

SEA- NEWSLETTER

The Department for Languages
and Cultures of Southeast Asia

Moral Lessons from an Ancient Javanese Text

Content contributor: Syukri Rizki

Zakariya Pamuji Aminullah, a PhD candidate in the Austronesian Studies Department, has recently got his book about the text Javanese *Udyogaparwa Jawa Kuna* (UdyJK) published by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia (PNRI).

Editing a critical edition based on the old-Javanese manuscript Br 520 at the PNRI, he focused on the episode of *Karṇopaniwāda*, conversations between Karṇa and Kṛṣṇa, and between Karṇa and Kuntī. UdyJK is adapted from a Sanskrit text, *Udyogaparvan*, a section from the great epic *Mahābhārata*.

The episode under study elevates loyalty above all other moral considerations. Karṇa, the central figure of the story, is portrayed as a character fully aware of his divine origin and thus bound to act according to the perceived divine manners. His father, God Surya, and his mother, Goddess Kuntī, warned him from fighting against his brothers, the *Pāṇḍawas*. Nonetheless, due to loyalty to his cousins, the Korawa, and his vision that a war between himself and one of his brothers must happen, he was involved in a war against Arjuna and thereby met with his demise.

Commenting on the epic, Zakariya noted that heroism does not always manifest itself as strength and victory. Rather, it can also be seen as bravery to do what is right, although it is not popular nor widely acceptable. Karṇa is depicted as a son who never disregards the merits of Rādhā and Adhiratha, the stepparents who raised him after his mother abandoned him shortly after his birth.

Happy with the publication of this book, Zakariya reflected on his writing. He feels grateful that his work complements previous scholarly investigations on UdyJK. He recalls the idea of Plato's philology that a dialog should not only happen between texts and their editors but also between the editors themselves. Also, a philologist, in his opinion, should not always look for unedited manuscript texts for research to discover novelty, since one can always do a deeper study of text fragments having unique intrinsic values.

Zakariya's book's full title is *Antara Takdir, Sumpah, dan Kematian: Sebuah Kajian Filologis untuk Memahami Percakapan Rahasia Karṇa-Kṛṣṇa dan Karṇa-Kuntī di dalam Udyogaparwa Jawa Kuna* ('Between Destiny, oath-making and Death: A philological Study to get a better understanding about the private conversations between Karna-Kresna in the Old-Javanese Udyogaparwa'). It is now freely accessible on the PNRI's website, <https://press.perpusnas.go.id/>.



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Special lecture by Thai guest speaker

Content contributor: Silpsupa Jaengsawang

During the winter semester the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) organised a lecture series entitled “Written Artefacts across World Regions: Incommensurabilities and Comparisons” from 14 October to 16 December 2024.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thaneerat Jatuthasri, a lecturer from Bangkok, Thailand, was cordially invited by the CSMC to deliver a lecture on “Investigating Thai Court Dance-Drama’s Manuscripts: Texts, Paratexts, and Text-Performance Relation.” Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thaneerat Jatuthasri, affiliated with the Department of Thai, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, teaches classical Thai literature and literary performance. Her expertise deals with the Inao story, which has reached Thailand from Java, in various fields, including literature, manuscripts, and the performing arts, as well as the relationship between Thai and other Southeast Asian Panji stories.

In her lecture she presented Thai manuscripts used for *Lakhon Nai*, the Thai court dance-drama performance, and highlighted paratextual elements that dealt with the contexts of royal Thai stage dances. Methodologies and approaches from the study of manuscript cultures were systematically applied to analyze the examined paratexts, providing the audience with historical insight into how the manuscripts played a significant role in the Thai court performance setting and how the Thai court dance dramas were presented to the audiences comprising royal family members.

The lecture garnered significant interest from the audience, who participated both in person and online. Several questions and comments spanned a wide range of academic fields, including history, philology, religions and beliefs, performance arts, and manuscript cultures. On behalf of the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, we would like to express our gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thaneerat Jatuthasri for her precious talk that benefits students, researchers, and teachers in advancing their academic contribution, thanks to the rich knowledge she shared. ●

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Lectures for Thai University by Thai Studies Scholars

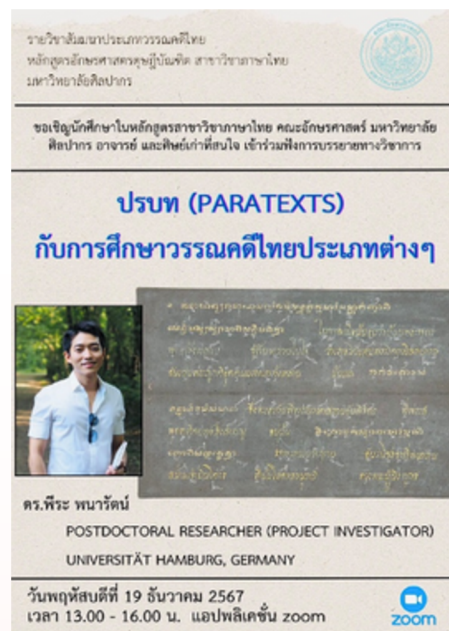
Content contributor: Silpsupa Jaengsaawang



Organized by the Faculty of Arts at Silpakorn University in Thailand, the semester courses “Thai Literary Genres Seminar” and “Thesis Seminar,” which are part of the curriculum, include online special lectures delivered by guest speakers from universities in various countries, who share their experiences in doing research. Our two postdoctoral researchers, Dr. Peera Panarut and Dr. Silpsupa Jaengsaawang, from the Thai Studies Section, were pleased to give lectures on the study of manuscript cultures.

Dr. Peera Panarut, a Principal Investigator (PI) at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), delivered the first lecture titled “Paratexts and the Study of Thai Literary Genres” on 19 December 2024. Dr. Silpsupa Jaengsaawang, also a Principal Investigator (PI) at the CSMC, delivered a second lecture titled “Manuscripts and Rituals: Research on *Anisong* in Lan Na and Laos” on 8 January 2025. The participants were mainly students and researchers who had either recently started or are in the process of developing their academic career.

The two scholars introduced the concept of paratext – the core approach in the study of manuscript cultures not yet available in Thailand. Dr. Peera Panarut explained what paratexts are and how they can be applied to the study of different genres of Thai literature, helping students become familiar with this innovative tool for studying manuscripts as both texts and objects. Following Dr. Peera Panarut’s lecture, Dr. Silpsupa Jaengsaawang further expanded on the study of manuscript cultures, drawing from her PhD study (2016–2019) on liturgical *anisong* manuscripts from Lan Na (Northern Thailand) and Laos. Additionally, in the second lecture, she introduced the Four Key Factors heuristic tool and the concept of codicological units to the participants.



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A lecture about the Topkapi Vase: A Masterpiece of Vietnamese art

A ZOOM lecture by **Quoc Trieu Nguyen SJ**
In relation to the celebration of the Tết
Festival 2025 (Tết Ất Ty), which already
took place on January 29, 2025, the
department of Vietnamese Studies and
the HGV e.V. invite you to a ZOOM lecture.

Webinar-ID: 674 4940 6316

Passcode: 12345678

Time:

Saturday, February 15, 2025,
4-6 p.m. CET

ZOOM address:

https://uni-hamburg.zoom.us/j/67449406316?pwd=Uw_K3OGtlnR6KBKE8Tq2Qn_6L2_fWBF.uxY9C5kY0EyUD14H

About the speaker:

Trieu Quoc Nguyen was born in Vietnam and came to Germany in 1987 at the age of 10, resettled alone from an Indonesian refugee camp. After graduating from high school in Oldenburg, he studied an MBA with a focus on tourism. He became a Jesuit in 2002 and has studied further: a BA in Philosophy from the University of Munich, a BA in Theology from Heythrop College, University of London and an MA in History of Arts and Archaeology of East Asia at SOAS, University of London.

He currently works for *Jesuitenweltweit* in Nuremberg, an international Jesuit aid organization based in Germany, Austria and Switzerland with partner projects in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, concerned with development and education, faith and justice, dialogue and peace. ●



Title of the lecture (which will be held in German):

Die „Topkapi-Vase“: ein Meisterwerk vietnamesischer Kunst.

There is no doubt that Vietnam has its own tradition of making blue and white porcelain. Despite its glorious past, this remained a mystery for a long time. Reasons are many: wars, occupations, disinterest, but also ignorance. The turning point was the rediscovery of the so-called “Topkapi Vase”, a masterpiece of Vietnamese art. It has been discovered in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, and it represents the uniqueness of Vietnamese ceramic art in contrast to the rich Chinese Ming blue and white.

This key object enables a stylistic analysis. In addition, its inscription makes dating possible and provides information about the place and name of the artist: Bui Thi Hy. This object provides insights into the status of women in 15th century Vietnamese society after the country gained back independence from Ming China.

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Recent publication from Southeast Asian studies

Southeast Asia Library Group (SEALG) recently published its annual newsletter, featuring a diverse range of fascinating articles on topics such as digital libraries, Southeast Asian children's books, Malay manuscript studies and Thai book design. Our PhD Student, Syukri Rizki, contributed an article on the acquisition of Acehese manuscripts during the Dutch occupation. Syukri argues that Aceh's strategic location fostered a rich manuscript tradition. During the 19th century Dutch occupation, manuscripts were acquired under the pretext of rescue, but also due to growing local interest. Today, conservation and digitization efforts ensure their preservation.

Read Syukri's full article and explore SEALG's 2024 newsletter here:

<https://sealg.hypotheses.org/files/2025/01/newsletter2024.pdf>



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