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Shaping Alternative Identities in Southeast Asia: Generations, Transnationalism, and Violence

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Abstract

This working paper presents the different ways in which local citizens and their communities are forging alternative identities in Southeast Asia. These identities present alternatives to the regional project of the ASEAN as primarily an economic unit. Three themes are significant in making sense of these diverse identities: generations, transnationalism, and violence. The first theme underscores how generational identities or consciousness are formed according to common experiences or crucial events in the socioeconomic, political, or cultural spheres. Transnationalism, the second theme, looks into how religion, ethnicity, and other social markers bring together different people across borders to advance common causes or confront shared challenges. The third theme documents how memories of past violence shape ethnic, religious, social, and political identities, with consequences on both solidarity and strife among communities. Each of the fifteen projects of the Work Package falls under one of these themes. This working paper highlights some of the salient findings from these projects in relation to the Work Package's overall interest in alternative identities in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: identity, generations, transnationalism, violence, regional integration

The basic premise of our Work Package is that the ASEAN project to create a common Southeast Asian identity is elite-driven. As our projects demonstrate, regional integration is far more complex given that there are competing identities at play. The challenges confronting Southeast Asia make regional integration arguably more complex than it has been for the European Union. For one, Southeast Asia is a religiously and ethnically fragmented region, which poses challenges to the long-term project of regional integration. We point out that the current global context places pressure on the values of multilateralism and the possibility of plural and transversal identities, thus posing a threat to ASEAN's framework-building efforts in the socio-cultural sphere. Fragmented identities along religious, linguistic, and ethnic lines among Southeast Asians are arenas where different forces are competing for local allegiances.

This Work Package examines three issues which are crucial to understanding competing regional integrations among Southeast Asians: *generations*, *transnationalism*, and *violence*. *Generational configurations* are the focus of a study on the national, ethnic, religious and

regional identities of SEA youth and the motivations of young women and men to seek a role shaping the future idea of the region (Thompson & Chulanee 1996). *Transnational ethno-religious groups*, possessing a capacity both to imagine solidarity and also to exacerbate tensions, are studied for their potential to support or contest regional integration (Hirsch 1996). Furthermore, for collective futures to nurture loyalty, collective pasts must be settled, and ways found for people to come to terms with memories of *violence*.

We have identified three transversal themes across the different projects of our Work Package. The first is *multiple mobilities*, notably mobile populations (labour migrants, pilgrims, tourists, refugees, and missionaries) to discern if their movements engender new forms of Southeast Asian identity. Another transversal theme stems from the recognition of the importance of *security* for regional solidarity, conceived in different respects, including human security from violence and social exclusion. As we explore identity construction, *gender* is another traversal theme that informs our analysis. Religious resurgence has taken various forms among Muslim men and women, ranging from pious feminism to radical patriarchy, while similar contestations engage Buddhist monks and nuns, and Buddhist societies and their ethical principles at large.

The individual research projects in our Work Package all put into question the extent to which non-state actors are taking part in shaping or contesting integration. At the same time, their initiatives demonstrate both the potential and limits of regional integration. In the following we present preliminary research findings from our individual projects to substantiate or challenge the methodological framework and hypothesis developed in Working Paper 1.

Generations

The main aim of this research cluster is to study how different generations construct their own identity influenced by common experiences or crucial events in the socioeconomic, political, or cultural spheres. As such experiences or events are rarely restricted to certain nation-states but effecting larger geographical entities or even operating on a global level, it is not surprising that identity formation within a specific generation is also transboundary or transnational. To understand what dimensions or factors determine the construction of identity within a particular generation we highlight the results of three projects. The first project studies the perceptions of and expectations from ASEAN among different age cohorts constituting distinctive generations. This project takes a macro perspective and a sociological approach. The other two projects are based on micro-level historical research and anthropological fieldwork, focusing on the dynamics of labour migration among transnational groups over generations.

Generational awareness and perceptions on ASEAN

Medelina Hendytio and Vidhyandika Perkasa (^aCSIS, Jakarta) pursue two main research questions. Firstly, they study how younger generations of Indonesians, when compared to their older cohorts, shape collective imaginings of ASEAN. Secondly, they explore how conflicts and narratives of shared violence play significant roles in identity formation by using the ongoing conflict in the province of Papua in eastern Indonesia as a case study.

To address the first focus the two researchers conducted a national survey in 34 provinces in Indonesia by using multistage random sampling. The total number of respondents was 1,960 representing adequately the genders as well as the urban and rural divisions of the Indonesian population. The respondents were categorized according to the following five age cohorts: Generation Z (under 22 years), Generation Y (Millennials) (23–38 years), Generation X (39–54 years), Generation Baby Boomers (55–73 years) and Generation Silent (above 74 years). Of the respondents involved in the survey, 39.9 percent were classified as Generation X,

followed by the Millennial Generation (31.7 percent) and the Baby Boomers (19.6 percent), while the very young Generation Z (7.3 percent) and the older Generation Silent (1.5 percent) are largely underrepresented in the sample. Therefore it was decided to focus the analysis on the young and middle age cohorts (Generation X, Generation Y-millennials and Baby Boomers).

When asked about *awareness* towards ASEAN by age, it becomes clear that ASEAN is considered as most relevant by the Millennials generation (55.9 percent) when compared to Generation X (43.8 percent) or even Baby Boomers (27.9 percent), although theoretically ASEAN should be most widely recognized by members of the two latter generations who grew up with the regional organization, founded in 1967, since their childhood or youth. The role of schools, television, and the Internet has helped socializing the youth about ASEAN. Indeed, schools played a more significant role in exposing Millennials to the ASEAN (46.7 percent) than television which influenced Generation X (60.4 percent) and Baby Boomers (52.3 percent). Interestingly, ASEAN has a better outreach towards the younger generations than the older ones. In the overall three age cohorts, better quality of education may also play a role in introducing ASEAN to the younger generations.

Is ASEAN politically relevant for the respondents? The findings call into question impressions that ASEAN is irrelevant. In all age cohorts respondents confirm that ASEAN is important and relevant for their lives and thus should be maintained: Generation Y-Millennials (90.5 percent); Generation X (92.7 percent) and Baby Boomers (90.7 percent). In all generations those who consider the existence of ASEAN as irrelevant were very small in number with hardly any significant differences between age groups, though the anti-ASEAN sentiment is slightly larger in Generation Y (4.6 percent) than among Baby Boomers (3.7 percent) and Generation X (3.5 percent). When asked why ASEAN is considered irrelevant the respondents refer to the “incapacity” of ASEAN to solve regional issues such as the Rohingya refugee crisis or the perception that ASEAN had so far brought little direct benefit to Indonesia.

Roughly two thirds of all respondents, irrespective of their generational categories, highlight the benefits of economic cooperation. The vast majority of the Indonesian respondents understand the importance of ASEAN in economic terms. In this global complexity there are multi-dimensional problems which also need to be addressed such as health, environment, politics, education and socio-cultural which require multilateral networking and solution. But the respondents see little benefit from ASEAN in tackling these problems.

But there are challenges that matter to the respondents. All cohorts identify the violation of human rights as an alarming issue for ASEAN solidarity. There are cross-border issues such as illegal fishing which leads to legal prosecution, the influx of migrant workers in countries experiencing labour shortages (e.g. Malaysia and Thailand), and the Rohingya crisis. For the respondents, these issues have the potential to disrupt ASEAN solidarity if not handled properly.

One important information that Hendytio and Perkasa seek to gather from their study is to clarify the notion of a so-called ASEAN identity. Does it really exist? If yes, how do the respondents perceive ASEAN identity? From the survey results, the majority of the respondents, including the Millennials, appreciate ASEAN identity related to “the spatial proximity of one ASEAN country to the other.” Therefore, ASEAN identity is about territorial proximity which has brought a shared feeling of being part of ASEAN. The other factor which supports ASEAN identity concerns cultural similarities such as food preferences, values, norms and *serumpun* (i.e. the feeling of belonging to the same family).

Generational experiences of transnational migration

The study by Natasha Pairaudeau (Cambridge University) of Kula or Shan gem miners in the borderlands of Thailand and former French Indochina is mainly based on primary sources kept in archives in France, England, Thailand and Cambodia. This historical research is enriched by interviews with informants in the three sites of Pailin in western Cambodia, Chanthaburi in eastern Thailand, and Huay Sai on the Lao side of the “Golden Triangle”. This project explores the historical trajectories of the Kula, bringing together an understanding of their once-vibrant involvement as gem miners in border areas between Siam and French Indochina, with their position today. Its aim is an historically informed analysis of the terms upon which migrant peoples such as the Kula formed regional senses of belonging, and how their allegiances and identities were shaped and reshaped in the long twentieth century. Through this analysis it seeks to answer how well groups such as the Kula, in the way they exist in the 21st century, might be aligned with one of ASEAN’s goals for 2020, that of fostering the development of a common regional identity.

Shan migrant gem miners most probably learned of new gem tracts in Siam’s northern and eastern borderlands through information flowing from networks of Shan caravan traders. While the migrant miners were pulled by the lure of riches to be unearthed in the new gem tracts, they were equally pushed by a severe break down in the political and social order in the Shan States from the 1880s. The movement of Shan miners to the gem tracts in the borderlands can be understood, then, as a case of people fleeing political upheaval and its consequences and taking refuge in the hills.

There is much to be gained in understanding Kula history by turning to scholarship addressing the relationship between Southeast Asia’s lowland states and its upland peoples. The migrant miners’ case helps to counter long-standing assumptions about Southeast Asia’s upland frontiers as zones isolated from economic life. Yet while the Kula gem migrants were undoubtedly refugees from late 19th century troubles plaguing the Shan States and Upper Burma, to characterise the frontier areas as “anarchist” zones (Scott 2009) would ignore their explicit involvement in state-making projects in the lowlands. The Kula miners were fleeing the disruptions of already complex upland tributary relationships. Even though they were depicted by outsiders as a self-sufficient, unruly bunch seeking sapphires and rubies, they were , actively engaged in bids to re-order their political lives, both locally at the mines and back in the Shan States.

The dynamics of gem mining are central to this story. The high value of gems, coupled with the ease with which they may be hidden, makes the output of gem mines difficult to control for any claimant to authority. In turn, while peripheries are by their nature removed from centres of power, gem mines on the periphery hold a special position. They are particularly attractive to political outcasts seeking to finance bids for power. Kula control over the mines and their earnings enabled them to propose, and to finance, bids for power in the disrupted Shan States; their hold on the mines themselves made them susceptible to colonial bids to sway their allegiances; it is no coincidence that Pailin became the holdout of Ieng Sary at the point when the Khmer Rouge was losing its political hold over Cambodia.

A second project related to labour migration pertains to the migration of Vietnamese workers into the tin mining region in the Nam Pathaen river valley in the central Lao province of Khammuan situated opposite the north eastern Thai province of Nakhon Phanom. This project carried out by Oliver Tappe (University of Cologne) combines historical and anthropological research methods in a *longue durée* perspective on labour relations and livelihoods over the generations. While research in the French colonial archives sheds light on the emergence of industrial labour and corresponding migration dynamics, anthropological field research in the mining villages addresses the question of how local artisanal mining and large-scale mining

concessions shape the everyday life of the local population. In both components of the project, Vietnamese labour mobility constitutes a key issue with regard to geopolitical aspects and regional economic integration as well as to questions of demography and local identity. More generally, the project explores how far global capitalism and regional economic dynamics shape local identities and livelihoods.

The phenomenon of the miner-peasant can be traced back to precolonial times when mining was practiced only for a few months in the dry season. According to archival sources, various rituals and taboos marked the dangerous mining activities. Fear of evil spirits prevented mining for most of the year. This made it difficult for French capitalists to recruit indigenous labour for the fledgling colonial mining industry at the turn of the 20th century, and they started to import Vietnamese *coolie* labourers. Even today, mining during the rainy season is considered particularly risky, and stories about malevolent spirits are widespread. However, poverty drives local villagers to accept the risks involved in mining.

Interestingly, local livelihoods today – combining agricultural subsistence with artisanal mining – seem to reveal certain continuities with (pre-)colonial times. Changing labour regimes and migration patterns certainly altered local socioeconomic configurations and labour relations. However, the specific miner-peasant identity of the region has apparently outlasted the manifold transformations induced by colonialism, socialism and, more recently, market capitalism. Today, artisanal mining generates up to 70% of local household income in the Nam Pathaen valley.

Several sources of precariousness and marginalization could be identified. Environmental degradation (polluted soil and rivers) affects local subsistence through reduced rice yields and fishing resources. Villagers rely on artisanal mining for income generation for another reason: Mining companies prefer to employ temporary Vietnamese (or Chinese) migrants who accept low salaries and harsh working conditions, and are often better skilled than local villagers. Companies tolerate artisanal mining on their grounds and sometimes integrate local miners in the supply chain (e.g. villagers selling crude tin ore to the company).

Large-scale Vietnamese migration to Laos dates to colonial times when the French administration faced the problem of labour in the growing mining and plantation industries all over Indochina. While labour demand on the rubber plantations in Cochinchina was met by importing thousands of North-Vietnamese *coolies*, the Lao mines faced a mix between attempts of local (seasonal) labour recruitment and both state-organized and spontaneous labour migration from Vietnam. Chinese labour was initially considered as well. Yet Vietnamese labour became a convenient choice due to the availability of a comparatively skilled, cheap and flexible workforce in the densely populated and impoverished coastal regions of Annam and Tonkin (Central and North Vietnam). Colonial stereotypes of “lazy Lao” and “industrious Vietnamese” contributed to this tendency of labour recruitment. Such stereotypes inform labour relations in Laos still today. Labour-intensive sectors such as mining and construction rely on Vietnamese migrant labour. While a century of Vietnamese migration to Laos has altered the demography of urban regions along the Mekong to different degrees, current dynamics of regional labour mobility add new layers to this history of transnational migration. Thakhaek, the provincial capital of Khammuane, is marked by an old Lao-Vietnamese commercial elite. More recent labour migrants from Vietnam benefit from these old networks that also include Vietnamese communities in the Thai city of Nakhon Phanom across the Mekong. However, a certain distance and suspicion between the old and new migrant communities can be noted.

The ongoing economic and political influence of Vietnam in past and present Laos is undeniable and corresponds with specific migration patterns. In the Lao mining sector, this influence is linked to transnational economic and political dynamics and related processes of

regional integration. Questions of identity and difference will remain a central issue in this context. For a historical contextualization of cross-regional relations and interactions, precolonial trade networks and patrimonial relations across Southeast Asia must be considered as well. One goal of the project is to understand (local and migrant) workers' everyday experiences, and their embeddedness in larger sociopolitical networks and dependencies. It will contribute to a deeper understanding of the local frictions of global capitalism, past and present precarities, and the historical significance of mining work. In this context, attention must be paid to shifting gender relations and generation conflicts – both among the local villagers and the migrant communities. Environmental issues and precarious livelihoods shape everyday life in the Nam Pathaen region today. The prospect of more large-scale mining concessions raises concerns that villages will be displaced. These tendencies will certainly affect local identities and further questions about current politics of socioeconomic development in the Lao PDR.

Transnationalism

The second theme of Work Package 4 is transnationalism. Our fundamental premise is that identity construction may draw from religion, gender, ethnicity, and other social markers that bring together different people around Southeast Asia. Advocacy is crucial in this regard. Individual projects under the theme of transnationalism investigate to what extent ordinary citizens or their respective organizations offer alternative pathways to articulating and embodying identities in the region. This cluster has three subthemes. The first is about transnational mobility and the sense of belonging. Projects under this subtheme interrogate the relationship between citizenship and being Southeast Asian in relation to labour migration and missionary work. The second subtheme tackles transnational religious networks in borderland communities. Border areas are analytically useful in underscoring modes of transnationalism that contest boundaries set by the state. The last subtheme is the performance of identities across borders. In Southeast Asia ethnic identities transcend borders. How these are defined and what entities are involved in defining them are some of the questions projects confront.

Transnational movement and sense of belonging

The first subtheme under transnationalism concerns mobility and sense of belonging. Both projects in this cluster work on Filipinos. The first draws on the experiences of migrant workers, a study that probes the implications of a change in citizenship for nationhood and for a sense of belonging in Southeast Asia. The project, led by Filomeno Aguilar (Ateneo de Manila University), investigates the circumstances, concomitants, and consequences of migrants from the Philippines acquiring Singaporean citizenship. In Singapore, the anti-immigration sentiment that erupted in 2010 and registered on the ballot during the 2011 general election – with PAP receiving 60 percent only of the popular vote, its lowest ever – has led to substantial policy changes that differentiate the citizen from the noncitizen. Permanent residents (PR) have felt the citizen–noncitizen distinction very keenly because it has affected children's access to education, which many resent because their sons are also required to render national service. Informants state that, since 2011, the acquisition of PR status and of Singapore citizenship has become difficult and unpredictable. Many skilled migrants are not encouraged to remain in Singapore.

In 2011 Singapore also established the Singapore Citizenship Journey as a requirement for naturalization to engender “political love” for Singapore. However, informants who acquired Singapore citizenship prior to 2011 and those who hope to acquire it in the future expressed pragmatic reasons for naturalization. In general, renouncing Philippine citizenship was a highly emotional episode in their lives. Many Filipinos, despite their permanent residency,

have not been willing to undergo naturalization because of their unwillingness to lose their Philippine citizenship. For them nationalism holds a strong affective value. Most informants have not really thought of their “Southeast Asian” identity while living and working in Singapore. If anything, they have been more conscious about their Filipino identity. Informants who said they have become more conscious about Southeast Asia—or simply “Asia”—point to the international cuisine available in Singapore and the opportunities to interact with other foreigners.

In summary, the limited number of interviews suggests that transnational migration by highly skilled professionals from the Philippines does not diminish national identity, while naturalization or acquisition of citizenship in another Southeast Asian state (Singapore) is pursued mainly for pragmatic reasons—although they do settle down and adjust to life in their destination. Attachment to the origin nation-state prevents the formation of affective citizenship toward Singapore. The sense of belonging to “Southeast Asia” is tenuous. In this sense, skilled labour migration, which is a part of the ASEAN Economic Blueprint, does not lend itself easily to the goal of regional integration, except in economic terms.

The second project, led by Jayeel Cornelio and Erron Medina (Ateneo de Manila University), also explores sense of belonging, but this time from the point of view of Filipino Christian missionaries based in Thailand. Some of these missionaries have also been involved elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The project advances the concept of the religious imaginary to account for the ways Filipino missionaries make sense of Southeast Asia, the region to which they feel they have been called. In other words, Thailand, and the broader region, constitute the space where they can fulfil their calling, which is mainly a personal discovery based on temporal transformations (or interruptions) in their lives.

The study’s take on the religious imaginary advances the literature. Religious imaginaries are people’s cognitive ways of making sense of time and history. The religious imaginary, for one, frames time in a metaphysical order in which the past continues to play out in the present. Remembering and re-enacting tradition makes this continuity possible. The religious imaginary, deployed through lingering beliefs and rituals, is in effect a chain of memory for people to remain connected to the past. In terms of history, the religious imaginary recognizes the past as foundational to the creation of a religious community. In both modes, the religious imaginary makes a direct line between the past, present, and the future.

By contrast, Cornelio and Medina propose the religious imaginary as an interruption in time, with consequences not just on lifestyle but on place-making as well. It emerges out of a moment that interrupts the lives of Filipinos otherwise involved in secular affairs such as employment elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The religious imaginary reconfigures the present by detaching it from the past and reimagining the present and the future in terms of a calling. Often, this calling is framed as a mode of giving up an otherwise lucrative career, an act that is nevertheless worth it in view of what Filipino missionaries believe to be God’s plan for Southeast Asia. As such, a compelling sacralized vision of the region is very much tied to personal transformation. Put differently, the religious imaginary is a sacralization of time, self, and place. Indeed, in the wider scholarship on religion and migration, religion provides people with the spiritual resources to justify their movement and decision to stay in spite of difficulties.

Based on interviews with Filipinos involved in missionary work in Thailand, this study will spell out the details of this religious imaginary. The first is that the region is reimagined as a place where convenience and career are given up. Many of our interlocutors were once migrant workers until an interruption took place in their lives. The interruption is what makes it possible for them to grasp their new calling for an unconverted region. This point is significant because often the movement of Filipinos is to developed countries where the

religious imaginary does not involve sacrificing career (Trolle 2019). The second involves the religious encounters that justify or validate the calling. These often come in the form of visions or spiritual moments about the region itself.

The project, which is ongoing, explores the ways in which Filipino Christians merge their religious identities with their citizenship to fulfil their calling in Southeast Asia. In fact, a promising lead for the project lies in the enactment of spiritual calling in the form of religious activities where the religious imaginary becomes observable. These activities include transnational religious gatherings and church anniversaries that magnify a Filipino sense of destiny for missionaries in Southeast Asia.

Transnational religious networks

The second subtheme under transnationalism is a cluster of related projects that focus on ethno-religious identities. All of these projects are interestingly located in borderland communities in mainland Southeast Asia. The first looks in the experiences of Karen ethnic minority people at the borderland between Thailand and Myanmar. Kwanchewan Buadaeng (Chiang Mai University) works on a Karen religious cult called Talaku, which was established around two centuries ago and had gone through many structural changes in history. The Talaku has maintained their bounded territory and distinctive identity although with some adjustments in the rituals and practices. However, the recent socio-economic and political changes pose a greater challenge to the survival of the cult. The Christian missions have started to successfully convert some members. While those who have not decided to convert have to adjust their ideology and practices. She explores how the integrative forces of the state, non-state and religious agencies affect the existence of formerly bounded religious communities. Moreover, she looks at the ways in which the cult members have reconstructed their identities, organizations and practices in responding to the integrative forces.

The Thailand-Myanmar borderland has undergone rapid changes in the last decade. On the Myanmar side of the border, the fighting between ethnic armed groups and Burmese army has basically ceased although occasional clashes still happened. Within a relatively peaceful context, economic development accelerated. The Burmese government launched an industrial development zone which is joined in by Chinese enterprises under the umbrella of China's One Belt One Road policy. The Thai government has also launched the Special Economic Zones scheme at the border, which supports the construction of mega projects (e.g. new and expanding roads, bridges, dam and ports).

All these developments have fostered greater mobility for locals and internationals. Members of the cult, who have maintained their bounded territory and identity, have found it difficult to control members to comply with rules and regulations. Amidst community disruption, in 2008 some Talaku members decided to convert to Christianity. Foreign missionaries have attempted to convert the Talaku since 1962 but without success. Besides the disruption that has occurred in the community, the potential of Karen missionaries and their networks also contribute to the success of evangelization. However, these groups had to deal with state agencies' integration policy, which sometimes discriminates against other religions than Buddhism. In the Talaku case, in 2016, the Thai Royal Forestry Department asked the Talaku Christians to demolish their church on the claim that it was built in a conservation area. However, the church has fought the case using their wide networks in Thai society and finally won.

The big question for the Talaku and for this research concerns the future. In 2019, the Talaku in Letongkhu village already has several factions: Christians, modified Talaku, and Buddhist Talaku, among others. However, they have to live together at the same place in one village because the separation into many villages is not possible according to the Thai system of

village registration. The relatively traditional Talaku has separated to build a new cluster in the Myanmar side of the border. In Letongkhu, the modified Talaku has created new rules and regulations. All these go to show that Talaku identity is increasingly pluralized.

A similar project that locates itself in a borderland community is by Sirui Dao (University of Hamburg). Further to the east, in the borderlands of China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, called the “new economic quadrangle”, live the Tai Lü, a transnational ethnic group. Dao studies the transborder religious practice of the Tai Lü and the worship of the transnational Theravada Holy Monk, *Ton bun*. These practices contest the newly formed nation-state borders by fostering a transborder ethnic-religious network. As a transborder ethnic group, the Tai Lü people, like other related Tai ethnic groups such as the Tai Khün, have not drawn much academic attention, especially their Theravada Buddhism in the Upper Mekong River Basin.

The Tai living in a marginal zone within the Upper Mekong River Basin, probably have closer connection with each other than their respective national centres. Transnational pilgrimage and merit-making activities are parts of the religious practice of the Tai people, especially of those who live in the borderlands of their respective nation-states. For example, in December 2014, a group of Thai artists and students from Thailand went to paint gold water for the temple hall (*wihan*) Phra Chao In San of Wat Phra That Don Rüang in Müang Phong (Shan State, Myanmar) where the charismatic monk Khruba Bunchum (born in 1965), a Tai Lü from Chiang Rai, is the abbot.

For the Tai people, a journey to the Theravada Buddhist area usually is accompanied with the visiting of local temples and the making of donations to the Sangha, the community of monks and novices. Tourist activity sometimes is disguised as pilgrimage. For a long time when Myanmar did not open Kengtung (Chiang Tung) and Müang Yòng for visitors, Thai visitors to these places usually followed monks participating in their religious activities. For Tai people, Buddhist space is not only a field of religious practice, but also a symbol of cultural and ethnic identity. For this reason, during the recent revival of Lan Na culture (since the 1980s), Tai Lü people in Northern Thailand replicated pagodas from Müang Yòng and Sipsòng Panna in their own communities. Given the fact that probably 25–40 percent of the Tai speaking population of Northern Thailand has Tai Lü, Tai Khün or Shan ancestry, though assimilation into the Tai Yuan or Khon Müang mainstream has reduced this share during the last century, the relinking of many Northern Thai to the Tai speaking areas in the eastern Shan State and southwestern Yunnan is of significance to forge a sense of belonging transcending national borders.

The dynamics of the Tai Lü transnational networks based on Buddhist pilgrimages have been studied against the background of restoration projects at three prominent temple structures triggering a sense of belonging among members of the Tai Lü ethnic group coming from different states of the upper Mekong valley. The case of the Wat Ban Yang Fa reconstruction project may serve to exemplify this transnational endeavour of identity building. The Buddhist architecture reconstructions in the 1980s were mostly replicated from structures in the original Sipsòng Panna style. However, since the late 1990s, as many monks and local Tai architects finished their learning from Thailand and went back to Sipsòng Panna, the (central) Thai style Buddhist architecture began gaining popularity (Shan 2009: 36).

A major feature of Sirui Dao’s project highlights the Ban Yang Fa Project, which is an attempt to preserve the local Buddhist architecture style, involving the cooperation between Thailand and Sipsòng Panna. Ban Yang Fa is a village of Chiang Chüang in Müang Chae Town, Müang Hai District. The village was built in 1450, formerly named Ban Siao (Seo). It is said that once upon a time the villages in Chiang Chüang were crashed by a thunder, only Ban Siao survived. For this reason, villagers changed the name to Ban Yang Fa (village of

stepping over the sky). The village temple was built in 1778 but destroyed in 1955. In 1984, it was rebuilt. The project originated in 2010, when art exchange activities between Chiang Rai and Sipsòng Panna was held. Thai artists visiting the village of Ban Yang found that the villagers of Ban Yang Fa planned to tear down the hall and rebuild a new one. The Thai artists became very worried about the disappearance of traditional architecture arts and proposed to assist the reconstruction. Then a Reconstruction Project was proposed by the Art and Culture Office of Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Thirty-four artists from Thailand and artists from Sipsòng Panna donated their paintings for a series of charity auction exhibitions in Thailand (Bangkok) to raise funds for the reconstruction. On 2 May 2011, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Ban Yang Fa villagers and a reconstruction company signed the contract. On November 24, 2012, the construction celebration ceremony was held.

Most parts of the hall, including the floor, were replaced with new materials, only the wall remained. For reason of the precious historical and artistic value of the decoration, the wall was preserved. The outer side of the wall is painted with murals of Buddhist Jataka stories, that is, Dasajati Jataka, Vessantara Jataka, Meghavadi Jataka, Pora Jataka, Buddhist history. The inner side of the wall is painted with gold inlay design (*lai kham*), which is a traditional Buddhist decoration technique in the Upper Mekong Basin. The use of *lai kham* is getting rare in Sipsòng Panna with the disappearance of the traditional Lü style Buddhist architecture. Nowadays, in Sipsòng Panna, the Buddhist architecture of modern Lan Na and central Thai style gains in popularity, and in these buildings *lai kham* is supplanted by golden color carving decoration. The reconstruction adopted the *lai kham* patterns of the original ones and of temples from surrounding villages. Apart from the hall and the house for Buddhist priests, a Buddha image was newly built in the southern (lower) part of the temple. The construction of this Buddha image and the temple wall were donated by a returned Lü diaspora, who was originally from Ban Yang Fa. The reconstruction of Ban Yang Fa is approved by many monks and lay people in Sipsòng Panna. Since the reconstruction, Ban Yang Fa Temple has become a model encouraging the Tai people in Sipsòng Panna to preserve the traditional local style Buddhist architecture.

Performing identity across borders

Alan Darmawan and Jan van der Putten (University of Hamburg) study how people defining themselves as ethnically Malay live in separate communities across national borders and reassert their Malayness through art festivals. Art festivals stimulate regeneration in art practices and invite the youngsters to engage in art production, to use traditional arts as sources of new creations and to perform them before national and international audiences. International Malay art festivals make the Malay performers familiar with the new achievements and strengthen the Malay world network. How do art festivals enhance networks in the Malay world? Most of the provinces in Sumatra employ art festivals to celebrate identity and promote Malayness. Malaysia, Singapore and the southern provinces of Thailand also stage Malay art festivals. The festivals follow each other in quick succession and the same cultural workers are engaged to perform in one festival after another. The year 2017 witnessed several festivals taking place consecutively in Tanjung Pinang, Batam, Daik-Lingga, Pekanbaru and then, Medan. The participants in those events came from Sumatra, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, south Thailand and even from south Vietnam in one case in Batam. On the other hand, from the Riau Islands young performers travelled to the neighbouring countries to perform at art festivals. This part of the research investigates how the cultural workers and youngsters in the Riau Islands conceive their encounter with young Malay performers from the other Malay lands at art festivals. Moreover, it uncovers also the experiences of several groups of artists from the Riau Islands performing at the festival in Malaysia and Singapore and how they perceive Malayness in the neighbouring countries.

Several groups of *mak yong* theatrical performance and musical bands from the Riau Islands are chosen as the case study.

The Riau Islands promoted as heartland of Malay culture and people can also claim being the heir of the royal traditions that can be traced back to Palembang and, more recently, fifteenth-century Melaka. With this it was the oldest Malay royal house that lasted until 1911 when it was dissolved by the Dutch colonial government. Specific buildings such as mosques and royal dwellings on the islands of Penyengat and Lingga are maintained by the local government, while three of the local royal scions have been promoted to the status of national hero, Raja Haji Fisabilillah, Raja Ali Haji, and most recently Sultan Muhammad Shah III. The first two are representatives of the vice-regal family of Bugis extraction who live on Penyengat, while the latter represents the Malay sultan family whose main basis is considered on the island of Lingga. In the course of history these families intermarried and dispersed over the Malay world and for about one century Riau has been without a sultan and his aristocracy.

This was until Huzrin Hood, a local businessman who had been the head of the region when the islands separated administratively from mainland Riau, appointed himself as Sultan of Bintan, one of the main islands in the province and once an important seat of the royal house of Riau. The capital of the province Tanjungpinang is located on this island. Sultan Huzrin Hood has joined a movement that strives for more importance of royal houses and the restoration of their former glory in Indonesia. He has also been quite active in rekindling old blood ties with royal houses in Malaysia, where nine sultans have maintained and expanded their role and power in modern Malaysia after independence. Sultan Huzrin of Bintan has fortified his claims by using his old network and introducing an Islamic economic exchange model that makes use of gold Dinar and silver Dirham as payment. These Dirham and Dinar are minted with his name and sultanate on them and have been accompanied with the building of a sultan's market-place and plans to build a new sultan's mall. With these efforts and plans he connects to the global Islamic network promoting dinar-dirham led by Sheikh Abdalqadir as-Sufi. This part of the research will find out how serious the sultan and his plans are taken and how this latest reinvention of the Islamic sultanate affects the configuration of cultural identity in the Riau islands.

The changing context of identity formation in the Malay world reveals that there is no single dominant force encouraging people in regional and transnational networks. We would rather consider it as revived efforts of multi-players who accentuate their roles in Malay historical narratives for a reputation of being or becoming the centre of the Malay world. Within this configuration, art festivals held one place after another, emerge as a means of connecting the Malay world, involving the youth in cultural production in order to shape Malayness and enhance consciousness of being Malay. Islamic royal relations also cement national and transnational connections in the networks that manifest themselves in cultural performances giving concrete form to this space called the Malay world.

Violence

The final theme of our Work Package is violence. Evidence from Southeast Asia suggests that a sense of belonging is shaped by the experience of mass violence. The shared memories of past violence shape ethnic, religious, social, and political identities. Bonds of loyalty are created and deepened through such memories, providing the justification and the models for future mass violence. Those who have experienced violence directly are invariably transformed by it, regardless whether they are perpetrators, victims or only witnesses of it. The individual projects of this cluster investigate the impact of large-scale violence on identity formation in societies that experienced mass killings and famine at a national level (Cambodia, Timor-Leste) as well as the impact of violence in borderlands

(Myanmar/Bangladesh) and the collective memory of communal violence involving different ethnic groups and political allegiances (Vietnam).

Youth violence in war and revolution

The term “youth bulge” was first introduced in the academic discourse by the American political scientists Gary Fuller and Jack Goldstone in 1995 and later popularized by the German sociologist and genocide specialist Gunnar Heinsohn in his work *Söhne und Weltmacht: Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen* (Sons and World Power: Terror in the Rise and Fall of Nations, 2003). Heinsohn argues that an excess of young adult males in the population (notably in cases where the cohort of those aged 15–24 years is higher than 20 percent of the total) leads to social unrest, internal and external armed conflicts, and terrorism. This is especially the case if the “third and fourth sons”, who do not find economic opportunities and prestigious positions in their own societies, rationalize their desire to compete for such opportunities and positions by turning to religion or political ideologies. Heinsohn’s provocative thesis appears highly plausible in the light of the Cambodian experience. Cambodia’s “youth bulge” had increased from 17.1 percent in 1962 to 19.7 percent in 1970, with many thousands of high-school students unable to find employment in the state bureaucracy of Prince Sihanouk’s autocratic regime and thus receptive for radical political mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The younger age cohorts (below 15 years) increased from 33.4 percent in 1962 to 43.9 percent in 1970 laying the ground for a further increase of the youth bulge in the early 1970s. The “extreme youth” was certainly one of the major demographic characteristics of Cambodia at the beginning of the Cambodian tragedy.

This is the point of departure of the project by Volker Grabowsky (University of Hamburg) on the role of the Cambodian youth in the violent revolution of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. In his long speech of 27 September 1977 in which he revealed the very existence of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and in the Black Paper (Livre noir) of September 1978 disclosing the background of the conflict with Vietnam, Pol Pot praised the loyalty of the hill people in north eastern Cambodia, the so-called Khmer Loei, the backbone of the Party’s armed struggle in the final years of Sihanouk’s Sangkum regime. He described them as “completely illiterate people who did not have even the slightest idea of cities, automobiles and Parliament [but who] dared to fight under the guidance of The Party” (quoted from Quinn 1989: 236). Apart from members of these national minorities, in the early 1970s thousands of young Khmer from poor peasant background in remote villages were recruited into the Khmer Rouge army which rapidly expanded from 15,000 soldiers in early 1971 to over 40,000 only two years later. As Prince Sihanouk observed, some of these young people were still children at the age of twelve when they started their military careers. Removed from their home villages and separated from their families, these young soldiers (*yothea*) grew up with their peers in the Khmer Rouge indoctrination camps considering as the greatest honour that the CPK praised them as “the dictatorial instrument of the Party” (*Oppakar Phdachkar Robas Pak*).

Absolute dedication to the revolutionary cause and loyalty to Angkar – a generic term designating the CPK and all its auxiliary organisations – was propagated in numerous short stories, such as those collected in the anthology ‘*Khèm, die junge Kämpferin’ und andere Erzählungen des kambodschanischen Widerstands*’ (‘Khèm, the young female combatant’ and other stories of the Cambodian resistance). Among the many stories published in the *Revolutionary Youth* magazine, the story of Comrade Phin who had joined the revolution as early as 1966 is striking. When captured in 1968 young Phin who had been serving as a messenger for the Party’s East Zone leadership vehemently repudiated his own mother when the latter was led by the police to his prison cell to identify him as her son. Finally, the police

had to release Phin who re-united with his old mother several years later when visiting his native village as a Khmer Rouge combatant not long after the liberation of Phnom Penh. The privileged role assigned to young people, especially from the disadvantaged strata of the population, is glorified by Pol Pot in his epic speech of 27 September 1977: “Youth is a period of life in which there are very rapid changes. It is a time when consciousness is most receptive to revolution and when we are in a full possession of our strengths. This, then, is a general directive of our Party. It is the youth of today who will take up the revolutionary tasks of tomorrow.” A thorough analysis of notebooks of Khmer Rouge youth cadres as well as school textbooks used in Democratic Kampuchea shall be used to explore the mechanisms of youth mobilisation and the reception of Khmer Rouge ideology at the grassroots level.

Though traditional forms of education were eradicated by closing schools and universities, ransacking libraries, burning “reactionary” books, and killing teachers of the old regime, the widespread notion that *any* kind of education ceased to exist in Democratic Kampuchea’s “stone-age communism” is wrong. While the old “feudalist-bourgeois” educational institutions were dismantled, the Cambodian communists introduced a qualitatively different system of education which put the main emphasis on communal and more participatory forms of learning that took place outside the classrooms and emphasized the crucial importance of manual labour to transform *human* nature along with a transformation of the *physical* landscape (Tyner 2019: 107). This kind of education was directed at the children of the poor and lower middle peasants – many of them illiterate – rather than the children of the “new people” who would have considered Angkar’s educational approach as an almost total lack of teaching. It seems evident that the rationale behind Democratic Kampuchea’s new education system was to create a sense of belonging to a peasant-worker collectivity, any kind of individualistic behaviour and thinking being eradicated. Violence played a crucial role to forge this collective identity among the peasant youth.

Accounts of survivors of Cambodia’s “Killing Fields” persistently report that adults were most afraid of the *chhlop*, the local militia that was responsible for the internal security in a village or commune. As most adult *chhlop* were transferred to the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea after April 1975, the Khmer Rouge recruited young people of poor peasant background, very often still teenagers, to fulfil the task. In fact, these young *chhlop* were feared as spies who tended to misuse their power. Absolute loyalty to Angkar and pride of forming the future elite of a Communist utopia was instilled into these *chhlop* as well as into children in general through various methods. Any sentimental attachments to parents, the wider family or even the village community was perceived as an obstacle to ensure absolute loyalty for the revolution. Slogans like “Young ones, you are the sons and daughters of the Angkar. Report everything to us who are your parents” and “If you wish to know how things happen, ask adults: if you wish to see them in a clear light, ask children” tell how the Khmer Rouge manipulated children encouraging them to denounce and spy on adults (Locard 2004: 142). In some, probably rare, cases “Khmer Rouge youths were ordered to kill their teachers or even their own parents”, as recalled by the Cambodian journalist Dith Pran who coined the term “killing fields” (Quinn 1989: 239). The children’s ideological training was very intensive. This is reflected not only in the extant notebooks of Khmer Rouge youth cadres but also in the memoirs of participants from the ranks of the “new people” recalling how the Khmer Rouge cadre unceasingly lectured about the youth’s pivotal role in the revolution and the gratitude they owed to Angkar, i.e. to the Communist Party.

As for the impact of violence on identity during the period of Democratic Kampuchea, the American anthropologist Alexander Hinton identifies hierarchy and honour as characteristic features in Cambodian society which, along with Cambodian cultural models of obedience, facilitated murderous acts. Socio-political transformations alone do not entail mass violence as the less bloody revolutions in Laos and Vietnam demonstrate. They must be accompanied

by a violent ideology which dehumanizes a real or perceived “enemy”, be he external or internal. Dissidents within the Communist movement were dehumanized as dangerous “microbes” and members of “secret networks” (*khsae somngat*) deserved to be “smashed into pieces”. The atrocities committed by the Lon Nol army against Khmer Rouge fighters and civilians as well as the devastations caused by the American terror bombing were constantly picked up by Khmer Rouge propaganda and memorized in revolutionary songs, including the National Anthem of Democratic Kampuchea. This explains why the perpetrators of violence in Democratic Kampuchea hardly felt any guilt about their deeds and also how violence created a sense of belonging or group identity among the Khmer Rouge hard core supporters enabling them a “second life” after January 1979 for another twenty years, now no longer under the banner of communism but of nationalism.

Though apart from “familyism” (*kruasarniyom*) organized Buddhism (such as the Sangha) represented a serious threat to the regime of Democratic Kampuchea, the Cambodian communists nevertheless resorted to Buddhist notions to transmit their collectivist ideology to the rural masses as suggested by Hinton (2005: 126ff). Phrases like “Angkar has the eyes of a pineapple” (*Angkar mean phnaek mnoah*) portray the CPK and its organizations as an enlightened, omnipotent being comparable to a Bodhisattva. Whether and to what extent this was a deliberate political strategy – several Khmer Rouge leaders, including Pol Pot, had spent parts of their youth in monkhood – or, rather, an unconscious process, needs further examination.

Youth and violence in a post-war situation

Like Cambodia, the former Portuguese colony of East Timor or Timor-Leste, the youngest nation-state in Southeast Asia and not yet member of ASEAN, has experienced an enormous amount of mass violence and famine during the late 1970s and early 1980s leading to the death of up to one-fifth of the Timorese population. This legacy of violence had a long-term impact on the relationship between collectively experienced violence and the forging of collective identities. Janina Pawelz (GIGA, Hamburg) studies the dynamics of violence in shaping the identity of youth groups dedicated to martial arts. The commitment to a rather vague ASEAN identity is an elite-driven project, as Pawelz emphasizes.

Timor-Leste is blessed with a high productive age population but is unable to provide income opportunities. The percentage of youth is rising every year and many young people are migrating to Dili and other urban areas. In contrast, the government of Timor-Leste has discovered the positive aspects of a youthful society as a potential. The demographic phenomenon is described as a demographic dividend, which means that the number of young dependents declines relative to the working population. In Timor Leste and elsewhere in Southeast Asia young people from rural areas move to the capital to find a job. Lured to urban centres by high expectations and bright city lights, many young men end up feeling unwelcome, redundant and frustrated since they failed to find a job. They start to hang out with other young men who are experiencing something similar. In the case of Timor-Leste, martial arts groups offer these youths companionship, status and protection.

Commonly, youth violence in Timor-Leste is linked to rivaling martial arts groups. Violent clashes between rival martial arts groups became frequent in the independence era, including numerous injuries and deaths. Yet, the overall level of violence and murders is at medium range as most incidents are non-lethal. The general security situation is under control and communities enjoy peace and stability. While the majority of martial arts groups in Timor-Leste is peaceful, three martial arts groups that have frequently been associated with violence and have been barred as illegal by the government in 2013. Local NGO Belun recorded ongoing violence linked to banned martial arts groups throughout the year 2018, causing

communities and local authorities to feel unsafe in society (Belun 2018). Most incidents occurred in the district of Baucau and the capital Dili. Backgrounds for violent fights are grievances and revenge between rivalling groups. Members of banned groups provoke each other and frequently end up fighting and throwing stones. Belun recorded 76 violent incidents which could be reliably linked to martial arts groups including one death in 2018. Social media has become a popular means to spread videos of violent fights. Videos posted on YouTube and faceclip.net evidence street fights between rivalling martial arts groups. They capture the atmosphere of aggressiveness among male youth ready to fight and exemplify why local families feel unsafe in their communities when fights break out. Besides showing fights, there are videos of burning martial arts attributes of their rivals, a clear provocation, or of burning down houses. The sound of videos gives an idea of the scope of the problem: cheering and hauling supports the mob violence in the streets.

Martial arts identity is strong, fostered by a lifelong commitment. While several identities can co-exist, there are three types of clashes of identities, which are related to martial arts groups. First, a clash between martial arts identity and national identity; secondly, between martial arts identity and security forces; and third between martial arts identities and political identities. Most importantly, the hierarchical structure of command, the loyalty to the group and the obedience to their leaders makes it easy to influence the voting behaviour. This structure can easily be used for generating political support, as the elections in 2018 evidenced. Xanana Gusmao's party CNRT has allied with martial arts-backed parties and regained power. In return, talks on reopening banned martial arts groups are on. According to interviews, re-activating the banned martial arts groups is an election promise of the Aliança para Mudança e Progresso AMP but also FRETILIN. It was a strategically smart decision to put the re-activation of these groups back on the table, as this is a popular issue which thousands of citizens – and voters – support.

The analysis of the case of Timor-Leste shows that there are various identities on several levels. ASEAN identity may indeed remain an elite idea supported by politicians. In regard to youth identities, martial arts groups play a major role as a vehicle for youth identity and belonging. Martial arts groups exhibit strong ties of loyalty, concepts of brotherhood and unity, and mutual assistance. Yet, martial arts identities are sometimes in conflict with other identities, as this paper showed. The sport practiced by martial arts groups offers a potential to engage in athletic competitions on a national and even international level. Besides being an outlet for youth recreational activity and outlet for energy, participation in international competitions can contribute to consolidate identities both as Timorese and as a Southeast Asian country. A positive connotation of Timorese martial arts can stimulate tourism and, to this end, contribute to offer employment opportunities.

Ethno-religious tensions and violence in borderlands

The relationship between violence and the sense of forming a persecuted community of destiny, rather than ethno-political ideologies, is examined by Jacques Leider (EFEO, Bangkok and Yangon) using a group nowadays called “Rohingya” and their entanglement in the Bengal-Burma borderlands during the period 1920–1960 as a case in point. British administrative, military and diplomatic papers and correspondence form an important body of sources for the present study. This is consistent with the fact that the border region belonged to the British Empire until the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and Burma in 1948. Thereafter, the former colonies were still areas of economic and political interest for the UK, but also each for each other India, Burma and Pakistan. British reports are found in the National Archives of the UK and the India Office Collections of the British Library in London. Myanmar administrative and diplomatic sources (both in Burmese and English) are accessible in the department of the National Archives in Yangon. Newspapers are important

sources, too. Unpublished and published private memoirs form an intriguing and colourful body of sources while a small, but useful amount of academic research done inside, and outside Myanmar can be exploited as primary sources when not otherwise accessible sources are quoted or referred to. The output in administrative reports and statistical data in the late colonial period was considerable. The archival legacy of the war period has an entirely different character as military concerns dictated policies; military and security aspects also permeated administrative reports produced after the war as the Union of Burma was struggling to overcome the civil war that exploded in 1949.

Colonial census reports are an important source of historical enquiries, because they provide statistical evidence on the development and the composition of the population. Nonetheless, their use raises both critical questions and methodological challenges; it also involves, quasi inevitably, the contemporary, ideologically tainted, debate on Rohingya identity. Two issues have gained prominence: the name issue (neither the census reports nor other British administrative documents use the term “Rohingyas” for North Arakan Muslims) and the historical relevance of Chittagonian settlers (the census reports strongly support the evidence of the arrival of new Muslim settlers from the neighbouring region of Chittagong). Therefore, modern Rohingyas tend to reject the validity of colonial census reports arguing that the Rohingya identity really has a precolonial foundation and that migrations of Chittagonians were mostly seasonal labour movements. Such statements don’t explain the inherent limits of investigation and miss the complexity of demographic change. Statistics about transborder land movements were not kept in any systematic way. As there are no serial data, neither for seasonal migrants nor for new incoming settlers arriving by *land*, making statistics-based arguments is not possible. However, other data still provide useful information. Concerning the name “Rohingya” which in its present form was fixed only in the early 1960s, one may note that historical Muslim identities and naming habits (both by endonyms and exonyms) are two separate issues.

Examining not only the imperial data (which are those mostly quoted in public discussions surrounding the Rohingya issue) but also the provincial data, a micro-perspective at township level has generated new insights on local demographic changes. They include a clearer perception of the chronology of migrations, a comparative view of gender gaps, a synoptic view of Buddhist and Muslim community developments and intracommunal differentiations between the local Muslims and new settlers. For example, data show that a massive push of new settlers took place before the First World War and conditioned population movements down south. Buthidaung, one of the two most prominent sites of Rohingya identity formation in North Rakhine, was only founded in 1911 (under the impact of a migratory push) and has had the smallest percentage of old Muslim residents in the north of the province. Further research may show to which degree the demographic data can be quoted as points of reference in the emergence of social, economic and ethno-religious frictions.

The study of the emergence of ethno-nationalist identities among Buddhists and Muslims in the border context at the end of WWII and the early years after independence shows the parallel development of rival communal identities, competing territorial ambitions nurtured by elites, defensive strategies with regard to central state administrations and a mix of aggressive and defensive tactics to gain political advantages in the parliamentary arena. How did the emergence of novel and newly energized local identities connect to violence?

The context of the abrupt changes (between approx. 1942-1952) that were conditioned by international ideologies (anti-colonialism, nationalism, socialism, communism), WWII and its aftermath as well as the birth of nation states faced with multiple challenges of their own was eminently conducive to violence, because war (and the perspectives of independence) created local disruption and anarchy, provided political entrepreneurs with a bonanza of firearms and

opened a vast field of political opportunities hailing unpredictable outcomes. Violence in Arakan, and particularly mass violence, became a factor that was intimately linked to the exercise of power by all the involved actors who tried to gain a share in the future of Arakan/Rakhine State. We may possibly attribute to the pervasive banality of violence in this context of social and political disruption the fact that nearly none of the horrors of violence have been described in any quantitative or qualitative detail (in stunning contrast with the contemporary reporting of human rights violations).

It is surely one of the contentions of the present research to argue that the frontier context with its multiple types of violent contestation has shaped specific identities more than political ideologies (Marxism) and cultural factors (religion) which played an undeniable role in the political struggles in other parts of post-colonial Burma. Yet violence does not singularly denote only physical violence. Historiography and the political use of history, for example, are fields of investigation, too. Even before the emergence of the Rohingya movement in the 1950s, North Arakan Muslims defended their ethnic and political claims with reference to alleged violent relations with their Buddhist neighbours in the distant past. This example of “cited violence” points to another important specific factor in the border context, namely the connectedness of Buddhist and Muslim ethno-nationalisms.

Identity is constructed from within (cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity) and from without, with shared memories often built against or in confrontation with some “other”. Ethno-nationalisms in Rakhine State have been shaped by power struggles and interactions in the border context where otherness was projected as an internal (political separatism) or external threat (cultural hegemony). The identities which Buddhist and Muslim elites developed and tried to promote in the 1950s evolved along each other in their opposition to the hegemony of the central state, and while partly ignoring each other for reasons of gaining a competitive advantage in their contest with the state, were necessarily proceeding in emulation as they drew on the same historical data and memories and claimed the same territorial legacy.

Memories of violence and identity

Andrew Hardy and Dao The Duc (EFEO, Hanoi) conduct research into an event of mass violence that took place in January 1950 at Sơn Hà in Quảng Ngãi province; it has three aims. First, to shed light on the local historical context that led to the violence. Second, to establish the facts of the event itself. Third, to explore the impact of the collective memory of the event on twenty-first-century ethnic relations and political culture in Quảng Ngãi province. The research is ongoing. Building on a summary of the current state of our knowledge, a question is raised by the findings of the project: is there a relation between regime change and mass violence?

To understand the deep context to this event, we must mention two historical processes. The first is the Vietnamese southward expansion into the territory of Champa. In Quảng Ngãi province, which was inhabited at the time of the Champa kingdom by ancestors of the Hrê ethnic group (Hardy 2019), this took place in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. The second is the Long Wall of Quảng Ngãi, a 100-mile-long hard border consisting of a network of forts built in the eighteenth century along a linking road reinforced in 1819 by a wall, hedge and ditch. The Long Wall was designed to separate two environments, hills and plains, and two ethnic groups, Việt and Hrê. It was built by common agreement, using technology and labour from both communities: the Hrê intended it to stop Viet migration into their fertile rice-growing valleys, while the Viet hoped that it would prevent bands of Hrê raiding Viet villages along the border (Hardy 2015). The principle of the settlement the wall embodied was that Viet people would remain in their territory to the east, while Hrê were restricted to

their territory to the west. Trade in essential foodstuffs (salt and fish was imported to the hills, rice to the plains) took place in the vicinity of the wall itself.

The results of ethnographic research into the events of 25 January 1950 demonstrate the high level of organisation and discipline among the Hrê that day. Coercion alone was insufficient for the mobilisation of this army, even among the Hrê, whose village heads held immense power. Our interviews showed that some Hrê saved those they knew personally but were prepared to kill Viet they were not acquainted with. Our interviews also show that it was possible for people to avoid participating in the killing. These data suggest that those who did participate were not only motivated by a fear of punishment.

The final strand of analysis relates to the long aftermath of the Son Ha Massacre and the meaning of the event in the province today. With the events of January 1950, the Hrê valleys entered Vietnam's twentieth-century wars and their population split between communist and anti-communist forces; the province of Quảng Ngãi was highly contested territory through the Vietnam War, broadly divided between communist insurgents holding the hills, US-Republic of Vietnam forces in the plains. The Son Hà Massacre was not forgotten, and in this part of the research we trace its memory among two communities.

Firstly, among the communist forces and their leaders, who after 1975 constituted the local government in the province. Here we are dealing with a specifically political memory. For this group, the Son Ha Massacre served as a lesson, that unless they had good relations with local communities and especially with ethnic minorities, it was impossible to rule. This lesson was explicit during the war, and we expect to find traces of it in the archives. But after 1975, when communist leaders moved out of their highland refuges and established themselves in the provincial city, they stopped mentioning the massacre. It became taboo: older officials remembered the lesson it embodied but did not speak of it.

Secondly, among communities in the province, and particular in Son Hà district. This is an issue of local memory. The passing of time and official suppression of the memory of the massacre transformed its memory. Specific details of the event were forgotten. But memory of the massacre itself was not lost. This was prevented notably by the observation of death anniversaries: in places where the massacre took place, anniversaries of the death of many members of many families are celebrated every year on the same day. This is how the (lunar calendar) date of the massacre is remembered. The memory of the event thus persisted, but in simplified form. As the historical details show, the Son Ha Incident was an act of violence organised by some Hrê chiefs for individual political purposes and contested by others: it was a political event. Now, however, local communities started to understand it as an act organised and enacted by the whole Hrê ethnic group against the whole Viet group. In the collective memory of the massacre, the suppression of historical detail thus led to an impression of ethnic conflict.

The preliminary findings of this project raise the following theoretical question: is there a relation between regime change and mass violence? To answer this question, we consider three types of resource that created the conditions for mass violence. The first is military: the availability of weapons and fighters trained in their use. The second is political: the availability of an authority with the political capacity to mobilise military resources. The third is ideological and is strictly speaking a dimension of the second: this is the availability of a discourse that dehumanises or 'others' a community, offering political justification to the act of killing.

Regarding military resources, as noted above, there is ample ethnographic evidence of the availability among the Hrê of weapons such as spears, knives and crossbows, of the high level of training in their use possessed by Hrê men, and of the ability of Hrê chiefs to mobilise

them at short notice. This point does not need further development here. Regarding political resources, as we noted above, French and VM analyses of the event in its aftermath were unanimous in ascribing responsibility for the massacre to the traditional political authorities of the Hrê: the influential chiefs. All the sources agree that the violence was a result of the threat these chiefs felt the Viet Minh posed to their economic and political interests. It is normal that a realignment of political forces should be accompanied by fighting, or what we can call political violence. The question raised by the Son Hà Massacre is why the violence was not targeted exclusively against representatives of the encroaching regime, but directed instead against women, children and others who were not connected even remotely to the Viet Minh? Why, in other words, did it take the form of mass violence? This distinction between political violence and mass violence, and the merging of politically motivated violence and mass violence at Son Hà, is a key theoretical problem posed by the events of January 1950. It hinges, in our view, on the third type of resource mobilised at that time, which was ideological.

A French military source contains a clue to understanding this, in its gendered and generational analysis of the killing. “The young people massacred, the women and children plundered, the old people burned and posted up slogans like: - Down with the V.M. invaders, - The mountain for the minorities, the delta for the “Kinh”.” If these slogans, as the French report noted, were written down and posted up, it is likely that they were written in Vietnamese or Chinese; there is no reason to think they were written in Hrê, for which no writing system existed at the time. We may conclude that they were posted up at the massacre site for the Viet Minh troops who first came to the devastated villages to read.

These slogans referred directly to the historical context described in the first section of this paper: the existence up to 1898 of a wall that separated the highlands from the plain, allowing a physical border to embody a law restricting the eastern territory to the Viet and the western territory to the Hrê. This law was abandoned with the wall at the end of the 19th century, and no one regretted its demise: Viet traders who settled along the Hrê River were welcomed by its inhabitants and Hrê raiding of Viet villages declined.

But the law was resuscitated now, not as a law, but as an ideological legitimation for the Hrê chiefs’ retaliation against the VM threat to their interests. The posters were intended for Vietnamese to read, but it is likely that the same ideological legitimation was used by the Hrê chiefs to motivate their troops. This was an ‘othering’ device that offered a justification in history and customary law to the transfer of their retaliation from the VM and its agents to the Viet population as a whole. It gave participants in the massacre an ethnic justification for the Hrê chiefs’ decision to order it. That decision transformed a revolt into a massacre, and the competition of a few individual men over power into an incident of conflict between two ethnic groups.

Conclusion

Our Work Package interrogates the different ways in which local citizens and their communities have been instrumental in shaping new regional identities in Southeast Asia. In keeping with our original themes, this report has spelled out the three broad themes of our WP: generations, transnationalism, and violence. As we have argued in our first report, these three themes are salient insofar as they provide new perspectives in understanding how alternative Southeast Asian identities are formed on the ground. In a manner of speaking these are significant markers for different citizens and communities to come together.

This is a major point of our Work Package, which demonstrates how locals are instrumental in their own ways in advancing common causes or confronting shared troubles. In many ways, the state only serves as a backdrop to shared experiences of violence or motivations for

migration, for example. Instead, borders are being challenged to create new ways of proceeding as peoples of Southeast Asia, whether along ethnic, generational, or religious lines.

The big question that has yet to be answered concerns forging a shared future. Many of our studies are silent on this matter especially because they are primarily interested in either the past or the present. But the work on generational identities is instructive in this regard. In both the literature and our ongoing work, ASEAN is mainly an elite-driven project that is largely economic in orientation for its people. In a very real sense, our projects demonstrate how in spite of – and not because of – ASEAN, alternative identities are being forged in ways that often contest the elite-driven developmentalist projects in and around the region. It is in this sense that communities are not passive victims of developmentalism. ASEAN and its states are to catch up on how they are to deal with new alliances formed along religious, ethnic, and generational lines.