

SEA-NEWSLETTER

The Department for Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia

DECEMBER 2024

Thanh Ha Nguyen

ALUMNI COLUMN

Thanh Ha Nguyen is originally from Hanoi, Vietnam. In 2021 she finished the Bachelor degree in Linguistics (major) and Book Science at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. Throughout her study in Mainz, Ha ascertained her interest for her mother language – the Vietnamese language. She wrote her final thesis about the system of personal references in Vietnamese.

With the ambition to learn more about the Vietnamese language and culture, she enrolled in the Master program for Vietnam Studies at University of Hamburg. At AAI she got the chance to take part in various courses under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Thomas Engelbert. The studies provided her not only with knowledge of the language but also the history of Vietnam, which helped to analyze the process of development and evaluate Vietnam's various circumstances across culture, politics, and economy. Besides her time at the University of Hamburg, Ha spent her semester abroad at the Ho Chi Minh University of Education. In this period of time, she had the chance to join courses, which specialize in language didactics and teaching Vietnamese as a second language with MA students and PhD candidates of the Language and Literature Department. With the



inspiration from Dr. Thi Tuyet Mai Tang – her supervisor at the Ho Chi Minh University of Education, she chose the topic of teaching Vietnamese as a second language at universities in Germany for her M.A. thesis.

After her graduation, Ha stayed in Hamburg and worked as program officer at the German Asia-Pacific Business Association (Ostasiatischer Verein e. V.) – one of the largest German associations that promote business relationships between Germany and the Asia-Pacific region since 1900. •



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By Cao Quang Nghiệp, MA

Through the kind mediation of Mr. Phạm Hồng Lam, Augsburg, Mr. Đỗ Mạnh Tri, Paris, a famous scholar on Vietnamese literature, donated nearly 700 books to our library. These books are on many different subjects, ranging from literature to politics and religion, published over the past seventy years.

Again, through the kind mediation of Mr. Phạm Hồng Lam, we received about 400 books from Mr. Dương Hồng Trạch, Stuttgart. Most of these books are books printed before 1975 in the Republic of Vietnam (1955-75), purchased by the Free Vietnam Federation after 1975. A small part are books from the Independence Center, which was established after 1975, donated by authors and associations of overseas Vietnamese. They have been preserved by Mr. Dương Hồng Trạch for a long time.

In addition, his son, Mr. Gilles Trần, and his daughter-in-law, Dr. Nguyễn Thụy Phương, donated books of the late translator and literary critic Trần Thiện Đạo (1933-2017). They entrusted a part of the book legacy left by their father to our library. Among these there are more than 400 books and magazines, most of which are about overseas Vietnamese literature.

Thus, most of the books from the three places that we received above are books about southern Vietnamese literature before 1975 and about overseas Vietnamese literature in the time thereafter, which can

Vietnamese Books
Donated to our Library

For many years, the Vietnamese holdings at our library have received books and documents donated by generous individuals and organizations, such as Mr. Phạm Hồng Lam or the Pagoda Viên Giác in Hannover. This year, we are especially happy to receive a large number of books from individuals and other associations.

be considered as a continuation of the Vietnamese literature of the Republic of Vietnam. With a total of nearly 1,600 books and magazines, this is certainly a significant contribution to our library which has only a relatively small budget for the annual book purchases. It is also an important addition in the project of collecting and preserving the cultural heritage of the Republic of Vietnam which we have been pursuing for a long time.

By the way, we would also like to announce that, if any association or individual is willing to donate books and documents, we will be very grateful to receive and preserve them for future use. Once again, we would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to Mr. Đỗ Mạnh Tri, Mr. Dương Hồng Trạch, the family of the late Trần Thiện Đạo, Mr. Phạm Hồng Lam as well as the management board of Viên Giác Pagoda for their trust and generous donation of books to our library. •



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A Researcher from Hamburg giving a Presentation to a Thai Princess in Berlin

By Peera Panarut

On 3 July 2024, on the occasion that HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand paid a private visit at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Humboldt Forum) in Berlin, Dr. Peera Panarut (Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Universität Hamburg) attended the reception and gave a short presentation on the masterpiece of Thai manuscript art kept at the museum in Berlin: King Taksin's cosmology manuscript dated 1776 (II 650, Museum für Asiatische Kunst). The presentation is a part of the collaborative project between Dr. Peera Panarut (Uni Hamburg) and Martina Stoye (Curator of South and South-East Asian Art, Museum für Asiatische Kunst) which started from October 2023, aiming to read and translate the text, as well as to interpret the painting of the Buddhist cosmology from this impressive illuminated manuscript, a Thai cultural heritage from the late 18th century. •



Photo credits: Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT)

Thai Forum Talk

Thai Royal Scribes as Traditional Librarians and Archivists

Thursday 3 October 2024
16:30 - 17:30
Baines Wing SR (1.06)

Dr Peera Panarut

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
Universität Hamburg

Thai Researcher from Hamburg in Leeds (UK)

By Peera Panarut

On 3 October 2024, Dr. Peera Panarut, postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Universität Hamburg, paid

a visit at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, to meet with Prof. Dr. Martin Seeger (School of Languages, Cultures and Societies) and give a lecture for the Thai Talk Forum at the University of Leeds. The talk is entitled "Thai Royal Scribes as Traditional Librarians and Archivists", concerning the roles of Thai royal scribes in the early archival practice and librarianship in Thailand, which is part of his on-going project at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures. •

Photo credits: Cintana Master Nun



Photo: The Royal Manuscript Hall and the Office of the Royal Scribes Department from the mural painting of Wat Ratcha Pradit (Bangkok)

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Indonesian Day at Arabic Culture Weeks, Hamburg

By Syukri Rizki



An array of Indonesian cultural performances was displayed in the *Kulturtag Indonesiens* (Indonesian Cultural Day) event at the Schule an der Bek, Halstenbek, on October 4, 2024, organized by the Indonesian/Malay studies department, University of Hamburg. Thanks to the Schleswig-Holstein government's financial support and some technical assistance from the team of the *Arabische Kulturwochen* (Arabic Culture Weeks Hamburg) the event could run successfully.

After an opening remark from a committee member, Prof. Jan van der Puten, the Head of the Indonesian/Malay studies department, gave a brief speech about the department's academic activities. He warmly encouraged the audience to visit our department if they want to know more about the study program. After that, two AAI students, Sarah Suhadi-Brata and Amelia Arnold performed *yapong Betawi*, a traditional dance from Jakarta. Jan Budweg then presented some general information about Indonesian geographical position, size, population, and administrative units. Mr. Budweg undertook his magister degree at our department and in Indonesia and had the position of DAAD visiting lecturer at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta for five years. He observed that most Indonesians are ready for spontaneous appointments. Growing up in Germany where people usually plan every meeting far in advance, he needed some time to get used to this habit. Remarkably, as he returned to Germany, he experienced a *Rückkehrschock*, a cultural shock in his own land.

Some of our PhD students were then called upon to the stage to showcase how certain German words are written in five scripts used in Indonesian manuscripts. The Balinese script was written by Dewa Ayu Carma Citrawati, Batak script by Roberta Zollo, Jawi script by Tiara Ulfah, and Javanese script by Zakariya Pamuji Aminullah. These students study manuscript texts in those scripts for their dissertations. Members from the audience were given the opportunity to approach them to get their names written down in the script they fancy and to learn the basics of the different scripts.



After that, representatives of the Angklung Hamburg Orchestra demonstrated basic steps to play *angklung* (a traditional Sundanese music instrument made of bamboo tubes of different lengths). The attendees were taught the instrument's notation and steps to shake which bamboo tubes and when. Lastly, Indonesian fried noodles, *rendang*, chicken curry, and crispy chips, all catered by an Indonesian restaurant in Hamburg, were served for the dinner. •



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Indonesian Batik Brought Esther to Prize Winning

By Syukri Rizki



collectie.wereldmuseum.nl



The Verein der Freunde und Förderer des kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars e.V. recently selected Esther Czaya's bachelor thesis about Indonesian batik motifs as one of the "Best of the Year". Congratulations on the achievement! The award ceremony took place at Warburg-Haus on November 27, 2024.

Supervised by Prof. Petra Lange-Berndt and Prof. Elsa Clavé, Esther traced the origin of a *sarong* (tubular skirt) with a batik motif so uncommon to find in Indonesia. Her research focused on a batik cloth that once belonged to Carolina Josephina von Franquemont, an Indo-European woman who operated her own batik factory from 1840 to 1867, initially in Surabaya and then in Semarang. The cloth is now housed at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, which provides open access to its image.

The batik bears a motif of a nutmeg tree known to be unique to the Moluccas islands of Indonesia. The tree is seen to grow with leaves, branches, and ripening fruits that break open and reveal the seed pods. Among the tree branches, several birds are visible, which Esther identified as nutmeg doves. Esther believes that native

Indonesians rarely used the motif in their batik clothes during the nineteenth century. It was mostly attributed to non-Javanese upper class around Java's north coast.

Art became Esther's passion long before she did her bachelor's program at the University of Hamburg. She showed us some of the amazing digital drawings she made when she was still working as a freelance illustrator. While majoring in the Art History Seminar, she took minors in the Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia, through which she got exposed to some Indonesian arts.

Motivated to hone her analytical skill in ethnographic study of textile motifs, Esther is currently pursuing her master's degree in Art History at the University of Hamburg. She looks forward to uncovering more fascinating discoveries from Indonesian art products. •