



Center for Global Studies Newsletter

 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Number 8, Spring 2009

New Perspectives

Politics and Travel in Myanmar - Burma - Land of the Golden Pagodas

By Helaine Silverman
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The Center for Global Studies has been a generous supporter of the activities of the Collaborative for Cultural Heritage and Museum Practices (CHAMP), which I co-direct with Dr. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Landscape Architecture). Over the past five years I have been traveling to developing countries around the world in a preliminary examination of their major heritage sites, heritage cities, and principal museums. I have undertaken these trips to enrich my teaching (especially Anth 224: Tourist Sites and Cities; Anth 460: Heritage Management; Anth 462: Museum Theory and Practice) and to choose a new region for a long-term research project outside Peru, my academic specialization.

I have been to Egypt, Chile, Easter Island, the Balkans (Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia), Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, China (including Lhasa, Tibet), and most recently Myanmar. Later this year I will be going to Turkey, the Baltics (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Libya (if a visa can be obtained) Syria and Jordan, and hopefully to Mali and Benin.

But already there is a front-runner: Myanmar. I have fallen in love with that country in the same sensory way that Peru affected me when I was a graduate student thirty years ago. And I am intellectually enthralled by the complex and dynamic tension between Myanmar's military government, warm people, magnificent architectural celebration of Buddhism, and packaging as an exotic travel destination (the country is almost always referred to as Burma in tour company advertisements and trade magazines, evoking a colonial land of exotic mystery).

When I told colleagues that I was going to Myanmar I received a lot of raised eyebrows and overt criticism along ethical lines (wouldn't I be supporting



Immense "Reclining Buddha", one of several in Myanmar.

a repressive regime)? But it was precisely the fact that Burma was being advertised for travel that intrigued me. Mere months after the most recent episode of suppression of pro-democracy protests and soon after the government's rejection of international aid to its cyclone-devastated areas, Myanmar was, in fact, open for business. I traveled in Myanmar on a small group tour (only

Continued on page 4

The New Global Studies Major *More Than Just a Name Change*

After more than 3 years of design, deliberation, refinement and approval, the new Global Studies major and minor in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) will be officially launched in Fall 2009. The new program replaces the current multidisciplinary major in International Studies. Current IS students may opt to stay in that program or switch to the Global Studies curriculum and graduate as a Global Studies major.

The IS major will be phased out as students graduate.

The effort to develop the new major was spearheaded by Dr. Barbara Hancin-Bhatt, Assistant Dean and

Continued on page 3

What's New at CGS

Summer Workshops

To receive advance registration information about teacher training workshops, please subscribe to the K-12 Global Education listserv: <http://cgs.illinois.edu/about/signup>

Music in Many Languages

With Special Guest, Mary Goetze

2009 International Summer Institute

June 14-19, 2009, University of Illinois

This intensive teacher training workshop will address ways of incorporating less-commonly taught languages and cultures into the classroom through music. Languages will include Chinese, Arabic, Bulgarian, Zulu, and Portuguese.

International Summer Institutes are offered annually and are co-sponsored by the National Resource Centers for Area Studies at the University of Illinois.

Understanding and Teaching About the Middle East: Interactive Teaching Methods for K-12 Teachers

June 23-26, 2009, University of Illinois

This intensive institute offers resources and methods for teaching about geography, religion, trade, and art, using films, activities, and discussion sessions.

Presenters include Barbara Petzen, Middle East Policy Council; Susan Douglass, Georgetown University; Audrey Shabbas, Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services; and Professor Mohammad Khalil, Illinois. Organized by the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; co-sponsored by CGS.

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CGS Invites Proposals for Title VI Grant Renewal Application

This Spring, CGS invited Illinois faculty and academic units to submit proposals for possible inclusion in its application to the Title VI program of the U.S. Department of Education. Every four years, CGS must apply to renew its status as a National Resource Center in Global Studies. In the past, the Center has received approximately \$1.5 million for program expenses and language fellowships and training.

In an effort to solicit participation, Ed Kolodziej, CGS Director, and Steve Witt, Associate Director, met during the semester with faculty in fields of study that support research, teaching, and outreach on understanding global issues confronting the world's populations and identifying ways to cope with and resolve these challenges. Interdisciplinary and interprofessional proposals, linking faculty from across campus in collaborative partnerships on research, course and degree development, and outreach were particularly encouraged.

Approximately 40 proposals from units across campus and community organizations were received. Funding will be contingent upon successful renewal of the CGS Title VI grant. The next grant period is August 15, 2010 – August 14, 2014.

Activities eligible for funding include:

- developing new courses and degree programs, concentrations, and certificates in global studies at the graduate and undergraduate level
- supporting acquisition of advanced language skills in Less Commonly Taught Languages
- developing teaching resources, professional training opportunities, and public programs in global studies for researchers, educators, students, business leaders, media, governmental agencies, civic organizations, and the public
- assisting faculty to enlarge their knowledge and skills in global studies
- seeding new faculty lines that support the overall CGS mission
- organizing activities such as conferences, graduate and professional advanced seminars

New Global Studies Major in LAS

Continued from front page

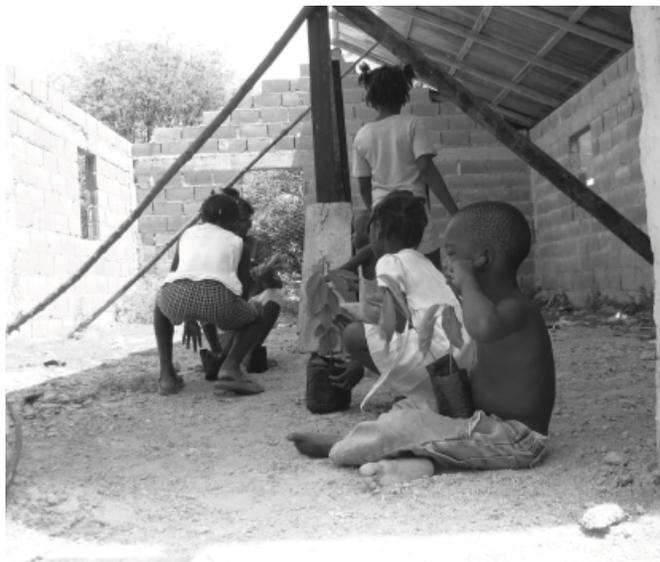
Director of International Programs in LAS, and the result is a competitive alignment with other global studies programs around the nation. New features include Global Learning Goals for students in the program to:

- 1) Expand knowledge of human cultures, their interactions and impacts on the world;
- 2) Develop skills for successfully negotiating realities of contemporary societies;
- 3) Cultivate values that support a commitment to diversity and sustainability.

Another new feature is the requirement that students select a thematic area of concentration for their major.

In Spring 2009, Hancin-Bhatt's office sent a Request for Proposals for new Global Studies Seminar courses that address the thematic concentration areas and were pleased to receive a wide number from which to choose. See the side-bar for next year's line-up, including, "Global Development and the Power of Information," a course being developed by Global Studies Librarian, Lynne Rudasill, with Barbara Ford, Director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs.

A number of campus units, including CGS, offered support and feedback as the proposal for the Global Studies major and minor was developed. A campus-wide announcement about the new major will be released soon by LAS.



Children in unfinished house being constructed in Batey Libertad, Dominican Republic. Photo by Cod Braults.

Thematic Concentration Areas

Wealth and Poverty in a Globalized World
 Human Rights
 Global Health
 Governance, Conflict and Resolution
 Environment, Sustainability, and Social Responsibility
 Communication and Information Systems
 Cultures in Contact

Features of the New Global Studies Major in LAS

- Advanced foreign language and area studies/culture requirement, including a semester-long study abroad
- Global Studies foundation course introduces the major and thematic areas
- Four Global Studies courses from 4 different disciplines required
- Seminar courses (1 hour) define specific global challenges to help students decide which thematic area to pursue (see next year's seminar offerings at right)
- Global Studies seminars abroad count toward the major
- Research methods course for Global Studies majors is required for all distinction projects

Global Studies Seminars GLBL 296

Fall 2009

Environmental Justice
 Global Development & the Power of Information
 Nuclear Weapons Proliferation
 Border Crossings: A Study of Transnational Migrations
 World Cultural Assets: Loss, Recovery, and Protection

Spring 2010

Food & Globalization
 Ethics Debate over Reforming Immigration Law
 Critical Human Rights
 Global Issues of Oil Dependence
 Microfinance & the War on World Poverty

Politics and Travel in Myanmar

Continued from front page

seven American participants) for fifteen days, run by an experienced travel company.

I anticipated a situation like Lima, Peru as it had been in the 1970s under that military dictatorship, when we always saw tanks, water cannons, armed soldiers, and lots of police on the streets. To my great surprise, there was no visual evidence of state control in Myanmar, other than the very occasional large road sign in Burmese and English stating that the military was the patriotic entity concerned with protecting the stability of the country and ensuring peace and warning the populace not to be duped by stooges (their word). So I conclude that ordinary life functions in Myanmar like the panopticon so well discussed by Michel Foucault. Presumably, since everyone believes themselves to be under surveillance, anti-government behavior is inhibited “voluntarily,” thus obviating the need for overt displays of control – until civilian cooperation turns into street protest.

But the panopticon does not explain the happy, active life I observed in every city and every place we visited (the central corridor along the Irrawaddy River, constituting some 30-40% of the national territory and the heart of historic Burmese civilization). People were out and about, chipper, clearly well fed with abundant gorgeous food in the markets and a delicious cuisine, very involved with their stunning, gold-covered temples and frequenting them constantly, monks visible everywhere and in the early morning receiving donations of food into their alms bowls. Daily life looks quite pleasant and unimpeded in the core of the country, with no apparent interference by the military regime (so long as they perceive no threat to themselves). I was struck by people’s friendliness, and willingness and indeed desire to be



Former British court building, Yangon.



The great golden Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon.

photographed (particularly women and children), and widespread ability to speak English (certainly among young people and by all hotel staff).

The internet is not widely available, but where available, connections were slow. In the larger cities (Yangon, Mandalay) we had CNN in our rooms and I could keep up with U.S. and foreign news. Large hotels caution their guests against placing international phone calls since it is difficult to get connected and one will be charged for the wait to be connected even if the call doesn’t succeed. Our cell phones do not function in Myanmar, but within Myanmar internal cell phones work and our guides were frequently communicating with their offices and families. I was told that access to and flow of these means of communication are monitored and controlled.

Municipal government around the country is run by the military, rather than being in the ordinary civilian sphere. I would characterize Myanmar’s infrastructural underdevelopment (poor roads, decrepit buildings, inadequate waste management, etc.) as “benign neglect.” The municipalities lack the budget or the will, or both, to deal with issues that in other countries typically fall within that purview.

I was told that the public education system is inadequate (and much of the educational mission is conducted in monastery schools) and that the universities face their own challenges (because this is where opposition to the government is strongest and, indeed, the major universities in Yangon and in Mandalay have been moved out of the cities to impede political protests in the urban centers). The health care system is said to be extremely deficient (but let’s not forget access to health care in the U.S. is also inadequate for those without insurance – and we are a very rich country).

I was told that there is no official system of taxation, which may explain why public infrastructure is

inadequate: no funds. Corruption in order to do business in Myanmar is reported to be rampant. Yet one philosophical resident told me that since there is no IRS equivalent, the cost of a bribe could be considered taxation such that it all evens out. So long as a business does not fall within the military's sphere of interest, it is left alone to function quite well in the private sector, although sometimes with foreign control or participation (generally Chinese, I'm told). While there are some government hotels, the military does not regard tourism as a domain to be monopolized, thus private hotels (ours were magnificent) and private restaurants (delightful) are flourishing, as are the several internal airlines, which perform marvelously well based on my experience.

Myanmar's inextricably linked living religious practice and stunning architectural monuments are the center of faith-based devotion and social life as well as constituting the country's principal draw for international tourism. Although in a recent report I read, only Bhutan receives fewer tourists than Myanmar, among the sixteen tabulated Asian tourist markets, I think that Myanmar's tourism potential is unlimited, given the beauty of the country, its almost countless temples and monasteries, fascinating cities, visually striking traditional culture and spectacular cuisine.

Tourism may well be the key to proximal improvements in the lives of Myanmar's citizens, for unless the Myanmar government closes down the country as North Korea has done, then:

(1) Every tourist is a source of information, verbal and visual, about the outside world. Not only do foreigners come to Myanmar, but Myanmar citizens are now able to obtain passports and to leave the country and return without undue hassle. Tourism should result in a gradual, peaceful process of growing internal political openness, albeit within limits. China may be the model for what Myanmar will look like in coming years in this regard.

(2) Tourism will promote economic progress among the populace through expansion of small family businesses (restaurants, souvenir shops, guest houses, etc.), as well as improved transportation (better roads, etc.) and communication facilities (better internet and cell phone service is inevitable due to tourist demand), and better education (there are tour guide and travel industry programs, English



Boy monks. Most males in Myanmar will spend some part of their life as a monk, typically during adolescence.

institutes, etc., and there should be spillover into wider public education).

Given its size of two million, it is difficult to envision the self-perpetuating military giving up control in even one hundred years. But, a military government need not be cruel and inefficient. With continued tourism and foreign investment and creative engagement of Myanmar by the ASEAN countries and western powers I can envision a very gradual process of liberalization and civic improvement in areas of ordinary domestic concern, such as those I have indicated above.

Indeed, concerning tourism, I was fascinated to read that on 9 January 2009 at the ASEAN Tourism Forum and 12th Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers, held in Hanoi, the years 2009 and 2010 were declared the "Youth Travellers' Year" in the hope that intra-ASEAN travel among youth will be a key mitigator of the global economic crisis that is also affecting the ASEAN countries. Also at this meeting the Ministers agreed "to further develop and enhance tourism through the adoption of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals and the preparation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015." If Myanmar participates in accordance with its ASEAN membership, then this bodes well for the Burmese people as well as for other Asian populations living under less than democratic conditions.

In the hope of conducting research in Myanmar, I am diligently reading in my new area of interest and currently auditing the marvelous Southeast Asian Civilizations course of my colleague, Professor Kris Lehman (Anthropology). I have several projects in mind (see below), so I will return to Myanmar

Teachers Study Tour to Turkey: Changing the Lives for 1,000s of Students to Come Trip Sponsored by the Turkish Cultural Foundation Benefits Illinois Teachers

For a third year in a row, Illinois teachers will have an opportunity to participate in a two-week study tour to Turkey, sponsored by the Turkish Cultural Foundation. This year, middle and secondary school educators were eligible to apply. The family-run foundation partners with the World Affairs Council of America to offer the program to educators nationwide. The Peoria Area World Affairs Council, which collaborates with CGS on K-12 programming, has been selected to participate in the Teachers Study Tour program every year.

Teachers selected for the trip are required to attend a pre-departure workshop that covers Turk-



Illinois teachers on the steps at Ephesus. From left to right: Christopher Wells, Allyson Knanishu, Christina Shelton, and Ivan Jimenez.

ish history and culture. Upon their return, teachers must develop and participate in similar programs for community organizations, students and teachers, and world affairs council events. Illinois teachers will travel to Turkey with a group of approximately 30 teachers from 27 July to 7 August, 2009.

Last year's teachers included Ivan Jimenez, Addison Trails High School, Allyson Knanishu, Farmington High School, Christina Shelton, Moline High School; and Christopher Wells, Eureka High School.

Christina Shelton teaches a Problems and Issues current events course and included Turkey as a topic of discussion. Her experiences became particularly relevant when President Obama visited Istanbul. In her Ancient & Medieval History course, Shelton was able to introduce her students to information about the archeological discoveries at the Neolithic site of Catalhöyük.

Karagoz & Hacivat Shadow Puppet Theater performance in Bursa.



Archeological dig at Çatalhöyük, a 9,000 year old Neolithic site in the Konya region. The site was recently added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list for consideration for inclusion. All photos by Christina Shelton

Ivan Jimenez offered a week-long unit on Turkey in his global studies course and shared curriculum resources and information with his social studies colleagues teaching World History, European Studies, and Government. Addison Trails High School also organized a program on "Turkey's Reputation and Relationships", which the Turkish Consul General for the Midwest attended.

Allyson Knanishu maintained a blog about her travels in order to connect with students and colleagues over the summer. Her comments about the value of study tours for teachers ring true – no matter the destination:

"I am living history! ...What I've seen in so many textbooks, I am seeing with own eyes! Truly life changing, not just on a personal level, but I think of how different and dynamic my teaching will be in the coming years....Thank you for all the efforts that have been made to immerse a teacher from rural Illinois into Turkish culture. You have changed the lives for 1,000s of students to come over the next 30 years."



Politics and Travel in Myanmar

Continued from page 5

to ascertain if these are feasible in terms of research permits from the government and local academic interest. Of course, these projects will be carefully designed to be apolitical on-site and as beneficial as possible to Myanmar and its people. Ideally, these projects would involve other Illinois faculty and graduate students as well as Burmese counterparts:

(1) A study of tourism that considers how the government administers Myanmar's cultural heritage sites, the interaction of local tour companies with (in this case) U.S. and British sponsoring travel agencies, discourse of U.S. and British travel companies promoting tourism to Myanmar supplemented by interviews with their personnel, the scripting of major sites and museums, impact of tourism on local communities, and expectations and outcomes of travel to Myanmar among U.S. and British tourists (with the inclusion of Britain being predicated on former colonial relations). This study might focus on a particular historic site such as Bagan, which is embedded in a bustling community.

(2) An architectural/archaeological survey-inventory-description of the hundreds of temples, monasteries and nunneries at Sagaing (outside Mandalay), possibly to prepare (if the government is interested) a nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage List of this extraordinary agglomeration of buildings, replete with the formulation of a cultural heritage management plan sensitive to and in cooperation with the many temple trusts overseeing these living monuments. This would be complemented with



Street scene. Note the use of thanaka on the cheeks. This is a cosmetic prepared from sandalwood that is widely used in Myanmar, believed to keep the skin soft and clear.

ethnographic interviews and historic archival research so as to write a history of Sagaing.

(3) Involve architects, architectural historians, and urban planners in the documentation of Myanmar's still standing, beautiful, but decrepit British Colonial architecture, especially in Yangon (formerly Rangoon). This research needs to be done now while the buildings are intact. This project would be a fascinating comparison with the intensive descriptive and theoretical work that has been done in India, of which Burma was administratively a part in the era of British colonialism.

Southeast Asia is a critical region for our university's historic strengths in area studies and its study contributes to global studies on campus. I appreciate the opportunity to share aspects of my recent trip to Myanmar with readers of the CGS Newsletter, and I welcome feedback.

Digital Libraries of the World Unite on Global Studies Library Web Portal

By Lynne Rudasill, Global Studies Librarian

The digital revolution provides constantly emerging opportunities for scholars to access interesting and exciting materials from around the world. On the Global Studies Library website, the *Digital Libraries of the World* link includes a selection of visually and intellectually stimulating digital collections.

CLIOH - A Cultural Digital Library Indexing Our Heritage is a searchable archive of multimedia from threatened cultural heritage sites at Uxmal, Yucatan, Mexico and Angel Mounds near Evansville, Indiana, United States.

e-codices Virtual Manuscript Collection of Switzerland - The Medieval Institute of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland provides digitized access to over 380 manuscripts from 16 different libraries.

European Library - This website of resources from 48 European national libraries includes all types of library material, searchable by country, material, subject, description, or collection.

Global Gateway - The U.S. Library of Congress compiles several digitized collections of their holdings and from a number of partner libraries.

Musée du quai Branly - Digital access to one of the newest Parisian museums featuring the arts of indigenous people of Africa, Oceania, Asia, and the Americas.

World Digital Library - Digitized primary resources from around the world presented by UNESCO and other partners to enhance better understanding between cultures and peoples of the world.

If you have a favorite digital collection, don't hesitate to contact us.



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