

Editorial Foreword

This double issue features thirteen research articles and a ‘Forum’ collection of short essays that comment on the intellectual contribution of Richard Fox’s recent book, *More than words: Transforming script, agency, and collective life in Bali*. Our Forum section will serve as a platform to highlight discussions about current intellectual trends as well as appraisals of contemporary issues and events in the region from multiple contributors. We envision that our Forum section will be a choice destination for publishing conversations and debates that emerge out of conference roundtables or symposia that require a different type of publishing space. As contributors to this issue’s Forum attest (Verena Meyer, Thomas Hunter, Penny Edwards, Kaja McGowan, Laurie Sears, Tom Nathan Patton), Richard Fox’s *More than words* provides new insight into our understanding of text that will be of keen interest to our readership.

In broad terms, our research articles focus on themes concerning (1) the construction of and contestation over spaces, (2) ecological governance, (3) knowledge production and epistemology, and (4) everyday agency. Our lead article (Ryan Edgecomb Holroyd and Kuan-Chi Wang) examines how Chinese scholars and sailors of the late Ming period (1500–1644) collaborated to produce a particular geography of ‘Southeast Asia’ that was based on contemporaneous accounts about these places, rather than on archived maps and accounts collected by earlier pre-Ming scholar-officials. The article highlights not only how the maritime trading system between East and Southeast Asia was spatially understood at the time, but also how sources reflecting this geographic-ethnographic knowledge were produced during and after the Ming era.

Esti Asmira’s article explores different understandings, functions, and narratives surrounding the establishment of Pasar Gambir, an early twentieth century fair-cum-marketplace in Dutch Indonesia. The week-long spectacle was intended to exhibit and project imperial messaging about Dutch customs, Western modernity and education to both local and European communities. Expanding on the view that Pasar Gambir represented a hybrid space for colonisers and colonised alike, Asmira treats the spectacle as a fair-cum-exhibition, arguing that non-Dutch actors expressed their identity and agency by participating in or withdrawing from marketplace activities.

Our focus on contested spaces in Dutch Indonesia connects Asmira’s article to Klass Stutje’s history of the penal island of Nusakambangan via the life-stories, social behaviour, and survival strategies of the prison’s inmates, who were from locales across the Indonesian archipelago. Based on an examination of the prison’s place in the larger Dutch penal system, internal prison social dynamics, labour conditions, and everyday negotiations between prisoners and guards, Stutje’s research suggests

that the island prison was a 'regional social contact' zone rather than a place of isolation.

Moving from Island Southeast Asia to northern Mainland Southeast Asia, our next three articles focus on regional highlands that are part of the broader 'Dong World', the linguistic and cultural zone that stretches from the Gulf of Tonkin in the South China Sea to the edges of Tibet. Kathleen Baldanza's article examines the role and rhetorical uses of the natural environment of Vietnam and its uplands in her analysis of fifteenth century Ming-Dai Viet expansion and state-building projects. Her research shows how environmental factors shaped the Ming invasion and occupation of Dai Viet and as well as Vietnamese resistance and state integration. Ian Baird and Urai Yangcheepsutjarit's article explores how Hmong gender norms were affected by interactions with Thai and Chinese communist groups during the Cold War, folding a feminist geography over conventional national boundaries (Laos, Thailand, and China) and the landscapes associated with the sociopolitical terrain of the Dong World. Drawing upon oral life-stories of these Hmong women, the article traces how communist relations affected gender relations at that time and how changes in gender practices since then have affected their autonomy. In a similar vein, Catherine Scheer's research takes us to the highlands of Cambodia during the same period and draws upon the life-stories of 'Bunong soldiers' (minority highland fighters), whose oral accounts challenge both nationalist and American narratives of their role in the tensions between Cambodia and Vietnam. Taken together, all three articles make reference to the ecological context of the borderland/Dong Zone and the manner in which borderland communities use different spatial and historical references to conceptualise their social world.

Scheer's emphasis on recovering minority worldviews and giving agency to these community experiences is mirrored in Pamela McElwee's study of highland lifeways, cultural beliefs, and swidden agricultural practices in Vietnam. Her article, the first of three that examine different forms of ecological governance in Southeast Asia, traces how shifting agricultural techniques and the communities that harness them have often been in opposition to state initiated anti-swidden programmes. By studying the history of anti-swidden policies and practices in colonial and postcolonial Vietnam, McElwee draws attention to the ways in which local officials and stakeholders responded by interpreting and reshaping attempts to control their ways and means of living, but in doing so created the justification for continued state intervention. Similarly, Mathieu Guérin's history of conservation in Cambodia over the long twentieth century highlights a similar tension between local priorities and external notions of best practice. Just as Scheer's work draws attention to state anti-swidden programmes, Guérin's research examines the forms of wildlife protection that were implemented in dialogue with global conservation policies and how these external ideas were translated into local practices by different actors over time. Whereas Scheer's study suggests that this interplay between the state and highland stakeholder perpetuates this cycle of intervention, Guérin's research points to the shortcomings of conservation policies and the failure to protect forest cover and wildlife in Cambodia. Moving beyond state and international ecological governance policies, Brendan Luyt directs our attention to private sector campaigns in post-independence Philippines to produce a more progressive forestry ethos in an attempt

to overcome conventional views of forests as wastelands. Luyt's research explores how a magazine (*The Lumberman*) attempted to promote a future-oriented conservation programme that encouraged sustainable development while actively serving as a watchdog for private and public institutions that fell short of its recommended measures and standards.

Three of our last four articles focus on the Philippines, with the articles by Joseph Scalice and Satoshi Ara presenting research that call for a critical re-examination of Philippine political history. Scalice's article examines the Manila Port Strike of 1963, an event that is argued to have been written out of history by some of the very elites associated with the labor movement. In a carefully constructed study of rare archival documents and newspaper accounts, the article raises important (and potentially controversial) issues about the politics of memory, historiography, and knowledge production. Ara's study takes readers back to the Second World War and the violence that erupted in Leyte during the Japanese Occupation. Like Scalice, he seeks to address the silences associated with the history of factionalism, division, and violence that involved Filipino actors. Seeking to transcend existing binaries that frame Filipino wartime experiences as either collaboration or resistance, his study highlights the experiences of paramilitary groups in Leyte, whose activities during the war complicate existing narratives about local community dynamics in rural areas during the Japanese Occupation. Paul Hogben's article picks up chronologically where Ara's article left off, focusing on the post-war Philippines and the role of advertising in shaping public awareness about urban renewal. Through a close examination of advertising campaigns promoting images of a modern, urban architecture, Hogben's research highlights how notions of futurity were crafted and disseminated in order to frame visually for the public how economic and physical recovery from the Second World War might be imagined. Like Luyt's study of a modern forestry campaign by *The Lumberman*, Hogben's article illustrates the role of promotional activities that enabled city planners, private sector industries, and the media played in both post-Second World War reconstruction and nation-building. Our final research article by Lam Choong Wah returns readers to where this issue began with a discussion of mapping and imagining East-Southeast Asian interactions. While our lead article focused on fifteenth century interactions, Lam's research takes us forward to the 1970s to explore the origins behind Malaysia's attempt to expand its territorial claims in the South China Sea. Unlike claims made by China, Vietnam, and the Philippines that were based upon primarily historical factors, maps, and memories, Lam argues that it was the oil crisis of the 1970s that motivated Malaysia to adjust its maritime jurisdiction policy. The study reminds those following the contemporary 'South China Sea Dispute' of the overlapping and interconnected contexts and factors that shape China-Southeast Asia relations and the interplay between competing narratives that shape our understandings of the region.

As highlighted earlier, we are pleased to offer a Forum of shorter essays focused on Richard Fox's *More than words*, followed by a sizeable collection of book reviews. As always, we are grateful to the authors, referees, and reviewers who made this double issue possible.

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