



Comments and Corrigenda



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Michael Smithies, Editor
The Journal of the Siam Society
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Letter to the Editor
[slightly edited]

Dear Michael Smithies,

I was interested in reading Stéphane Doyt's article on "From the composition of national histories to the building of a regional history in South-East Asia" (JSS vol.93 2005), in seeing a different argument in establishing that Southeast Asia is truly a region and not a figment of someone's imagination. I thought that this has been pretty well established by 20 years ago with a somewhat similar article by an American political scientist Donald K. Emmerson (1984 "Southeast Asia": What's in a name? *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15 (1)1-21) and my answer to him (1985 "Southeast Asia": what's in a name, another point of view: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16 (1): 141-147). As Emmerson never replied to my criticisms I assume he was in agreement with them.

Emmerson stated (page 1): "Most Southeast Asianists, myself included, would sooner consider themselves botanists of the real, writing science, than zoologists of the unreal, writing fiction. But each self-image is incomplete. To combine the two is to understand that those who first named and depicted the region as a whole wrote, without realizing it, a kind of science fiction, in which 'Southeast Asia', like 'spaceship', labeled something that did not exist—but eventually would."

The beginning of my 2nd paragraph (page 141) expressed the focus of my argument against Emmerson's article. "Before reading the article from beginning to end I had scanned the footnotes to see what archeological reports or publications by archaeologists he had referred to, and found none. I wondered how could he talk seriously about Southeast Asia as a region, or whether it was and is a 'real' region, without referring to the prehistory of the area?"

Doyt's article is much the same. He apparently has not read the considerable archaeological, historical and anthropological literature which over the last 20 years and more has clearly established that "Southeast Asia" is real and has been real for many thousands of years. His



“Bibliography” lists almost none of the many authors of articles and books that should be included in a paper such as he presented. One book that would be very instructional for him is O.W. Wolters (1999) Revised Edition of his *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. The revised edition has considerable changes from the original edition in 1982. The changes came about because he started reading a number of archaeological reports and articles on the prehistory of the “Region”.

This points up an other problem, i.e. that most scholars in Europe do not read American and Canadian journals or books and the same for American scholars, many of them not reading European publications. The English are somewhat of an exception. I must admit that this is true for me as well, as the majority of the authors listed in Doyere’s article I have never heard of before.

Sincerely,
Wilhelm G. Solheim II

Reply to Wilhelm Solheim’s letter concerning the article ‘From the composition of national histories to the building of a regional South-East Asia’, published in *JSS* Vol. 93 2005, pp.101–127

Written sources are definitely not sufficient to provide a proper image of ancient times in Southeast Asia. The lack of indigenous written sources on leaves, parchment or paper, the relative scarcity of stone inscriptions and their allegoric tendencies, do not supply a comprehensive view of the history of the numerous peoples who long have inhabited the mainland and islands of what is now termed “Southeast Asia”. In this context external texts, including Chinese chronicles, are of tremendous value. But their records are limited to certain places at particular times. Moreover, the conceptions of the Chinese travelers were particularly influenced by their own civilization, and they tended to misunderstand and misjudge what they experienced and observed in countries located far from their birthplace.

In such a situation, Dr Wilhelm G. Solheim is definitely right in pointing to the importance of archeology as a leading source for the researchers working on ancient history in the region. Being myself much inclined to favor transversal approaches, not to say holistic ones, I cannot disagree with the comments made by Dr Solheim about the need to study carefully the material sources, including monuments, statues, burials and artifacts, to understand the civilizations and their interactions. Of course, I do not overlook the work of O. W. Wolters who has, along with others, brought to light considerable new knowledge during the past thirty years. Fortunately, despite the suggestion of Dr Solheim, their work is used worldwide, without any consideration nationality whatsoever.

Apart from the innumerable excavation reports from American, European, Japanese and more and more frequently local teams that sometimes provide essential data, the already classical works of archeologists like Charles Higham or Pierre-Yves Manguin, as well as prehistorians like Peter Bellwood or linguists such H.L. Shorto, are very precious. And they do not consider the current political borders of the region as relevant limits to appreciate the ancient periods from the metal ages to what Anthony Reid has termed “the age of commerce”.

Every researcher agrees in saying that the nations of ancient times are not to be compared with the current ones. It is clear as well that contacts, exchanges of goods and populations movements (about which Volker Grabowsky has produced a couple of important articles in *JSS*) have played a central role in the history of the region, tending to invalidate an analysis in terms of “nation-states” closed to each other. Is that enough, as Dr Solheim suggests, to “clearly establish that ‘Southeast Asia’ is real and has been a reality for many thousands years”? Probably not. In terms of political perceptions, Southeast Asia is definitely a new concept. Prior to the twentieth century, nobody could have called himself a “Southeast Asian” or enounced some related notion. And if exchange networks used to be more dynamic than we long thought they were, they have not occurred within the delimited borders of what it is now Southeast Asia. The pearls discovered in numerous places by archeologists have revealed an important exchange flow five millennia ago between the Indian east coast and some ports in what are now Thailand, Viet Nam and the Philippines. More recently the Arakan kingdoms had closer relations with India than with what is now Southeast Asia. For a long time, the populations of the Red River Delta had closer cultural links with the populations of South China (they were both referred to as “Yue” in the Chinese chronicles) than with the “Southeast Asian” Cham. And some academics such as Charles Holcombe have concentrated on the genesis of East Asia (as he entitled his book relating to the period 221 BC–AD 907 published in 2001 at the University of Hawai’i Press) without any consideration for subdivisions that could eventually include Southeast Asia.

No geographic space or human group can be considered as a relevant community without questioning the criteria that determine their integration in or exclusion from it. Buddhist networks have always involved Sri Lanka but have never included the archipelago of the Philippines. Later on, Islam became a unifying faith for the Malay peninsula, Java and Champa and a part of India, but not for the rest of “Southeast Asia”. Religions, cultures, traditions and economic interests have been shared by some neighbors but not by others inside or outside “Southeast Asia”.

What could be considered as unifying on a certain scale regarding particular criteria and for a special moment of time could be different from, or even in radical contrast to, earlier or later periods. In other words, the relevant geographic scale must be determined regarding the topic and the field of interest in a particular period. In this respect, Southeast Asia, as defined by the post-Second World War context, appears to be relevant only when regional construction is considered.

Southeast Asia, like all human concepts, is definitely based on self-belief. The purpose of my paper, in similarity with the article of Donald Emmerson mentioned by Dr Solheim, was not to give a comprehensive account of thirty centuries of history. It was rather to question the mental categories we commonly construct without taking time to discuss the conditions for their emergence and the limits of their relevance.

Stéphane Dovert

25 October 2005

Reply to review by Peter A. Jackson of Richard Totman's *The Third Sex: Kathoey - Thailand's Ladyboys*, which appeared in *JSS* vol. 93 2005, pp.316–319.

Peter Jackson offers a critical review of my book *The Third Sex*, in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 93, 2005. In this he claims that I have copied large sections of an article written by him, 'Male Homosexuality, and Transgenderism in the Thai Buddhist Tradition'.

On reviewing the section of my book in which this paper is an important source, and on asking colleagues for their comments, I realize there is a case to answer. This source is not properly acknowledged and it might appear I have presented Jackson's work as my own. This was not my intention but clearly I owe Jackson an apology for this oversight. I will ensure that in any future editions of the book, this mistake will be rectified.

Jackson comments on a photograph reproduced in my book that was taken by Charles Buls, a Belgian mayor and traveller in Siam in the late nineteenth century and published in his book, *Croquis Siamois* in 1901. This shows a group of nine performers relaxing off-stage. However Jackson insists these are not actors but 'noblewomen attended by a group of female servants'. In my book, the caption to this photograph reads "'Actresses" as seen by Buls'. These words and indeed the inverted commas are not my invention but come from the English language translation of Buls' book, by, E.J. Tips in 1994. Buls' depiction of this ensemble as a group of gender-ambiguous Siamese performers is surely the one to be believed, in that unlike either Jackson or myself he was actually there at the time.

Finally, I make a claim in the book that a sub-population of *kathoey* are exceptionally tall—that is, above the average height of a Thai male. This of course refers to physiological height and has nothing to do with shoes or headgear and is supported by the three gender reassignment surgeons with whom I spoke. There is a credible biological basis for this to do with abnormal levels of testicular oestrogen during puberty—a regulating factor in the growth of the long bones of the arms and legs.

I am disappointed that Jackson did not like my book. Nonetheless I stand by the integrity of the accounts and ideas in it and indeed the format and accessible style which I deliberately chose to adopt.

Richard Totman
February 2006

Dr Peter Jackson declined the right of reply.

**Volker Grabowsky, ‘Population and state in Lan Na prior
to the mid-sixteenth century’ JSS vol. 93, 2005**

Corrigenda

Page 1, note

Line 3: Saraswadee (not: Saruswadee); insert “Harald Hundius,” after “Renoo Wichasin”

Line 4: “for helpful and critical comments” (not: for the helpful and critical comments and contributions)

Page 2, footnote 3, line 3: Liew (not: liew)

Page 5

Paragraph 2, line 5: Lan Na (not: Nan Na)

Page 8

Footnote 35, line 6: *Prathetsarat* (not: *Phrathetsarat*), delete the first “h”

Page 11, last paragraph, last line: Emerald Buddha (not: Jade Buddha); Phra Kaen Can Dang (not: Phra Kaeo Can Daeng)

Page 21

Footnote 89, line 2 (in the Thai text): ชูแห่ง (not: ชูแห่ง)

Page 22

Last line, at the end of Table 1: Replace as follows:

Source: PC-TMP-HSH, Aroonrut et al. 1984: 16–17. The indices used for the phonetic transcriptions of Tai Yuan words in tables 1–4 designate one of the six tones in Thai Yuan language. Based on the dialect of Nan the following tones can be differentiated: /1/ = high-rising, /2/ low-even, /3/ low-falling, /4/ high-even, /5/ high-falling, /6/ low-rising. See Hundius 1990: 58–63.

Footnote 93: PC-TMP-HSH, Aroonrut 1984: 16-17 (ff° 41–42 in the original manuscript). ...

Page 23

Caption to the Map (on the *panna* system of Phayao)

The numbers in brackets correspond to the sequence in Table 2 (not: Table 3)

Page 24

Table 2, line 2:

Phonetic transcription: /khook³ luaŋ⁶/ (not: kook)

Siamese transcription: โคกรหลวง (not: โคคหลวง)

Page 33

Footnote 120, line 5: donors (not: donator)



Page 43

Footnote 139, line 3: delete the *mai tho* in the word *kaeo*: แกวถวาย (not: แก้วถวาย)

Page 53

Footnote 198, line 2 (Thai text): 6 คนแล (not: 6 คนแล) (*tò tao*, not: *khò khon*)

Page 60

Line 7: irrigation (not: irration)

Line 14 (Thai text): ลมูล (not: ลมูล)

Line 19: Insert between lines 19 and 20 the following additional reference:

Aroonrut Wichienkeo et al. อรุณรัตน์ วิเชียรเขียว และคณะ (transcr.) 1984. ตำนานเมืองพะเยา ต้นฉบับใบลาน ทอสมุดแห่งชาติ (The Phayao Chronicle, palm-leaf manuscript, National Library). Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai Teachers' College.

Page 62

Line 4 from bottom: Phosarat (not: Khosarat)

Page 64

Line 10 from bottom: delete the *karan* in: พงศ์ศรีเพียร

Page 66

Line 7: insert the following reference:

Hundius, Harald 1990. *Phonologie und Schrift des Nordthai*. Stuttgart: Steiner.



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