

Southeast Asia: Differences and Commonalities

Yukti Mukdawijitra
Thammasat University

issues

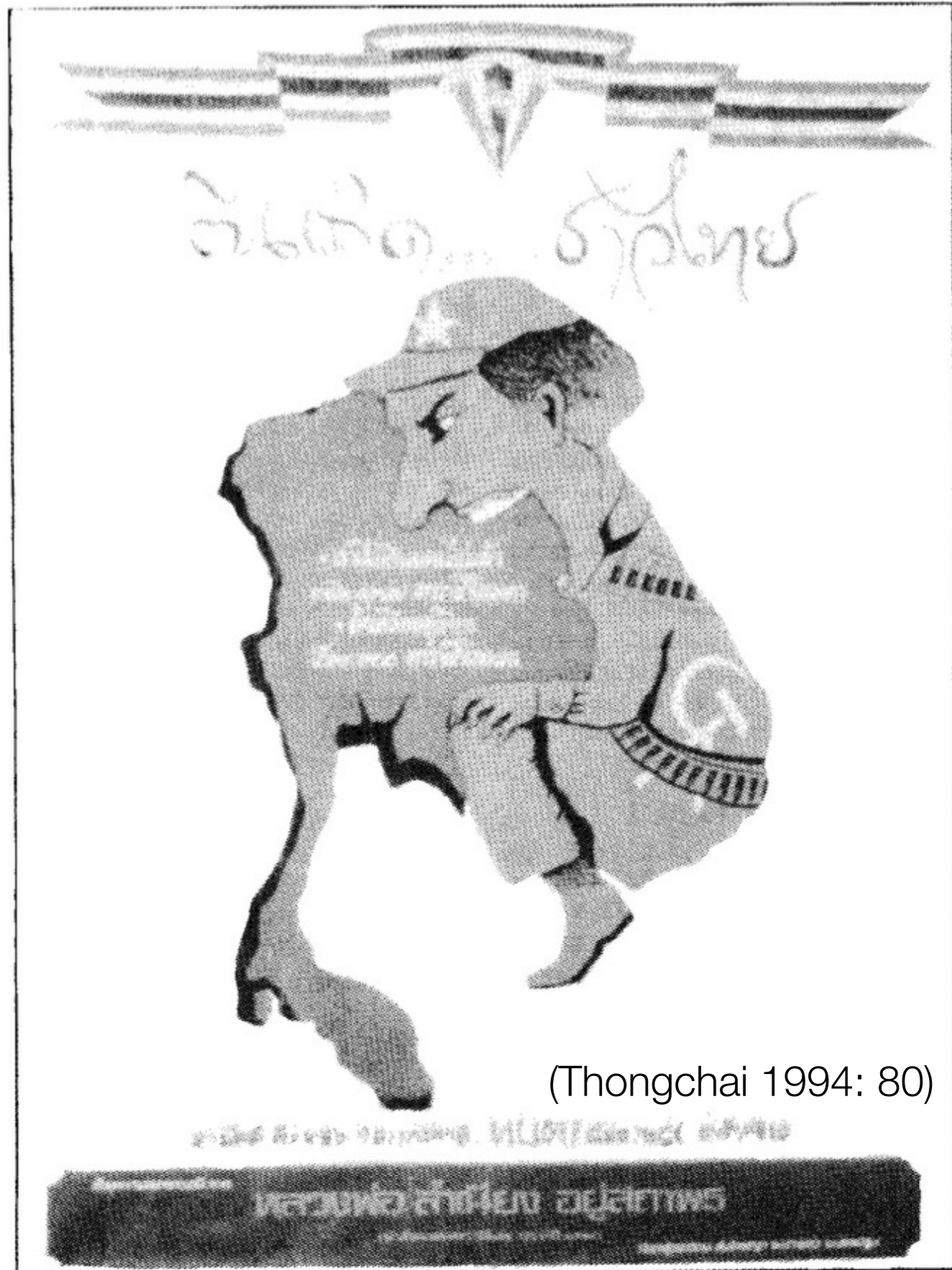
- Prejudices against neighbors
- Southeast Asia as a world region
- Commonalities
- Nation-states and demarcations

prejudice against neighbors



Thai centralism

- Know more about Europe, the US, China, and India than about neighboring countries.
- Big neighboring countries are enemy.
- Small neighboring countries are vassal states or colony.



(Thongchai 1994: 80)

Figure 20. "Wake Up, Thai People" (By permission of Conrad Taylor)

Thai centralism

- Thai school textbooks focus mainly on Siam/ Thailand.
 - At the seventh grade, the first year of secondary school, ancient Thai history is taught, with emphasis on the Sukhothai period, but the other half of the subject covers Southeast Asian history.
 - The eighth grade continues ancient Thai history, focusing on the Ayuthaya and Thonburi periods, with the other part delving on Asian history.
 - African, American, Australian, and European histories are taken up in the ninth grade.
 - In the last three years of high school the focus reverts back to Thai history and the history of the monarchy.

Southeast Asia as a world region

Southeast Asia as a world region

- This term emerged in the United States in 1948, the Cold War period.
- Commonalities:
 - bilateral kinship, egalitarian gender relations, presentist orientation, men of prowess, mandala.
 - betel chewing, cockfighting, gong, tatto, penis pins, fermented fish, takrow.
- Relaxed states transformed by colonialism.
- Great civilization (Hinduization, Sinoization, Islamization) vs. little or local cultures.

the state of culture

- Actors, individuals, commoners as the agent of change.
- Questions of authenticity. Is there an authentic SEA culture?
- Invention of traditions. Identity and culture are constructed and contested.
- Hybridity of culture and identity. Globalization and the state. How much can a state control cultural flows?
- Diasporic communities and marginal communities. (Ong's work on the Chinese.)
- Heterogeneity of the state. The failure of the state.

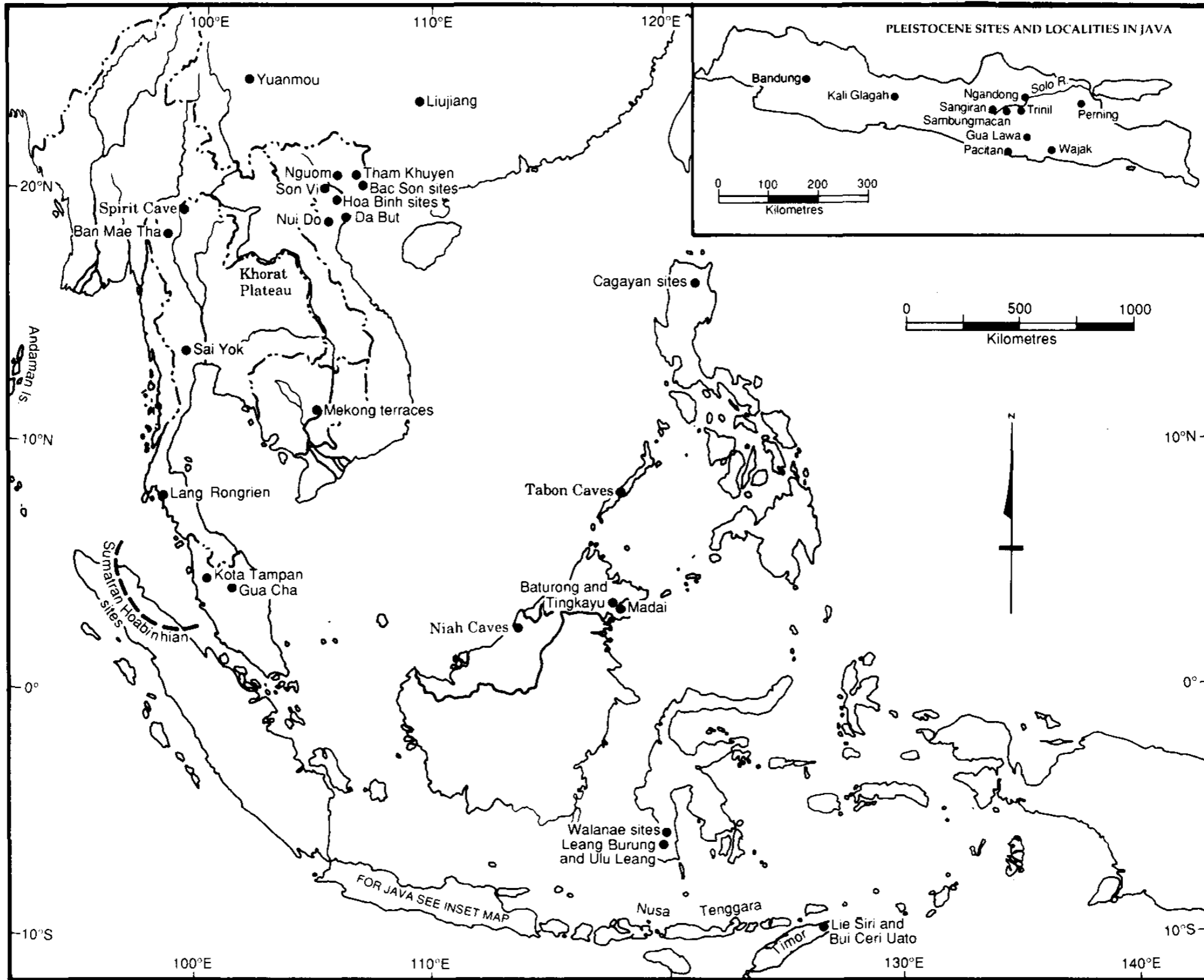
commonalities

shared structures

- geography
- population
- language
- trade
- culture



Nicholas Tarling (ed.) (1993)



Map 2.3 Major Pleistocene and early Holocene sites.

the Ice Age and Southeast Asia

- Connected and close lands in the Sunda Shelf.
- Shared fauna and flora (fossil of Orang-Utan in China, Laos and Vietnam).
- Shared geography and climate.

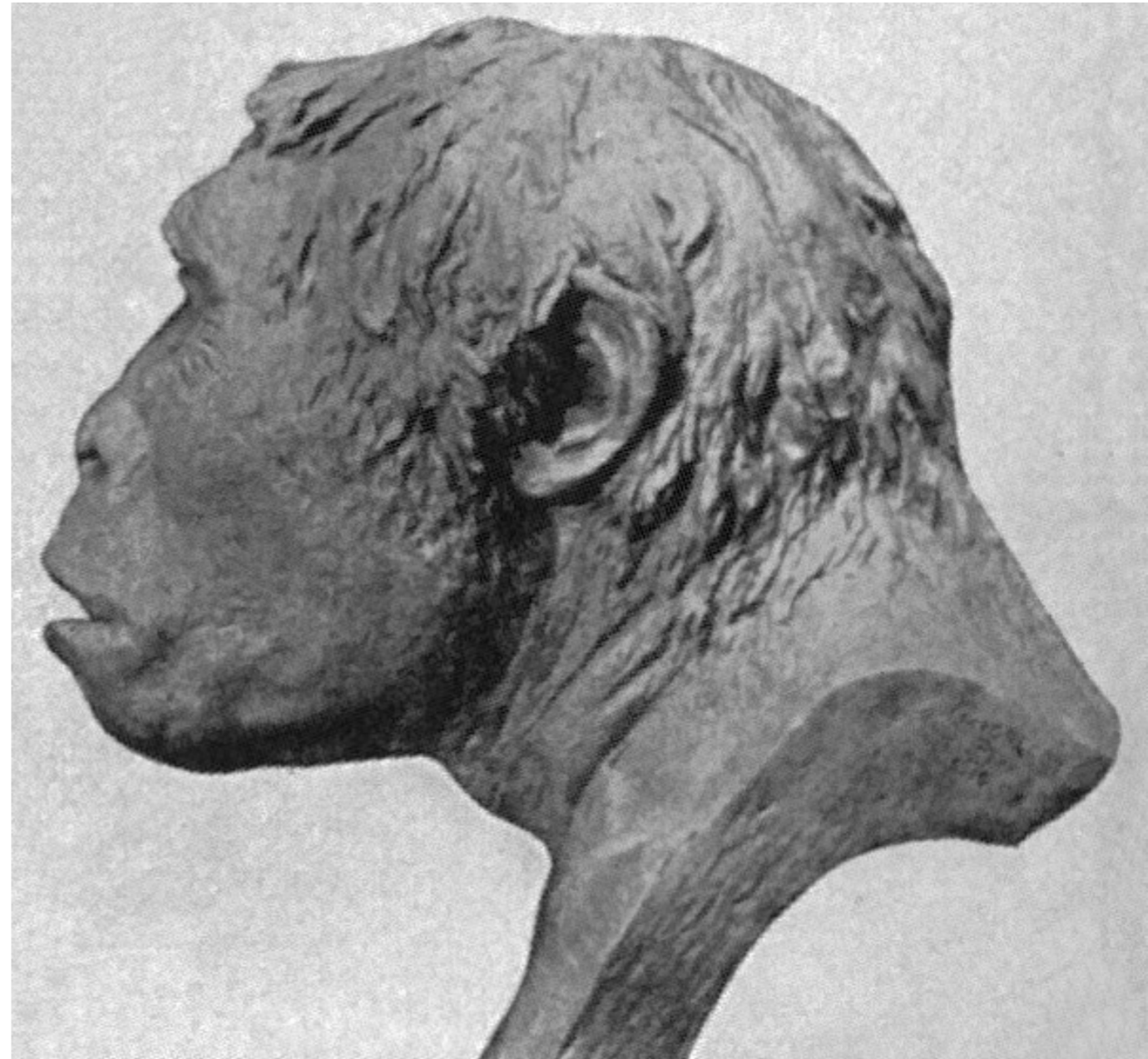
7,000 years ago

- 500,000 years ago: Homo erectus (Java Man)
- 40,000 years ago: Homo sapiens, the Negritos and the Melanesian
- 7,000 years ago: Homo sapiens, the Southern Mongoloid migrated to replace the Negritos.

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Java Man



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fe/Java_Man.jpg

The Maniq, the Negritos



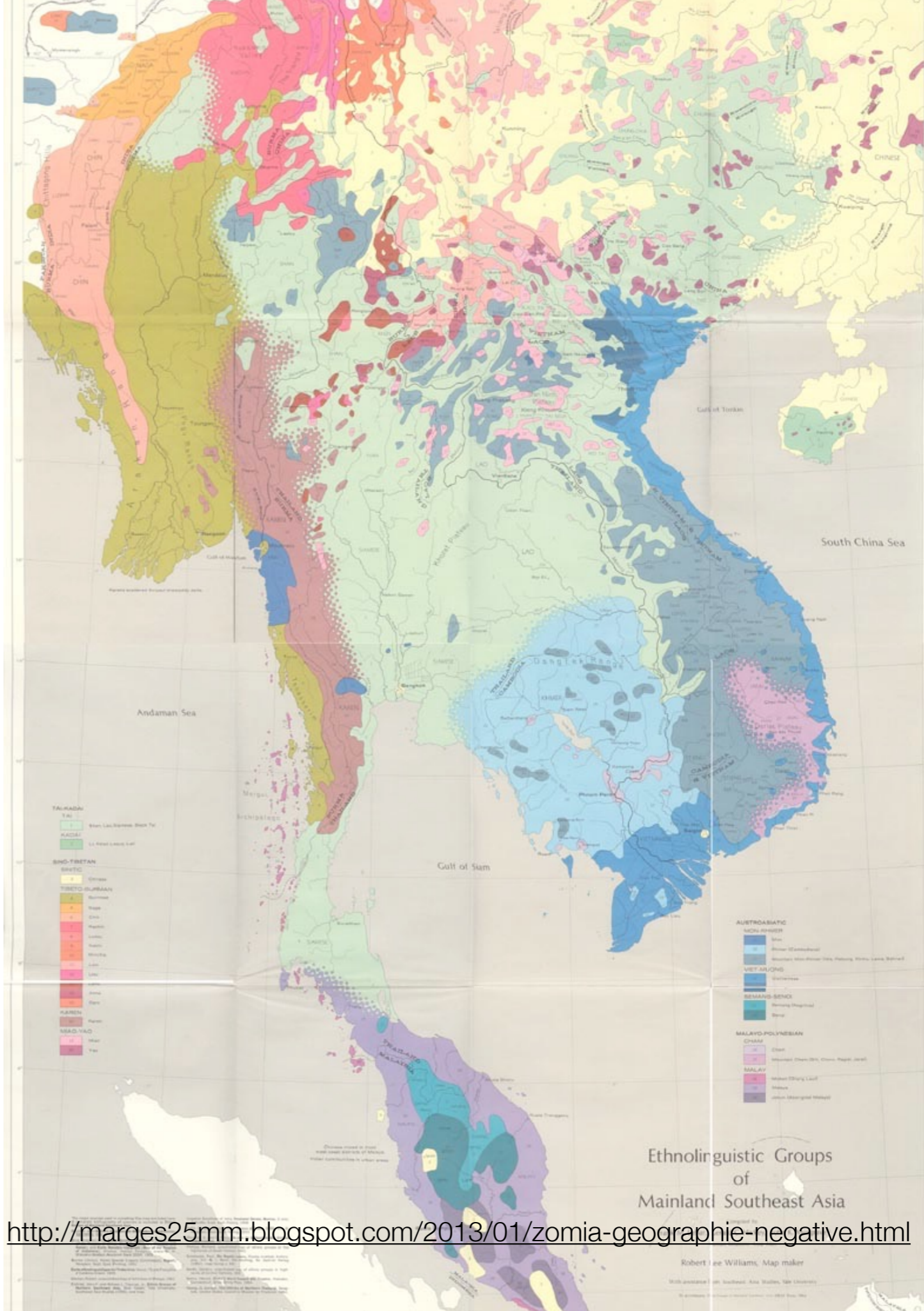
<http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2012/10/mani-peopleone-of-african-natives-of.html>

Southern Mongoloid

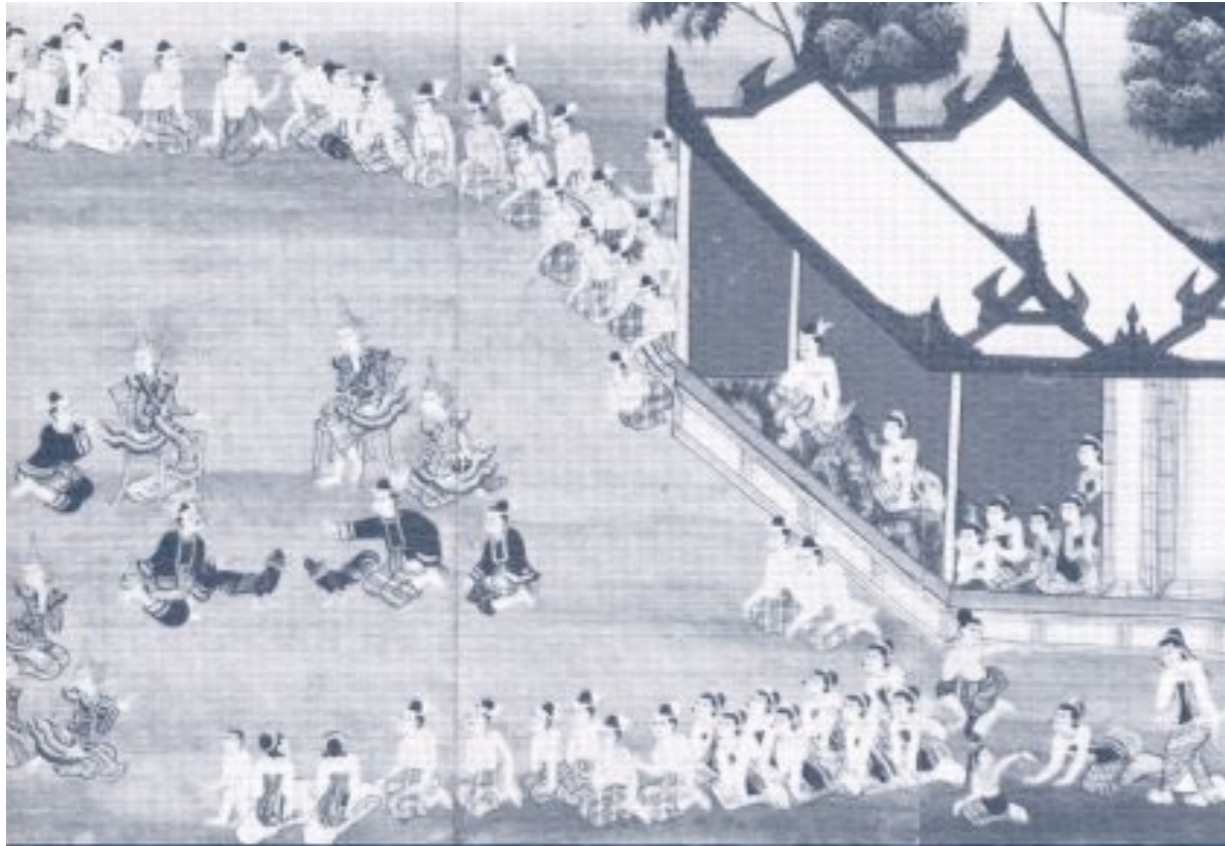
- 7,000 years ago
- Import agriculture to the region
- Import languages to the region: Hmong-Mien, Tai-Kadai, Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, Austronesian

languages in Southeast Asia

- Hmong-Mien
- Tibeto-Burman
- Tai-Kadai
- Austroasiatic (Mon, Khmer, Vietnamese)
- Austronesian (Malay, Cham, Java)



<http://marges25mm.blogspot.com/2013/01/zomia-geographie-negative.html>



**Southeast Asia in
the Age of Commerce
1450–1680** *Anthony Reid*

*Volume One:
The Lands below the Winds*



**Southeast Asia in
the Age of Commerce
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*Volume Two:
Expansion and Crisis*

common culture

- common artifacts: bronze gong, food ways (betel leaves Areca nuts, fermented fishes of many kinds).
- women's roles, gender egalitarianism.
- cosmopolitanism: outward (maritime) and inward (mainland) trades



Betel leaves and Areca nuts

Betel chewer





Contemporary
gong

Ancient Dong Son gong
found in Vietnam





<http://sites.asiasociety.org/vietnam/?p=19>

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/2e/Dong_Son_bronze_drums.JPG



Takraw player



Penis pins found in Thailand

gender and power

- World feminists believe that male dominant is universal.
- However, Southeast Asian facts point out other conclusions:
 - more favorable social position of women
 - matrilineal, matrifocality
 - matrilocality

Hai Bà Trưng



http://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tập_tin:Dongho_haibatrung.jpg

gender issues

- Penny Van Esterik (1982): relatively high status of women in SEA.
- Atkinson and Errington (1990): regional, local construction of gender relations.
- Ong and Peletz (1995): gender is not static. Gender is fluid, contested, negotiable conceptual field. Gender is contested ideology.
- Sears (1996) and others: gender is a state construction. Subversive gender (like female workers in Malaysia and Thailand.)

Cosmopolitan Southeast Asia: Melaka, Phuket, Hoi An

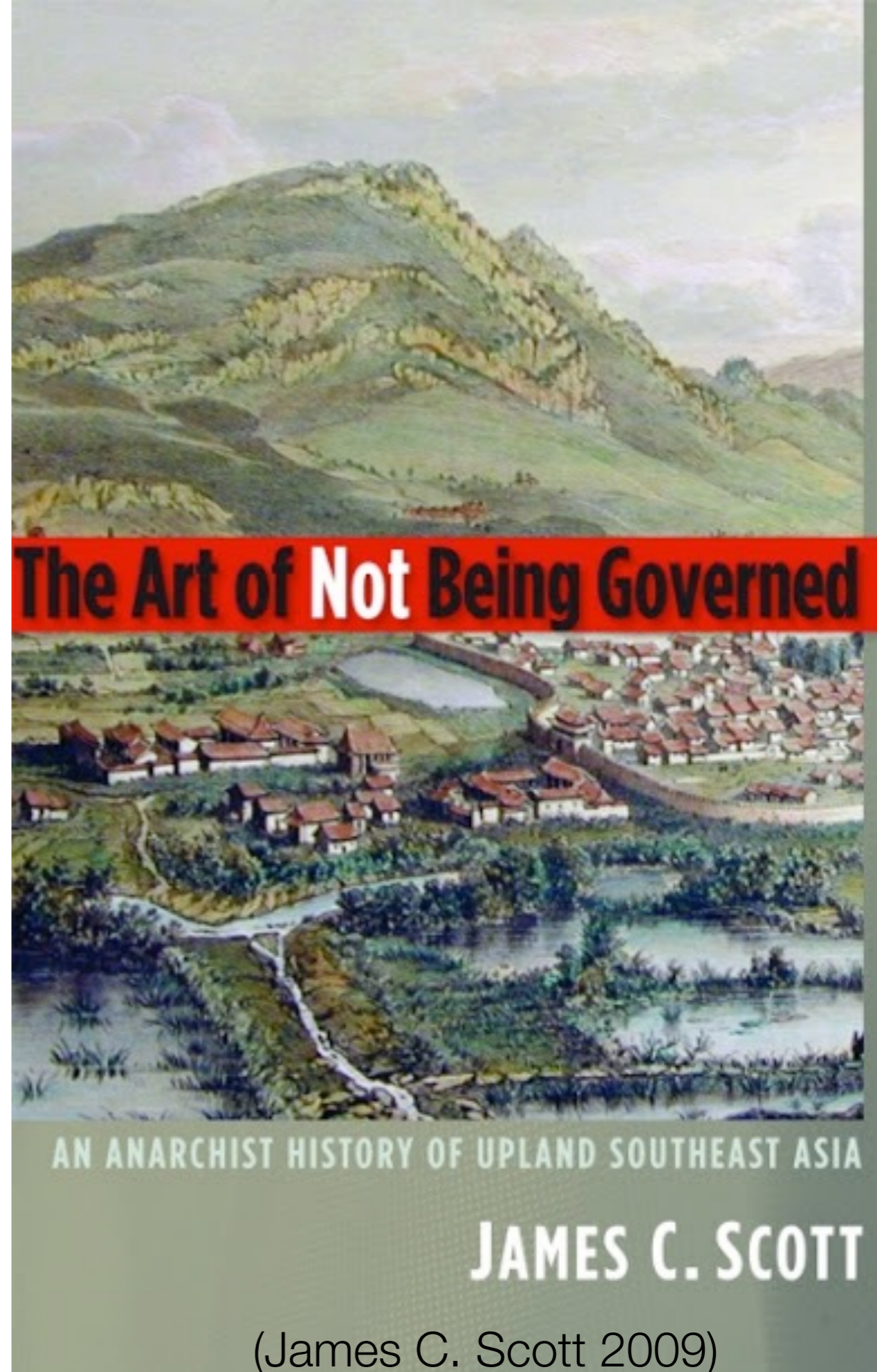


shared politics

- Mainland: lowland states vs. highland communities
- Island: agricultural states vs. trading states
- Hindu, Buddhism, Confucian vs. Islam and Christianity

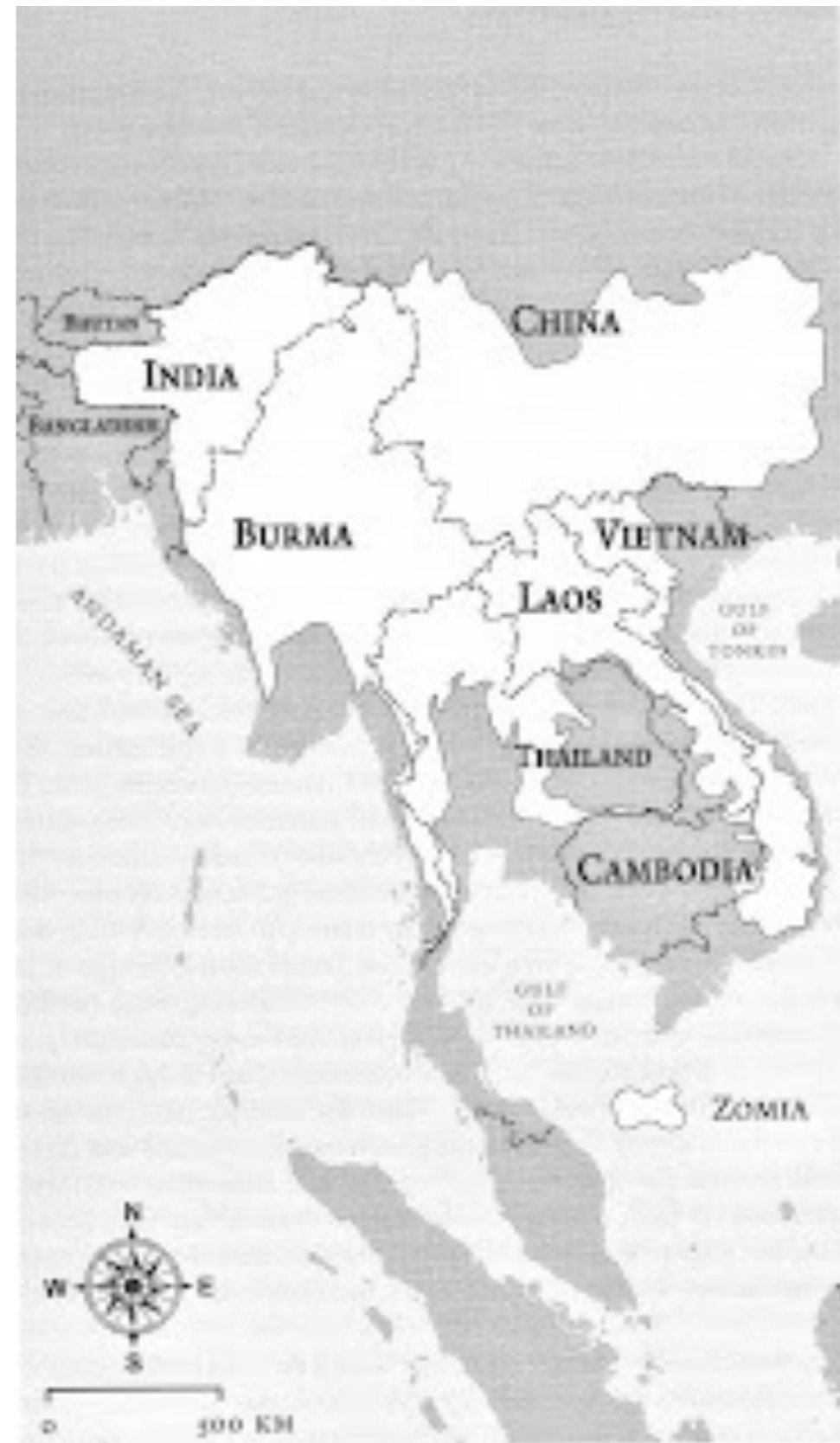
states-nonstates

- 1-1950 AD.
- highlands: 200 meters above sea level
- highlands are beyond the reach of the state power
- lowland states are more homogenous, more rigid, more hierarchical
- lowlands-highlands mutual relations.



(James C. Scott 2009)

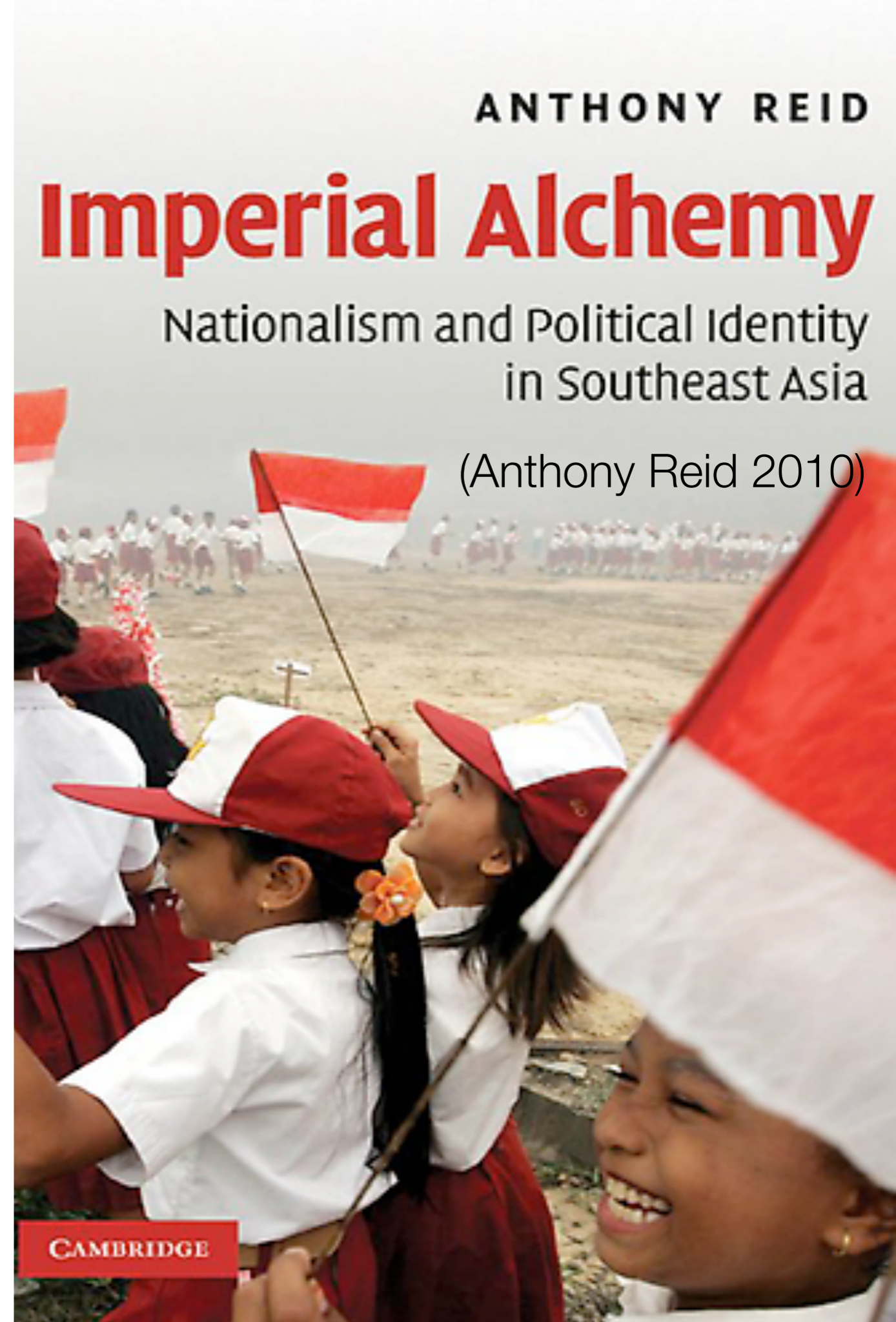
Zomia, highlands



nation-states and demarcations

SEA states before nation-states

- 3 types of SEA states in pre-colonial period:
 - Strong, relatively unified: Burma, Siam, Vietnam
 - Weak, relatively decentralized: Laos, Cambodia
 - Never be a state: Indonesia, Malaysia.



ANTHONY REID

Imperial Alchemy

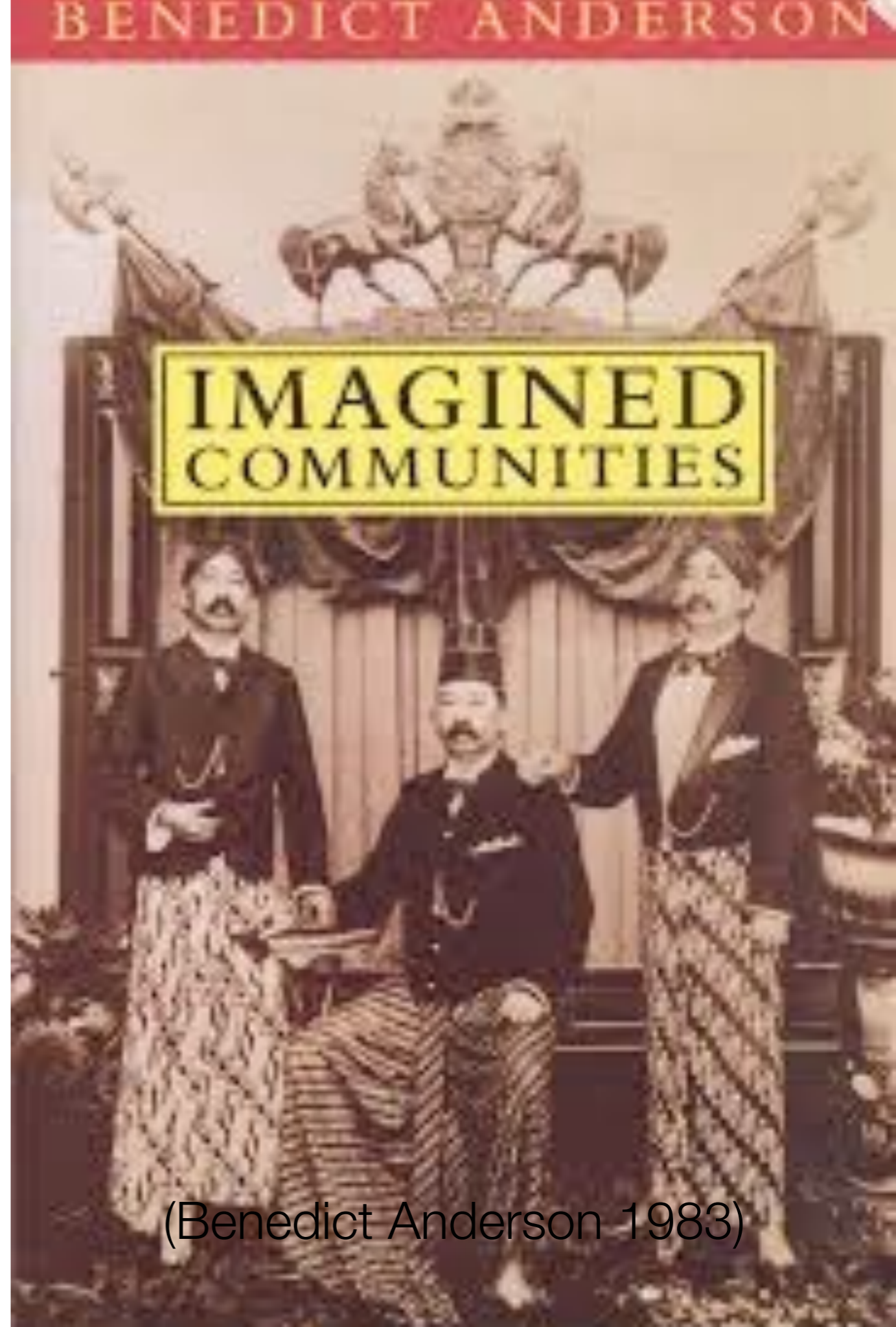
Nationalism and Political Identity
in Southeast Asia

(Anthony Reid 2010)

CAMBRIDGE

Imagined Communities

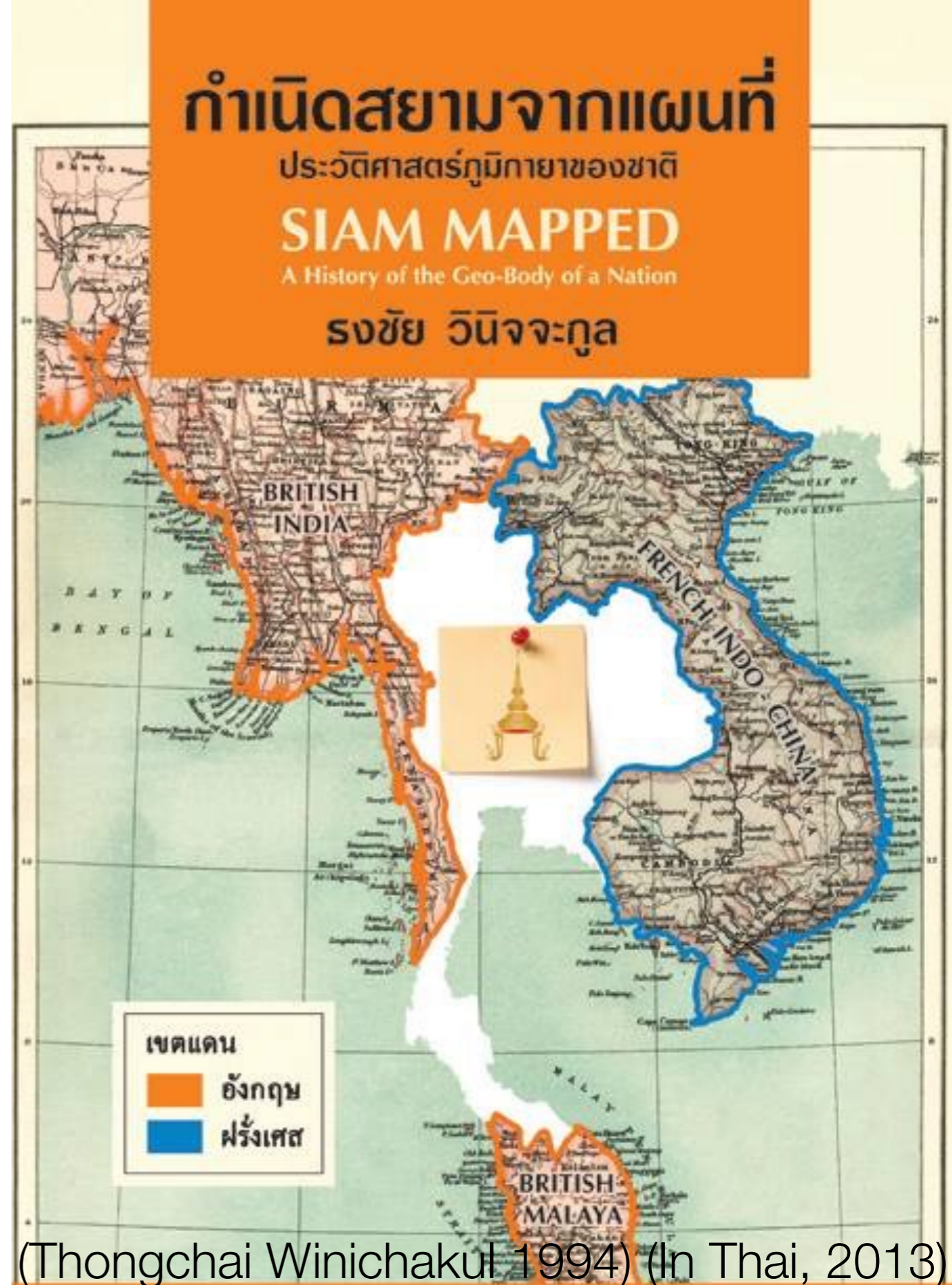
- vernacularization: using spoken language for writing
- simplification and standardization of writing system
- print-capitalism
- create the sense of “we-ness” via writing and reading.



(Benedict Anderson 1983)

nationalism and borders

- never before European and Siamese colonization that states in SEA had borders.
- borders dividing power and people.
- borders control trade and border crossing.
- nation-states create geo-body: selfness imagined via geography.



colonialism and nationalism

- Fixed political, linguistic, and cultural boundaries:
 - Other countries: Western colonization.
 - Thailand: internal colonization, Siamese colonization.

different nation-states

- Thailand: state nationalism, top down nationalism, not a mass-based nationalism
- Other ASEAN countries: nationalism is a people's mass movement, bottom-up nationalism to overthrow the colonizer.

challenges of the nation-state era

- conflict between official nationalism and people's nationalism.
- conflict between localism/ethno-nationalism and official nationalism.
- languages, cultures and ethnic identity always cross borders.
- cosmopolitanism and globalization.
- national security and liberty and human rights.