insistently."⁶⁸ Her advice is especially pertinent in the field of earlier Southeast Asian history where the sources are almost invariably written by males and female voices are almost unnaturally silent.

I have been impressed by the distinction gender studies make between "text" and "practice," a distinction which I take to mean between usually accepted stereotypes of male and female behavior and what actually happens.⁶⁹ In the Southeast Asian context the distinction is worth bearing in mind because the records often tend to luxuriate in metaphorical language drawn from Sanskrit literature in order to present the tone of public life esteemed by males who imagined themselves

⁶⁷ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, especially pp. 146-153. Andaya has written a valuable and comparatively focused statement on the status of women in pre-modern Southeast Asia and includes details about tenth-century Java; Barbara Watson Andaya, "Women and Economic Change: The Pepper Trade in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38.2 (1995): 165-190.

⁶⁸ Suzanne A. Brenner, "Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideologies of Gender and Self-Control," in *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 42. Barbara Andaya has brought to my notice a statement by Merry Wiesner: "A people's notions about gender shaped not only the way in which they thought about men and women, but also the way they thought about their society in general"; Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶⁹ The gender studies I refer to are essays in *Power and Difference: Gender in Island Southeast Asia*, eds. Jane Monnig Atkinson and Shelly Errington (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) and *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*. In the former volume "practice" involves the advantage performance can give men in spite of sexual equality accorded by *adat* law (see Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's essay), looking for signs of male potency (men of prowess?) in a society where women are behind-the-scene managers of information and relationships (see Ward Keeler's essay), and differential access to prize speech forms (see Joel C. Kuipers's essay). I like the term "process" and have defended textual studies because they, too, are concerned with (literary) processes at work in early Southeast Asia; 1982, p. 68.

to be living in the "Hindu world." The distinction between "text" and "practice" requires one to problemize the meaning of female "autonomy" in Southeast Asia.⁷⁰

To provide a glimpse at how familiar materials may become rather less familiar when a gender-related perspective is borne in mind, I have included in the postscript's second appendix possibilities for studying how men and women belonging to the Trần dynastic family in thirteenth and fourteenth century Vietnam thought about each other.⁷¹ Drawing on materials in the Trần Annals, I examine how, as a result of particular circumstances, men attributed authority to women and how women exercised it. The Vietnamese case illustrates a precept of gender studies: the historian must always consider what women as well as men took for granted.⁷² When studying Vietnamese texts one has to work hard to make allowances for male perspectives. In the case of the Trần Annals, the text edited by Ngô Sĩ Liên, one must also allow for the perspective of a self-styled Confucian scholar. In Trần Vietnam, for example, a figure of speech deemed appropriate by a male panegyrist for praising a courageous woman mentioned in the appendix was to compare her with a famous male tiger-tamer in ancient China, while her generous conduct of household affairs was such that she could be compared with a Confucian-style "gentleman." In both cases the standard of exemplary behavior was embodied in men.⁷³

There are probably endless possibilities for gender studies available to the historian provided that he or she can recognize them, and case studies need to be undertaken against the time when they are sufficiently numerous to leave an impression on the historical enterprise.⁷⁴ Here I note four examples, though only the third was intended as such. Their historical contexts and source materials differ, and different modes of analysis bring gender-related issues to the fore. Each example, however, touches on questions of power and powerlessness, central questions in gender studies.

⁷⁰ Jennifer Krier informs me that the present academic tendency is to reduce the status attributed to women in Southeast Asia. Men's mobility gives them the advantage in access to power.

⁷¹ See Appendix 2 below, "A sample of gender relations at the apex of Vietnamese society in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."

⁷² Brenner quotes approvingly what Gayatri Spivak has referred to as "an espousal of, and an attention to, marginality—a suspicion that what is at the center often hides a repression"; Brenner, "Why Women Rule the Roost," p. 42.

⁷³ Barbara Andaya wonders whether these compliments mean that the courageous woman is considered to become male-like. Is there a female way of showing courage or loyalty? She also asks how powerful were literary images of women in constituting a model that, in turn, helped create "reality."

⁷⁴ Gender studies permit the study of many matters: for example, the notion that female power can be dangerous and needs to be controlled; Mattiebelle Gittinger and H. Leedom Lefferts, Jr., *Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia*, The Museum (Washington, DC: The Textile Museum, 1992), pp. 198-201. Also the notion that women are a threat to ascetics; Kamala Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), chapter 5. Gender studies have their place in Joyce White's case for studying heterarchy in a Southeast Asian context; see White, "Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Socio-Political Development: The Case from Southeast Asia," in *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, ed. Robert M. Ehrenreich, Carole L. Crumley and Janet E. Levy. Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, No. 6 (Arlington, Va.: American Anthropological Association, 1995), p. 118: "the dynamics brought to light by awareness of heterarchy" are "that women have realms of, or access to economic and/or political power, and flexible roles."

P. J. Worsley and Tony Day use literary texts for their studies. Worsley studies royal life in fourteenth-century Java as it is reflected in the Court poet Mpu Tantular's kakawin, the *Arjunawijaya*, which alludes to and perhaps influenced practices and institutions in its day.⁷⁵ He suggests that the poet has identified in the intimate relationship between king and queen the essence of political success, and in the lonely absence of a queen and her restraining influence a prescription for kingly failure. Day elaborates on a similar motif when he studies female imagery in the twelfth-century Javanese epic, the *Bharatayuddha*, in order to understand better how kings ruled. This poem may be another mirror to "social reality."⁷⁶ He demonstrates how the male-oriented *ksatriya* code of conduct that shaped struggles for dominance was itself dominated by sexual politics in which female attributes associated with weakness, such as beauty, emotion, desire, and family loyalty became sources of power.⁷⁷ The degree of political instability caused by two competing and perhaps irreconcilable value systems invites further historical inquiry.

In the third study Barbara Watson Andaya confronts Western source materials written by males in order to examine how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sumatran women were affected by Dutch attempts to expand the scale of the pepper trade from a domestic basis to satisfy an overseas market.⁷⁸ Her conclusion is that Europeans, because they failed to appreciate gender divisions in working practices and land ownership, unwittingly instigated the pepper trade's demise by marginalizing the women who had dominated the production and marketing of the imported plant. This study is focused on the balance of power between men and women.

Finally, in her study of Southern Thailand, Lorraine Gesick challenges our definitions of "history" by asking what the concept might have meant to an elderly custodian of ancient sacred manuscripts who, paradoxically, was forbidden to touch

⁷⁵ P. J. Worsley, "Kakawin Arjunawijaya." I have discussed these case studies with Lorraine Nicholas Anastasio and benefited from her comments. Perhaps something may be gained perspective-wise when studies of gendered relationships are jointly undertaken by males and females. Less is likely to be overlooked.

⁷⁶ Anthony Day, "War and Death as Domestic Bliss: Locating the Dominant in the Old Javanese *Bharatayuddha*," paper presented for Session 39, "The State of Southeast Asia," 48th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (Hawaii: April 1996). He notes that support for his treatment of the poem as a representation of "social reality" comes from Helen Creese, "Love, Lust and Loyalty: Representations of Women in Traditional Javanese and Balinese Literature," a paper presented to the Fourth Women in Asia Conference (University of Melbourne: October 1993).

⁷⁷ Jane Austin in *Mansfield Park* provides an example of the bracketing of attributes when she endows Fanny Price with a combination of related attributes. Her future husband "knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading." He also noticed her question about the slave trade. He came to regard her as capable of advising him. She could form independent judgments. Here is a coherently rendered "literary" construct of an enlightened female who stood head above shoulders among the other and self-absorbed females who peopled *Mansfield Park*; Margaret Kirkham, "Edmund Bertram: A Politically Correct Hero?" *Persuasions* 17 (1995): 71-76. I am grateful to John and Peggy Mowat for bringing this article to my notice. Southeast Asian catalogues of female attributes could be scrutinized for similar bracketing.

⁷⁸ Barbara Watson Andaya, "Women and Economic Change: The Pepper Trade in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia."

them because she was a "polluting" woman.⁷⁹ In what seems to be a recurrent theme of power residing in powerlessness, Gesick identifies a female tradition of oral storytelling that flourished in the absence of female literacy. By telling stories about a "meaningful past," women effectively became custodians of "history" as Gesick defines it.

The Vietnamese empresses described in Appendix 2 energetically discharged their roles as mediators within the imperial family. The Javanese, Sumatran, and Thai women mentioned above also played variously energetic roles that would influence male roles in their societies. But the question I am bound to ask is whether Southeast Asian women in earlier times should be attributed with the vastly more energetic role of "women of prowess" and, if so, what would have been their relationship with contemporary "men of prowess"? One may even wonder whether the notion of "men of prowess" will survive flourishing gender studies. The question requires attention to be paid to innate qualities associated with women as well as to their status in society and roles in marriage alliances.⁸⁰

Men of prowess could be construed as being Śiva-like, and women, at least in Java, could be construed as Durgā-like, with the supernatural and fearful signs of Śiva's consort, Durgā. Such women would have the power to attract spouses capable of performing as men of prowess.⁸¹ Śiva and Durgā were each regarded as repositories of divine power (*sekti*). Durgā-like women or goddesses were believed to confer fertility and prosperity on the land and were honored by male rulers accordingly.⁸² Their auspicious role was not entirely different from that of the Vietnamese empresses described in Appendix 2 who helped to protect the imperial family from destroying itself by factionalism. And as recently as the middle of the nineteenth century the ruler of the Central Javanese Court of Surakarta was able to see a supernatural sign in the form of a radiant sphere of heavenly light descend on the head of his future consort.⁸³

I believe that the prospects facing the concept of men of prowess will have to be reconsidered when Southeast Asia in *maṇḍala* times becomes a field for extensive gender studies. The expressions "men of prowess" and "women of prowess" may need to be abandoned in favor of "people of prowess," and this possibility would have the merit of bringing to the fore the question of what criteria—political, religious, economic, and so forth—shared by men and women alike were to be

⁷⁹ Lorraine M. Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood: Southern Thailand and the Meaning of History* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995).

⁸⁰ Kirsch criticizes anthropologists who treat women as passive counters exchanged between groups of men. He refers to Izikowitz's study in 1951, which deals with women in upland groups on mainland Southeast Asia who may strive to enhance their own dowry and hence the bride-price they may command. The implication is that such women are "as vitally concerned with achievement of status within these groups as are men"; A. Thomas Kirsch, *Feasting and Social Oscillation: Religion and Society in Upland Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1973), p. 24, n. 30.

⁸¹ Peter Carey and Vincent Houben, "Spirited Srikandhis and Sly Sumbadras: The Social, Political and Economic Role of Women at the Central Javanese Courts in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries," in *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*, ed. Elsbeth Locker-Scholten and Anke Niehof (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1987), pp. 13-17. This article is a mine of information on gender-related matters in Java.

⁸² The serpent princess in Angkor is a familiar example; 1982, p. 85.

⁸³ Pemberton, *On the Subject of Java* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 80.

associated with the manifestation of extraordinary qualities. The possibility also arises that in the future, if not already, the criteria of prowess may change.

I had two intentions when I decided to broach perspectives I had ignored earlier, though I doubted whether I had the skills to discuss the topic of gender studies.⁸⁴ The first was to inquire how far the additional perspectives would provide an improved backdrop for *mandala* history. The other intention was to discover whether the additional perspectives would require me to modify my earlier approach or whether I would continue to find what I was looking for.

To take the second intention first, I believe that I do not have to revise my sense that a gradual and relaxed pace of happenings characterized *mandala* Southeast Asia. Richard O'Connor gives me reason to suppose that there was a Thai presence in the lowlands long before Thai epigraphic evidence begins in the thirteenth century, and this could have increased the strain on the Angkorian *mandala* some time before the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the decline of Angkor becomes evident in written records.⁸⁵ I am still confident that the Southeast Asian past can be characterized as a record of substantial continuity rather than abrupt changes. I noted hints of ethnic assimilation in the wake of agricultural innovation on the mainland and a reasonable probability of reduced tension in the lowlands on account of a Southeast Asian flair for multilingualism and for updating knowledge, including technical knowledge. Bearing in mind what O'Connor has referred to as the region's "polyglots," the historian can presume that successful overlords ruled over less intractable subjects, that borders were genuinely porous, and that lexicographical and even ideological borrowings were facilitated. In these respects my impression of an ethnically fluid state of affairs may not be too far-fetched in spite of what may have been a high level of tournament-style warfare to test prowess in a world where manpower was too precious to be slaughtered.

Moreover, I have attempted, rightly, I believe, to designate a place in history for the whole of the region's population. As part of the historical backdrop on the mainland and in the islands, one can visualize fracas between the inhabitants of the lowlands and the uplands or forest. Perhaps tension would be heightened when the volume of trade between Southeast Asia and the other countries of the "single ocean" was increasing. In particular, a synchronism can be expected between an expansion of Chinese shipping activity overseas and the lowlanders' depredations and demands for tribute at the expense of uplanders and forest inhabitants. This development would have got under way from the tenth and eleventh centuries onwards. The hoards of Sung, Yuan, and Ming sherds found in innumerable sites would be an index of increasingly intense pressure on those who lived on the fringes

⁸⁴ Nor am I qualified to pursue the subject of women as ritual consorts in tantric systems; see 1982, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁵ Anthony Reid has proposed that the period corresponding more or less to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a time of unprecedented Southeast Asian commercial activity, stimulated by "an explosion of Chinese maritime activity" as well as by European demands for the region's products. Unfortunately, earlier boom centuries lack comparable documentary materials for putting the later centuries into a more realistic perspective; Anthony Reid, "Introduction: A Time and a Place," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 1-19.

of the *mandalas*.⁸⁶ A further stimulus to international trade would have come from the Fātimid port of Fustāt in Egypt in the tenth and into the twelfth centuries and later from the Mamlūks. Southeast Asia's international commerce as well as debt-bondage would be causes of unequal human relationships.⁸⁷ Southeast Asia was always a region where networks of personal relationships were complex and comprised much more than direct interactions between overlords and their vassals or entourage.

Barbara Andaya, who introduced me to gender studies, believes that the field may contain opportunities for identifying local differences in male-female relations.⁸⁸ For me, this is a timely observation when I complete this section of the postscript because an effect of my expanded range of perspectives has been to strengthen my impression of Southeast Asia's regional identity.

In 1982 my plea had been for the study of the region's various local cultures.⁸⁹ I asserted that only when more was known about them would we be able to resume inquiring into the possibility of a regional shape to early Southeast Asian history. My approach today has changed, even though I continue to believe that the basis for the region's identity must still rest on shared cultural traits and historical experience rather than on persisting inter-*mandala* impingement on each other's affairs on the scale we can associate with Europe. But this does not mean that I am no longer interested in local cultures or local histories. On the contrary, the emphasis I have now accorded to region-wide aspects of early Southeast Asian experience makes it, in my opinion, more necessary than ever to pay attention to the study of what I now like to consider as local cultural nuances and preoccupations that remind us that, in addition to regional characteristics found more or less in most localities, there were still ways in which localities could differ from each other.

In 1982 I made a clumsy transition from the issue of whether Southeast Asia could be studied as "regional" history to my hunch that the study of local histories

⁸⁶ The volume of porcelain exported from Southern China in the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries is dramatically demonstrated by a cargo of more than 31,000 undamaged ceramic items recovered from a wreck in the Lingga Archipelago. The ship was probably sailing from China to a harbor in the neighborhood of Jambi, at that time the self-proclaimed coastal hegemon in southeastern Sumatra. Only a few items were of superior quality, which indicates how far down in local society the taste for Chinese porcelain had penetrated; Abu Ridho and E. Edwards McKinnon, *The Pulau Buaya Wreck: Finds from the Song Period*, ed. Sumarah Adhyatma (Jakarta: The Ceramic Society of Indonesia Monograph Series No. 18, 1998).

⁸⁷ Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells supplies a key perspective that spans all boom periods when she reminds us that in the later period there were no European-type accumulations of capital. Everything depended on political patronage. Commercial favors were personal ones and could be forfeited at any time. Merchants could not save or plan for the future. Economic activity belonged only to the present; Kathirithamby-Wells, "Restraints on the Development of Merchant Capitalism in Southeast Asia before c. 1800," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 136-143 and especially p. 142. We are again dealing with personal relations and present-mindedness.

⁸⁸ "In other instances, however, research may reveal very different ways in which the women and men of specific communities developed their own understanding of gender, and how these influenced notions of the family and relationships between the sexes"; her letter dated April 30, 1997. Barbara Andaya has also passed on to me Merry Wiesner's advice: the historical experience of women was not uniform; we must therefore be wary about comments such as "the status of women." The role of gender in determining the historical experience of men and women varied over time, and from group to group.

⁸⁹ 1982, p. 50.

was preferable at the present stage in our knowledge. It suited my purpose to note what Henri Brugmans had written about organizing a general shape to European history around the notion of an always developing common cultural heritage as my first step in trying to demolish the case for a regional history.⁹⁰ Fifteen years later the case against a regional history is no longer a concern, but this does not mean that European history need no longer provide the Southeast Asian historian with useful guidelines.

John Hale's beautifully written *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* provides such guidelines because it illustrates how a skillful author may take note of local cultural nuances and preoccupations which need to be stressed to protect them from being ignored or even smothered under the weight of region-scale generalities and, perhaps today, of globalizing developments.⁹¹

Hale reminds us that "it is Italy that has traditionally been seen as representing the cultural tone of Renaissance Europe. It was there that scholars first put the present in touch with the life of classical antiquity, there that contemporary achievement in learning, literature and the arts was most consciously seen as a re-emergence of long-buried talent."⁹² But he then proceeds to issue a word of caution: the term Renaissance "loses much of its appropriateness when transplanted from peninsular soil. It becomes a medal to congratulate the acceptance of an Italian flavor within another country's culture ('the Renaissance in Spain') or simply the achievement of a largely native peak of creative ebullience ('the English Renaissance')."⁹³ The word "medal" is an inspired one because it conjures up self-esteem. Hale's statement, if one were to substitute "Indian" or "Hindu" for "Italian," provides a paradigm for studying cultural developments in early Southeast Asia and especially for studying what distinguished one local culture from another and how people in Southeast Asia as well as in Renaissance Europe made sense of what came from outside.

Hale graphically illustrates his perspective on the Renaissance. ". . . [I]mports from Italy," he writes, "no more transformed a country's indigenous culture than did the spices imported from Venice add more than an exotic flavour to its tables."⁹⁴ Or again, "cultural traditions, social requirements and intellectual appetites differed from country to country. There could be no uniform pattern of consumption as far as

⁹⁰ 1982, pp. 40-41.

⁹¹ John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (New York: Touchstone edition, 1995). There is, of course, much in Hale's volume to invite comparisons between Europe and Southeast Asia such as, for example, his discussion of how each region did or did not recognize itself as a region and how affairs of various polities may have impinged on each other. More interesting are some Southeast Asian-type phenomena apparent in Renaissance Europe such as the importance attached to diplomatic skills, what Hale refers to as "the marriage traffic" between princes, the relative absence of hereditary ruling families, the attraction of public life in the service of rulers, the Court as the locus of personal rule, the significance of Court clothing, rivalries among the rulers' subordinates, propaganda to emphasize the virtue of unchallenged authority and constraints on authority that required "operating within the pragmatic context of getting things done." Rulers could not enforce obedience.

⁹² Hale, *The Civilization of Europe*, p. 321.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

learning, literature and the arts were concerned."⁹⁵ Another of his observations explains quite clearly why his volume appeals to me. Humanism, fanning out from Italy, was "chiefly a tool for the reshaping of their own preoccupations and ways of expressing them."⁹⁶

Hale's discussion of how the influence of the Italian Renaissance was exerted beyond the Italian peninsula according to what specific local cultures deemed important required him to use a terminology that historians of early Southeast Asia may find helpful. North of the Alps artists and scholars in general "rephrased," "interpreted," "were ready to absorb," combined what was new and fashionable within a style that was "congenial because regionally familiar," satisfied "local demands," submitted to "local adaptation," and "readily acclimatized."⁹⁷ Terms such as these are equivalencies of the process I described in 1982 as "localization."

One further point, with a bearing on early Southeast Asian history, emerges from Hale's materials. The classical authors were admired in Europe not only for their knowledge or particular expertise but also as models from which to learn about important matters such as statescraft.⁹⁸ Antiquity was useful.⁹⁹ Sir Francis Walsingham in Elizabeth I's reign told a friend how "flexibly" the new knowledge could be usefully applied.¹⁰⁰ In 1982 I suggested that Southeast Asian scholars regarded Indian materials as both flexible and useful.¹⁰¹

My interest in Hale's approach is enhanced by his insistence that Italian cultural stimuli first had to make sense in terms of non-Italian concerns and skills before they were able to exert an influence elsewhere. As noted above, he insists that Italian humanism was used by non-Italians as a "tool for reshaping" their own ideas of the world.¹⁰² When self-ascribed Southeast Asian "Hindus" removed Sanskrit materials from their original context (fracture or fragment them were my terms in 1982), the fragments would then "retreat into something else" to become "localized" and belong to a new cultural whole.¹⁰³ The process would constitute "a local statement" about something else that the host culture made about itself.¹⁰⁴ "Local statements" and the "something else" would explain sub-regional nuances.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁹⁷ On "Netherlandish artists," see *ibid.*, pp. 226 and 228; on north of the Alps in general, *ibid.*, pp. 229, 332, and 325. "As in France, humanism in England had become readily acclimatized," says Hale; *ibid.*, p. 343.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁹⁹ One thinks of Vietnamese appeals to Chinese antiquity when it served their purpose to make them.

¹⁰⁰ Hale, *The Civilization of Europe*, p. 192.

¹⁰¹ 1982, pp. 47-49.

¹⁰² Hale, *The Civilization of Europe*, p. 325.

¹⁰³ "Localization" assumes, of course, that what was localized had originally made a considerable impression even though it had to be locally construed. I believe that the Hindu *bhakti* movement, with its flamboyant practitioners, made such an impression when it reached early Southeast Asia.

¹⁰⁴ 1982, pp. 55-57. In note 63 on page 57 I disclaim "localization" as an original idea.

¹⁰⁵ Hale mentions instances of "something else." Here is a sample: the German concern for painting and sculpture, though Luther's influence extinguished enthusiasm for humanism; an interest in the Netherlands in painting the effect of commercial enterprise on the contemporary scene; the French aptitude for "exploiting the promise of their own tongue,"

In 1982 I proposed a number of preoccupations that resulted in "local statements," each calling attention to "something else" which could be recovered from foreign materials localized in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁶ I hasten to add that only the awareness of a "something else" prevents the notion of "localization" from being trivial. These "local statements," generated from interactions between foreign fragments and indigeneous preoccupations, comprised a range of experiences: for example, relationships between local spirits and the "Hindu" pantheon and how religious and political relationships overlapped in Khmer elitist society; the dispersal of foreign materials in Khmer and Malay society; the value of royal gifts in Malay society; the blending of tantric and indigenous notions of sanctity in Borneo; how Viṣṇu in Balinese society came to represent new men from the periphery of ancestor groups; the Tagalog localization of Christ's Passion; how Angkor Wat, with its profusion of Hindu materials, represented the privilege of living in Sūryavarman II's generation¹⁰⁷; a Vietnamese local statement that called attention to the novelty of the Vietnamese dynastic institution.¹⁰⁸

One awaits the day when there will appear a study of "Hinduized" Southeast Asia comparable with Hale's penetrating analysis of European cultural diversity in Renaissance times. Hale has set a high standard for those who attempt comparative studies of cultural differences by examining varying local responses to a common exposure to outside influences—be they the Italian Renaissance, Hinduism, Buddhism, or contemporary elements of western modernity.¹⁰⁹ Only when that day comes will a full-bodied regional study of local nuances as well as shared cultural traits take shape, and it will have to depend on a background of comparative studies by scholars in the habit of looking over their shoulders at the work of colleagues in other parts of Southeast Asia.

In 1982 I argued on behalf of literature as one means of studying local cultures and especially literary conventions *en vogue* in specific local cultures.¹¹⁰ Today I prefer the term "writing" rather than "literature" because it encourages one to focus on processes whereby language is used to produce meaning. As I remarked earlier, literary studies in this sense can bring us closer to actual happenings, or how minds worked. Moreover, the study of "writing" enables one to avoid the issue of what constitutes "great literature."

In this section of the postscript, my concern has been to enlarge my regional perspectives. The next section will have a different focus. I shall be interested in textual study for the sake of recuperating themes supporting local statements and preoccupations, or, in other words, clarifying themes that influenced what local people chose to write and how they did so. Whether foreign materials were localized

and the way the mood of the Renaissance stimulated "the peculiarly English addiction to theatrical experience."

¹⁰⁶ 1982, pp. 58-66.

¹⁰⁷ Eleanor Mannikka's book is now out: *Angkor Wat: Time, Space, and Kingship* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁸ 1982, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁹ Hale's study brings home to me that in 1982 I had paid perfunctory attention to instances of differing Southeast Asian local receptions of Indian materials. I merely glanced at Barry Hooker on law (p. 51), James Boon on Bali and Java (pp. 56-57), and A. Thomas Kirsch on Buddhism in Thailand and Burma (p. 52).

¹¹⁰ 1982, pp. 65-66 and 68-70.

or whether two or more localities shared common preoccupations will not be important in this next analysis. When I attempt "literary" comparisons, it will only be to indicate possibilities for further study. Others with appropriate competence may develop or challenge my framework of inquiry. A glance at *South-East Asia. Languages and Literatures: A Select Guide*, edited by Herbert and Milner, will be sufficient to show that I am dealing with only some of the *genres* in question and with only a fraction of what happens for various reasons to be accessible to me.

If the reader becomes aware of inconsequential shifts of focus from one part of the region to another, the sensation will accentuate the impression that particular localities are being foregrounded for their own sake. This is the effect the next section is intended to give. At least the localities in question may appear less anonymous, and this was also my aim when, at the beginning of Section III, I digressed to say something about Dvāravati and southwestern Sumatra. To refer again to Lorraine Gesick's expression, we may get a little closer to overhearing the "conversations" of some people in earlier times.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Gesick, *In The Land of Lady White Blood*, p. 48.

LOCAL WRITING

One general preoccupation was with good writing for various purposes. In 1982 I noted Anthony Day's observation that Old-Javanese *kakawin* (poetry in Indian meters), when written about the landscape, perceived landscape as "a setting for poetic composition which does not refer to the natural world but to the processes of poetic writing."¹ The processes included the maximum recourse to "verbal ornamentation" (*alamkāra*).² Zoetmulder, for his part, believed that the use of religious language in landscape poetry enabled the poet to experience a trance-like union with divinity achieved by language about nature but not by nature itself.³

Here are two striking instances of local preoccupations exposed by literary study, each supplying a particular reason for good writing. Shelly Errington noted a literary feature of Malay *hikayat*: the provision of sound effects in writing intended to be read aloud.⁴ The *hikayat*'s language of politeness and courtly speech is "sounded" to enable listeners to hear an admirable style of speech. In Malay society, language defined the shape of human relations; polite behavior was synonymous with addressing people properly.⁵ Human relationships, a controlling factor in *manḍala* history, reappear in a literary context.

Fascination with language was not confined to the island world. Judith Jacob has noted the Cambodians' love for verbal play and sophistry.⁶ The way in which poetry lends itself to song is a special Cambodian feature; a feeling for music and rhythm is combined with "a remarkable facility with words."⁷ She notes two characteristically Southeast Asian categories of songs,⁸ though the attitude towards nature manifested in Khmer narrative poetry, written for pleasure, distinguishes itself from that of the Javanese *kakawin*. Nature is an occasion for verbal alliteration and assonance, and

¹ 1982, pp. 86-87.

² *Alamkāra* has also been noted in Cambodian inscriptions. 1982, p. 87 and Appendix C.

³ 1982, pp. 99-101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 87 and 101-102. For a correspondence between Old-Javanese and Moslem-Malay concepts of the beautiful and their effect on the soul, see V. F. Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993), p. 88.

⁵ Javanese speech differences according to status come to mind.

⁶ Judith M. Jacob, *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia: A Preliminary Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 17.

⁷ Jacob says that "a tendency towards wistfulness characterizes Khmer songs . . ."; *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

flowers and plants in themselves are not the object of the poet's interest. The poet wants to show off his poetic skills.⁹

Southeast Asian writing and writing everywhere relies on conventional literary devices¹⁰ that render their texts readable by alerting readers to how texts work as "texts."¹¹ Three such devices are reiteration or repetition, pauses for reflecting on what has been written, and metaphor. All these assist texts in conveying meaning. Though the same devices are likely to be found in several local literatures or even in all of them, they are still worth noting especially when they signify what deserves emphasis.

Repetition is an obvious way of emphasizing what a local culture regarded as being important. According to Shelly Errington, repetition is associated with *hikayat* language when a major Malay preoccupation—courtly speech and behavior—is involved.¹²

The inscription about Devānika in Appendix 1 suggests an immoderate amount of emphasis; the man of prowess is compared with numerous heroes in the Hindu epic, and several verses from the epic are adapted to authenticate his pool's holy properties. Khmer folktales about humans often attribute them with recurring experiences¹³; similar adventures happen to heroes and heroines in narrative poetry, where the purpose may be to entertain by giving listeners what they would expect and thereby prevent interest from flagging.¹⁴ Vietnamese tales of the tutelary spirits, where almost identical events occur in each tale even if their sequence may vary slightly, also contain a great deal of recurrent language. For example, we frequently read of "fear," "amazement," and "comprehension" when spirits miraculously make themselves known. Heroism is invariably displayed in wars against Chinese and Chams.¹⁵ The tales' message justifies the maximum amount of repetition: a successful ruler must be able to understand supernatural or human signs of assistance in a country beset by perils but rich in supernatural power and not lacking in men of exceptional prowess. The Vietnamese tales are about leadership or, more precisely, canons of behavior to be observed by those who govern. In the dangerous Trần times this needed to be emphasized.

Lorraine Gesick has discussed a special function of repetition, illustrated by a Peninsular Thai practice of gaining royal approval for recopying earlier royal decrees (*tamra*) in favor of monastic property into the latest decree. In this way the royal voice-laden and supernatural authority of the earlier *tamras* would be reactivated

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ On conventions that have interested me, see 1982, pp. 88-89 and Wolters, *Two Essays on Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*. The Lac-Viet Series, no. 9 (New Haven: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988), p. viii.

¹¹ Lorraine Gesick pays proper attention to conventions. A text must make sense by articulating "meaning through a set of conventions"; Lorraine Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood: Southern Thailand and the Meaning of History* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995), p. 22.

¹² 1982, p. 101.

¹³ Jacob, *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia*, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁵ See Wolters, *Two Essays*, p. xvi, and Wolters, "On Telling a Story of Vietnam in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 67.

and enhance the authority of the new one.¹⁶ The purpose was to secure the perpetual autonomy of the monasteries mentioned in the *tamra*.

Gesick's study of local history attests to what she describes as "the stubbornness of locality,"¹⁷ and this is the context in which she invites us to conceptualize local history in the Phatthalung area of Peninsular Thailand as a "conversation," when each monastery and *tamra*-owning community in the area asserts its autonomy.¹⁸ The *tamras'* royal utterances were not regarded as talismans but as guarantees.¹⁹ As she puts it, the local "conversation" would be a "multi-vocal historical discourse" about the security vouchsafed by the royal grants in each *tamra*, the relative purity of each monastic lineage, sacred relics, and a plethora of stories woven around sites in the area where something remarkable or even dangerous was believed to have happened and would not be forgotten.

A second literary device for emphasizing matters of importance is to give the reader opportunities to reflect on what is written. Worsley's explication of the bas-relief of Candi Surawana provides a good example.²⁰ Texts need not be in writing; in Appendix 3 I mention two texts inscribed in the form of Javanese bas-relief. In 1984 he and I, presenting seminar papers on the same day, happened to suggest that our texts of fourteenth-century Java and fifteenth-century Vietnam each employed this narrational device. Worsley believed that the narrative disorder he discussed in his paper was a "deliberate strategy."²¹ The disorder was caused by the interception of the major text, the *Arjunawiwaha*, by two other texts, and the reason was "the opportunity which their citation provides for reflection" upon the major text.²² The minor texts were introduced to direct the maximum attention to the major text, which emphasized the qualities of Arjuna, an exemplary warrior. In the *Arjunawiwaha* men and women are a synecdoche for the world of human society. The juxtaposition of the three texts would enable the viewer to reflect on the example set in the major text where the warrior Arjuna resists the sexual temptations illustrated by the two minor texts.²³

¹⁶ Gesick, *Lady White Blood*, pp. 27-32. Gesick stresses the importance of punctuational devices for separating the different *tamras*; *ibid.*, pp. 44-46.

¹⁷ Gesick, *Lady White Blood*, p. 3. On the same page she refers to "historical sensibilities" as a tool "for investigating the many different ways different human communities have imagined their pasts." She returns to this notion on pp. 17-18, where she throws down the gauntlet on behalf of a "History" which is more than a study of "documentary sources" or the nature of cause and effect or, in other words, of western historical sensibilities.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. The "conversation" she has in mind is multi-vocal in the sense of representing overlapping local histories, or "the business of the people who inhabited those localities"; *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁰ See Appendix 3.

²¹ Peter Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs at Candi Surawana," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 347.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 342.

²³ In a review of the seminar's published proceedings, Lorraine Gesick expressed misgivings concerning the bas-reliefs' gender perspectives; Lorraine Gesick, "Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries: The Dead Past Lives," *Asian Studies Association of Australia Review* (November 1989), p. 155. See Appendix 3 below, note 9.

The function of the bas-relief's device in enabling the viewer to reflect on its meaning resembles a Chinese annalistic device adopted by Vietnamese historians, including the fifteenth century historian Phan Phu Tiên. Tiên frequently interrupted his year-by-year and month-by-month narrative chronicle with contrived and often lengthy "pauses" beginning with such expressions as "at that time." His didactic intention was to linger on aspects of the narrative so that the reader would be bound to note and ponder over them. His pauses enabled him to make his key statement in respect of the years 1293-1357 of the Trần dynasty that government "at that time" was satisfactory.²⁴ Thus, in Java and Vietnam in approximately the same period, a need was felt to stress in stone or writing ascetic or man-management aspects of government. In both instances the texts contrived to foreground something of importance.

Metaphor is a recourse for familiarizing the unfamiliar and is also the third emphatic device. It is difficult to study a Southeast Asian text without stumbling on examples of metaphorical usage. Metaphor's two functions can overlap, as they do in my three Appendices. In the first, metaphor helps to delineate Devānīka and his bathing pool's efficacy as a pilgrimage center; in the second, the Vietnamese princess is portrayed as possessing superlative masculine virtues; and, in the third, the Candi Sukoh's bas-relief message relies on the devices of metaphor and equivalence, and the ideal Javanese warrior is presented as the ascetic Arjuna on the Candi Surawana's bas-relief.

The sea has been a prominent and familiar feature of Southeast Asian history and especially in the context of Malay history. In his study of the meaning of boat symbolism in island Southeast Asia, Pierre-Yves Manguin has identified and explored an important instance of metaphorical usage in Indonesia.²⁵ The topic requires him to survey a wide geographical area and continually shift his focus from one part of the region to another in the manner I warned the reader that I would do in this section. His study is undoubtedly an authentic "literary" one. The "writings" are manifold and comprise *hikayats* (that are often in highly ornate and repetitive language)²⁶; *pantuns*, inscriptions, and also visual materials such as southern Sumatran textiles or ritual behavior that included *rites de passage* and the ceremonial trappings of great State occasions. His "texts" are diverse, but they always require him to use a vocabulary appropriate in literary criticism and especially the term "metaphor" for understanding the meaning of allusions to boats in indigenous written and oral sources. Manguin's texts are about "the development of political systems."²⁷ Evidently, the boat was conventionally used in island Southeast Asia as the metaphor for emphasizing the meaning and importance of an "ordered social

²⁴ O. W. Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading of the 1293-1357 Period in the Vietnamese Annals" in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 376. The article was an extended "reading" of a portion of the Trần Annals by means of structural analysis; for a summary, see *ibid.*, pp. 396-400. I mention the results of the analysis on page 199 below.

²⁵ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Shipsape Societies: Boat Symbolism and Political Systems in Insular Southeast Asia," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 187-207.

²⁶ Manguin, "Shipsape Societies," pp. 194-195.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

group,"²⁸ whether it be an organized social unit²⁹ or the spatial classification of social groups within a larger social framework.³⁰

Manguin resourcefully develops his analysis of the boat metaphor as a tool for estimating the effect of the passage of time on the organization of societies by proposing a progression from a time when a "boatload" was used as the model for the household³¹ or alliance of families³² to times when it referred to small-scale political systems,³³ and then to large and hierarchical units where the "shipmaster" realistically signifies the ruler and the helmsman the *bendahara*.³⁴ Manguin's inventory of metaphorical usage has a further implication. He notes that the boat motif is rich at the eastern end of the archipelago and among Malay societies at the western end from Sriwijaya onwards, whereas early Javanese political systems by no means followed the pattern so extensively.³⁵ Perhaps the continuing prominence of the boat symbolism at opposite ends of the archipelago reflects the style of political system in pre-Hindu and pre-Muslim time and the style that persisted *mutatis mutandis* thereafter.³⁶

Manguin has provided "text"-based evidence for considering a major difference within the Malay and Javanese societies of island Southeast Asia. This is not the only scholarly opportunity arising from his study. He also reminds us of the need for discipline on board ship. Everyone must occupy the correct place. The boat metaphor would therefore be an apt one in an ocean-going society, where disciplined and hierarchical distinctions were necessary to ensure safety and great mobility.³⁷ The reader may recall Joyce White's argument that archaeological research in mainland Southeast Asia pointed to heterarchic rather than hierarchical situations in prehistoric times. I remarked that the concept of heterarchy needed to be tested further and especially in the archipelago.³⁸ Would her model be inapplicable when studying scattered maritime Malay societies, where hierarchic behavior on board ship was an indispensable fact of life during adventures at sea (whether in long-distance trade or *manḍala* -controlling operations) and where such behavior would therefore also be instinctive ashore? On the mainland and in inland Java heterarchic

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

³⁶ This is Manguin's suggestion on p. 202. For other suggestions concerning pre-Hindu society in Southeast Asia, see note 20 on p. 112 above for Guernonprez's surmise about Balinese "men of prowess" in pre-Hindu times and note 9 on p. 127 above on Vickery's hypothesis that the *poni*, often associated with man-made ponds, are the earliest known Cambodian chiefs of small communities.

³⁷ Warships were the indispensable component in the Malacca way of life. For example, according to the Malay Annals a naval expedition had to be sent to enforce the obedience of the Pahang vassal on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; "Séjarah Melayu or 'Malay Annals': A Translation of Raffles MS 18 (in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society, London) with commentary by C. C. Brown": 92.

³⁸ See pp. 124-125 above.

tendencies would be encouraged by the combination of bilateral kinship systems that did not tie one to a particular location and where there was ample space for settling elsewhere if circumstances made it desirable to do so, whereas Malay space in the form of ships, ports, and estuaries would tend to be enclosed. Maier has suggested that the notion of "enclosure" helps to explain why Malay texts are so concerned with defining the relationships within a community. Relationships protect the community. He also notes that Malays, in their texts, are always fearful of being without a ruler (captain).³⁹ Perhaps social and political discipline should be accounted a particular preoccupation in Malay society and writing.

Manguin, surveying the whole of the archipelago, has identified a variety of local nuances in the "boat" metaphor.⁴⁰ Keith Taylor's study of cultural diversity during recent centuries in the territory we call Vietnam⁴¹ is an example of how paying attention to writing can contest what at first sight seems to be unbroken cultural uniformity and reveal instead what Lorraine Gesick calls "the stubbornness of locality" or, as Taylor would wish to qualify the expression, "what these people we call Vietnamese were doing at particular times and places."⁴² I shall note briefly how he "reads" some local poems.

Of Đào Duy Từ (1572-1634), a poet born in Thanh-hóa not far south of the Red River plain but whose life was spent further south in Quảng Bình and Quảng Trị, Taylor says that his poems suggest "a sense of freedom and self-confidence without regard for convention, history, or ancestors."⁴³ Similar cultural traits were, I believe, shared by those who lived in the relatively relaxed polities of "Hindu" Southeast Asia. These traits were still visible in Vietnam as late as the fourteenth century and help to explain Ngô Sĩ Liên's disgust when he commented on public behavior under the Trần dynasty.⁴⁴ Taylor contrasts Từ's poems with those of the northern poet Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491-1585), who, according to Taylor, sees the world as dangerous, full of human greed, violence, confusion, and competition, constrained by cyclical time, and requiring self-cultivation by persons such as he.⁴⁵ One marked difference is that Khiêm acknowledges the importance of family responsibilities and settled living, whereas Từ's imagination roams as far as possible "from home and altar."⁴⁶ And by the eighteenth century some Vietnamese had migrated far south, where Mạc Thiên Tích (-1780) wrote poems with a sense of "expectancy, change,

³⁹ On open space in the mainland, see p. 156 and p. 162 fn. 45 above and p. 136 above on diffuse settlement patterns in Java. I am grateful to H. M. J. Maier for sharing his views with me in a letter dated January 6, 1998.

⁴⁰ The nuances include the contexts of the *suku* in southern Sumatra, Court ware in central Java and Perak, and "the ship of State" in Perak.

⁴¹ See p. 147 fn. 123 above. References below cite Taylor's manuscript. For Taylor's 1998 article published from the manuscript, please see bibliography.

⁴² From Taylor's manuscript, p. 15. We would find "quite different kinds of people whose view of themselves and of others was in some significant degree grounded in the particular terrain in which they dwelled and in the cultural exchanges available in that terrain."

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ See pp. 146-147 above.

⁴⁵ Taylor's manuscript, p. 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 23. Ngô Sĩ Liên would have applauded Khiêm's values.

variety and possibility, of freedom and non-discrimination."⁴⁷ The following couplet captures his mood:

Life's vicissitudes have passed through many years, and elegant
literary compositions are heterodox;
Human affairs incessantly change and appearances are many.⁴⁸

Taylor suggests that the southern poet insists that literary habits are bound to change in the distant south and that no apology is necessary for heterodoxy. Ngô Sĩ Liên would have repudiated his blatant non-conformist outlook.

I have mentioned a few examples from different parts of the region that illustrate the care taken to produce good writing and sound effects. I do not pretend to identify and compare local literary nuances, though differing Javanese and Khmer literary attitudes towards nature may be an instance. Instead, I am interested in writing conventions and especially those connected with emphatic devices that threw into relief local preoccupations, no doubt shared over the region, such as good writing for its own sake, the delineation of heroes, lessons for rulers, and maximizing the power of the royal voice.

I have not yet discussed notable instances of localized foreign materials. Some of the texts mentioned above may be modeled on foreign *genre* but, with the exception of those in the Appendices, have not drawn heavily on foreign materials.⁴⁹ I shall now consider instances of localized and reworked foreign materials in which literary nuances, local statements, or preoccupations—all susceptible to textual study—are more prominent.

I shall first note straightforward examples of what could happen when foreign materials originally in the form of the illustrious Hindu epic, the *Rāmāyana*, were appropriated by local cultures. The epic, already mentioned in pre-Angkorian inscriptions,⁵⁰ was adapted in Southeast Asia as convincingly as "imports from Italy" were "adapted" north of the Alps.⁵¹ The Thai *Rāmākien* of Rāma I's reign (1782-1809) unmistakably reflects local values such as reverence for the king⁵²; in this Thai version of the *Rāmāyana*, Rāma's divine nature is stressed in a way not found in Vālmiki's version.⁵³ The Thai penchant for feasting guests and respect for kinship ties, another departure from the original version, are also reflected.⁵⁴ The Thai

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ The *kakawin* used Indian meters, the Vietnamese Annals were modeled on Sū-ma Kuang's *Tzu chih- i' ung-chien*, and the *Hikayat* genre was an amalgam of Persian popular tales but with a prototype in Old Malay literature, and of Muslim genealogical historiography; Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974); Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," pp. 370-372 and 401; Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁰ George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 291, note 83.

⁵¹ See pp. 172-173 above.

⁵² Srisurang Poolthupya, "Thai Customs and Social Values in the Rāmākien," *The Southeast Asian Review* 5,2 (December 1980): 49.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. On page 59 another departure is noted in respect of gratitude. Here is a further instance of the value attached to personal relationships in Southeast Asian cultures.

version is a Buddhist text, and in it the Buddhist concept of *karma* binds all in a manner that distinguishes it from the Hindu text.⁵⁵

A more dramatic transformation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* occurred in Cambodia between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries in the form of the *Rāmakerti*.⁵⁶ In it Buddhist nuances abound. Rāma is simultaneously the brahmanical Viṣṇu, a Buddha, and a bodhisattva, and his mission is to lead all creatures to deliverance. Saveros Pou defines the "classical" Khmer text not as "a simple echo of the Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* but the creation of an indigenous people of Southeast Asia, fervently Buddhist, who composed a libretto for a dance-theatre on an Indian theme."⁵⁷ Chains of events were not a preoccupation of the poets involved.⁵⁸

Are the Thai writers going out of their way to emphasize their "Thai" Buddhism and are the Khmer ones leaving their Buddhist allegiance in even less doubt? Were the Khmers more aware of a "Hindu" past than the Thai were, or may Saveros Pou happen to know more about the past than Srisurang Poolthupya does? There are those who could explore further the differences between the two localized versions of the epic. One thing seems clear. In both cases local poets have taken the initiative in reworking a foreign text in order to update it and make it conform with new and Buddhist preoccupations. They are making statements about something besides Rāma. The world that matters to them is Buddhist.

The next instance of reworked localized foreign materials is provided by Vietnamese pastoral poetry of the fourteenth century, the *corpus* of Vietnamese poetry with which I am most familiar. What is now remarkable is the thoroughness of the localization rather than the extent to which foreign materials were deliberately reworked.

In Section III I was at pains to bring Vietnamese historical experience more into the mainstream of early Southeast Asian history, yet it is a striking fact that, in the crucial matter of literary *genre* and linguistic usage, the appearance of Chinese influence is overwhelming in Vietnam before the fifteenth century, and probably later. Vietnamese poets made ample use of the Chinese language, lexicon, and verse forms and were familiar with the work of the major Chinese poets.⁵⁹ What they wrote is appropriately known as "Sino-Vietnamese" poetry, and Chinese scholars could be excused for attributing Vietnamese poems, redolent with Chinese poetic language, to Chinese authors. Vietnamese poets had taken extraordinary care to master the rules of Chinese prosody in order to write well.⁶⁰ Moreover, in the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62. Many places in Thailand are known by the epic's toponyms. This kind of identification is as old as Southeast Asian protohistory, when local "Hindus" were able to identify themselves and their locations with the "Hindu" world, as they did when, by mental effort, they visualized "Kuruksetra" in the Vat Phu area; see Appendix 1.

⁵⁶ Saveros Pou, "Les traits bouddhiques du *Rāmakerti*," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 62 (1975): 355-368.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 358. Also see pp. 362, 364, 365, and 367.

⁵⁹ See Huỳnh Sanh Thông, *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. xxvii for a summary of Vietnamese poetic usage.

⁶⁰ Here are two examples. The second couplet in Chinese poems of four couplets usually describes a landscape scene, yet the second couplets in "diplomatic" poems written by Vietnamese rulers to Chinese envoys sometimes artfully profess to describe the friendly relations between the Chinese suzerain and his Vietnamese vassal. Human relations can plausibly be understood as occupying the scene. See the second couplet of Phạm Mai's poem

fourteenth century they were anxious to proclaim their work as "poems" by including the Chinese word for poetry (Chinese, *shih*; Vietnamese, *thơ*) in what they wrote. Their poems did not hesitate to mention names of outstanding Chinese poets such as T'ao Yüan, Li Po, and Tu Fu. In these ways they could hope that their peers would judge their work to meet an acceptable standard.⁶¹

Vietnamese had written Sino-Vietnamese poetry centuries earlier, but surviving specimens suggest that their themes had mainly been Buddhist. In the fourteenth century, however, pastoral poetry flourished.⁶² Phạm Mai's poem on a retired scholar's retreat, written in the first half of the fourteenth century, demonstrates how thoroughly these poets could absorb the mood of Chinese pastoral poetry.⁶³ The situation in the first couplet concerns the poet's impatient expectations:

When I arrive, I know that your fame enjoys the fragrance of an orchid.
My staff pounds [impatiently] on the dark green moss.

Friendly relationships occupy the scene in the second couplet:

In human feelings, nothing keeps us apart.
A few acres of fields and garden are sufficient for us.

The third couplet is conventionally concerned with a happening, and here two famous Chinese poets respond to nature:

T'ao Ch'ien's homesick song was about the pine and the chrysanthemum,
And Tu Fu's elated chanting stirred the countryside.

The reflection in the final couplet is Phạm Mai's:

Those capable of deep "emotional response" [] relish the scene [] in front
of your hall.

A "scene" combined with an "emotional response" was an admired feature in Chinese lyric poetry.⁶⁴ Phạm Mai faithfully reproduces it and, at the same time, manages to liken his own poetic sensibility with that of two giants in the history of Chinese poetry. T'ao Ch'ien sings, Tu Fu chants, and the Vietnamese poet relishes.

Does the weight of Chinese literary influence compromise my efforts to reduce the difference between Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia? I do not think so.

on this page for an example. The other example is Phạm Mai's knowledgeable allusion to the Chinese literary critic, Yen Yü (fl. 1180-1235), who likened the poet's intuitive apprehension to that of the follower of the *dhyana*. I have translated Phạm Mai's poem in "Chu Văn An: An Exemplary Retirement," in *The Vietnam Review*, Autumn-Winter (1996): 77. For a discussion of Yen Yü, see James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 37 ff.

⁶¹ These poets often addressed their poems to friends.

⁶² I justify the expression "pastoral poetry" in "Chu Văn An: An Exemplary Retirement," pp. 78-79.

⁶³ See *Thơ văn Lý-Trần*, vol. 2, pp. 834-835 for the poem's text.

⁶⁴ Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 242.

The Vietnamese and also the Javanese poet, Prapañca, and other "Hindu" Southeast Asians had a lively sense of their countries' comparability with foreign countries, whether China or India.⁶⁵ In 1982 I suggested that Trần-period poets would deliberately and enthusiastically proclaim their mastery of Chinese poetry to demonstrate that their countryside deserved the highest standards of Chinese-style poetry in the same way that the Chinese countryside did in China.⁶⁶ Today I would add that the apparent profusion of poets in the first half of the fourteenth century coincided with an increasing prominence of educated officials. Writing high-standard Chinese was a requisite for those who wished to succeed in public life, and officials would naturally wish to flaunt their knowledge of Chinese poetic language. Insinuating the word "poem" (*thơ*) in their lines and referring to famous Chinese poets—a name-dropping technique—would enhance their poems' fame. These poets could therefore hope that their poetry would become an occasion for making their literary talents known to their professional peers and even for competing with them.⁶⁷ Scholarship was one measure of prowess and especially when emperors and princes, too, wrote poetry.⁶⁸ Phan Phu Tiển, the Trần annalist who also compiled collections of poems, was careful to mention poets among the Trần officials. Thus, the fourteenth century poets' feats in localizing Chinese pastoral poetry enabled them to make statements about their country and, at the same time, about themselves. Khmer narrative poets were also glad to display their verbal skills when they wrote about flowers and plants.⁶⁹

Now for two more elaborate instances of the localizing and reworking process, where a plenitude of foreign materials did not simply retreat to permit local statements about the condition of the authors' country. Their function was rather to camouflage local statements under cover of allegories.

The *phủ*, or rhymed prose (Chinese *fu*), became a successful Vietnamese localization of a Chinese literary form during the second half of the fourteenth century, when the Chinese myth of a golden age was localized under the name of *Văn-lang*.⁷⁰ Prose poems had become a *genre* in Western Han China (206 BC-AD 23) as a tool to enable scholars to voice their criticism of government.⁷¹ The same tool was now a handy one for voicing scholarly discontent in Vietnam when the authority of government was disintegrating. Vietnamese poems were presented as Chinese-style poems about the Vietnamese countryside, but the authors of *phủ*, perhaps for reasons of discretion, concealed their criticism of the contemporary situation with

⁶⁵ See pp. 148-149 above and note 13 on p. 110. The concept of the "Hindu World" implies that everything seen and happening where one lives mirrors what is mentioned in Sanskrit literature and therefore represents universal phenomena.

⁶⁶ 1982, p. 72.

⁶⁷ I believe that some of the poems Chu Văn An wrote during his withdrawal from Court as a protest against bad government were intended to convince his former colleagues of his unshakable resolve to retire. See Wolters, "Chu Văn An: An Exemplary Retirement," pp. 86-88.

⁶⁸ For example, the prince Trần Quang Triều (1286-1325), the Hưng-đạo prince's grandson, was at the center of a group of poets.

⁶⁹ See pp. 176-177 above.

⁷⁰ The fourteenth century also saw a new style of ceramics, a Vietnamese calendar, and the first Vietnamese paper currency. These were creative times even though the Trần government was heading for collapse.

⁷¹ See Helmut Wilhelm, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of 'Fu,'" *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 310-319.

erudite versions of ancient Chinese texts on Chinese historical episodes.⁷² The foreign texts they manipulated were venerated in China as part of the canon of political, social, and moral wisdom. Fourteenth century Vietnamese chose to invoke them not to teach "Confucian" principles of good government, as Ngô Sĩ Liên was to do in the following century,⁷³ but as crafty allegories, prudently camouflaged as Chinese history,⁷⁴ that would highlight their own contemporary issues such as the failure to restore law and order at home before campaigning against the Chams⁷⁵ and what should be recognized as signs of good government.

Java's earliest surviving literary masterpiece, the Old-Javanese *Rāmāyana*, provides another example of an allegory.⁷⁶ Here, again, a foreign text—the famous Indian epic—was extensively reworked in Java to enable the local élite to savor and perhaps recite it aloud.⁷⁷ This enterprise preceded the Thai versions by many centuries. The text has been attributed to a poet living in Central Java in the middle of the ninth century. If this is true, then the allegory would be in honor of the reigning king and queen under the guise of Rāma and Sītā. The poem sought to teach a most important lesson: the qualities associated with good government,⁷⁸ a topic of such gravity that it was taught not only by personifying the king as Rāma but also by including several instructional passages on good government. Moreover, as Robson notes, the text was a work of art; the poet, evidently confident in his skill, lingers over beautiful features of the Javanese landscape and especially the multiplying temples of Central Java.

Scholars have paid close attention to the processes whereby the Javanese poet reworked the epic. For some reason or other, a particular Indian version of the epic, the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, was used, but only as a model for the first half of the Javanese poem, and even here descriptions of Javanese temples were introduced. In the second half the poet went his own way and, among other things, improvised a happy ending to the Rāma story.

The Vietnamese *phủ* and the Old-Javanese epic, though separated in time by about four hundred years, evince a concern with good government. The former discreetly tap and keep close to ancient Chinese texts so as not to endanger their didactic purposes, and they even situate the location of their discontent in ancient China. The latter does not hesitate to localize the Rāma epic in Java. One difference between them, of course, is that the Vietnamese preoccupation with problems of government was urgent, whereas in Central Java the government was believed to deserve the highest possible praise. The Vietnamese allegory warns; the Javanese one praises.

⁷² Among other texts were the *Tso-chuan's* commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Songs*, and the earliest Chinese Histories.

⁷³ See pp. 144-145 above.

⁷⁴ Some of these *phủ* are anonymous.

⁷⁵ See Appendix 2, pp. 229-230 for similar advice from an emperor's secondary wife.

⁷⁶ S. O. Robson, "The Rāmāyana in Early Java," *The Southeast Asian Review* 5,2 (1980): 5-17. See Worsley, "Mpu Tantular's kakawin Arjunawijaya and Conceptions of Kingship in Fourteenth Century Java," in *Variation, Transformation and Meaning: Studies on Indonesian Literatures in Honour of A. Teeuw*, ed. J. J. Ras and S. O. Robson (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991), pp. 166-167 for a further discussion of the function of allegory in Old-Javanese literature.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The rewriting of foreign texts to manufacture allegories for local consumption about suitable standards of public life is a vivid example of how the study of textual localization can bring local preoccupations to the fore. In these two instances, ancient texts—Chinese ones reworked into Vietnamese prose poems and the *Ramayana's* account of the hero Rāma reworked in the Old-Javanese poem of that name—mobilized, as it were, a distant or legendary past in order to serve contemporary needs.

Southeast Asian cultures are well-known for their indifference to the past for its own sake.⁷⁹ I shall now consider the past in a different light and also propose a different approach to local writing. The past does not always have to be summoned to serve the present; it can also actually belong to and be available to the present and, in certain circumstances, be capable of asserting itself, of asking itself to be tapped, and even of mobilizing the present into action.

Craig Reynolds's study of the cultural status in Thailand of the numerous Thai language versions of the Chinese *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sam Kok*) would seem at first sight to provide a remarkable example of a foreign text that has submitted to multiple local reworkings during the last two centuries because its themes could make sense in a variety of ways.⁸⁰ Reynolds suggests that "creation" is a preferable term to translation and that the *Sam Kok* is "far more a living, breathing thing than the *Rāmakien*."⁸¹ Indeed, the claim has been made on its behalf that Thai find in it a reflection of Thai Buddhist values that include gratitude and obligations for favors bestowed, also registered in the Thai version of the *Rāmāyana*.⁸²

According to Reynolds, the Thai have valued *Sam Kok* as "a comprehensive inventory of human virtues and foibles"⁸³ and also, it seems, as a compendium of ancient wisdom available for achieving success in all kinds of situations, be they literally warlike or political and entrepreneurial. Thus, over the years its themes have sponsored popular drama and compilations of episodes concerning *Sam Kok's* favorite characters; they have fed into nationalist sentiments directed against Communist China and were a military inspiration during the Cold War.

Sam Kok's transformations in Thailand seem to qualify it as a convincing example of what can happen when a foreign text is continuously rewritten. The "rewriting" process has evidently produced "statements" about several "something elses" during Thai history in the last two hundred years.

But Reynolds encourages a more fruitful consideration of what can happen when rewritten foreign texts are habitually read. What was once a foreign text could "creep" into the local "consciousness" and become part of it to the extent of

⁷⁹ For a detailed treatment of this topic, see *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1979).

⁸⁰ Craig Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords: Modern Thai Social Formations and Chinese Historical Romance," in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese in Honour of Jennifer Cushman*, ed. Anthony Reid (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia Southeast Asia Publications Series in association with Allen and Unwin, 1996), pp. 115-147. Reynolds uses terms such as "rewriting," "retranslation," "explication," "transformation," and "transmogrification."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125. Saveros Pou has referred to the Khmer version of the *Rāmāyana* as a "creation."

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 126. See fn. 54 on p. 182 above for the Thai version of the *Rāmāyana*.

⁸³ Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords," p. 118.

stimulating responses to untoward circumstances or, to put it otherwise, to be on recurrent recall when occasion requires.⁸⁴ A text's teaching could become instinctive.

This possibility arises when one notes that the *Sam Kok* genre has attracted members of the Sino-Thai bourgeoisie, now enjoying national status, who in 1996, when Reynolds published his study, were engaged in global economic activities and were challenged by *Sam Kok* to compete successfully with Western capitalism.⁸⁵ Contemporary global-scale economic opportunities had become the occasion when these businessmen's consciousness instinctively recalled the *Sam Kok's* military style strategies, or as I would prefer to put it, its expedients. The text therefore became a source for recurrent flashes of ancient wisdom that could exert an influence on economic behavior because of its "apothegms that rationalize or privilege strategies of manipulation that lead to profane-world success."⁸⁶

This was possible because Sino-Thai readers were saturated with *Sam Kok* themes as the result of continuous rewriting and updating for the benefit of new generations of readers.⁸⁷ In particular, according to Reynolds, there would have been a word of mouth dissemination of *Sam Kok* by means of what he calls "proverbs," or snippets of wisdom culled from versions of the beloved story and at hand to inspire and guide militant-minded and would-be successful businessmen. "Proverbs" is a useful term because it implies repetition, is something that can habitually recur, and is packaged, language-wise, for coping with challenges. And *Sam Kok* not only proliferated proverbs. Reynolds notes that it inspired newspaper columns and essays, and that books—may I suggest "manuals"?—that applied *Sam Kok* wisdom to business endeavor were taught in Thai business schools.⁸⁸

The modern Thais' enduring fascination with and reliance on the *Sam Kok* also tells us "something else" about Thailand⁸⁹: the cynical expectations of public figures who are believed to possess special power on account of their knowledge of *Sam Kok*, and the faith of little people that they can win advantages by using their wits in *Sam Kok* fashion.

Reynolds's insight that a text can "creep into consciousness" prepares one for a similar possibility, albeit in a vastly different context, of the power of the past, living on in one's consciousness, to mobilize the present. The example of this phenomenon that I wish to note comes from the Surakarta *kraton* in Central Java and took place from the mid-eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth.⁹⁰ What took place there during two centuries is commonly understood to be no more than a picturesque performance of rituals by a Court, whose power the Dutch had

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140. Perhaps this is one reason why *Sam Kok* is more influential than the *Rāmakien*; *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁸⁷ Reynolds stresses the role of "secondary orality" in promoting knowledge of *Sam Kok*; *ibid.*, pp. 129 and 143.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140. Behavior, morality, and political style are couched in the vocabulary of "war is business" and "business is war"; *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁸⁹ Reynolds' expression on p. 143.

⁹⁰ John Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), to which I refer in fn. 6 on p. 108 above.

neutralized in 1745. But John Pemberton, exquisitely illustrating what he calls "textual exploration,"⁹¹ attributes much more significance to the rituals.

The major focus of his study of Surakarta, when the Dutch ruled Central Java, is on the recurrent royal weddings, which were also recurrent occasions for the ruler's ritualistic enactment of the role of bridegroom, a kingly role for a day in Hindu-Javanese cultural tradition.⁹² From the Javanese point of view, these weddings were especially welcome because, unexceptional occasions though they might seem to be, they could be seen from within the *kraton* to represent a surviving mode of activity which the Surakarta rulers, the Pakubuwanas, shorn of "real power," could still undertake in order to exercise a subtle form of authority, the authority of the bridegroom on the day of his wedding. By becoming a bridegroom a nineteenth-century Pakubuwana could "be treated like a king."⁹³ His ritual movements would "display the cultural authority that becomes both a groom and king."⁹⁴ No wonder wedding ceremonies were stately and that the archival accounts in the *kraton* became increasingly lavish as though their authors realized more and more the weddings' potentiality for elevating the Pakubuwanas' dignity. Of *The Wedding of Parta*, written to commemorate Pakubuwana VII's wedding ceremony in 1835, Pemberton writes that, instead of metaphorizing the ruler as a *Mahābhārata* hero, the text transforms the latter into a Surakarta figure and "the effect of such a commemoration is to establish the past as present—indeed, a present of now mythic proportions—and in the process, to install the groom as king."⁹⁵ This is exactly the process whereby the past becomes part of the present, and it is similar to the process that interests me in Reynolds's account of *Sam Kok's* role in recent Thailand. Indeed, Reynolds, as Pemberton does, uses the expression "mythification" in this kind of context.⁹⁶ Thai businessmen were mobilized to undertake ambitious ventures by proverbs and newspaper columns and by their general assimilation of *Sam Kok* stories derived from a text.

But what text mobilized Surakarta's Court into action? There is no actual text equivalent, for instance, to an early version of *Sam Kok*. Instead, I suggest that it was sufficient that the text in question should be presumed by the Surakarta Court to belong somewhere to the famous *kraton* library and would therefore validate their ruler's wedding ritual, though, in fact, the origin of traditions about the bridegroom's kingly status on the day of his wedding was probably ancient and may have originated among villagers who looked beyond themselves to the world of the *rajas*.⁹⁷

Against whom were the Surakarta rulers and their Court being mobilized by the living past to handle the exigencies of the present? Their target, of course, was the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79. On page 101 Pemberton defines the wedding as a "textual subject."

⁹² The Malay bridegroom enjoys the same status; W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1900), p. 388; Richard Winstedt, *The Malays: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., rev. ed., 1950), p. 28, where "Hindu ritual" is invoked.

⁹³ Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java,"* p. 74.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73. The only shadow puppet drama that draws on the eleventh-century Old-Javanese *Arjunawitaha's* tale of Arjuna's wedding does not handle the subject so lavishly; *ibid.*, pp. 72-73. The tale was inspired by the wedding in the *Mahābhārata*.

⁹⁶ Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords," p. 142.

⁹⁷ I am grateful to James Siegel for proposing and discussing the notion of an invisible text.

Dutch Resident on their doorstep, with whom the Pakubuwanas were able assiduously and increasingly effectively to develop a ritualized relationship, one more of the relationships noted in the postscript. This one was enacted in public whenever royal weddings were solemnized⁹⁸ and when the Residents were given an "identifiable and implicitly subordinate place in Javanese court ceremony."⁹⁹ In 1853 the ruler and the Resident were even described in a Court chronicle as "mutual parents-in-law"; for ritual purposes they were of equal status.¹⁰⁰ Royal wedding toasts began with a toast to the royal groom.¹⁰¹ Thus, the Dutch Residents were gradually domesticated¹⁰² in an increasingly self-conscious "Javanized" world, whose ritual would later be designated by Indonesian New Order rule as manifestations of "traditional" culture and therefore of order and well-being instead of controversy, conflict, and disorder.¹⁰³

Spontaneous and "text"-inspired responses available to Dutch-controlled Javanese princes and Sino-Thai businessmen suggest further ways in which local writings can illuminate Southeast Asian situations. The Surakarta rulers instinctively and with growing confidence enacted Court ritual to protect their sovereign status. Sino-Thai businessmen, in a globalizing age and living in a region where exhibiting prowess and competing for success have always been cultural influences, have sought to advance their economic status by means of strategies validated by antiquity. Both cases presume a fund of established wisdom concerning appropriate behavior in particular circumstances. The *Sam Kok* was associated with guile, and in Surakarta the concept of being a bridegroom may have been associated with an age-long quality of *santosa*, or a kingly dignity, the quality of self-possession and "complete unconcern" attributed in the eleventh century to Erlangga.¹⁰⁴

The Thai and Javanese responses to challenging circumstances help one to understand better why educated Vietnamese would instinctively graft on to their own statements appropriate rhetorical flourishes borrowed from ancient Chinese texts.¹⁰⁵ Thus, when the Trần prince Nguyễn Đán discovered that his elder daughter had been seduced by her teacher, the future Nguyễn Phi Khanh, his immediate reaction was to exclaim that such conduct was known to "those in ancient times," and he recalled the case of Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju, a well-known writer of *phú* (Ch. *fu*) in Han times. Đán knew that Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju had behaved as Khanh did, and he therefore made it known that he wanted Khanh to become equally famous.¹⁰⁶ I suggest that Đán referred to "those in ancient times" so that he could justify his

⁹⁸ I am reminded of Lorraine Gesick's remark that the Thai "modernization" program was urgent in part because it played before a critical European audience; letter dated October 2, 1997.

⁹⁹ Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java,"* p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84. When birthdays of the Dutch sovereign were celebrated, "king-to-king" exchange of compliments would take place; *ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, *passim* and pp. 241 and 256-258. Shadow-theater performances based on the *Rāmāyana* are associated with "rituals," now signified by the word *upacara*, designed to compose conflict in society; see Robson, "The Rāmāyana in Early Java," p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Zoetmulder, *Kalangan*, p. 244.

¹⁰⁵ 1982, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁶ Trần Annals under the date of 1385.

forbearance by appealing to ancient Chinese wisdom. His response bears comparison with what Reynolds says about the Thai need to authenticate *Sam Kok* as a work translated from Chinese "in order to validate its putative wisdom," or to give it a whiff of authoritative antiquity.¹⁰⁷ In such cases, local writing teaches us something about things that mattered in different parts of Southeast Asia. Can one go further and suggest that in earlier Southeast Asia nothing of importance was done unless one knew that a text existed or could be presumed to exist that would justify taking such action? Invoking appropriate textual support implies the awareness of what is appropriate in a particular situation at a particular time, or what is needed "now," and "now," I believe, is the time that mattered in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁸

I have considered ways of studying writings from several parts of the region. I am interested in writing for the sake of good writing, and I have mentioned a few literary devices or conventions that rendered writing "readable." I have referred to the "boat" metaphor in the Indonesian archipelago and to local poetic differences in central and southern Vietnam. I have noted what happened when foreign materials were reworked in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Java, and I have tried, in the context of Thailand and Java, to distinguish, on the one hand, between the reworking of materials in the sense of updating them and, on the other hand, an ever-present influence of the past that has "crept" into one's consciousness and can lead to action when circumstances require. I continue to see the distinction as being between an appeal to the past for the sake of the present and the mobilization of the present as a result of the indwelling presence of the past that enables one to comprehend the present and respond to its challenges.

Section V will now focus more sharply on sub-regional differences revealed in writing by subordinates on the topic of public life. The postscript has led one to suppose that such matters as responses to leadership, personal relationships, and the value attached to reputation would be prominent in early Southeast Asian writing.

First I shall consider Keith Taylor's study of three poems by Đoàn Văn Khâm, an official in the Lý Court during the late eleventh century.¹⁰⁹ Taylor is interested in them because they illustrate a major and persisting Vietnamese problem: reconciling the Court's claims on the individual with the individual's own quest for personal salvation. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia meritorious service under a god-like ruler was associated with a superior death status, and Khâm's problem would only arise in Vietnam. Indeed, according to the Candi Surawana's bas-relief, Arjuna provides a model for combining active public life with ascetic behavior. A warrior could intervene on behalf of a troubled society with the detachment and steadfastness of mind that he had cultivated by asceticism.¹¹⁰

Đoàn Văn Khâm wrote two eight line poems in honor of two deceased monks: Quảng-trí, who had chosen to withdraw from the world, and Chân Không, who frequented the Court. On the Candi Surawana bas-relief the claims of self and society were reconciled by Arjuna, but this was impossible in eleventh century Vietnam, and

¹⁰⁷ Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords," p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ I discuss the notion of "now" on pages 21 and 114-115.

¹⁰⁹ Keith W. Taylor, "The Poems of Đoàn Văn Khâm," *Crossroads* 7,2 (1992): 39-53. This is a rare instance of a publication that has devoted an issue to Vietnamese poetry and history. A noteworthy feature of Taylor's article is his discussion of Sino-Vietnamese prosody, a subject I raised in 1982, pp. 71-72, but have neglected ever since.

¹¹⁰ Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs," p. 349.

the reason, according to Taylor, was that a pernicious effect of the millennium of Chinese occupation had not disappeared and continues until today.¹¹¹ The Vietnamese came to associate the Chinese provincial government with an alien presence and influence, and the same attitude towards government persisted even after the Chinese provincial government withdrew in the early tenth century. Moreover, those who managed public affairs thereafter were unable to shed domineering and arrogant habits inherited from those in the Chinese provincial administration. In his study of the Chinese period,¹¹² Taylor demonstrated that, during the Chinese period, a considerable amount of intermarriage, generation after generation, took place among Chinese immigrants and local people, a circumstance that helps to explain the extraordinary competence of educated Vietnamese in Chinese written materials. The descendants of these marriages often became officials in independent Vietnam. At the same time, villagers at the bottom end of society would perceive the Vietnamese "imperial" Court and its staff as a distant phenomenon with little in common with their own world.

On these lines may be explained Khâm's contrast between the monk who "left" the world and the monk who "entered" the world. He attributed both monks with great influence even though the first couplets in the poems contrast their situations. Quảng Trí had lived among the mountain peaks, and the further he was from the world the more powerful was his reputation.¹¹³ Chân Không, for his part, was a "purifying influence" that extended from the Court to the people.¹¹⁴ Chân Không's influence would certainly have promoted good government. The second and third couplets develop the contrast between the solitary Quảng Trí and the Court-based Chân Không. The poet's reflections in the two final couplets are especially interesting. He urges us not to mourn Quảng Trí's death as though he were separated from us forever; the monk is surely reflected in the landscape in front of his courtyard. Such, perhaps, could be the enduring influence of someone detached from the world of public affairs. Chân Không's death evokes a very different reflection. We grieve at his final disappearance. Taylor sums up the difference thus: "Quảng Trí is still at his meditation hall and Chân Không can be found at his grave."¹¹⁵ Thus Buddhism, personified by Chân Không, can uphold the social order, but, in Quảng Trí's case, it can also be the way to personal salvation.¹¹⁶

Outside Vietnam public service was always esteemed, but a conscientious Vietnamese could have reservations about entering public life. Could more have been involved in Vietnam than the lingering effect of government's tainted association with China? Perhaps Vietnam was also saddled with an unstable dynastic institution. The prolonged decline of dynasties could undermine confidence

¹¹¹ Taylor, "Đoàn Văn Khâm," p. 52.

¹¹² Keith W. Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

¹¹³ See Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 113-114 on the fourteenth-century *dhya*na-influenced emperor Minh-tôn's conception of his country as a *dharmadhātu*, or the spiritual sphere and counterpart of the worldly sphere where differences merge in an underlying reality. A deceased monk, mourned by Minh-tôn, had helped to sustain the *dharmadhātu* with his enlightened influence. In the Candi Surawana bas-relief the relationship between men and women is taken to be characteristic of society; Worsley, "Narrative Bas-reliefs," p. 348.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, "Đoàn Văn Khâm," p. 49.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

in government, as was the case in Đoàn Văn Khâm's day,¹¹⁷ and could cause the kind of tension expressed by Đoàn Văn Khâm between the desire to serve loyally at Court and the personal satisfaction that retirement could bring. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia there was always the chance of a sudden change at the top when a new family or branch of the old one would seize the kingship, and then one could quickly transfer one's loyalty to the new ruler rather than fight a rearguard action on behalf of an ailing dynasty.

Next, I shall consider some Vietnamese writings two centuries or so later than Khâm's poems. These express a much more positive approach towards public life and define with some precision responsibilities expected of officials and qualities admired when the Trần government was beginning to weaken.

The first item comes from the Trần Annals. Though compiled in the middle of the fifteenth century, the Annals may be likened to what Lorraine Gesick describes as a multivocal "conversation" in the sense that the annalist, Phan Phu Tiên, sought to catch the drift of what those who lived in the fourteenth century were recorded as discussing or remembering about the conduct and reputation of officials in that century. What he wrote about the performance of officials not so long ago would interest later generations of officials in a peer-competing society and concern a historian whose task it was to teach the lessons of history and especially how to govern well.

The feature of the Trần Annals that surely reflects the "conversation" the annalist sought to tap is his provision of ample "pauses" in the narrative that required the reader to linger over and reflect on what he had written and considered important. I mentioned this device in connection with the Javanese bas-relief studied by Worsley, and I shall return to it again. A pause under the date of 1323 is an example of the same device. The annalist pauses in order to call attention to thirteen officials who, "at that time," served "one after another."¹¹⁸ The period covered by what is known of them is from 1292 to 1370. Why the annalist contrived the pause is explained by the emphatic figure of speech with which he chooses to refer to the officials. He uses an expression in the Confucian *Analects* for defining the "gentleman": their "ability combined elegance and substance in equal proportions."¹¹⁹ I suggest that this list of honorable officials reflects the collective judgment of those who knew them or had heard of them. The pause can therefore be read as a fragment of a fourteenth century multi-vocal "conversation."

The following group of Vietnamese writings bears on public life and comprises poems in honor of three prominent officials of the mid-fourteenth century. The officials in question, all of whom are included in the list of 1323 just mentioned, were utterly loyal to the dynasty on whose behalf they sought to maintain the *status quo* in the face of serious unrest in the countryside.¹²⁰ The poet is Trần Nguyễn Dán (1325-1390), whose voice would not be forgotten or ignored by the compiler of the Trần

¹¹⁷ Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," pp. 392-393 and 397 on "broodiness."

¹¹⁸ *TT* (The Vietnamese annals) under the date of 1323.

¹¹⁹ This expression comes from the Confucian *Analects*. Quang-Khai's wife was praised for being a "gentleman"; see page 167 above.

¹²⁰ I sketch the deteriorating situation in "On Telling a Story of Vietnam," pp. 69-74. Some of Nguyễn Phi Khanh's poems give a graphic account of the situation, though one has to bear in mind that he was aggrieved because he was excluded from office; Wolters, "Celebrating the Educated Official: A Reading of Some of Nguyễn Phi Khanh's Poems," *The Vietnam Forum* 2 (1983): 79-101.

Annals.¹²¹ Đán's grandson was the famous Nguyễn Trãi, who was to play an important part in the resistance against the Ming forces early in the following century. Đán himself was a junior prince of the Trần ruling family and the great-grandson of Trần Quang Khải (1241-1294), a younger brother of the emperor Thái-tôn who served as chief minister and general in the Mongol wars and was the husband of the admirable princess mentioned in Appendix 2. Of high birth, Đán was close to the center and had opportunities for observing the behavior of senior officials. His poems would reflect expectations of responsible subordinates and also, I suggest, their mood when they served the emperors.

Đán's kinsman, the emperor Nghệ-tôn (1370-1395), considered that Đán, too, exemplified the qualities of a good official. Nghệ-tôn was a weak and tragic figure who played into the hands of Lê Quý Ly, a kinsman by marriage who usurped the throne in 1400. Đán had seen the writing on the wall and went into retreat five years before he died in 1390. He may even have retired a number of years earlier. Nghệ-tôn wrote an inscription to honor his relative.¹²²

For a day he would sit on a great rock and then plan peace for the affairs of the State. For a day he would descend to a clear stream and then want to assist in the complexities of the State's policies.

The inscription ends on a moving note:

He assisted me in ruling. He had no intention of abandoning me. Therefore I sigh as I write this in the mountain shade.

Nghệ-tôn gives the impression that Đán's retirement was a busman's holiday. Four different forms of assistance are listed.¹²³

I shall now consider Đán's poems in honor of his three friends, all of whom are mentioned in the Annals as being among the excellent officials listed under the date of 1323. We must remember that Đán was writing poetry appropriate for particular occasions; two are matching poems and one congratulates a friend on being promoted. We can therefore assume that he wrote with an eye on what he supposed the recipients would expect and enjoy and that his poems would throw light on attitudes towards public life deemed proper by senior and successful officials. The friends served in the middle of the fourteenth century when they were at the peak of their careers and at a time when the country was becoming increasingly disturbed.

The first poem matches a poem sent to him by Lê Quát, who died in 1370.¹²⁴ Quát is best known for attacking popular Buddhism in an inscription because it encouraged villagers to become vagabonds and neglect their family duties.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Under the date of 1390 the compiler gives Đán a none too favorable obituary notice.

¹²² *Tho van Ly Tran (TVLT)*, Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, vol. 3, no. 149 (Hanoi, 1978). Đán's retirement in 1385 is the best known episode in his life because of the Trần annalist's long and critical account of it. Little is known of his earlier years except that he helped to resist an usurper in 1369.

¹²³ He does so when he sits on a rock, visits a stream, is under shady trees, and leans against a bamboo clump.

¹²⁴ *TVLT*, III, no. 114.

¹²⁵ Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 18-19.

Dán begins by identifying Quát as a veteran official:

Fifty years have rolled on. You are now half-way into declining old age.
With so much worldly experience, with such composure do you endure noise!

The scene in the second couplet describes a contrast and suggests that Quát is homesick. The river Nhị, flowing through the capital, and the many moons are metaphors for years of arduous official service.

Cold has been the river Nhị at night time for many moons.
Peaceful is your ancestral village at daytime, a breeze blowing over the stream.

In the third couplet, conventionally reserved for a happening, Dán indicates that his friend is indispensable. According to the Former Han History, being "forgetful of self" is among the attributes of a perfect official.

Forgetful of self in all vicissitudes of fortune, your mind is undisturbed.
Involved in all affairs of State [literally "peace and danger"], you are at the centre.

Dán ends his poem by reflecting that his friend is conscientious in public and private affairs alike.

When the Court is in recess, you call for tea, worried as you are by the people's problems.
You will then relax and unroll a well-worn scroll to teach your son.

In the fourteenth century Lê Quát and Phạm Sư Mạnh were known as friends. Mạnh's numerous surviving poems include some written when he led soldiers on punitive expeditions against local rebels along the northern border and in the north-west.¹²⁶ Dán's poem was in response to one sent by Mạnh and reveals Dán's admiration for the brave campaigner.¹²⁷

Dán uses snatches of Chinese poetic diction to salute a cheerful scholar on duty.

A determined official who prefers to bid farewell and disregards great danger,
He sings and chants loudly, and obeys Heaven.

Mạnh serves his ruler in unpleasant surroundings. The expression "distant peoples" may be a Chinese archaism to give the poem a "Chinese" flavor. Thai translators of the *Sam Kok* also sought "Chineseness."

A man of all seasons, he repays the perspicacious ruler's trust.¹²⁸
Among the tigers' lair and serpents' haunt, he pacifies distant peoples.

¹²⁶ O. W. Wolters, "Phạm Sư Mạnh's Poems Written while Patrolling the Vietnamese Northern Border in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century," *Vietnam Forum* 4 (1984): 45-69.

¹²⁷ *TVL*, III, no. 143.

¹²⁸ "Perspicacity" was a conventional imperial attribute in fourteenth-century Vietnam; see Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," pp. 380-381.

The "happening" couplet extols Mạnh's ability to manage human beings.

The waxing and waning of the sun and moon man can easily see,
But wisdom and stupidity, profit and loss, these matters are difficult to control.

The famous Chinese poet T'ao Ch'ien wrote a *T'ing-wên* (Vietnamese, *Đinh Văn*) poem for a friend, and Đán appropriates the title to express his feelings. The reference to the moon suggests that he has been writing all night.

Long separated from happy times, we are on the edges of the horizon,
I have finished my "*Đinh Văn*" poem. The moon is about to descend in the west.

Đán's poems to Quát and Mạnh are affectionate. Nguyễn Trung Ngạn was another of Đán's friends and often mentioned in the Trần Annals on occasions of his numerous and ever more responsible appointments. Yet nothing interesting is recorded of him except his boastfulness.¹²⁹ Đán's poem was written to congratulate Ngạn on a promotion.¹³⁰

The first line introduces Ngạn in language used to honor the famous T'ang period Confucian scholar, Han Yu.¹³¹

Bright as the Northern Star, lofty as the Tai Mountain.
The people look up to the heights and flock to the office of the Censorate.¹³²

Ngạn dominates the scene in the second couplet.

Your achievement is utterly meritorious and supports your exalted destiny.
You carry the sky, such is your great strength.¹³³ You wield marvelous ability.

What happens in the third couplet is simply that this hardy official perseveres into old age.

An aging minister, you endure the snow. Your temples are hoary and ancient.
Plum trees are pruned each spring. In old age your pen is still active.

Đán concludes his eulogy by reflecting that Ngạn had served rulers for about half a century. The Chinese terms "Sons of Heaven" and "the Three Chief Ministers" were used in the Trần Court, but in the poem they are intended to enhance its imperial flavor and Vietnam's comparability with China.

¹²⁹ The Trần Annals, under the date of 1326, quotes Ngạn's poem in which he outlined the successive stages in what would be his successful career.

¹³⁰ *TVLT*, III, no. 120.

¹³¹ See Huỳnh Sanh Thông, *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 225.

¹³² For "censorate," see *TVLT*, III, p. 174, note 2.

¹³³ Attributes of a loyal minister.

Having successively served five Courts of Sons of Heaven, sages,¹³⁴
Suddenly with noble appearance, you place your official's tablet before the office
of the Three Chief Ministers.¹³⁵

The poem's most conspicuous feature is its lavish language to adorn Ngan's career. Having introduced him in terms worthy of the famous Han Yu, the poet in the second couplet's scene seizes the chance to emphasize Ngan's achievement, success, and "marvelous ability." The couplet resounds with notions of "carrying," and "wielding." The conventional trope of "carrying the sky" (a patriotic minister) is the closest Đán can get to Arjuna's ability to "maintain the world," and the achievement is a subject's and not a ruler's. The happening in the third couplet is focused on Ngan himself. His age makes no difference to his activity; the great man continues to serve. The concluding reflection portrays Ngan's proximity to the center.

What happens when the three poems are read alongside each other?

Đán is obviously anxious to heap fulsome compliments on each of his friends, and, because he is erudite, he can tap the resources of Chinese poetic language. The poems ooze with hyperbole, but it is unfair to suppose that Đán was intent only on flattery. He is writing for particular occasions. Two of the poems, those to Quát and Mạnh, are, according to their titles, "matching" ones. The poems to which he is responding have not survived, but other poems by Quát and Mạnh may give a hint of their mood. Quát wrote four couplets in two parts.¹³⁶ The first part begins: "Affairs are confused. Sickness brings leisure." The second part begins: "In recent years the world's affairs are at odds with my mind." He goes on: "Daily I long for my ancestral home and I recite the *Shih Wei* poem."¹³⁷ Quát's poem is replete with unhappy signs of confusion, autumn wind, end of the year, homesickness, cold, and sleet. Đán probably wrote his poem to cheer up his unhappy friend by reminding him of his services. Mạnh's poems, on the other hand, are often self-confident accounts of his military expeditions, and Đán echoes them in his poem to Mạnh among "the tigers' lair and the serpents' haunt."¹³⁸ Đán's poem to Ngan is easily explained. He is congratulating him on a promotion.

These poems need not, however, be read as character sketches of three friends. They tell us something of the range of associations of public life in fourteenth-century Vietnam. Quát and Mạnh are attributed with what would be recognized as admirable personal qualities, and Ngan with enviable status. They can tell us more. I have mentioned Keith Taylor's suggestion that the long experience of living under a Chinese administration left a mark on later Vietnamese officials as well as on those they ruled.¹³⁹ The officials tended to and were perhaps inclined to feel at home in the

¹³⁴ The Trần rulers were conventionally regarded as "sages" because of their far-sightedness.

¹³⁵ "The Three Chief Ministers" are mentioned in the *Chou-li*, one of three early Chinese books of regulations for ceremonial procedure. Đán wants to stress that Ngan is a very important official.

¹³⁶ TVLT, III, nos. 93 and 94.

¹³⁷ The *Shih-wei* is a poem in the *Book of Odes* about a wanderer's mood. All he wants is to return to his native village.

¹³⁸ See note 126 on p. 195 above.

¹³⁹ See note 112 on p. 192 above.

exalted sub-culture of the Court.¹⁴⁰ Đán's image of Ngạn is consistent with Taylor's suggestion. Ngạn's situation in the first couplet and Đán's reflection in the fourth have a distinctive "Chinese" tone. Ngạn is likened to the "North Star" and "Mount Tai," two conventional Chinese literary symbols for great men. So exalted is his status that the people look up to him and flock to his office. The reflection in the final couplet exudes Đán's conviction of the comparability of the Vietnamese and Chinese empires: each is ruled by a "Son of Heaven," while the last line seems to be a truncated reference to a passage from Han Yu and also to the "Three Ministers," a governmental institution in early China.

Thus, Ngạn's long and illustrious career is graced with Chinese-style status and fame. Officials serving the Vietnamese Court with its "imperial" pretensions could be expected to preen themselves. Đán is anxious to flourish status and fame, and I suspect that this is precisely what Ngạn, luxuriating within the Court sub-culture, valued. Đán congratulated him in language that would have delighted him.

Quát and Mạnh had also spent many years in service and are saluted as important officials. Quát's "place is at the centre," responsible for "maintaining the world," and Mạnh "pacifies distant peoples." But in other respects the two poems lack the magnificence of the poem written for Ngạn.

There are further differences. The first is that Quát and Mạnh disregard the possibility for personal advantage. When compared with Ngạn, they are self-effacing. The first couplets are more modestly phrased. Quát is aging and Mạnh obeys Heaven. The only compliment paid to Mạnh is a personal one; his situation is that of "a determined scholar" who soldiers on cheerfully. The scene in the second couplets concerns hardship rather than the merit to be earned. Quát is not pitted for being homesick, and, in formidable territory, the adaptable Mạnh performs his duty by repaying the ruler's trust. The happenings in the third couplets are statements of fact, unadorned by judgment values. Quát is forgetful of himself, a remarkable attitude of mind in an achievement-oriented society,¹⁴¹ while Mạnh is apparently doing his best to manage people in an unpredictable world. It would be far-fetched to suggest that Quát and Mạnh had ascetic qualities, yet Đán writes about them in a way that strips them of warmth. The final couplets reflect a further difference between these poems. Quát and Mạnh, unlike Ngạn, have private lives. Quát has a son and Mạnh is the poet's old friend. As one would expect, the worthy Ngạn reports for duty.

The qualities of endurance and loyalty are those which Nguyen Đán's son-in-law, Nguyễn Phi Khanh, ascribed to himself in poems he wrote when serving Lê Quý Ly, who usurped the Trần throne in 1400.¹⁴² His poems assume that an educated official behaves with impersonal zeal and is indifferent to his conditions of service. His behavior is consistent with the ideal of selfless duty and with the conduct of a talented and virtuous person. He is valued by the ruler but does not seek office for office's sake and does not accumulate wealth. He exhibits practical aptitudes when dealing with problems, especially with those of the people. The people respond to his influence, and protest is muted, but he can also adopt a stern

¹⁴⁰ I floated this notion in *Two Essays*, pp. xvii-xviii.

¹⁴¹ In his comment in the *TT* under the date of 1370, Ngô Sĩ Liên criticized Vietnamese officials for being merit-seekers. Also see Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," p. 380 on Minh-tôn's adverse opinion of merit-seekers.

¹⁴² Wolters, "Celebrating the Educated Official," p. 85.

attitude towards domestic disorder. The employment of such an official guarantees good government.

Read together, these three poems offer an account of those qualities considered admirable in fourteenth-century officials. The fifteenth-century Trần Annals, mentioned briefly above, echo and, in a way, "converse" with fourteenth-century voices by employing a feature found in the earlier narratives, that is, the ample provision of pauses as occasions for the reader to reflect. The pauses enabled the annalist to formulate a crucial statement: the conduct of government during the 1293-1357 period was satisfactory. The pauses record information about no less than nineteen officials,¹⁴³ and the statement, or "sentence" as I have called it, comprises a syntagm of six units. "[The enlightened emperor] appointed" a person [i.e. one of the nineteen]—who possessed "suitable attributes"—and "performed his duties admirably"—in a manner which earned him a good "reputation"—and won him the ruler's "favor."¹⁴⁴ The statement explains how the annalist supposed things happened when the conduct of government was satisfactory. It is therefore a recipe for good government and, not unexpectedly, it describes a series of relationships between the ruler and his subordinates. It also contains an acknowledgment of the ruler's prowess, seen in his capacity to attract a suitably qualified entourage, and takes into account the subordinates' priorities—reputation and the imperial favor. The Annals define the basis of public life in fourteenth-century Vietnam.

The attributes of the nineteen officials noted in the Annals' pauses are so unremarkable that one may wonder why they were mentioned at all. Could they have been unusual ones at the time? The officials were "pure," "respectful," "resolute," "honest," "straightforward," "willing to speak out," and "peaceful and not seeking merit in order to outshine others." Two had scholarly ability. The impression given is that it was sufficient that officials should be obedient and honest. The range of their performance was also limited: having good *rapport* with the ruler, military or diplomatic success in connection with China or the vassal kingdom of Champa, managing imperial funerals with propriety, handling taxes honestly, showing good judgment in legal cases, settling land disputes, and bravery in battle.

The Trần Annals were completed in 1455, only a few years before the reign of the fourth Lê ruler, Lê Thánh-tôn (1460-1497), under whom an attempt was made to govern according to neo-Confucian ideology to which educated Vietnamese were exposed during the Ming occupation early in the same century.¹⁴⁵ In Lê Thánh-tôn's reign the close relationship between ruler and officials, celebrated by the "sentence" in the Trần Annals, could be restored, but it would no longer be so straightforward. In the fourteenth century this relationship had been a personal one and consistent with the informal style of government which Ngô Sĩ Liên had criticized, but in the later decades of the fifteenth century subordinates were trained according to ideological principles authorized by the ruler.¹⁴⁶

Thus, a syntagm that defines a satisfactory relationship between ruler and subordinates during the 1293-1357 period is recoverable in the Trần Annals, and the same syntagm is likely to be reproduced in other Southeast Asian political cultures

¹⁴³ See Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," pp. 402-405.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 373. I have modified this passage to include six units.

¹⁴⁵ For an account of this episode, see John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)*, The Lạc-Việt Series- No. 2 (New Haven: Yale University, 1985), chapter VI.

¹⁴⁶ Wolters, *Two Essays*, pp. 125-126.

where public life was also based on personal relationships. The Malay Annals, comprising stories of the genealogies of the Malay Raja, is one such instance.¹⁴⁷ The stories, in which the syntagm's units are reasonably well distributed, resemble much longer versions of the Trần Annals' pauses to the extent that they ask the listener or reader to reflect on the continuous glory of Malacca. The major difference between the pauses and the stories is that the former are much more deliberately organized to teach the syntagm's lessons. Nevertheless, the Trần syntagm is disembodied and, by itself, does not flesh out the ruler and subordinates in question. I have said something about the context in Trần Vietnam, and I shall now look over my shoulder and briefly compare the Trần context with the Malay one, where the scene is the fifteenth-century Sultanate of Malacca.

The Trần emperors in the 1293-1357 period were said to be "discerning," "discriminating" and "free from bias."¹⁴⁸ The Malay Sultans were "just and humane"¹⁴⁹ though interested in the results rather than the problems of administration.¹⁵⁰ They were expected to consult their Ministers,¹⁵¹ something that would not occur to the Trần emperors. The Sultans could be "very shrewd and clever,"¹⁵² and they were, of course, God's Deputies on Earth as were the Minangkabau rulers studied by Jane Drakard.¹⁵³ The Vietnamese rhetorical image of the ideal ruler was that of the far-sighted and penetrating "sage ruler" in Chinese antiquity, whereas the ideal Malay ruler, according to words attributed to certain Sultans on their death bed, was expected to rule according to Moslem standards. The Sultan Mansur Shah urged his heir to "put the business of God before your own,"¹⁵⁴ and the Sultan Ala'ud-din reminded his heir that "all rulers will be questioned by God as to the manner in which they have tended their subjects."¹⁵⁵

In both cases these attributes are unexceptional and probably conventional. The significance of other units in the syntagm is more interesting when one considers those whom the rulers appoint and how they perform.¹⁵⁶ "Appointment" (*gĕlar*) is the second unit. Malay subordinates are not educated commoners who catch the rulers' attention as in Trần Vietnam but "major chiefs" (*orang bĕsar-besar*) who possess many retainers (*banyak orang*).¹⁵⁷ A likely explanation for the appointment of commoners in Vietnam is that the senior princes in that period, uncles and brothers of the emperors who occupied the highest posts at Court (those of the Three Chief Ministers referred to in Đán's poem in honor of Nguyễn Trung Ngạn) were of greatly inferior caliber in comparison with their thirteenth-century predecessors such

¹⁴⁷ See Braginsky, *Classical Malay Literature*, pp. 25-26, for a description and discussion of the stories.

¹⁴⁸ Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading," p. 380.

¹⁴⁹ Brown, "Sĕjarah Mĕlayu or Malay Annals: A Translation of Raffles MS 18," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25,2-3 (1952): 63 and 72.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 77 and 80.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁶ Rulers with favorites were disparaged; for example, Brown, "Sĕjarah Mĕlayu," p. 166. "Dandies" were frowned on in a society where warriors were accorded pride of place.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67 and 76.

as Quang Khái, and are mentioned only rarely in the Annals. In Malacca, on the other hand, the Sultans, generation after generation, appointed members of three great families for the three senior offices of Bëndahara, Treasurer, and Tëmënggong. A Bëndahara's son would succeed his father, and the same procedure was observed in respect of the other two offices. This more or less hereditary situation resembles that of the senior princes in Tràn Vietnam, though the Malay appointees were not regarded as members of the ruling family even when they sometimes had marriage ties with it. The Bëndahara was, in theory and usually in practice, the officer closest to the ruler.

There were also nobles of lesser rank (*tuan-tuan yang baik-baik*), often belonging to ancient families, who, at the rulers' behest, would be ordered rather than appointed to perform numerous missions such as punishing disobedient vassals, fighting the Siamese, or negotiating royal marriage alliances. These subordinates differed from their Vietnamese counterparts in two respects. Instead of possessing the skills of a *literatorus*, they had retainers and warships, which imply retainers, and their families could be linked with each other by marriage. The famous Laksamana Hang Tuah's two wives were each related to senior nobles, and the daughter of one of them was a Sultan's wife.¹⁵⁸

The Bëndahara's esteemed attributes included giving good advice to the rulers, being able to manage foreigners, and avoiding pretension. The attributes of junior nobles are usually illustrated by how they performed in the rulers' service (*kěna kěrja raja* and *jasa-nya*) when they could earn "merit."¹⁵⁹ An esteemed attribute was what C. C. Brown translates as their "cunning" (*chěrdek*), usually at the expense of Javanese, Siamese, and Indians rather than of Malays and an attribute ascribed in the Annals to the Malay *elite* in general.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps being "cunning" is a rendering of a Southeast Asian aptitude for devising expedients to achieve specific goals by outwitting those who competed with the Malay Court or stood in its way, whether they were the ruler of Majapahit, Siamese armies, an Indian designer of fabrics, or a Moslem missionary. Foreigners were usually the foil.

Vietnamese subordinates sought to earn a reputation among their peers, though neither the fourteenth-century emperor Minh-tôn nor Ngô Sĩ Liễn, the fifteenth-century historian, were impressed by merit-seeking officials.¹⁶¹ "Reputation" (*nama*) is rendered elaborately in the Malay Annals, where it is equated with "not being disloyal."¹⁶² "Reputation" could also be reflected in what was said about one,¹⁶³ a usage similar to the Tràn Annals' expression "he had a reputation at that time." But in one respect, "reputation" in the Malay Annals distinguishes itself sharply from the Vietnamese version. In Malacca the Bëndahara's reputation was associated with that of Malacca itself. Malacca's prosperity was attributed to the Bëndahara.¹⁶⁴ The reputation of the Bëndahara Paduka Raja was said to be the equivalence of that of

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁵⁹ See Brown's inventory of instances in "Sějarah Mělayu," p. 9, and their performance in Majapahit, joyfully described in chapter 9.

¹⁶⁰ My impression is that it was unnecessary to refer to Malay "bravery" because Malay tactics were always successful and the results of the battles spoke for themselves.

¹⁶¹ See note 141 on p. 198 above.

¹⁶² Brown, "Sějarah Mělayu," pp. 9 and 192.

¹⁶³ "*di-katakan*," as in Winstedt, "Malay Annals," p. 96; Brown, "Sějarah Mělayu," p. 68.

¹⁶⁴ Brown, "Sějarah Mělayu," p. 134.

Gajah Mada, the famous chief minister of Majapahit, and that of Malacca with the reputation of Majapahit and Pasai when the same Bēndahara was alive.¹⁶⁵ In Vietnam the Trần Court's "imperial" appearance was sufficient to protect its reputation, though Ngô Sĩ Liễn doubted whether it succeeded in doing so.¹⁶⁶

The Malays in general believed that they were known in Majapahit as "sharp-witted" but regarded themselves as having good "behavior" (*kělakuan*). The Laksamana is quoted as insulting the Raja of Siak's officer, who had executed someone without the Sultan of Malacca's permission: "You must indeed be a jungleman not to know the rudiments of proper behavior."¹⁶⁷ A local ruler, deemed to be a rebel by his overlord, is reduced to the status of a "jungle dweller." The Siak ruler was an affront to the Laksamana's sense of order.

The Trần and Malacca rulers rewarded their officials (the final unit of the syntagm). The emperors congratulated them, conferred on them auspicious surnames, promoted them, or authorized special funeral rites.¹⁶⁸ In Malacca the royal favor was endlessly bestowed (*anugraha*) in the form of robes of honor. In the fifteen chapters that relate Malay history from the foundation of Malacca to the arrival of the Portuguese this favor is mentioned in almost every one and sometimes several times.

The syntagm is certainly recoverable in the Malay Annals even though the Malay and Vietnamese Annals do not belong to the same *genre*. In the Malay Annals, to be heard as well as read, the units appear in "stories" instead of "pauses" in the narrative. In Maier's words, the stories were "meant to amuse but also to teach,"¹⁶⁹ whereas the Vietnamese Annals would be read simply for instruction. The latter were organized in accordance with the conventions of a Chinese chronological narrative, interrupted by "pauses" with didactic intent whereas the Malay Annals were a compilation of separate stories that tended to repeat the same kind of subject matter even after the arrival of the Portuguese. The Vietnamese tales of the tutelary spirits were also repetitive in order to impress on rulers the need to be alert to the presence of supernatural signs.¹⁷⁰ The effect of repetition in the Malay Annals is to create, time and time again, the atmosphere of a famous Malay Court. Repetitive materials in the Malay Annals would have held their listeners' attention just as the pauses repeating the syntagm's units would do. In both texts the syntagm would represent the echoes of countless conversations in either Court.

There are, of course, real differences in the rendering of the syntagms. Public life in Malacca was not disturbed by civil disobedience; the only disturbance came from contumacious *rajas* elsewhere on the Malay Peninsula or in Sumatra. Again, the Trần

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁶⁶ See p. 145 above.

¹⁶⁷ Brown, "Sējarah Mēlayu," p. 118: "Sunggoh-lah. Tuan hamba orang hutan, maka tiada tahu akan 'adat bahasa.'" R. O. Winstedt, "The Malay Annals, or Sējarah Mēlayu. The earliest recension from MS. No. 18 of the Raffles Collection, in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society, London," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16,3 (1938): 144. Also the "Kling" who "tiada tahu bahasa"; Brown, "Sējarah Mēlayu," p. 161 and Winstedt, "The Malay Annals," p. 185.

¹⁶⁸ *TT* under the date of 1335. Brown, "Sējarah Mēlayu," p. 95, on similar funeral privileges.

¹⁶⁹ Maier, "The Malays, the Waves, and the Java Sea," in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*, ed. V. J. H. Houben, et al. (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Asie en Oceanie, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1992), p. 21.

¹⁷⁰ See page 177 above.

Annals and Đán's poems give the impression of a small and conscientious body of beleaguered subordinates separated from ordinary people, whereas the Malay Annals convey the impression of teams of adventure-seekers at the Sultans' disposal. References to "retainers" in the Malay Annals suggest ties between people of different levels in society. One pictures many small entourages. Similar entourages in Vietnam would undoubtedly have been regarded as threatening to the emperors.¹⁷¹

Perhaps the major difference between the two contexts in which the syntagms work is that the repetitive and sonorous Malay Annals taught polite behavior in Court circles, whereas the Vietnamese Annals were consulted for information and especially about what had constituted a satisfactory relationship between rulers and officials in Trần times. It should be remembered that in the fifteenth century the status of the Malacca Court was being established in the Malay world, where polite manners were esteemed, and therefore much more notice is paid to the style of behavior in the Malay than in the Vietnamese Annals. In the fourteenth century and thereafter the dominant concern in the Red River delta was the need for disciplined social behavior.¹⁷² Polite behavior is a much more privileged topic in the Malay Annals than the booming international trade, something taken for granted when the Bëndaharas were performing well.¹⁷³ Malacca's claim to display surpassing courtly behavior (*bahasa*) was synonymous with its claim to occupy senior status in the Malay world, where every country had its *raja*.¹⁷⁴ Several centuries earlier the Sumatran maritime rulers from whom the Sultans were descended attached similar weight to their relative status and would vie with each other in sending expensive tributary missions to the Chinese Court.¹⁷⁵

Is it appropriate to regard the Malay syntagm as a statement about government? I think so, provided that one bears in mind the factor that underpinned the entire system: the loyalty all owed the Sultan and which guaranteed prompt obedience to his commands, the *leitmotif* for which is suggested by the expression "ordering ships to be made ready," *měnyuroh bėrlėngkap*.¹⁷⁶ Obedient performance and routine rewards are, I suggest, the Malay syntagm's prominent units. In the Trần Annals during the 1293-1357 years the rulers are rarely out of sight, and more varied qualities are attributed to the Trần officials, perhaps to prove that the rulers were discerning in appointing them.

Because of the influence of the Malay Annals, Malacca would be remembered as the place and time when the major preoccupation of the *élite* was to bask in the rulers' favor and be on hand to serve them because to do so was the source of ineffable well-being. Richard Winstedt has proposed that the core of the Malay Annals was written before 1536 and therefore not much later than the fall of Malacca

¹⁷¹ The Trần princes had private armies at the disposal of the rulers. The *TT* under the dates of 1237 and 1328 record the execution of considerable numbers of followers of disaffected princes who had been accused of treason.

¹⁷² See page 150 above.

¹⁷³ On expectations of foreign trading treasure, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Merchant and the King: Political Myths of Southeast Asian Coastal Polities," *Indonesia* 52 (October 1991): 41-54.

¹⁷⁴ Brown, "Sejarah Melayu," p. 189.

¹⁷⁵ See p. 132 above. Chapter 10 of the Malay Annals corrects the impression that Malacca was not China's equal.

¹⁷⁶ Brown, "Sejarah Melayu," p. 194; Winstedt, "The Malay Annals," p. 217.

in 1511.¹⁷⁷ It may be that the text's wealth of detail about the children and grandchildren who were offspring of the many marriages recorded in the text¹⁷⁸ was included partly as a challenge to the living generation of *rajas* and nobles, now in changed geographical circumstances, to uphold the proud style of Malacca's Court ceremonies inaugurated early in Malacca's history¹⁷⁹ and renewed after the fall of Malacca.¹⁸⁰ It may be significant that most of the family details appear late in the Annals during the reign of the last Sultan of Malacca, Mahmud Shah.

But does anything of interest emerge when, having identified the *Trần Annals'* syntagm concerning the conduct of government, one looks over one's shoulder at the Malay Annals at the same identifiable syntagm in another context? Is this no more than a fruitless comparison of incomparables if for no other reason than that in *Trần Vietnam* the government was being increasingly propped up by administrators such as Quát, Mạnh, and Ngạn, while the Malay Annals would have us suppose that the chiefs were participating in a successful way of life that sustained the self-esteem of all who served the Sultans?

In spite of obvious differences, I would bear in mind the clarity of the contrast in official behavior if I were to study Vietnamese and Malay history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I would consider how far the obedient and proud tradition of "imperial service" in Vietnam, weaned in a Court-based sub-culture, lent itself to a Marxist "cadre" style of government in the modern age and how far the similarly obedient and proud Malay tradition of serving the "*kerajaan*"¹⁸¹ had to be unlearned to prepare the Malays for an ideologically different mode of modernity. I would be studying transitions and the extent to which they were eased by traditions in public life revealed in the two Annals.

In the meantime, I suggest that the chain of command represented by the syntagm in the *Trần* and Malay Annals can alert us to what mattered in public life during earlier times: important things would happen when leadership was exerted and others could experience a sense of well-being. As I remarked in 1982, "we are dealing with the led as well as the leaders."¹⁸²

In this section I have glanced in a hotchpotch fashion at examples of writing from various parts of the region in order to bring into the picture local writing that might offset my new emphasis on the "regional" aspects of early Southeast Asia. A number of cultural differences within the region have emerged, though nothing so far permits me to characterize local cultural traditions with John Hale's confidence in respect of Renaissance Europe.

I have interested myself in what people chose to write and how they did so, continually shifting my focus from one part of the region to another or from writing for this purpose to that purpose. I have tried to reduce subregional anonymity in Southeast Asia and indicate something that writers deemed to be relevant. I still

¹⁷⁷ Winstedt, "The Malay Annals," pp. 27-34.

¹⁷⁸ See in particular Brown, "Sejarah Melayu," pp. 142, 164-165, 170, 177 and 193-194.

¹⁷⁹ Chapter IV of the Malay Annals.

¹⁸⁰ Chapters XXII and XXVII of the Malay Annals.

¹⁸¹ Briefly defined by Milner as "being in the condition of having a Raja"; A. C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), p. 9.

¹⁸² 1982, p. 19.

believe, as I did in 1982, that textual study will one day help to delineate specific literary cultures and illustrate the phenomenon of cultural diversity.¹⁸³

I have also wanted to suggest that there were plenty of ways whereby historians could advantageously study local writing to unearth statements about matters of local importance. I observed that Javanese, Malay, and Khmer writing supplied specimens of good writing for varied purposes that ranged from achieving a religious experience to displaying polite speech or demonstrating verbal skill. Literary devices, making for readability, could indicate matters requiring emphasis in particular local cultures. Repetition was one such device. Another was metaphor, examined in depth by Manguin in the context of maritime Malay political culture in order to formulate a Malay statement about a well-ordered polity. With the help of Taylor's study, a span of Vietnamese subregions was illuminated, mirrored in a diversity of poetic topics. The Thai and Khmer "Buddhist" localization of the Hindu epic *Rāmāyana* reflected local and perhaps somewhat different values. The Vietnamese reworking of Chinese pastoral poetry was an example of how a local countryside and its poets could come to life under cover of a foreign literary model. Vietnamese and Javanese alike were able to manipulate foreign texts for allegorical purposes. Vietnamese and Malays recognized the structure of public life as an irreducible syntagm of personal relationships between the ruler and his subordinates.

In 1982 I concluded Chapter 5 on "Local Cultural Statements" by remarking that the study of "literary" processes should be one of the historian's concerns because they could articulate the vision and values assumed to be natural in a culture. Today I have not changed my opinion. The results of this kind of study are surely worthwhile.

¹⁸³ 1982, p. 81.

"REGIONAL STUDIES" IN THE 1990'S

I ended the earlier volume on a cheerful note. Though the field of early Southeast Asian history was still relatively new, its future looked promising. Disciplines other than history were interested in the region because it offered theoretical knowledge, while the field's youth in terms of contributing to undergraduate education encouraged one to rethink it, develop appropriate study tools, and probe new ranges of historical experience. Students had an opportunity of being exposed to sources as well as to teachers. The subject was something to be discussed rather than taught straight from the shoulder. Finally, those who did not pursue Southeast Asian studies could find features there that deserved to be taken into account in contexts outside the region. As I look back on what I wrote, I seem to have adumbrated a future that could realize the region's potential for inter-disciplinary scholarship and trans-regional scholarly exchange.

The postscript has been written against a disturbing and probably more challenging background than at any time in the history of Southeast Asian studies.¹ The background is disturbing because of a notion circulating among Foundation donors that there was no longer an urgent demand for regional studies; with the end of the Cold War and the increased mobility of international capital, regional studies' relevance for understanding and managing the problems of our times was thought to be much reduced.² And yet, in the second half of 1997 and not long after the relevance for regional studies had been questioned, dramatic economic events overtook Southeast Asia and are now seen as having initiated a threat to the global economy.³

¹ I have discussed the situation with colleagues and consulted the following: *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*; *Association for Asian Studies Newsletter (Viewpoints)*, Summer, 1997; *Items* (Social Science Research Council); *Lingua Franca: The Review of Academic Life*.

² Jacob Heilbrunn acidly remarks that global capital flows have done little to reconcile the Tutsis and the Hutus; Jacob Heilbrunn, "Does Global Thinking Threaten Local Knowledge? The Social Science Research Council Debates the Future of Area Studies," *Lingua franca* (May/June 1996): 55.

³ An imputation in the 1990's, propagated to discredit regional studies, is its alleged poverty in developing "models" that could compete with those flourished by political scientists such as the model of "rational choice," which "seeks to replace ethnographical study with an economic-based explanation of human behaviour"; *ibid.*, p. 52. "Area studies are a threat to the universality of the 'rational choice' model which can explain every subject provided that the listener knows little or nothing about it"; "Asia, Asian Studies, and the National Security State: A Symposium. Introduction by Mark Selden," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29.1 (1997): 23.

But this background has also challenged "regional" scholars, and they have responded with two major points. The first point, aimed at the Social Science Research Council, has been that "the trump card" of regional studies—"their detailed linguistic and cultural knowledge of specific regions and peoples"—was being discarded in the 90's in favor of global studies.⁴ The other point has been neatly summarized by Thongchai Winichakul, who argues that global knowledge has its limits, and, wherever one reaches those limits, local or area knowledge becomes necessary.

We usually recognize the transnational forces of globalization. We seldom recognize the limits, the edge, where global forces encounter, confront, or are resisted by local counterparts. Globalization has never been a friction-free process. "Hybridity" appears everywhere and perhaps in every process of the global/local encounter. The line or edge of the global force is "language." At the point where the global language/text needs translation or interpretation (both literally and metaphorically), it is the point of localization where local context, text, and knowledge transform the global factor. This is the point where non-global knowledge is indispensable.⁵

Thongchai is making the essential point that global forces are not irresistible and that their interface with local understandings is extremely important and must be studied. Herein lies the regionalists' challenge today. I shall return to it, but first I wish to note three instances of globalizing situations that existed not long before the economic crash in 1997: a situation in the Indonesian province of Riau as it was analyzed during an international and multidisciplinary seminar held in Riau; the increasingly transnational economy of Thailand, analyzed through an informal debate among Thai intellectuals who discussed consequences of a global economy; and a disturbing implication of globalization revealed through study of a Malaysian literary *genre*. Each has historical dimensions.

In the first example, a recently published group of seminar papers examines what is happening as the result of Riau's being included within the Growth Triangle of Johore—Malaysia, Singapore, and Riau—Indonesia. The Growth Triangle's aim is that these territories should benefit from "the economies of scale and enter a 'globalized' economy" by "efficient" exploitation of timber, mining, fishing resources, and the development of oil plantations.⁶

The "Riau" that comes through the seminar's proceedings is an area with a local identity that does not, however, smother the dispersed and disparate communities in Sumatra and the islands. So disparate is the population that the province's inhabitants were not able to be unanimous in nominating Riau's "local heroes," and those who were eventually nominated failed to secure immediate promotion to the

⁴ Heilbrunn, "Does Global Thinking Threaten Local Knowledge?," p. 55.

⁵ Thongchai Winichakul, "Viewpoints," *AAS Newsletter* (Summer 1997): 12.

⁶ Cynthia Chou and Will Derks, eds., "Riau in Transition," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153,4 (1997): 475. Also see Vivienne Wee and Cynthia Chou, "Continuity and Discontinuity in the Multiple Realities of Riau," *ibid.*, pp. 527-541.

Indonesian pantheon of "national heroes."⁷ Even the local variations of the Malay language have defied being homogenized to become "pure Malay."

The seminar took into account such familiar "Southeast Asian" aspects of life as porous borders, multilingualism, and an uneasy relationship between dominant and "tribal" people. The Malays were attributed with fluidity and flexibility in assimilating and adapting to "various centres of reference simultaneously," skills that resemble a formula for holding one's own in *mandala* contexts.⁸ Similarly, "the common identity and shared culture of Malay lie in negotiating concurrent Malay identities rather than a single Malay identity,"⁹ a judgment that recalls Joyce White's notion that heterarchic societies were capable of conflict resolution¹⁰ and is consistent with the view that man-management was a requisite of public life in *mandala* times. Finally, a historian who took part in the seminar stresses the Malays' "fundamental pragmatism that has always characterized the people who live in this region, and their willingness to adapt to the demands of reality."¹¹ Having an eye on the present is embedded in the Malay mind-set. Being up-to-date and maintaining an awareness of the importance of the present are continuous themes in the postscript. The Orang Suku Laut, sea nomads, are among those ready to participate in the processes of change in order to protect their maritime resources and enhance the quality of development schemes. But they must be assured of the benefits.¹²

Only regional specialists could be expected to conceive, let alone accomplish, so well-researched and perceptive a survey. The fourteen regionalists from no less than nine research centers and several disciplines concluded that globalization in Riau was by no means a self-evidently benign influence even if it were the inevitable shape of things to come. Its victims' livelihood and homes were threatened, and global forces needed to be regulated by agencies that were not guided by the "rational choice" model or insensitive to local interests.

Many who participated in the seminar were especially interested in how local cultures reacted to globalizing processes, and they marveled at the resilience with which local values could be asserted under circumstances that reflected what Thongchai would refer to as "friction." As a particular instance of local adaptability to external forces that also illustrates what I have referred to as a Southeast Asian aptitude for "making sense" of the unfamiliar, there are those in Riau who proudly point to fifteenth-century Malacca as a "global"-scale success story. "Globalization" holds nothing new for them.¹³

Today critics may declare that regional studies have "become a field in search of a mission."¹⁴ The Riau seminar suggests that a mission already exists: observing and making better known local difficulties created by globalizing developments.

⁷ Nevertheless, to be recognized "nationally" was considered a victory for those on this small periphery. On this episode, see Timothy P. Barnard, "Local Heroes and National Consciousness: The Politics of Historiography in Riau," in "Riau in Transition," ed. Cynthia Chou and Will Derks, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153.4 (1997).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See p. 124 above.

¹¹ "Riau in Transition," p. 505.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 479.

¹³ I am grateful to Timothy Barnard, one of the conference's participants, for this information.

¹⁴ Heilbrunn, "Does Global Thinking Threaten Local Knowledge?," p. 50.

In the second example, globalization has sparked off a recent and lively debate among Thai "public intellectuals."¹⁵ As Craig Reynolds, who has covered the debate, notes, the debate "has become more tense and urgent as the ecosystem has deteriorated and as development has radically altered social relations."¹⁶

The debate has two notable and related features. The first is that a historical framework, sketched by Reynolds to explain the participants' various points of view, is rarely out of sight. Thai historical analogies are sufficiently numerous that the phenomenon of globalization could hardly have taken educated Thai by surprise, and this circumstance argues on behalf of the role of regional studies in promoting an intelligent understanding of contemporary opinion in at least Thailand. Those who deplored some globalizing effects in Thailand could see the phenomenon as a perverted replay of past experience. Thus, in *manḍala* times, peripheries, often inhabited by multi-ethnic peoples, were always porous and liable to disregard the centers and go their own way, while today, and as the result of modern technologies of communication that enable the agents of the global economy to ignore national boundaries, the "centre-periphery framework is becoming less and less applicable to the globalizing process."¹⁷

One reflection emerging in the debate is that the Thai are "natural" globalizers and able to make the necessary adjustments. After all, they had satisfactorily handled the Portuguese, Dutch, Japanese, and others in the recent two centuries. Their facility to do so was reinforced by a tradition of being able to localize useful foreign knowledge, as we noted in the previous section in connection with the manuals inspired by *Sam Kok*. The history of Southeast Asian Buddhism is a record of multiple traffic between Southeast Asian monks and those of South Asia.

Because the challenge of globalization can evoke historical memories among Thai intellectuals, some can confront the challenge with confidence, and here one can take into account the second notable and related feature of the debate. All who participated in the Riau seminar, chiefly scholars from the west, were unhappy with the situation there, but the Thai intellectuals did not entertain unanimously pessimistic views on globalization. Here is an illustration of Southeast Asian pragmatism.

Some were optimistic about Thailand's chance of holding its own and even benefiting. They would expect that telecommunications could provide a liberating influence as the result of by-passing national boundaries and introducing universal standards in respect of human rights, democratic institutions, conservation, environmentalism, and so forth, and, in general, assisting those who wanted to help the underprivileged.¹⁸ The global culture could be domesticated. An example of extreme optimism was the claim that the telecommunications revolution would

¹⁵ Craig J. Reynolds, "Globalisation and Cultural Nationalism in Modern Thailand," in *Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand*, ed. Joel S. Kahn (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 115-145. The "debaters" included freelance journalists, university teachers, and an economic historian.

¹⁶ Reynolds, "Globalization," p. 126.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117. Reynolds stresses the influence of telecommunications and the fascination and fear telecommunications have aroused among Thai intellectuals.

¹⁸ Satow attached importance to the electric telegraph as a "great instrument" for concentrating royal power; see note 106 on page 143 above.

bring into existence an *ersatz* Thai culture for transnational consumption alongside the "authentic" Thai culture.

The pessimists in the debate expressed equally extreme views. Their overriding concern was that the "integrity" of the Thai culture would be compromised by globalization. This had been the concern of King Rama VI (1910-1925) and is likely to strike a sympathetic chord among all Thai. Anxiety was expressed that "Thai creativity" would be diminished when confronting change¹⁹; as Thongchai insists, the characteristic feature of the global/local encounter is that it is never a friction-free process. Naturally, the pessimists were acutely aware of the threat facing their cultural heritage to the extent of wanting to fight back against global and state planning by mobilizing "local culture" at the level of village society.²⁰ By this means rural people would be helped to contend with the more damaging effects of overdevelopment. Globalizers and their critics both invoked "local knowledge," but self-help and the autonomy of village life were the critics' goal.

If globalization represents the shape of things to come, it may not have an easy passage in Thailand. Local resistance will be reinforced by appeals to the nation and its cultural heritage. But what may a historian make of this profusion of Thai responses to the globalizing prospect? The Riau seminar was anxious to tabulate conclusions, but the Thai materials, presented by Reynolds, were in the form of an open-ended debate and can only invite comments. Mine is that I am inclined to see the profusion as moments in a necessarily prolonged effort by Thai intellectuals to make sense—for me always a useful conceptual tool—of what is happening to them in light of their historical experience. Thai specialists would be able to discuss in detail how Thai were able to construe globalization. Southeast Asians in protohistory came, I suggested, to construe the devotional movement, assumed by them to be an universal feature of the "Hindu world," as supplying a convincing explanation for their leaders' Śiva-like stature and justifying their submission to his prowess. Then and today two "Southeast Asian" cultural aptitudes are involved: being up to date with what seems to represent universal norms and evaluating those norms in terms of their own experience.

I believe that Reynolds in his final paragraph is thinking on these lines when he remarks that all the evidence he has presented is "evidence of particular ways of thinking about the world, what one might consider to be cosmologies." I take this to be a reference to the global dimensions of the Thai situation and the modern equivalence of "the Hindu world."

The Thai intellectuals were examining consequences of globalization, the latest version of the contemporary. My third example of a globalizing situation, a Malaysian one, differs from the Riau and Thai ones in two respects. In this third example, "globalizing" tendencies are signified by the term "modernity" and represented by the Malay corporate élite. Moreover, while the Riau and Thai situations could be discussed within a broad historical framework, the Malaysian

¹⁹ How may creativity in *maṇḍala* times be defined? One definition might be celebratory writing and building inspired by the sensation of living in peace under an exemplary ruler as though it were a divine dispensation. See p. 186 above in connection with the Old-Javanese *Rāmāyana*.

²⁰ Reynolds notes the importance Thai attach to UNESCO's favorable listing of Thai "heritage sites," valuable tourist assets. One recalls instances in *maṇḍala* times when there was competition for preeminence or at least comparability in such diverse fields as tributary missions and literary skills.

framework is more narrowly focused: it is the history of the Malay novel from the 1920's to 1980.²¹ The effect of the focus is to draw attention to modernity's potential for divisiveness.

Virginia Hooker, combining skills of literary criticism and an awareness of the general historical context, has written a detailed study of the Malay novel since the *genre's* inception in the 1920's to 1980. The novelists, men and women who never belonged to the traditional courtly elite or the Malay political elite of more recent decades, wanted to present their own view of how the Malay race and society could survive in the face of modernity. In Hooker's judgment, their achievement has been "revolutionary." They chose to summon to life the world of the village, the family, and the home, or, as Hooker calls it, "a civil sphere" of private life. Here Malay society, struggling to survive in the modern age, is capable of transforming itself under its own leaders by means of its effort, initiative, fortitude, and steadfastness. These are the qualities which will protect the integrity of Malay society. At last there is a welcome break with the postscript's vision of a "Southeast Asia" where everything happened in the context of public life.

The cultural values that sustain "the civil sphere" and safeguard the Malay "homeland" are those of the "little people" (*rakyat*).²² By the 1970's the Malay novel's intent had become sufficiently radical and even subversive that ordinary Malays, when they were disappointed with their elected representatives, were urged to take matters into their hands and seek leaders from within their own community. They were able to do so because they were represented as living in a changed society, where human relationships were based on equality rather than hierarchy.

By the 1980s and 1990s, and as the result of modernizing or globalizing influences, the gap between those at the top and bottom of Malay society was growing at the rate which one has learned to attribute to the expanding global economy. Inevitably, the result of this process has been that a few Malays have become better qualified to benefit materially and are distancing themselves from their own culture.²³ A "New Malay" generation is now being fostered, "one that possesses a culture that keeps abreast with the changing times . . . and is able to compete without assistance . . ." ²⁴ "New Malays" already exist among the "corporate, management and professional class with economic standing and conspicuous material wealth," and they have sometimes been characterized as imbued with a "captive mind," westernized, imitative, and intellectually limited and likely to be insensitive to the needs of rural Malays.²⁵ They may even be

²¹ Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change through the Novel in Malay* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Prof. Hooker for allowing me to read this example of how literary studies can contribute to historical knowledge. After World War II the Malay novelists began to refer to their works as "novels" instead of "new hikayats."

²² The novelists' mood is reminiscent of the Thai appeal to "local knowledge." Neither they nor the Thai critics refer to a "golden age," be it Malacca or Sukhothai. They do not associate themselves with the sentiments of the traditional elite.

²³ I have benefited from Ahmat Adam, "Vision 2020: Will It Be the New Malay Dilemma?" in *Toward the Promotion of Southeast Asian Studies in Southeast Asia*, ed. Taufik Abdullah and Yekti Maunati (Indonesian Institute of Sciences: Program of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994), pp. 219-236.

²⁴ Ahmat Adam, "Vision 2020," p. 222.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 228. On p. 163 above I confessed that my earlier regional perspectives may have given the impression of an unusually serene part of the world. The Malaysian situation makes me wonder how often, in spite of the fine metaphors of the inscriptions, those in public life in

undermining Malay confidence in the Malay language, the language of the *rakyat* and the novels.

Each of these three instances of globalization comprises a complex local situation.²⁶ Those who question the continuing relevance of regional studies may not always be aware of disturbing aspects of the present socio-economic situation in Southeast Asia. In 1993 I presumed to ask my colleagues in Southeast Asia whether they might wish to become more aware of cultural factors in their regional past that could help or hinder the economic growth which at that time they took for granted. Today I suggest that other Western capitalists may wish to emulate Australian prudence and learn something of local cultural factors that can affect business behavior in Southeast Asia.²⁷ After all, an ill-informed economic relationship—excessive lending by foreign banks that stimulated excessive borrowing by Southeast Asian banks—has contributed in no small measure to the present crisis.

It is easy enough, of course, to reproach the global economy for its adverse effects, but the regional specialists' challenge today, to which I referred at the beginning of this section, lies elsewhere. They need to muster their resources in order to demonstrate the contemporary case for regional studies and, above all, consider what may be required to improve their field's standards of performance. Indeed, there has been a heartening groundswell of self-criticism among Southeast Asian specialists that has resulted not only in defenses of their vocation such as Thongchai's statement quoted above but also in reflection on what more needs to be done to widen the scope of regional studies.²⁸ I shall single out one call to arms,

mandala times disregarded the interests of those who did not belong to their entourages or were their dependants.

²⁶ Much more could be said of particular local situations. In, for example, Robert W. Hefner, *Market Cultures: Society and Morality in the New Asian Capitalisms* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), the point is made that, in the societies discussed in this volume, market growth has been accompanied by religious revival for such reasons as the pursuit of private wealth or as a refuge from the privations of urban isolation; *ibid.*, p. 27. Hefner broaches the topic of consumption as a means of reinforcing social differences and also as a divisive influence unleashed by an expanding market; *ibid.*, pp. 24-29.

²⁷ This was part of the intention behind a recent initiative of the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences. See Anthony C. Milner and Mary Quilty, eds., *Communities of Thought* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Anthony C. Milner and Mary Quilty, eds., *Comparing Cultures* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996). The third volume in the series came out this year: *Episodes* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998). These volumes, written largely by Asian specialists in the humanities, appear to be reaching their intended market. They are employed in seminars for business people and have been cited and recommended in major newspapers. After noting that "two-thirds of our exports go to Asia," the foreign editor of *The Australian* described *Comparing Cultures* as "a systematic and rigorous comparison, at every point, of Australia with its main Asian partners . . ." He added: "this is exactly the cross-cultural literacy we are going to need to navigate our way through our environment"; Greg Sheridan, "Our Northern Exposure," *The Australian's Review of Books* (April 1997): 14.

²⁸ For example, Selden, "Introduction," p. 23; *AAS Newsletter*, "Viewpoints" (Summer 1997): 7-12; Immanuel Wallerstein, "Open the Social Sciences," *Items. Social Science Research Council*, 50,1 (1996): 1-7, see especially pages 6-7 for his proposed reforms. See also Peter A. Hall and Sidney Tarrow, "Globalization and Area Studies: When is Too Broad Too Narrow?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 23, 1998): B4-B5. Andrew Gordon in *AAS Newsletter*, "Viewpoints" (Summer 1997), p. 11, rebukes those who suppose that regionalists are merely "the fetchers and carriers of the academy," the lowly status assigned to historians by social scientists deplored by Mary Wright. Gordon reminds us that once upon a time theorizing and gathering

which is Ruth McVey's "Golay Lecture" delivered in 1996.²⁹ Her address challenged her colleagues in measured terms to rethink their vocation in order to overhaul it.

She reminded them that they studied a region of famously diverse cultures that should provide "the basis for manageable and useful comparative study" within a multidisciplinary framework. They therefore had a rare opportunity to "re-think" their approach to Southeast Asian studies. But they had to "make it so" and develop global scale networks that extended beyond regional specialists in order "to make Southeast Asianists' combination of local and disciplinary knowledge available to the wider scholarly world. This means, in the first place, identifying problems which are of broad concern intellectually and/or socially, to which the study of Southeast Asia can contribute significantly."³⁰ She went on to insist that "fundamental to any attempt to help Southeast Asianists break out of their area studies ghetto is the formulation of questions which cross disciplinary boundaries and whose investigation can serve to illuminate both theory and local knowledge."³¹ She listed new topics such as those raised in Craig Reynolds' "Golay Lecture" that preceded hers: changing Southeast Asian concepts of selfhood, examined in literary production, religious reform movements, and disciplines of the body.³² She also proposed questions that could challenge established assumptions and enlist the interest of scholars working in other regions of the world. She mentioned, for example, networks that crossed territorial boundaries, the artificial distinction between "traditional" and "modern," the "western-nonwestern distinction," a greater awareness of "the way in which the past lives in the present" and beyond it, awareness of the ways in which Southeast Asian peoples have accumulated and organized knowledge, cultural as well as socio-economic and ecological processes of Southeast Asia's industrialization, and much more.

Ruth McVey's recommendations have an important implication. Inquiries of this kind could enrich the disciplines and enhance the prestige of regional studies, but regional scholars would need to reexamine their credentials; it is not enough for them to have expert disciplinary knowledge of one part of their region and to be content with the status of a "sub-regional" expert. They also need to consider what scholars in their own and other disciplines are doing elsewhere in the region so that they can gradually transform themselves into genuine "region-oriented" scholars. New problems and questions need to be identified, and then consideration can be given to suitable approaches likely to attract interdisciplinary responses from scholars working in other "regions." Funders' notice can too easily be attracted by advertising an impressively long list of scholars, drawn from a huge span of disciplines, whose names appear in catalogues as being affiliated with a regional center. But how many of them have been groomed to behave as "regionalists"? They would have to be willing to interest themselves in other parts of the region, talk shop

and sifting evidence were inseparable pursuits in the best scholarly work in humanities and social sciences.

²⁹ Ruth McVey, "Globalization, Marginalization, and the Study of Southeast Asia," *Southeast Asian Studies: Reorientations* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1998), pp. 37-64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-63; Craig J. Reynolds, "Self-Cultivation and Self-Determination: Postcolonial Southeast Asia," in *Southeast Asian Studies: Reorientations*, ed. Ruth McVey (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1998), pp. 7-35.

with colleagues in other disciplines, cooperate in forming productive relationships with them, and, above all, cultivate sufficient depth of regional knowledge to be qualified and anxious to play more than a marginal role in a center's affairs. Education in regional studies is not only for graduate students. Their teachers, too, may sometimes need to be "educated" so that they can offer ideas that would not have occurred to them if they were not becoming effective members of a "regional" center.

McVey is not, I take it, inviting her colleagues to change direction and embark on different studies. Instead, she urges them to ask themselves what else they could bear in mind when they pursue their chosen studies. What further and perhaps unsuspected significance may their field—no matter what their disciplines are—have today and how may they identify and share it with others? The would-be regionalist should at least be aware of general ranges of experience attributed to his or her region and of directions in which relevant research is heading.

My 1982 volume professed to have regional orientations.³³ But can the postscript claim to have supra-regional as well as regional concerns? Elsewhere I have suggested that some of the cultural features I ascribed to the region were more pronounced there than in many other parts of the world and that their combination might be distinctively "Southeast Asian."³⁴ Those familiar with other regions could comment on the comparison. And how evenly and with what significance are the various features represented among the Southeast Asian subregions? I referred above to Arthur Wright's observations on the Chinese adaptation of Indian Buddhism³⁵ and found it stimulating to read what John Hale had written about the Renaissance in Europe because it reinforced my confidence in the resilience of local cultures even though I failed to throw much light on specific Southeast Asian instances. Hale seemed to demonstrate what genuine "regional studies" could involve. Here are two modest cross-regional gestures. The postscript also noted how evidence of "heterarchy" in archaeological materials from mainland Southeast Asia could be replicated by evidence from Europe and America.³⁶ Sunait Chutintaranond found it helpful to take into account the notion of "segmentary States" in southern India when interpreting the nature of the Ayudhya polity,³⁷ and the study of the

³³ This was not because I was unusually enlightened. The reason for my "regional" bias was a pedestrian one. When I became an academic, I was expected to examine Chinese documents about numerous parts of the region that were on or close to the lanes of maritime communication through which traders to and from China sailed. I studied what these documents wrote about the "kingdoms" in question and then tried to supplement their information from other sources. And so it was that I became accustomed to introducing each "kingdom" in turn as though nowhere else was so interesting even though it might have something in common with other parts of the region.

³⁴ Wolters, "Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study," *Indonesia* 58 (October 1994): 11.

³⁵ See note 22 on p. 113 above.

³⁶ The title of Joyce White's article is significant: "Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Socio-Political Development: The Case from Southeast Asia," in *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies*, ed. Robert M. Ehrenreich, Carole L. Crumley and Janet E. Levy. Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, no. 6 (Arlington, Va.: American Anthropological Association, 1995). The heterarchy concept had been developed in the context of Bronze Age Denmark, Medieval Ireland, and the Classic Maya; see Elizabeth M. Brumfiel's article in the volume containing White's article.

distribution of specific types of Chinese ceramics over trans-Asian trade routes as far west as Africa would obviously assist in establishing a comparative chronology of the volume of trade along the routes.

I have probably underestimated the extent of region-scale studies under way.³⁸ Those who practice ethnomusicology have a convincing reason for conceptualizing Southeast Asia's distinctive "regional" identity. In the words of a colleague,

a conspicuous characteristic of instrumental ensembles in Southeast Asian musical cultures is the centrality of percussion instruments and techniques of performance. From at least as early as the sixteenth century, highly developed percussion groups that served particular roles in different segments of society could be found everywhere in the region. These ensembles comprise three types of percussion instruments, and their distribution varies from ensemble to ensemble and place to place. But, when all of the diverse and variegated musical cultures of the region are compared with the musical cultures from other regions of the world that are comparable in size and population, the predominance of percussion ensembles is clearly evident in Southeast Asia.³⁹

Today Southeast Asian studies also require a steady flow of new ideas and fresh intellectual impulses in response to what Ruth McVey has described as "global questioning" and "Southeast Asian ferment."⁴⁰ She believes that a considerable body of information about Southeast Asia is available and that new lines of inquiry should now be related to the old wisdom.⁴¹ In the final analysis, the future of Southeast Asian studies may depend on innovative scholarship that can engage the attention and collaboration of scholars studying other parts of the world.

³⁷ Sunait Chutintaranond, "'Mandala,' 'Segmentary State,' and Politics of Centralization in Medieval Ayudhya," *Journal of the Siam Society* 78,1 (1990).

³⁸ Richard A. O'Connor, "Agricultural Change and Ethnic Succession in Southeast Asian States: A Case for Regional Anthropology," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54,4 (1995), pp. 988-989. John R. Bowen has addressed some contested issues concerning Southeast Asia viewed from the perspective of anthropology; "The Forms Culture Takes: A State-of-the-Field Essay on the Anthropology of Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54,4 (1995): 1047-1078.

³⁹ Martin F. Hatch's communication, dated February 25, 1998. For S. J. O'Connor the Southeast Asian societies are "cloth cultures" (see page 127 above), and for Hatch they are where percussion ensembles predominate.

⁴⁰ Ruth McVey, "Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 5-8. In a valuable "state-of-the art" survey, she observes that historical understandings now play a major role in the analysis of Southeast Asian societies, while the understandings of anthropologists have increasingly suffused work in the other disciplines. One result has been that the nation-state has ceased to be the major target for study. Instead, the focus has shifted to alternative realities. In general there is a "growing permeability of disciplinary boundaries," and the disciplines have themselves fragmented; Ruth McVey, "Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies," pp. 5-6.

Will Derks, urging the need to study differences among literary systems, compares a Western preference for books, novels, and permanent fame with the contemporary Indonesian preference for reading or, often more likely, listening to poems and short stories published for immediate gain in journals and magazines, where the literary tradition is a popular and orally oriented one and where writers seek immediate achievement; Will Derks, "'If Not to Anything Else.' Some Reflections on Modern Indonesian Literature," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152,3 (1996): 341-352.

⁴¹ McVey, "Globalization," p. 52.

In her "Golay" lecture, she proposed some questions that could profitably engage the attention of Southeast Asianists, and she has recently suggested that "globalization," involving the sensitive global-local interface that Thongchai emphasized, should itself become a major theme for investigation.⁴² For better or for worse, globalization has become a fact of life in Southeast Asia as well as elsewhere, and a better informed understanding of its implications and prospects is a reasonable responsibility not only for economists and political scientists but for historians and their kinsmen such as anthropologists. Here would be a more positive way of responding to the present challenge to regional studies than merely pointing out that globalization will never extinguish local characteristics. In a similar vein, a fellow historian urges his colleagues not to be overwhelmed by the current prominence of the expression "globalization" and neglect to study its languages and rituals with the detachment they cultivate when they study other elements in Southeast Asia's multicultural scene.⁴³

One approach to the challenge would be to respond to something that I noted above. Malays can construct memories of fifteenth-century Malacca as a "global" success story, and Thai can do likewise in respect of Ayudhya's success (1351-1767) in handling foreigners from different parts of the world. According to the Malay Annals, the Bendahara of Malacca, too, could handle foreigners. Malays and Thai are confidently asserting that their history in *mandala* times qualifies them to understand and control contemporary economic and political situations. What, then, may be said on behalf of these self-images? Can conspicuous features of the globalizing economy in its Southeast Asian context be credibly understood as a continuation or resumption of experience in earlier times and, if so, what light might be thrown on the region's capacity for adjusting itself to what is happening today? And would a history-oriented study on these lines be of any interest as far as comparative regional studies are concerned?⁴⁴

Bearing in mind perspectives arising in the postscript, I shall comment briefly on these questions and suggest implications for the future of Southeast Asian regional studies. Others may push this line of inquiry much further.

A straightforward definition of globalization is a multicentered generation of power, usually understood as competitive economic power, initiated by those endowed with superior business prowess and resources. Because of advanced communications technology, a center's initiative is almost immediately communicable on a global scale and without hindrance from national boundaries. Moreover, economic power on a global scale can attract and absorb rival centers of economic power and create multinational conglomerations with immense power.⁴⁵

⁴² In a letter to the author dated April 18, 1998.

⁴³ This is Rudolf Mrázek's advice. He regards "globalization" as a language game to trap historians and discourage them from studying "global Southeast Asia." In the same way Kartini in Java at the beginning of this century was seduced by Western friends to embrace unthinkingly the concept of "modernity" and see her home as "a remote corner in the woods." I am grateful to Mrázek for his lively criticisms of an earlier draft of this section.

⁴⁴ This would be connected with two questions proposed by McVey in her lecture: a greater awareness of "the way in which the past lives in the present" and "the Western-nonwestern distinction."

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Erik Thorbecke for helping me understand what an economist understands by "globalization."

This perspective on "globalization" applies equally well to the Southeast Asian *maṇḍala*, when the region was multicentered and where rulers of some centers were perceived to be capable of superhuman achievements and able to attract and absorb other centers and reduce them to the status of allies and vassals. The literary convention was that a ruler's Śiva-like prowess was bound to extend into unlimited space. In practice, his power could be projected ever further afield by means of networks of marriage ties and trading activities, feats of arms, and the sheer momentum of his reputation in a region where the inhabitants were alert to spot signs of expanding or diminishing power. One recalls Jane Drakard's concept of a "culture of communication," where the ruler's voice and written word were carriers of power. Telecommunications today perform the same function. Moreover, just as today Western business giants can scan the globe for profitable opportunities, so in *maṇḍala* times there was an elitist propensity to be *au courant* with skills and techniques appearing from afar. The historian need not be surprised by the recent statement of a World Bank official that many of Southeast Asia's economies had the advantage of an "outward looking" character, which took to the export trade with alacrity. A journalist has commented that Southeast Asians "do not need to learn how to live in a global market."⁴⁶

Perhaps further associations of *maṇḍala* times can be revived by "global" experiences. For example, today global economic power can cause ripple effects; when one currency comes under speculators' fire, neighboring currencies can be endangered. Similarly, an overlord's prowess would enlarge his *maṇḍala*'s sphere of influence and, ripple-like, persuade distant centers to seek his "protection." Again, in *maṇḍala* times compulsory transfers of population often took place; today there is large-scale traffic in migrant labor within the region and globally as well. In both instances additional manpower and skills would enhance a center's power and encourage multilingualism. Yet again, at the apex of this or that society in earlier times there would be shared cultural assumptions derived from Sanskrit literature.⁴⁷ There would also be similar habits of mind such as a concern to be abreast of new information from afar and a preference for well-tested expedients. Today Southeast Asian participants in globalizing economies are often likely to have had a professional education comparable with that of their Western partners or competitors. In recent years they would also share similar "global" experiences that promoted region-wide political, business, and cultural—including recreational—exchange and reinforced the sense of a new regional identity at least in corporate circles and fostered cultural attitudes that were neither global nor local.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Jean-Michel Severino, the World Bank's vice-president for East Asia and the Pacific, quoted by Barbara Crossette in the *Sunday New York Times*, May 31, 1998 ("Weathering the Storm").

⁴⁷ In 1982, p. 48, I touched on this "broadly based communality of outlook."

⁴⁸ Here I have been influenced by Ruth McVey's critical reading of an earlier draft of this section. She has sketched the emergence and business affiliations of the Southeast Asian entrepreneurs in modern times; Ruth McVey, "The Materialization of the Southeast Asian Entrepreneur," in *Southeast Asian Capitalists*, ed. Ruth McVey (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1992): 21-27. My approach to globalization has also been influenced by Curtis Anastasio, a lawyer engaged in international business. In a letter dated April 23, 1998, he wrote: "it seems to me that new differences replace the old ones as each region digests the changes wrought by globalization and adapts in new, distinctive ways."

Sheldon Pollock has questioned the dichotomy of "global" and "local." Studying the interaction of "cosmopolitan" Sanskrit and vernacular literatures, he considers that the role of Sanskrit "was to participate on the very creation of these cultures, and to be itself changed in

So far reminiscences of earlier situations might protect the global-local interface from serious misunderstanding and friction. At least for some in Southeast Asia there might be a degree of familiarity with aspects of globalization. But how far can all contemporary global phenomena fit into familiar categories of experience? Hefner asks: "how do firms work? Are they really everywhere the same?"⁴⁹ Another and urgent question today is how far one is justified in assuming that the Southeast Asian understanding of the banking institution resembles that of the West in every respect. How did banks have to make sense before they could be localized? How should one explain instances of rash diversification resulting in an excess of industrial capacity and overinvestment in the private sector made possible by imprudent loans by local banks? What are judged to be reasonable levels of risk-taking? It has been suggested that Indonesian business has been based on personal relations, not commercial principles, and that banks have lent recklessly, and this is explained as the result of "over-confidence, born of conceit and economic success."⁵⁰ But should an historian be satisfied that this is the whole of the story? Obligations arising from personal relations were recognized in the region long before western norms of business practice were introduced. Local cultural constraints as well as "rational choice" should be considered when accounting for economic behavior.⁵¹ Moreover, Southeast Asian businessmen cannot be held solely responsible for the woes of recent times. Foreign banks, unable to resist high Southeast Asian interest rates pegged to the US dollar, are also responsible by bringing matters to a head with their lavish short-term loans to tempt those who preferred to grasp at what they believed were opportunities for immediate gain rather than be content with the prospect of security in the future. Again, sudden flights of foreign capital have had devastating consequences on local economies, and it is by no means surprising that the operations of global financial institutions are now having to be scrutinized. Instances of formulaic rigidities in Western economic policies have come increasingly under fire in the West as well as in the countries that have had to endure them.

Another topic for "interface" research could be the relative importance to policy-makers of tested economic models and quick fixes, the present-day equivalence of the "expedients" noted in the postscript. Or again, what are the late twentieth-century economic equivalences in Southeast Asia of the "royal favor" (*anugraha*), "tribute," and "entourage" in *manḍala* times? The field of comparative law, which notes instances of regional resistance to the globalization of law and politics, may

the process"; Sheldon Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *Journal of Asian Studies* 57,1 (1998): 33.

⁴⁹ Robert W. Hefner, *Market Cultures: Society and Morality in the New Asian Capitalisms*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *The Economist*, January 17-23, 1998, p. 14.

⁵¹ Another question for historians is why insolvent Southeast Asia firms cannot be forced into bankruptcy. See comments in *The Economist*, January 24, 1998, pp. 71-72. For recent analyses of the current situation in Southeast Asia, see Nayan Chanda, "Rebuilding Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (February 12, 1998): 46-49; "A Survey of East Asian Economies: Frozen Miracle," *The Economist* (March 7-13, 1998), after p. 58. In view of the influence of government on decision-making in the private sector and also the traditional prestige of government in the region, one wonders whether businessmen, sheltering behind their often dependent relationship with government, have gained sufficient experience in taking prudent economic risks when opportunities arise.

provide further insights into the nature of the global-local interface.⁵² Perhaps a case should now be made for proposing "cultural economics" as a field for systematic study in the Southeast Asian or any other regional context caught up by globalizing processes.

The present economic crisis in Southeast Asia is sufficient to remind us that the globalizing economy cannot be assumed never to run into local difficulties. The interface unquestionably deserves to be a field for study by regional specialists. Nevertheless, the processual parallels between *maṇḍala* history and the globalizing present may suggest that Southeast Asian historical experience be studied as a continuum, with a relatively short "nationalist" interval wedged between *maṇḍala* time and what may plausibly be regarded as neo-*maṇḍala* time. One may even wonder whether there has ever been a non-*maṇḍala* age in the region with the exception of the "colonial" interval. After Southeast Asian peoples regained their independence, have centralizing institutions and influences associated with independent governments become so robust and acceptable as to create an unbridgeable discontinuity between pre- and post-colonial time? Alternatively, has independence brought with it a resumption of a style of public life within the broad and always evolving framework of the *maṇḍala* model and at a time when the global economy is independently tending to replicate *maṇḍala*-like features and attitudes of mind? One scholar has recently suggested that, as a result of international labor flows and especially of an ethnic division of skills and abilities, multicultural trends in contemporary capitalism may be endangering the system of nation-states, a threat that would be in addition to transnational representations of community to serve the needs of transnational capitalism.⁵³ And as a ferocious instance of the threat to the nation state posed by contemporary global communications, widely separated and loosely linked terrorist groups are able to coordinate their conspiracies without regard to national borders. Today individuals as well as nation states can cause havoc.⁵⁴ Perhaps the western tradition has tended to overemphasize the staying power of the nation state, which may turn out to be a blip on the screen of history.

The *maṇḍala* and the global economy comparison can be taken a stage further. The overlord in earlier times, a man of prowess, could be attributed with a beneficent

⁵² For example, in Germany legal norms, involving the State's strength, rather than social norms or moral values, define social norms, whereas in Japan, where public opinion is respected, legal norms are deeply embedded in social norms; Peter J. Katzenstein, in "A World of Regions: America, Europe, and East Asia," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 1,1 (Fall 1993). Curtis Anastasio informs me that anthropologists have undertaken cross-cultural studies in the related subject of dispute resolution, a subject that returns us to Joyce White's observation on pre-historic response to tension-causing situations; see p. 124 above.

⁵³ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 231-231. Ruth McVey notes how the conceptual supremacy of the nation-state has been undermined by the influence of political economy in revealing the relationship between wealth and power in society, by stressing values determined by the market and not by the state, and by bringing out the extra-national links and pressures which limit sovereignty; McVey, "Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies," p. 7.

⁵⁴ In an article in *The Times* of August 24, 1998, William Rees-Mogg noted the argument that the balance of power between the state and the individual had shifted in the Information Age decisively in favor of the individual. He cited James Davidson and William Rees Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual: How to Survive and Thrive During the Collapse of the Welfare State* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

influence even though the prospect was that his *maṅḍala* would shrink before expanding again. Under him the Golden Age, celebrated in the Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*, would be temporarily restored. He could be seen as resisting the cyclical forces of global destruction. Such seems to have been the vision of those who built Angkor Wat or composed Old-Javanese Court poetry. The overlord enforced peace among numerous centers not only through his military might but by his moral presence and thereby encouraged behavior that was believed to provide his followers with spiritual rewards. His influence would be regarded as beneficent even though rivals persistently emerged to contest his hegemony. Nor would a *maṅḍala's* fragrance be extinguished when it eventually collapsed.

But what may be said of global economic success? Today's globalizing economies create tremendous wealth and wondrous construction works, but they are also often accompanied by large-scale downsizing of local work forces and toleration of environmental degradation for the sake of productive efficiency, savings for consumers, and higher living standards. And just as an overlord's overthrow or death and the collapse of his *maṅḍala* could be followed by a resumption of fighting to fill the power vacuum, so today the temporary collapse of economic stability in Southeast Asia has led to harsh living conditions and violent protests. The high cost of oil has even led to piratical attacks on oil tankers. In the old days piracy would break out when the authority of maritime overlords such as the rulers of Sriwijaya had disappeared.

The *maṅḍala*-globalization parallelism seems to break down in a further and significant way. In *maṅḍala* times, despite intervals of contraction, what had been regarded as constituting a state of spiritual well-being when a *maṅḍala* prospered would be expected eventually to return. But even when or where the global economy is judged to be booming, it has no moral associations.

The global market today is the latest instance in world history of a large-scale cultural transformation, whereby a sense of the world in which one lives and therefore one's life-style are transformed.⁵⁵ One thinks of "Hinduization," the Reformation, and the scientific revolution (with its responsiveness to the demystification of the world grounded on Reformation ideology) as three such instances. But transformations in the past were never without their religious or ethical aspects. What is now unprecedented is that the international-scale focus on technological and economic developments coincides with a time of moral disarray and frequent violence in many parts of the world. Yet these conditions seem to be of marginal concern or even a matter of indifference for those who generate the global economy. There seems to be little concern for quality of life. The scribes' claims made to embellish the experience of living in a flourishing *maṅḍala* have no convincing equivalences. In Southeast Asia non-governmental organizations seem to be carrying the responsibility of demanding that economic change should be mediated more compassionately than the governments of the nation-states are prepared to do.⁵⁶

Yet, in spite of this notable difference between the *maṅḍala* and the contemporary situation, the comparison between the two may still be worthwhile by returning to a similarity which could be the most decisive: a propensity for being up-to-date. But being up-to-date today is not only a matter of receiving and reacting to economic intelligence from the other end of the world. Much else besides economic

⁵⁵ I thank A. Thomas Kirsch for assisting me in drafting this paragraph.

⁵⁶ Ruth McVey, "Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies," pp. 7-8.

information or the flow of capital is communicated; there is also an unimpeded flow and exchange of information in the form of news and ideas on all kinds of subjects.

A technological acceleration of this trend has been with us for centuries. In 1836 Thomas Carlyle wrote something that is an intimation of the force of what the global flow may now imply: "He who first shortened the labor of copyists by the device of movable types was disbanding hired armies, and cashiering most kings and senates, and creating a whole new democratic world."⁵⁷ Today the flow of communication is more important than ever for the simple reason that governments, facing opposition, cannot control the cellular phone and fax machine. Local and foreign newspapers can be read on the Internet. This summer visitors to Indonesia have come back with exciting tales of how everyone seems to be talking about everything. This is a time of multiple voices, even if the voices are those of a very small, albeit articulate, minority of educated persons. Those on the phone are talking and registering their opinions in public and propagating them. They belong to a new style of public life, are helping to shape public opinion, and are beginning to participate in group action. Instant and confidential conversation is now possible as Southeast Asians strive desperately to make sense of their sufferings and opportunities in the wake of economic collapse. Voices over the phone may play their part in determining whether a "globalizing" version of the *maṇḍala* is the shape of things to come and, if so, to what degree of local adaptation global models must submit and the extent to which local excesses have to be curbed. From time to time commentators make the point that countries with democratic policies in train are in the vanguard in recovering economic health.

The consequences of a *maṇḍala's* collapse had to be endured, but there was always the expectation that the moral order would be restored one day. Perhaps the same prospect lies ahead for the region as it enters its neo-*maṇḍala* age.

An unforeseen consequence of writing the postscript has been to broaden the horizons of one who had regarded himself as a "medieval" historian and to encourage him to ruminate about the region's future. The connecting thread may be a curiosity in the cognitive processes whereby former and present generations of Southeast Asians could construct and reflect on what was and is happening to them. Thus, I have come to believe that *maṇḍala* and globalization history in Southeast Asia have something in common. In both cases the scene is multicentered and boundary-less, and the dominating category is immense prowess, a flexible category capable of accommodating religious, political, or economic power. I have therefore been ready to pay attention to the Malay and Thai self-images which introduced my suggestion that Southeast Asia had now entered its neo-*maṇḍala* age.

If I were to be asked what was my vision of topics lying ahead for Southeast Asian studies, epistemology would be among them. How do people in Southeast Asia conceptualize what they know about their world and their experiences?⁵⁸ What they mean by "knowledge" could, for example, throw light on local perceptions of "globalizing" tendencies and on such matters as the extent to which recommendations from the IMF are understood and implemented by Southeast and East Asian governments. The comparison could be an unusual illustration of local cultures in action. "Knowledge" and the imparting of knowledge certainly lend themselves to transregional study on an Asian scale and beyond. The complexity of

⁵⁷ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 516.

⁵⁸ I referred briefly to this topic in 1982, pp. 47-48.

such a study becomes clear when one reads the chapter on "education" in the Australian publication *Comparing Cultures* and observes how different views are held, for example, about the purposes of education, the division of sciences and humanities, the status of teachers, and, predictably, the importance attached to teaching proper social relationships.⁵⁹ The relevance of education as a field for study is underscored by the priority some believe is accorded to education in Southeast Asia today, a priority with major political and economic implications.⁶⁰

Tony Day and Craig Reynolds have introduced the subject of knowledge by suggesting that its ramifications span Southeast Asian history. Knowledge has always been of central concern for those in power on account of its "universalizing" dimension in respect of time and space.⁶¹ This is not surprising in a region where Śiva—the divine *guru* and wielder of universal and timeless authority—had been the exemplar for royal leadership. Day and Reynolds analyzed materials that ranged in time from Angkor Wat in the twelfth century to the Thai *Traiphum* of the late eighteenth century, Thai intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Javanese *Centhini* of the early nineteenth century, and the Taman Mini in Jakarta of our day.⁶² As the result of their analysis, they were able to identify recurring moments in time when what was regarded as knowledge about Truth—Hindu, Buddhist, or Western—could be perceived as a kind of "cosmic machine" available for serving "the state." The knowledge in question would sometimes be reconciled with "Truth" from outside the region and with competing claims to universal application, but it would always define what constituted practical value in the context of contemporary problems because it could be understood to be constitutive of time and space.

One observation by Day and Reynolds is particularly pertinent today. They believe that there is a recurrent Southeast Asian relationship between knowledge and power, and this may suggest that "Southeast Asia and its history in the fullest sense are still a useful framework for comparative analysis in an age when area studies and the 'nation-state' are being called into question."

Their study echoes themes in the postscript. The repetitiveness of the relationship between knowledge and power is reminiscent of the Vietnamese tales of the spirits, where heroes repeatedly apprehend the presence of supernatural and human resources available to them in times of crisis.⁶³ In *maṇḍala* history the

⁵⁹ "Education," in *Comparing Cultures*, ed. Milner and Quilty, pp. 69-103.

⁶⁰ *Sunday New York Times*, May 31, 1998 ("Weathering the Storm") and citing, among others, the senior World Bank official mentioned in n. 46 above. But Benedict Anderson gives a depressing account of the state of education in Southeast Asia; Benedict Anderson, "From Miracle to Crash," *London Review of Books* 20,8 (April 16, 1998): 54.

⁶¹ Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, "Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* (forthcoming).

⁶² Day and Reynolds also considered Trương Vĩnh Ký's encyclopaedic account of Northern Vietnam, undertaken on behalf of the French in the South. It would be interesting to compare its organization with that of Chinese and also earlier Vietnamese compendia of knowledge. Were there divergent sequences of headings and, if so, why? In the case of Angkor Wat, I cannot help seeing the great monument as a textually accurate measurement of Suryavarman II's stature and authority.

⁶³ See page 177 above. Repetitive experience generates a sense of predictability and confidence in the future such as Vietnamese may have felt during the thirteenth century; Wolters, "On Telling a Story of Vietnam in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 67-68.

recurrent appearance of men of prowess, anxious to tap knowledge, would be a familiar experience. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that knowledge was understood to be a fund of timely and, above all, effective "expedients," another feature of historical experience in the region.

There are further echoes. Day and Reynolds refer to "competition" between local and foreign bodies of knowledge in the nineteenth century and the localization of the latter, for which they prefer the term "reconciliation." As a result, Southeast Asia's intellectual resources could be regarded as at least comparable with those of the West. "Comparability" is another of the postscript's themes. The authors also give instances of Javanese manuals of knowledge that match and are likely to be modeled on Indian *sastra* in the sense of being guides that serve as general principles to be applied rather freely. The Thai *Sam Kok* is a manual.⁶⁴

The study of "knowledge" interests me for a special reason. It can suggest examples of subjects that Southeast Asian cultures at particular times chose to localize in Western forms (such as geography, astronomy, encyclopaedism, and Marxism) because they made sense to them and were relevant to their concerns. This was how I approached the reception of "Hinduism" in Southeast Asian protohistory.

Day and Reynolds conclude their study in a manner that should satisfy Ruth McVey's standards. Having considered recurrent but never identical relations of power and knowledge, "we are left with the question of what kind of 'state' and what kind of 'history' are implied by the characteristics which these discourses have in common." Here is an invitation for further research and advances in Southeast Asian scholarship. The meaning of knowledge and the purpose of education are related subjects. Pedagogical theory and practice should be part of a full-bodied story of Southeast Asia. But education is not a topic to be studied only in a Southeast Asian context. In the globalizing world, about which we are being endlessly reminded, should not thought be also given to educating those in the West who may encounter Southeast Asia in manifold ways and especially in the market place? To an important extent, this involves undergraduate education, a responsibility to which the discussion of the future of regional studies seems to give remarkably scant attention.

I am aware of two notable exceptions to this neglect. In the 1990 Wingspread Conference on Southeast Asian Studies, Frank E. Reynolds admitted that he was not surprised by the absence of questions concerning undergraduate curriculum and teaching put to those invited to address the conference. He proposed an aggressive approach to the neglect such as insisting that the field should be represented in required core courses for undergraduates and by offering team-taught "civilization" courses.⁶⁵ The other exception is Stanley O'Connor, who has recently made a massive defense of Southeast Asian art as a component of a liberal undergraduate education and has shifted the discussion from the multiplication of teaching courses to what is actually taught.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "Manuals" and "models" interested me in 1982, pp. 46-49.

⁶⁵ Frank E. Reynolds, "Southeast Asian Studies in America: Reflections on the Humanities," in *Southeast Asian Studies in the Balance: Reflections from America*, ed. Charles Hirschman, Charles F. Keyes, and Karl Hutterer (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Association for Asian Studies, c. 1992), pp. 69-72.

⁶⁶ Stanley J. O'Connor, "Humane Literacy and Southeast Asian Art," in *Southeast Asian Studies in the Balance: Reflections from America*, ed. Charles Hirschman, Charles F. Keyes, and Karl Hutterer (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Association for Asian Studies, 1992), pp. 147-158.

Dissociating himself from the modernist position that art, housed and exhibited in museums, should be studied for art's sake, he insists that artifacts should be seen as "centers of [Southeast Asian] experience" that teach us "what is socially and culturally possible at a given place and time."⁶⁷ The artifacts' living experience and also the cultural constraints they have to acknowledge challenge the teacher to convert the classroom into the place where the forces that created Southeast Asian art should be restored to life in order to expose undergraduates to other human experience. By means of these encounters, undergraduates may begin to question their own cultural assumptions and thereby fulfill what has been proposed as the goal of a liberal education: risking the self so that it may be broadened and deepened, so that it will be rooted fully in its time and place in a way that is effective, responsible, and imaginatively rich.⁶⁸ Maybe some undergraduates, educated under the influence of Southeast Asian art, would one day encounter Southeast Asia in different circumstances but with sensitivity or at least be able to influence others who encounter the region.

O'Connor would take his students from the museum to the classroom in order to return Southeast Asian art objects to life. Lorraine Gesick had another kind of museum in mind when she studied traditions associated with the *tamra* manuscripts in southern Thailand, now transferred to Bangkok. For her the "museum" was represented by the national archives in Bangkok, where "modernizing Thai historians and their Western colleagues earlier in this century," intent on writing "national" histories or on finding "possibly reliable documentary sources for our mode of History," have often seen the "historical sensibilities" of the southern Thai as mere museum pieces.⁶⁹ Perhaps, I venture to suggest, the teacher should occasionally consider leaving behind not only museums and archives but also text books, which may sometimes preserve and even mummify such notions as "the state" or "men of prowess."

If the past can return to life in O'Connor's classroom or, with Gesick's guidance, the royal voice can be heard when it addresses a local audience through the *tamra*, where may voices and lives frozen in textbooks be heard and lived? The answer, of course, is in "texts."

Studying texts can be another "museum"-escaping experience, and the opportunity of being educated to "read" in order to listen is one of the privileges of those entering the field of regional studies today. By means of textual study, one can hope to get closer to what is authentic in the Southeast Asian past⁷⁰ and listen to it

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶⁹ Lorraine Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood: Southern Thailand and the Meaning of History* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995), p. 17.

⁷⁰ I do not use the term "authentic" in the sense that Craig Reynolds does in the following passage: "to authenticate Southeast Asia as a region and a field of study" and as a Western and postcolonial project; Reynolds, "A New Look at Old Southeast Asia," p. 437. I mean no more than trying to hear a "voice" from the past more distinctly. An example of what I mean by "authentic" is provided by Nguyễn Trãi's poems, written during the Ming occupation of Vietnam (1407-1427). His poems disclose that he associated those dismal years less with grief than with the sensation of being silenced and isolated, and being nowhere which he could recognize as his country. His contemporaries were collaborating with the enemy, while he had to lie low. The poems describe the price of loyalty. No source could convey the price of Trãi's loyalty more authentically and movingly than these poems; O. W. Wolters, "A Stranger in His

with respect just as one may be trained to look respectfully at artifacts or accompany Gesick respectfully into the presence of the elderly Thai women who remembered with awe the ceremony required when the *tamra* were read.⁷¹ In 1982 I observed that Southeast Asian studies were interesting and educationally justifiable because they provided opportunities for learning how to learn.⁷² I continue to think so.

I ended the 1982 volume rather pretentiously by asserting that the field of earlier Southeast Asian history had the particular merit of being concerned with identifying and understanding historical processes.⁷³ I suspect that most of those who read that volume tended to linger over the earlier rather than the later and process-oriented chapters which dealt with texts. I agree with Ruth McVey that a great deal is now known about the region, and this may be an additional reason for diverting more attention to processes at work when texts are written and, maybe, even for experimenting with writing narrative-style history that allows appropriate space to processing its texts, though never, of course, at the expense of readability.

Own Land: Nguyễn Trãi's Sino-Vietnamese Poems, Written during the Ming Occupation," *The Vietnam Forum* 8 (1986): 60-90.

⁷¹ Gesick, *In the Land of Lady White Blood*, p. 20.

⁷² 1982, p. 91.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

A "HINDU" MAN OF PROWESS

The Sanskrit inscription of Vat Luong Kau, believed to be written no later than the second half of the fifth century, states that King Devānka visited Vat Phu.¹ He was no ordinary person; he had been "inundated" by the "grace" (*prasāda*) of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā. His devotional (*bhakti*) prowess would have earned him this favor.² As a result, he had performed superhuman acts; he would have achieved much and been perceived as a "man of prowess." His achievements are listed in the form of "Hindu" metaphors; they are compared with those of renowned heroes in the *Mahābhārata* who resemble the epic's "who's who." The epic, the most famous of all Hindu devotional texts, provides literary opportunities for emphasizing the king's greatness. His reputation for asceticism may be reflected in his comparison with Arjuna, the conqueror.³

Devānka had come from a distant place and just been "installed in supreme royal power by the auspicious Śrī Liṅgaparvata [the 'mountain *liṅga*'], honoured since antiquity." The *liṅga* was a natural one in the shape of a brute stone about sixty feet high and twenty feet in diameter and would be identified in the "Hindu world" as one of Śiva's sixty-eight natural, or original, *liṅgas* and was therefore "honoured since antiquity." Devānka was now "the king of kings" (*mahārajadhirāja*), an overlord and believed to participate in Śiva's *śakti*, or divine energy. He would be Śiva-like. Perhaps he had just undergone a special consecration ceremony, justified by his victories.

The inscription, having introduced the overlord, proceeds to describe and commemorate what he did at Vat Phu. It invokes his merits, no doubt his achievements as a result of his religious devotion, and announces his intention to help mankind overcome the sorrow of "transmigration," which would, no doubt, be after they achieved union with Śiva, whose *liṅga* gave its name to the mountain. For this purpose he constructs a bathing pool, endowed with his merits, for those who visit Vat Phu to worship Śiva. Because the pool is associated with the ruler's great merits, the pilgrim will have a bonus of merits awaiting him. His merits as a pilgrim will be enhanced by the king's. Here, then, is a Southeast Asian "Hindu" who is able

¹ Claude Jacques, "Notes sur l'inscription de la stèle de Vat Luong Kau," *Journal Asiatique* 250,2 (1962): 249-56; Wolters, "Khmer 'Hinduism' in the Seventh Century," in *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*, ed. R. B. Smith and W. Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 438-440. Today Vat Phu is in southern Laos.

² See pages 22, 111 above on *bhakti*.

³ See Appendix 3 for more on Arjuna.

to create a "Hindu" facility. He enlarges an already holy zone by creating a holy bathing pool.

The pool was given a startling name: Kurukṣetra, the burial ground of the Kurus in the *Mahābhārata* and today the name of a bathing pool not far from Delhi where Kṛṣṇa is believed to have revealed the *Bhāgavad Gītā*, the classic of *bhakti* Hinduism, to the warrior Arjuna. Kurukṣetra was also where the decisive battle in the *Mahābhārata* began. Were there now two "Kurukṣetras" in the world? Was the Vat Phu one merely a "New Hampshire," as it were? Certainly not. The inscription immediately quotes the three verses in the epic that concern the Kurukṣetra pool and goes on to describe the efficacy of Devānika's pool. For example, "May the celestial fruit, formerly proclaimed in the Kurukṣetra [by the epic] and celebrated by the Devarsi [ancient bards], find itself here in the new Kurukṣetra."⁴ The epic's tank becomes Devānika's. Also the inscription puts it, he has "created on earth the best of the pools [i.e. of the pools mentioned in the epic]." The question of emulation does not arise. The inscription has not re-adjusted the Hindu world to accommodate part of Southeast Asia. Vat Phu and its neighborhood are not apprehended as a recent extension of the Hindu world but as an integral part of it just as Vat Phu's *linga* is one of Śiva's sixty-eight natural *lingas*.

How was this possible? Devānika was able to transfer the one and only Kurukṣetra to Vat Phu by performing exactly what the epic states can be done: "O foremost of warriors, the sins of one that desireth to repair to Kurukṣetra *even mentally* [my italics] are all destroyed." Or again, "he that is inspired with the desire of beholding all *tirthas* [pools] should sojourn to them even in the imagination." Thus, he dug his tank, "saw" it in his devotion-charged mind as the one and only Kurukṣetra, and named it accordingly. The transaction is possible because Devānika is identified by his scribes as a "Hindu" in the religious sense of the term. He has just been installed in power by the Śrī Lingaparvata and can use his kindled imaginative faculty which *bhakti* teachers taught their followers to cultivate in order to strengthen their awareness of the god's presence and tap cosmic power for personal ends.

Here, then, is a specific instance of the "Hinduizing" process, better described as a self-Hinduizing one: a Southeast Asian "Hindu," secure in his sense of being efficaciously devout, was able to mobilize his pious imagination to create in his own Hindu world a site mentioned in the epic as being particularly holy.

I suggest that the Vat Phu inscription, having localized excerpts of the *Mahābhārata* in a confident fashion, makes two local statements: Devānika is perceived as a "Hindu warrior-king," comparable with Arjuna, and he is qualified to assume a "Hindu" initiative by performing a spiritual service for the local population. As a result, the pool would become a pilgrimage center and enlarge the communications within the king's *maṅḍala*, wherever it was, and maybe trans-*maṅḍala* communications as well.⁵ In these ways, the inscription contributes towards defining a "Hindu" man of prowess. His achievements were supposed to be derived from his spiritual zeal; he was interested in the spiritual welfare of others.⁶

⁴ Jacques, "Notes sur l'inscription," p. 253.

⁵ The name "Kurukṣetra" persisted at least as late as the eleventh century, when the *linga* jumped into the sky and suppressed a rebellion; *Les inscriptions du Cambodge (IC)*, 8 volumes (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1937-1966), VI, p. 267.

⁶ I touched on this aspect of good government on page 31 of 1982.

My analysis—depending largely on noting the inscription's literary devices for emphasizing statements deemed important—can no doubt be improved, but I hope that I have indicated the possibility that a few lines in an early Sanskrit inscription from mainland Southeast Asia can animate a particular historical situation as well as illuminate its cultural aspects. The scribes were either smothered by the *Mahābhārata* or made sense of it for their own purposes. I happen to accept the latter explanation.

A SAMPLE OF GENDER RELATIONS AT THE APEX OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

A gender-oriented study should do more than put women into history. It should also throw light on the history—male as well as female—into which women are put, and this is what this Appendix attempts to do on a modest scale.

According to Judith Jacob, in traditional Cambodian poetry “heroines are by no means the colourless, frightened, protected daughters of the king that one might expect.”¹ Likewise, the Trần Annals (1226-1400) occasionally mention female members of the Trần imperial family who were by no means always passive actresses in public life in spite of some evidence to the contrary.² This was so even though one might suppose that they would be the Vietnamese women whose behavior would most likely have been influenced by Chinese values concerning the subordinate status of women in society and the family. Some were notorious, as, for example, the covetous secondary wife of the ruler in 1317 who was accused of constantly stealing land from the people. But instances of women who exercised leadership in times of emergency are more numerous. The following women engaged in crisis control.

In 1370, the Thiên-ninh princess, discussed below, goaded her reluctant half-brother and future ruler, Phủ, into resisting an usurper. She exclaimed that “the empire belongs to our ancestors. How can you abandon the State to another? You must be active. I’ll bring my household women to help the cause.” And in 1376 a ruler’s secondary wife, accompanying her husband’s army, implored him not to

¹ Judith M. Jacob, *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia: A Preliminary Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 38.

² For example, in 1306 a Trần princess was married to the Cham ruler in exchange for Cham territory. In 1258 the emperor Thái-tôn’s first wife, discarded in 1237, was given in marriage to a faithful imperial subordinate. All dates in this Appendix are according to the Trần Annals (*TT*) unless otherwise stated. For a useful summary of female privileges—especially property rights and the influence of Confucian prejudices—see Mai Thị Tu and Lê Thị Nhâm Tuyết, *La Femme au Viet Nam* (Hanoi: Editions en langues étrangères, 1976).

wage war on the Chams until law and order had been restored within Vietnam itself.³

The "Mother of the Country," who died in 1259, is shown in her obituary notice as having intervened in crises during more than one period in her life. She was the last Lý ruler's widow but also the wife of Trần Thủ Độ, the Trần family's strongman during the first decade of the new dynasty. The title of "Mother of the Country" was bestowed on her because she had once been an empress. Moreover, she was the mother of two Lý princesses who, very young, married the first Trần emperor and his elder brother Liễu. Her obituary notice in the Annals records that she protected the Trần princes' families when they fled by river during the Mongol invasion of 1256-7, ensured that their boats transported hidden weapons, and delivered the weapons to Vietnamese soldiers. She also composed the quarrel between the emperor Thái-tôn and his indignant brother Liễu after the former, in 1237, married Liễu's pregnant wife in order to increase the likelihood that he, too, would have an heir. Liễu took up arms before submitting to his brother's decision. According to the Trần Annals' acerbic commentator, Ngô Sĩ Liên, at least "she achieved much when she participated in the domestic affairs of the Trần family."⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of her illustrious rank and influence, she was unable to persuade her husband to bend the rules and allow her to employ someone whom he was conscripting for the army. She could exert influence only in acceptable ways that benefited the Trần family.

A final example of crisis control concerns the urgent intervention of the Thụy-bà princess, Thái-tôn's elder sister, in 1251 when Liễu's son Quốc Tuấn, the future hero of the three Mongol wars of the thirteenth century, seduced the newlywed wife of a Trần prince and was exposed to grave danger at the hands of an outraged father-in-law. The Thụy-bà princess had reared Quốc Tuấn as her "son," and she successfully implored her brother to allow Quốc Tuấn to keep the woman he had seduced and pay compensation to the injured family. Here is a further instance of mediation by a senior woman in the Trần family to avert a quarrel that could tear the family apart and endanger dynastic stability; Quốc Tuấn's father, Liễu, was still alive when his son misbehaved.⁵ Thái-tôn's sister's advice, like that of the "Mother of the Country," evidently commanded the ruler's respect.

Prince Quang Khải's wife is an example of a Trần princess who cared for her family and was also heroic in wartime. She may have been the daughter of Thủ Độ, the strongman mentioned above. Quang Khải was Thái-tôn's younger son and a major figure in the second half of the thirteenth century when the Mongols threatened Vietnam. An inscription, written by a male, praises her for her sense of duty and compassion in managing family affairs during her busy husband's absence on Court affairs.⁶ She was even kind to her husband's concubine. When in 1284 the family fled from the Mongols by boat, she threw herself on top of her husband's body to protect him, a deed that justified the panegyrist's comparison of her with

³ *Thơ văn Lý-Trần (TVLT)*, vol. III, pp. 607-610.

⁴ *TT* under the date of 1259.

⁵ In 1236 his father Liễu had been reduced in rank on account of a sexual escapade under cover of a flood in the capital but his son in 1251 was pardoned because he was Liễu's son and therefore a privileged person.

⁶ *TVLT*, vol. 1 (1988), pp. 441-450.

Feng Fu, a famous tiger-tamer in Chinese antiquity.⁷ She was also likened to a Confucian-style "gentleman" because "her heart was free from jealousy." Evidently, senior Trần wives could exercise leadership in times of emergency.

Barbara Andaya has noted "the prestige that accrues to older women and widows" in Southeast Asia and refers in particular to the influence of the dowager queen throughout the region.⁸ The Trần Annals provides two instances of this phenomenon.

The first is the emperor Anh-tôn's wife, the Thuận-thánh bảo từ dowager empress. Anh-tôn, Thái-tôn's great grandson, died in 1320. His wife was Trần Quốc Tảng's daughter and had married Anh-tôn as soon as the latter was proclaimed heir to the throne in 1293.⁹ Quốc Tảng was the second son of the Quốc Tuấn who had misbehaved in 1251 but been forgiven on account, I suggested, of the intimidating reputation of his father, the affronted Liễu. The Thuận-thánh bảo từ empress was Liễu's great-granddaughter, and Anh-tôn would have married her in order to maintain amity between the two branches of the family; his forebears had contracted similarly prudent marriages.¹⁰

Quốc Tảng, the father of Anh-tôn's wife, is recorded in the Annals as angering his father, Quốc Tuấn, the commander-in-chief during the Mongol wars, by hinting that the time had come to change the succession to the Trần throne. He was alluding to the grudge that the seizure of Liễu's wife had caused among his branch of the Trần family¹¹; moreover, Liễu had been Thái-tôn's elder brother. The expedient of marrying imperial heirs to daughters of the Liễu branch of the family was intended precisely to eliminate this danger.

But in 1314 Anh-tôn, reflecting that his wife had not borne an heir, took the unprecedented step in Trần family tradition of nominating as his heir Minh-ton, whose mother, though of Trần stock, cannot be identified as being directly descended from Liễu. The conciliatory marriage alliance with Liễu's family was now in abeyance. Perhaps Anh-tôn, making his decision, took into account the fact that the irascible Quốc Tảng, his wife's father, had died the previous year and that it would be safe to appoint Minh-ton. His wife's response is unknown, but her obituary notice in the Annals on the occasion of her burial in 1330 contains significant information. She is described as a kind person who treated all her husband's sons, even those of secondary wives, with equal kindness. Though she was not Minh-ton's

⁷ This is a good example of the Vietnamese ability to manipulate Chinese writing to their advantage. According to Mencius, Feng Fu had improperly shown off his skill as a tiger-tamer after he had become a scholar. The Vietnamese scholar, interested in rhetorical effect, was indifferent to Mencius's judgment. Her reputation was embellished with Confucian values: purity, moral conduct, filial piety, the observance of mourning rites, a loving heart, forgiveness. But she was also interested in meditative Buddhism, though she ignored complex concepts in order to concentrate on the essence.

⁸ In a letter dated April 30, 1997.

⁹ This was the Trần expedient for safeguarding the succession. The heir would be young and his father still alive.

¹⁰ In 1258 Thái-tôn's heir married Liễu's fifth daughter; in 1274 his heir's son married Liễu's granddaughter, and in 1292 the latter's son, Anh-ton, married Liễu's great granddaughter.

¹¹ A fifteenth-century poet praised Quốc Tuấn for forgetting the family quarrel and being faithful to his country throughout his life; *Anthologie de la littérature Vietnamiennne*, vol. 1 (Hanoi: Editions en langues étrangères, 1972), p. 231.

mother, when Anh-tôn died in 1320 she was accorded the highest honors in the funeral procession.¹²

The Annals do not acknowledge 1314 as a year of crisis, but the empress's concern for all her husband's sons implies that she connived at her husband's appointment of Minh-tôn. At least she did nothing to disturb family unity.

Dying in 1330, she lived long enough to witness a much graver succession crisis, from which, as far as we know, both she and Minh-tôn's wife, the *Hiên-tù tuyên thân* empress, distanced themselves. Minh-tôn's wife, the second empress to whom I am referring, was the daughter of Minh-tôn's uncle Trần Quốc Chấn, who was Anh-tôn's younger brother and confidant and also the son of Liễu's granddaughter. But by 1328 she had not yet produced a son, and her impatient husband wanted to appoint as his heir the son by a secondary wife. Thereupon a treacherous member of the Trần family whispered to him that Quốc Chấn was plotting trouble, and a crafty courtier immediately recommended that Quốc Chấn should be put to death. This was done. More than a hundred others were killed at the same time, a figure that suggests the size of a potential faction within the Trần family. The secondary wife in question, not of the Trần family, was associated with a group of prominent people from a particular region, and the prince who poisoned Minh-tôn's mind belonged to this group; he was closely related to one of the emperor Thái-tôn's sons. The Trần family was by no means a monolithic unit.

The tragedy of 1328 was the first major succession crisis in Trần history, yet neither of the two empresses seems to have been implicated. They may have been timid. Alternatively, they may have decided not to divide the dynastic family by taking sides and precipitating a struggle for power. But action necessary to save the dynasty from extinction would be altogether different, as Minh-tôn's long-lived empress was to show. In 1336 she had given birth to a son, Dụ-tôn, who in 1341 was appointed heir and "emperor" when the heir appointed after the crisis of 1328 died young. Minh-tôn himself died in 1357.

Dụ-tôn died childless in 1369, and a dynastic crisis exploded for which there was no precedent. Thereupon Minh-tôn's widow immediately took the initiative and appointed as emperor someone whom she mistakenly believed was the son of her own eldest son, born after 1328, who had incurred Minh-tôn's displeasure and been excluded from the succession.¹³ But her appointee was an impostor and killed her. The impostor, I suggest, had to kill her because he knew that she would mobilize her moral authority at Court as soon as he announced his decision to change the dynastic name from Trần to Dương, the surname of his real father, an actor. An obligation to be grateful never occurred to him.

The murdered empress dowager is given a very favorable obituary notice in the Trần Annals, as were the empresses who died in 1293 and 1330. She was intelligent. Minh-tôn had accepted her advice to suppress news of an unfavorable omen. She was known as "the perfect mother."¹⁴ She looked after all her husband's sons, no

¹² See Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading of the 1293-1357 period in the Vietnamese Annals," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 381. Minh-tôn's natural mother was not granted the rank of empress until 1359 when she and her husband Minh-tôn were both dead.

¹³ Under the date of 1341 the Annals disclose that Minh-tôn refused to elevate her unruly first son.

¹⁴ "She was able to follow the Mother's Way in its entirety," an epithet probably culled from the *Old Han History* to eulogize her good nature and kindness.

matter the status of their mothers. Being willing to accommodate themselves to polygamous husbands seems to have been a hallmark of good Trần empresses.

The Dương usurpation caused the senior males in the Trần family to lose hope. One member of the family, however, kept her presence of mind. She was the Thiên-ninh princess, mentioned in the third paragraph of this Appendix, who issued the clarion call to resist the usurper: "the empire belongs to our ancestors. How can you abandon the State to another?" Her eldest half-brother, Phù, fled to the mountains in the northwest, but she and a younger half-brother, Kinh, met in Thanh-hóa in the south to mobilize troops. The Trần "restoration," for what now happened was considered to be sufficiently momentous to be known as such, succeeded, the impostor was overthrown and executed, and in 1371 the Thiên-ninh princess was honored with the title of the "senior princess who had assisted the State." Her name was changed from "the brilliant gem" to "the State's fragrance." Her half-brother, the emperor, awarded her these marks of honor because he wanted to recognize the great services she had rendered to their family. Only once before in the history of the Trần dynasty was a woman so honored, and she was the "Mother of the Country" and wife of the last ruler of the former dynasty. Two male relatives were also honored in 1371.

I suggest that her pivotal role in these events depended on the circumstance that she was the member of the Trần family who could claim to have the most Trần blood flowing in her veins. She was the murdered empress's daughter and was therefore descended on her mother's side from a woman whose parents were solely descended from that family.¹⁵ The other senior members of the family were half-brothers, born of non-Trần mothers. Kinh, who accompanied her south in 1370, was Minh-tôn's eleventh son. Her ancestry was therefore such as to make it reasonable to surmise that she, now at least thirty-five years old (she was the elder sister of Dụ-tôn, who was born in 1336), was regarded as inheriting her dead mother's authority that had been so disastrously exercised in 1369 when she elevated an impostor to the throne. No wonder that her half-brothers heeded her clarion call in the name of her ancestors. She had more claim to lead the Trần family than anyone alive at that time.¹⁶

I have sketched the activities of these women in response to the challenge that gender studies can provide additional arrows in the historian's quiver. But the question for the historian—male or female alike—must be whether, in this instance, light is shed on anything interesting. At least two possibilities may arise, and they

¹⁵ The *TT*, under the date of 1351, explicitly refers to her as Dụ-tôn's sister by the same mother. Dụ-tôn was the murdered empress's son.

¹⁶ Her unimpeachable "Trần" credentials may help to explain a bizarre event. In 1339 Dụ-tôn, still a child, fell into the Western Lake at the capital, was caught in a fishing trap, and was pronounced to have become impotent. In 1351 the son of a Chinese doctor, who had come to Vietnam during a Mongol invasion and remained there, advised Minh-tôn that Dụ-tôn would be cured if he had sexual intercourse with his elder sister, the Thiên-ninh princess. Minh-tôn agreed. If one bears in mind the Trần obsession with securing heirs by any means, the possibility arises that the doctor prescribed an incestuous ritual whose efficacy would be guaranteed because it depended on intercourse by two persons whose blood was wholly "Trần." No other two persons at that time were so qualified. Or are we dealing with a tantric technique? Tantricism was flourishing in Mongol China, and monks of that persuasion were visiting Vietnam from Central Asia in the mid-Trần period; *History of Buddhism in Vietnam*, ed. Nguyễn Tài Thu (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1992), pp. 219-220.

suggest that, in Trần times at least, the activities of women were by no means restricted by Chinese family values that privileged male authority.

One possibility is simply that, by choosing to undertake family responsibilities, the Trần women intended their husbands not be hindered when participating in Court business that supported the family dynasty. Another is that wives in families organized according to bilateral kinship on which the dynastic institution of father-son succession had been rigidly grafted had a special role in mediating between rival factions within the family, each of which in unsettled times could push its claims to hegemony. Nervousness about the loyalties of some members of the Trần family would also help to explain why rulers indulged their male and female relatives at public expense.¹⁷

No matter, however, what is the significance of these episodes, one conclusion seems to be that Trần empresses were very influential personages at Court because, as daughters of Liêu's male and female descendants, they represented the potentially most threatening element in the allied branches of the ruling family. Their "prestige" would be derived from a particular "function" they discharged.¹⁸ Their marriages had been intended to allay disaffection in the branch of the family that had been humiliated in 1237, and their presence at Court, symbolizing the unity of the ruling family, would therefore be a visible guarantee that the family continued to remain unanimously loyal to its head, the emperor. The empresses were making it known that they would not behave as factional leaders.¹⁹ Moreover, they were often mothers of the senior Trần princes on whom the rulers relied for assistance in Court business. For all these reasons, to defy an empress's wish could be risky. One can believe the empresses were aware that, when the family's interests were at stake, they possessed overriding influence even when they were married to rulers who, during most of the Trần period, could be recognized as "men of prowess."

In other words, in times of family crises, which would also be times of State crises, senior Trần women assumed the responsibility of leadership within their family. So much for Chinese family values.

The story of these women may contribute to an understanding of the Trần history to which they belonged by strengthening the historian's impression that the

¹⁷ For a brief discussion of the rulers' habit of indulging their relatives, see Wolters, "On Telling a Story of Vietnam in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26,1 (1995): 69-70.

¹⁸ Women could, of course, discharge many other functions. Barbara Andaya, in a fax dated September 30, 1997, describes an impressively large number of functions that included behaving as malevolent spirits, acting as Regents for young princes, teaching, negotiating marriages, and performing rituals. She issues a challenge: "I . . . believe that we should give serious attention to the fact that in the *Sjjarah Melayu* it is two old women (apparently without husbands) who meet the divine princes on the mountain."

¹⁹ They can be distinguished from Sultan Mahmud Shah's mother, who represented the "India-Muslim" faction in Malacca palace politics and, in that capacity, advised her son to appoint a particular person to the post of *Bendahara* Cheah Boon Kheng. "Power behind the Throne: The Role of Queens and Court Ladies in Malay History," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 66,1 (1993): 1. Cheah's informative article makes it clear that Malay queens and Court women were usually involved in struggles for succession to the throne; *ibid.*, p. 20. The Vietnamese women discussed here had a very different role. It was not always so in Lý times; see O. W. Wolters, "Lê Văn Huru's Treatment of Lý Thần Tôn's Reign (1127-1137)," in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays presented to D. G. E. Hall*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976). In 1137 several wives squabbled over a succession.

dynasty felt insecure in spite of its successes against the Mongols.²⁰ The women in question may have been even more essential in protecting the imperial family than were the appointments of senior princes to the highest posts at Court or the lavishing of vacant land on members of the family. When the family seized the throne in 1226, Trần Thủ Độ, future husband of "the Mother of the Country" and the family's strongman, felt constrained to murder his captive, the last Lý ruler, marry the latter's widow, and kill surviving members of the Lý family. An explanation for this ruthlessness would be that the Trần family felt insecure not only because most of the country was still in a state of rebellion but also because the overthrow of the Lý family after more than two centuries of rule was perceived as an abhorrent event.²¹ Thủ Độ's policy was simple: he married the widowed empress and married her two daughters to the first Trần emperor and his brother and, at the same time, killed off the remaining members of the unfortunate Lý family. A persisting family feud caused by Thái-tôn's marriage in 1237 to his brother's wife would have increased and prolonged the new dynasty's sense of insecurity. Hence the concern of the "Mother of the Country" and Thái-tôn's sister that the feud should be composed and the compliance of the empresses in 1314 and 1328 when sons of secondary wives were appointed heirs. Hence, too, the series of marriages between the imperial heirs and Liễu's descendants.

Perhaps the story of these women may also make a small contribution to comparative studies, the ultimate justification for regional studies. Here are two suggestions.

The first arises from note 19 above, where I compare the differing roles of a Malacca queen and the Trần empresses. The former led a faction; the latter did not. Moreover, Malay queens were usually involved in succession struggles, while the function of Trần empresses was to safeguard successions. Do these differences make for a better understanding of either political culture? I shall not pursue the matter beyond suggesting that the differences raise questions of what was meant in either case by family identity, family discipline, and values, priorities, and expectations for the future in general. In each case, for example, loyalty was involved, but how should the Malay and Vietnamese "loyalty" in question be defined? These possibilities belong to comparative cultural studies in general and to the study of the family in early Southeast Asia in particular.²²

The second possibility for comparative studies also arises from my explaining the prestige of these empresses in terms of their function in fostering Trần family unity and loyalty. In a sense, they can be seen as playing a public role even if they would normally have busied themselves with domestic duties. They should certainly not be regarded as meek and housebound. Traditional Cambodian codes of conduct, the product of didactic Buddhist poetry, proclaim that "a house has an air of content

²⁰ A senior Trần prince defected to the Mongols.

²¹ Thủ Độ observed that the inhabitants of the capital took a great interest in the captive Lý ruler. For disturbances in the countryside at the end of the Lý period, see O. W. Wolters, "Engaging J. D. Legge: Narrating the Fall of the Lý and the Rise of the Trần Dynasties," *Asian Studies Association of Australia Review* 10,32 (1986): 24-32.

²² The Southeast Asian family in earlier times is discussed by A. J. Day, "Ties That (Un)Bind: Families and States in Premodern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55,2 (1996).

because the wife is a good manager."²³ The Vietnamese empresses and senior princesses, too, were honored for their management skills. They may also be compared with present-day Javanese women whose roles Suzanne Brenner has studied. According to her, Javanese men have claimed and been assumed to have superior status, power, and potency and frown on economic activities as demeaning. This view is founded on the notion that men possess "total but effortless mastery of the inner passions,"²⁴ while economic activity is regarded as signifying lack of potency and low status. Brenner contests the ideological construct. Men fail in business not because they are too self-controlled but because they are insufficiently so, while women possess the quality of self-control that enables them to hold their own in the market place.²⁵ But why do women engage in trade even if only in the market place? Brenner suggests that their priorities are focused on the family's well-being (including economic well-being) and the enhancement of prestige for themselves and their husbands. As she puts it, when one associates the woman with the household, one should grant her "the role, at least in some contexts, of domesticator (of men, money, and desire, among other things) rather than domesticated, and which sees women's activities as central to the production of the family's status in the wider society."²⁶ This perspective accounts for a woman's business aptitude and activities within her family and also makes her privy to her husband's status in public life.²⁷

While not wishing to insinuate that Javanese and Tr n gender relations are bound to be identical in every respect, I suggest that Tr n empresses and Javanese women today, though living in very different times and situations, seem to combine in anything but a meek manner the roles of household managers and promoters of their husbands' public status.

These two lines of comparative inquiry are proposed by a male historian. I wonder how a female historian, provided that she were prepared to accept my gender-based analysis of the Tr n women's place in history, would wish to

²³ Jacob, *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia*, p. 30. "The kite flies because of the wind, the officer is glorious because his men keep him secure, possessions are kept safe because the woman knows how to save. It is a contented house because the wife is good."

²⁴ Suzanne Brenner, "Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideologies of Gender and Self-Control," in *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 28. See Hefner, *Market Cultures*, pp. 23-24, for comments on the movement of Southeast Asian, including Vietnamese, women out of the home and into economic enterprise. "A tightfisted concern with moneymaking tends to be seen as an unflattering trait among males. By contrast, a certain money-mindedness is tolerated or even admired among females"; Robert W. Hefner, *Market Cultures: Society and Morality in the New Asian Capitalisms* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), p. 24.

²⁵ Brenner notes that "even inside the palaces of Central Java there was a long history of women managing court finances and engaging in certain types of trade"; Suzanne Brenner, "Competing Hierarchies: Javanese Merchants and the *Priyayi* Elite in Solo, Central Java," *Indonesia* 52 (1991): 81.

²⁶ Brenner, *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*, p. 44.

²⁷ In Thailand, too, women play a prominent role in business, but this is because they are denied access to the highest Buddhist-defined status in their world, which is the monkhood. To become monks, they have to be reborn as men; A. Thomas Kirsch, "Buddhism, Sex Roles, and the Thai Economy," in *Women of Southeast Asia*, ed. Penny Van Esterik (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern Illinois University, Center of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), pp. 13-32.

investigate the implications of this sample of gender relations. Would additional or different lines of comparative study occur to her? In my case, I have tended to seize on the notion of loyalty in the first example and, in respect of the second, I, predictably, in view of the postscript's bias, would wish to know more about public life in Trần Vietnam and contemporary Java.

READING BAS-RELIEF ON TWO JAVANESE CANDI

In his description of royal tours, the fourteenth-century Javanese poet, Prapañca, records that the ruler "read" the bas-relief on the walls of the temples he visited. "And to his heart's content he read again and again what those who compose verse in *kakawin* had incised there."¹

The first bas-relief discussed in this Appendix is a fifteenth-century temple bas-relief, that at Candi Sukoh in central Java.² The meaning of the iron smithy depicted here has been explored by an art historian, Stanley O'Connor, who takes us into the secrets of Old-Javanese metallurgy and calls attention to how Javanese understood the transforming processes involved in metal-smelting. For them these processes were a metaphor for the "natural energies and rhythms for those spiritual transformations believed to govern the career of the soul after death." The smith's ritual was the key to the means of spiritual transcendence.³

The smith is the Hindu god Bhīmā, one of the five Pāṇḍawa brothers and a powerful hero in the *Mahābhārata*, the text mobilized by the Vat Phu inscription. As O'Connor points out, Bhīmā "undergoes a sea change in Javanese literature and becomes a spiritual guide who 'knew the path that leads to perfection.'"⁴ The ritual signified on the bas-relief would be a suitable backdrop to the enactment of deliverance rites in the temple.

The tools that O'Connor brings to his study pertain to hermeneutics and are appropriate for "reading" a verbal text. He uses such terms as "equivalences," "tissue of interconnections," "metaphor," and "parallels" and seeks to recover the Old-Javanese "imaginative universe." He identifies signifying clues the viewer would immediately understand. The viewer "would draw on his whole range of knowledge and experience."⁵

¹ *Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛtāgama)*, p. 47.

² Stanley J. O'Connor, "Metallurgy and Immortality at Candi Sukoh, Central Java," *Indonesia* 39 (1985): 53-70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59. He is among the most admired figures in Javanese *wayang*; Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1996), p. 24.

⁵ O'Connor, "Metallurgy," p. 56.

The study is also a well-documented exercise in intertextuality. Numerous Old-Javanese modes of behavior, supported by an archipelago-scale comparative study, illuminate the temple's meaning; even early twentieth-century courtly behavior in central Java is relevant. The local viewer stands by one's side at every stage in O'Connor's explication of the hermeneutic circle, and the climax for yesterday's viewer and today's reader alike is when the former instinctively apprehends and the latter—having being taught the significance of clues identified by the former—comes to understand that the temple's bas-relief is a "performative utterance."⁶ The "words" are in stone and "perform" the transformation of the dead person's spirit. Bhimā is a Javanese smith but with immensely enhanced attributes.

O'Connor takes us a considerable distance in recovering local preoccupations and not only in Java.

The other bas-relief is the narrative illustrated on the fourteenth-century Candi Surawana in east Java.⁷ The materials were selected in order to formulate statements that are Javanese and not Indian: the *Arjunawiwāha*, the *Sri Tañjung*, and the story of Bubuksa and Gagak-Aking.⁸

The story is about the warrior (*ksatriya*) and ascetic Arjuna's temptation by celestial nymphs when he is meditating and is organized in terms of the dichotomy of nature and human society. Arjuna is both "the world renouncer" and "the world maintainer," and his enemy is the "world destroyer." The world of human society is signified in the bas-relief by a synecdoche: the presence of man and woman, the source of sexuality.⁹ The sequence of panels in the Arjuna-focused bas-relief, based on the *Arjunawiwāha*, reveals an interruption in the narrative, which Worsley considers to be "a very apparent narrative disorder [created by the other two texts] in the arrangement of the bas-relief." The effect is to confront a Javanese viewer familiar with Old-Javanese literature with "two intersecting sets of concepts which describe the human condition."¹⁰ To read these bas-reliefs, one has to be able to understand the subtle juxtaposition of its three texts, the basis of the temple's message.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65. He invokes the work of J. L. Austin. Does Devanika's mental vision of the epic's Kuruksetra at Vat Phu qualify as a "performative utterance"?

⁷ Peter Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs at Candi Surawana," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 335-366.

⁸ The *Arjunawiwāha* is based on an episode in the *Mahabharata*. Zoetmulder believes that the eleventh-century Javanese ruler Erlangga and Arjuna are identified with one another and that the poet hoped that his poem's magic power would contribute to Erlangga's final victory; P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 245.

⁹ Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs," p. 342. Lorraine Gesick has supplied an excellent summary of Worsley's study; Lorraine Gesick, "Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries: The Dead Past Lives," *Asian Studies Association of Australia Review* (Nov. 1989), p. 155. She asks a troubling question: what if the pilgrim to this *candi* were an educated woman? Would she come away with an unsettled feeling suggested by the symbolic use of women's sexuality in this "text"? "Might not the woman pilgrim, though accepting the moral universe depicted in the temple, also carry away a tiny reservation about men's dealings with her?" But perhaps she might acquiesce in the queen's contribution to successful kingship, proposed by Worsley and Day on pp. 168 above?

¹⁰ Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs," pp. 341-342.

Arjuna is the "world maintainer," with a duty to society. Yet the bas-reliefs depict three images of him: the ascetic, the householder, and the warrior.¹¹ The relationship between these images, comprising the pictorial subject-matter on the bas-relief, and especially the meaning of their juxtaposition, should be read as representing "a single moral vision and also as revealing the tension involved."¹² The Javanese *ksatriya*, to whom the lesson is being taught, "must at once live in the world and be detached from it." He must "turn his back on meditation and yet carry something of this attitude of detachment and steadfastness of mind" into the world. "By transcending society in this fashion, he is then capable both of meditating alone and engaging his enemy in armed conflict."¹³

The bas-relief's exemplary ruler bears comparison with King Devānika of Vat Phu, who also was a warrior and likened to Arjuna, perhaps because of his ascetic prowess. Devanika's concern to provide people with a religious facility is not paralleled in the bas-relief, but the exemplary warrior fights on behalf of society.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 349. See Anderson, *Mythology*, p. 25 on Arjuna's *wayang* status.

¹² Worsley, "Narrative Bas-Reliefs," p. 349.

¹³ *Ibid.*

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