Fragments From A Critical Dictionary *of* Southeast Asia

by HO TZU NYEN

H

Hydrography
Hydraulics
Hydrology
Humidity

Water is a constant and central feature in descriptions of early Southeast Asia. Closed in on the north by the mountain ranges of the eastern Himalayas, and internally choked by dense tropical forests and swamps, this was a region difficult to access by land, but everywhere opened up to navigable waterways. Its long, hospitable coastlines welcomed steady streams of seafarers for more than two thousand years, bringing together a mosaic of people, things, ideas and languages, dispersed inland through its network of rivers. This understanding of the role of water in the fertile plurality of the region's genetic and memetic matrix is born of an alignment between history and *hydrography* – a science originating in the making of navigational charts, based on understanding the physical features of water bodies and a mapping of their changes over time.

By the beginning of the Common Era, two distinct but sometimes overlapping forms of polities had emerged in the region. The first,

found along the river plains of continental, or mainland, Southeast Asia were religious-political systems centered on wet-rice agriculture. These were societies organized around the construction of large-scale irrigation and drainage systems, from which a type of padi-politics was born – the planting of rice and the pinning down of people, a population rendered sedentary, countable and taxable. The second, found in archipelagic, or island Southeast Asia, were thalassocracies fueled by flows of maritime and riverine trade. Their modus operandi was the struggle for the control of coastlines and strategic 'choke-points' along river-ways and their power measured by the number of boats controlled. However, both types of domination are in their own ways, techniques of distributing bodies through the manipulation of water flows. Therefore, analyses of both political systems are necessarily a kind of *hydraulic* analytics, attentive to the generation, control, and transmission of power by the use and control of pressurized water. [1]

Although both the hydrographical and hydraulical modes of historical understanding remain crucial to making sense of the region, they are primarily mechanical systems engaged with quantitative relations of force and matter, dealing with water solely in its liquid state. What escapes them is water's inherent liminality and innate propensity for qualitative phase changes; water not only flows, it freezes and it evaporates. To fully grasp the manifold relationship between water and Southeast Asia requires a third mode of thought – a *hydrology* devoted to cyclical transformations; an ontology of metamorphosis to supplement the mechanistic systemics of hydrography and hydraulics.

Intuitions of such a hydrology can be found in the animistic cosmologies of the region, where water plays a central role in the emergence of life or in the founding of a people (usually through the union of a local woman with a man who arrives from the sea). Yet the sacredness of water in Southeast Asia has always been accompanied by an attitude of deep ambiguity to this element. It is attributed with the powers of healing and purification, just as it is commonly dreaded as the source of epidemics, bad spirits and bad deaths. [2] Water does not, in itself, possess a value that is unequivocally positive or negative. It is beyond good and evil because it enables the transition between good and evil. As a lubricant for transgressing boundaries of all kinds, it facilitates passage across inanimate and animate states (the emergence of life) and

dissolves the separation between the inside and the outside (the birth of a people through the synthesis of the local and foreign). [3] This is why in many parts of Southeast Asia, it is said that a shaman or a sorcerer who seeks to turn himself into a tiger did so in the midst of crossing a river. Should a body of water not be close at hand, the would-be weretiger performs three somersaults, drawing in the air the sign of the swastika – the symbol of water and of cyclical return. To think hydrologically is to think metamorphically, and in the context of Southeast Asia to water, this means attending to water in its most prevalent but also most invisible mode, as vapors permeating the atmosphere. Southeast Asia is an empire of *humidity*. [4]

Humidity is ambient oppression, at once imperceptible and visceral. A human subject in a humid atmosphere is prone to breathing difficulties and respiratory conditions such as asthma, along with symptoms of hyperventilation, chronic anxiety, numbness, fainting, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, and loss of concentration. The invisible forcefield of water vapors in the air palpably impedes the body's normal processes of heat dissipation primarily by preventing sweat from evaporating. And if the environment is as warm, or warmer than the skin, the heat-carrying blood that rises to the body surface is also prevented from cooling via conduction into the air. This results in a continuous surging of blood to the surface of the body and a corollary reduction of blood flow to the active muscles, the brain, and other internal organs, which in turn brings about a decline of physical strength, loss of alertness and mental capacity, a condition known as 'heat stress', which in extreme cases, leads to death by heat stroke. It has been predicted that by 2045 climate change would push heat stress impacts in Southeast Asia to a boiling point, with dire implications for national economies and the safety of workers. In Singapore, the number of heat stress days has been projected to rise to 364 days (from the current 335), resulting in a 25% loss of productivity. [5] For an island state engineered as a model of ruthless efficiency, humidity is an apocalyptic threat that can only be contained by an intensification of microscopic control over the air. The former, hydraulic systems of discipline are mutating into the hydrological model of societal control, embodied by invisible, but pervasive, air-conditioning. [6]

If death by fire is exuberant and immediate; death by water (and its vapors) is a kind of endless falling into a dense darkness, lethargic and dream-like, a daily death that is infinite, akin to the sluggish melancholy we experience in the presence of a dormant pool, or a stagnant, asphyxiated pond on a hot, humid afternoon, where time itself seems to have slowed down to an infinite crawl.

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1. A *hydraulical* mapping of power also offers insights into the forms of resistance and evasion under these modes of domination. To think in terms of water is to think the latent possibility of seepage and a restless search for side-stepping blockages. On the Southeast Asian mainland, the key strategy for people wishing to escape state control has always been to abandon the sedentary existence of wet-rice agriculture, adopting a nomadic existence in the refuge of forests or the mountains. See James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Yale University Press (New Haven), 2009. On the other hand, on island Southeast Asia, anarchy often took the form of a subversive use of the same water channels that the State had sought to control, by intensifying the inherent dynamics of water. In the Malay Archipelago, nomadic sea tribes could swiftly strike, before quickly disappearing into the the labyrinthine water ways.
2. For example, the cosmology of the Ngaju Dayak of Borneo is centered on the notion of a life-giving water stored up within the Tree of Life, while many tribes in Indonesia attribute their origins to the union of a local woman with an 'overseas' man. See Peter Boomgaard, 'A State of Flux' in *World of Water: Rain, Rivers and Seas in Southeast Asian Histories*, KITLV Press (Leiden), 2007, pp. 5 - 7. This text is also a typical example of scholarship somewhat 'stumped' by the contradictory attitudes of Southeast Asian people to water. For example, Boomgaard describes how the Ngajuk Dayak also associate water with illnesses, and consider the annual flooding of the river their 'lifelines' as a source of prosperity by connecting upstream and downstream territories, but at the same time, causing death by drowning and by crocodile.
3. A variant of the common Indonesian myth of origin through local woman and 'overseas' man is also present in the account of the founding of the Funan kingdom, which emerged on the lower Mekong delta between the first to sixth Century CE. It was said that a woman ruler of that region led an attack on a passing merchant ship. After successfully defending themselves, the merchants made their way to shore, whereupon their leader "drank water from the land" and married the woman ruler, who is described as the daughter of the ruler of the Realm of Water. Water eases the transitions between the inside and the outside.
4. The combination of equatorial heat, proximity to water bodies and high rainfall makes Southeast Asia home to some of the most humid cities on earth.
5. The research was carried out by the British firm Verisk Maplecroft in 2015. See report 'Too hot to work: climate change puts south-east Asia economies at risk' in The Guardian, 28 October 2015. [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/28/too-hot-to-work-climate-change-south-east-asia-economies-at-risk]
6. It is well known that Lee Kuan Yew, the chief 'engineer' of Singapore, names the air-conditioner as the most important invention of the 20th century. It is also well known that he keeps the room temperature of his office is kept at exactly 22 degrees Celsius, and that of his bedroom at exactly 19 degrees Celsius.

W
Weretigers

It has been said that the Javanese people do not, after sundown, utter the word *macan* (tiger) for fear of invoking its presence. Instead, they refer to him as *guda*, from the Sanskrit word *gudha*, which means hidden, or secret.

What one cannot know, or does not wish to know, one passes in silence. This is why certain tribal groups in Malaya refer to the tiger only by stretching out their right hands in the shape of a claw. The Gayo of Sumatra call him *Mpu uton* (grandfather of the forest) or *Mpu tempat* (grandfather of the place), while the Acehnese refer to him as *datok* (grandfather or ancestor) or *gop* (other person, someone; used also for people from another village or place). [1] Yet these aliases tell us something of the tiger's secret: it is a creature of the forest, it is a being of nature, and it is other to humans—though never completely or radically so. For it is also kin, bound by blood to humans in the distant horizon of an ancestral time, for tigers dispersed across Southeast Asia more than a million years ago, long before the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. Tigers have always been here, at the origin of our histories.

When early human settlers arrived in the region, they favoured as their habitat the transitory zones between the forest and the waters, an

ecotone already occupied by other large, ground-dwelling mammals like the deer and the boar—and the tiger that preyed on them. Humans did not yet have the capacity to dominate this savannah-like landscape, for which the tiger was so perfectly adapted. With its paws masterfully designed for stealth, and its eyes attuned to darkness, the tiger, with its striped coat of yellow and black, dissolved into the golden brown fields of the tall lalang grasses, silently stalking its prey from behind, awaiting the perfect moment at which it would bound up and seize the throat. To live in such a terrain, humans had to attune themselves to the ways of the tiger, a process that brings about fusion between the two species.

This traversing of the boundary between nature and culture is especially apparent in the healing rituals of some village shamans: their hands seem to take on the form of tiger claws, or their behavior takes on aspects of a tiger. This is why across Southeast Asia, the tiger was widely believed to live in villages, where the houses have walls of human skin, and the roofs are thatched with human hair. And when crossing lakes and rivers, the tiger can dissolve into the shape of a human. Should a body of water not be close at hand, the would-be weretiger performs three somersaults, drawing in the air the sign of the swastika – the symbol of water and of cyclical return.

The first written record of the Malayan 'weretiger' comes from an early fifteenth-century Chinese source, *The Triumphant Visions of the Shores of the Ocean*, by Ma Huan, who served as an interpreter to Admiral Zheng He, the great navigator-eunuch of Ming Dynasty China. Of his visit to Malacca, he wrote: "In the town there are tigers which can assume human form; they enter the markets, and walk about, mixing with the populace. If anyone recognized one of these creatures, he would seize it and kill it." There were ways by which one could discern a weretiger. In its human form, it is believed to lack the philtrum, the cleft on the upper lip, and is a being without a fixed abode: a vagrant, a beggar, or a shaman who traverses the liminal space between nature and civilization.

The British colonial rule of Malaya brought about an unprecedented disruption that was at once ecological and cosmological. Tigers were massacred, and weretigers exiled to the realm of folklore. But like a Leibnizian divine machine, where animal being is a deathless monadic composition that knows only ceaseless reconfiguration, the tiger

keeps returning to haunt the region in reconfigured forms. In 1942, the Japanese 25th Army led by Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita - known also as the "Tiger of Malaya", exacted revenge upon the British forces in Malaya. Moving swiftly through the forest – savage, amphibious and full of guile in a battle – the Japanese forces seem to embody the very qualities that had made the tiger such a feared adversary of the early British settlers.

The principal resistance in Malaya against the Japanese occupation was the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army, a guerilla organization under the leadership of the Malayan Communist Party. When the Japanese forces surrendered in 1945, the epithet of 'tiger' gradually transferred to the Communists, who now constituted a very real threat to the returning British forces which were deflated and weakened by the war. The British eventually responded by intensifying their regulation of forested zones, offering cash bounties, organizing hunts and ambushes – similar strategies previously employed to annihilate the Malayan tigers. And in the shadows of the dense tropical forest, the British hunters of Communist guerillas sometimes found themselves coming face to face with tigers instead.

To embark upon the trail of the weretiger is to follow through with its line of perpetual metamorphosis – an anthropomorphic, yet non-anthropocentric line that is at once materialist and metaphorical. And in the myriad entanglements of this metamorphic line, one senses the contours of a shape-shifting region.

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1. Robert Wessing, *The Soul of Ambiguity: The Tiger in Southeast Asia* (DeKalb: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 1986).

An earlier version of this text was published as 'We're Tigers' in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (Critical Climate Change) edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, Open Humanities Press, London, 2015

Another version of 'W for Weretiger' co-written with Robert Wessing was published in *Field Notes No.3, Asia Art Archive*, 2012.
See [http://www.aaa.org.hk/FieldNotes/Details/1216]

Film stills from *2 or 3 Tigers*, 2 channel CGI video, 12 channel sound, 18 min 22 seconds, 2015

G

Gene Z. Hanrahan

The Communist Struggle in Malaya, first published in 1954 by the Institute of Pacific Relations and subsequently republished by the University of Malaya Press in 1979, was one of the earliest general historical accounts of the Malayan Communist Party.

This short and concise text by Gene Z. Hanrahan remains to this day a key resource for this period of Malayan history, and has been regularly cited by subsequent studies of Communist histories in Southeast Asia. His writing was crisp, his analyses reasonable, if never spectacular. But what made the text valuable was the author's access to confidential documents beyond the reach of other researchers, although Hanrahan never explained how his sources were explained.

The bibliography of Hanrahan is dazzlingly diverse. The books that he has been involved with as a researcher, translator (of multiple languages), editor, and writer include *Documents on the Mexican Revolution* (Documentary Publications, 1981 to 1985), a nine volume collection of confidential documents related to the Madero Revolution of 1910, writings on military strategies and guerilla warfare, as well as introducing, translating and editing the writings of Carlos Marighella, the Brazilian Marxist revolutionary and urban guerilla theoretician.

Then, there is Hanrahan's more 'literary' streak, in putting out *ASSAULT!* (Bantam Books, 1962), an anthology of 'real' descriptions of the Pacific War by 'real' US Marines, *Hemingway – The Wild Years* (Dell Publishing, 1962) a selection of Ernest Hemingway's articles for the Toronto Star, as well as *50 Great Oriental Stories* (Bantam Books, 1965), a collection of the "finest Oriental tales ever written", chosen and edited by Hanrahan. He also wrote brief but erudite commentaries for each section of the anthology, meant for "students of Oriental literature".

Hints to the biography of this polymath or hack are meagerly scattered on the dust jackets of his publications, or in prefaces and forewords written by others. Hanrahan has been variously described as a naval intelligence officer, a lecturer and a specialist of guerilla warfare. But judging from the tone of these prefaces and forewords, it would seem as though none of the authors know him on intimate terms. And in *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924 – 1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party* (Cornell University Press, 1992), the Malaysian historian Cheah Boon Kheng declares: "it is believed that Gene Z. Hanrahan is the pseudonym of a research assistant or a research organization".

But if 'Gene Z. Hanrahan' was indeed a pseudonym, it was one that in turn, had a pseudonym. According to the U.S. Library of Congress, the author known as William J. Kennedy is the pseudonym of Gene Z. Hanrahan. As William J. Kennedy, he authored *Pre-Service Course in Shop Practice*, (John Wiley & Sons, 1943), a technical manual for "pre-induction training based upon the requirements of the U.S. Army" to be offered to high school seniors during the Second World War, and *Secret History of the Oil Companies in the Middle East* (Documentary Publications, 1979).

The oeuvre of 'Gene Z. Hanrahan' can be described as consisting largely of texts that are 'documentary' in nature, but it partakes of fiction at a different level – the construction of an author. Gene Z. Hanrahan is an author dreamt up by his books, and in the oneiric skein of his bibliography, is entangled the history of Malayan communism.

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In February 2015, Ho Tzu Nyen presented his collection of books by Gene Z. Hanrahan alongside a film *The Name*, at the DAAD Galerie in Berlin.

'G for Gene Z. Hanrahan' was first published in *ArtReview Asia, special issue,* March 2015. See [artreview.com.]

Film stills from *The Name* (a film about Gene Z. Hanrahan), single channel HD projection, 6 channel sound, 16 min 51 seconds, 2015

INDEX

A
for **ALTITUDE / ANARCHISM**

On the relationship between altitudes and the attitudes of anarchism, from the high altitude anarchism of the upland hill tribes of Zomia to the low altitude piracy that plagues the archipelagoes of Southeast Asia, and the connection to the of (Indic) cosmology, where mountains and seas are places of power.

Resonating terms:
Animism
Aporia (of Mixed Bodies)
Archipelago
Assimilation

B
for **BUFFALO**

On the symbolism of the Buffalo in the buffalo-tiger fights staged by the Javanese courts. Across different historical periods, the significance of the buffalo-tiger pair shifted. The buffalo was a life-giving animal of civilization, while the predatory tiger manifested the wild and savage power of nature. There are times when royalty and peasantry alike rooted for the buffalo against the tiger, but at other times, the peasant rooted for the Buffalo against the tiger of the royalty. During colonial periods, the royalty stood behind the buffalo against the tiger, which embodied Dutch colonial power. To connect this elasticity of signification with a notion of Southeast Asian subjectivity through the technique of fabricating Wayang-Kulit (Shadow play) puppets out of buffalo skin.

Resonating terms:
Barbarian
Bondage
Boundaries
Bricolage

C
for **CIRCLE / CORRUPTION**

On the continuity of the form and logic of corruption from ancient to contemporary Southeast Asia, beginning with early cosmological system of cognatic kinship (transmission of power through maternal and paternal lineages) and endlessly proliferating circles of Kings) to the nepotism of today. Describe corruption as a physical and cosmological system, a corruption of the spirit and a spirit of corruption.

Resonating terms:
Circle (of Kings)
Cognatic Kinship
Cosmology

D
for **DECAY**

Begin with an archaeological mystery in Perak, Malaysia, where excavations uncovered what appears to be graves, except that no human remains were discovered. A recent hypothesis/speculation is that the acidity of the soil, intense rainfall and high rates of humidity in Malaysia brought about the complete decomposition of all human remains, including the bones. This term deals with both the absence of material artifacts plaguing historical research in Southeast Asia, the impossibility of forensic.

Resonating terms:
Decenter
Dispersal
Disaggregation
Dissimulation

E
for **EPIDEMIC/ EVASION**

On epidemics (both biological and ideological) and techniques of evasion.

Resonating terms:
Ecology
Efficacy

F
for **FICTION/ FRICTION / FOREST**

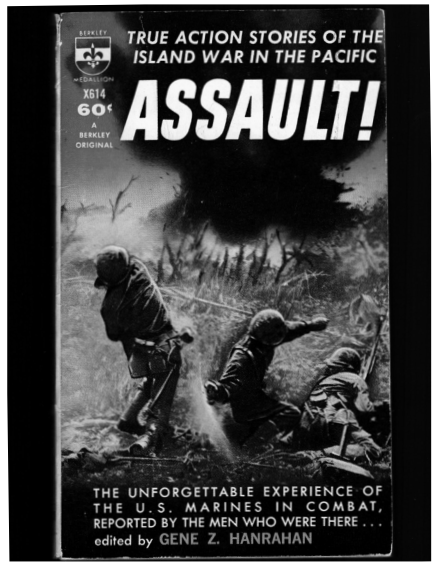
On the friction of terrain presented by the dense, tropical forest, which shelter outlaws (bandits, communists, etc) as well as myths and magic.

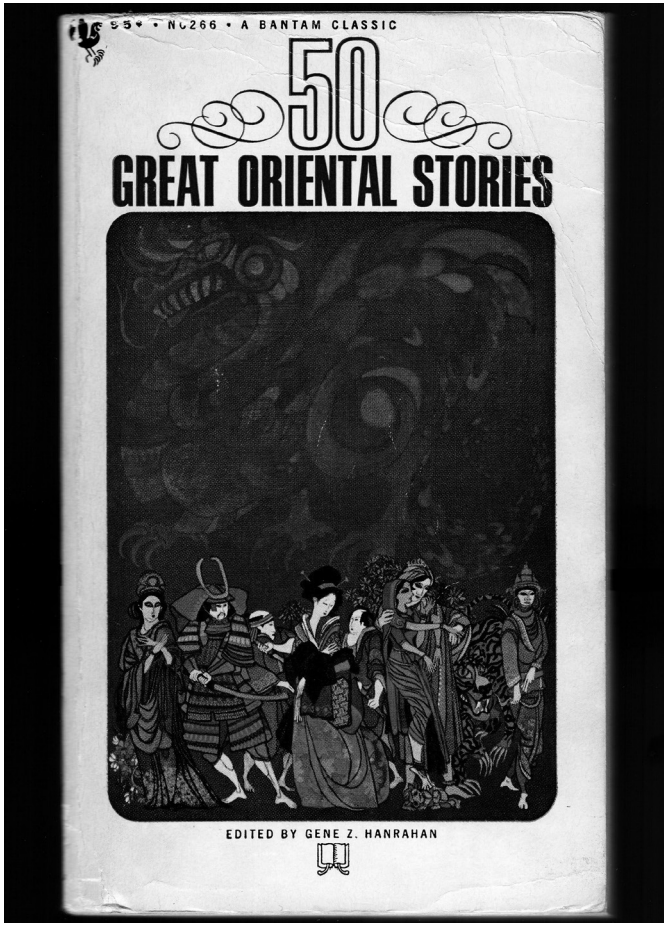
Resonating terms:
Fiction
Fluidity (ethnic and national)
Flight (from State)
Friction (in distance)
Frontier

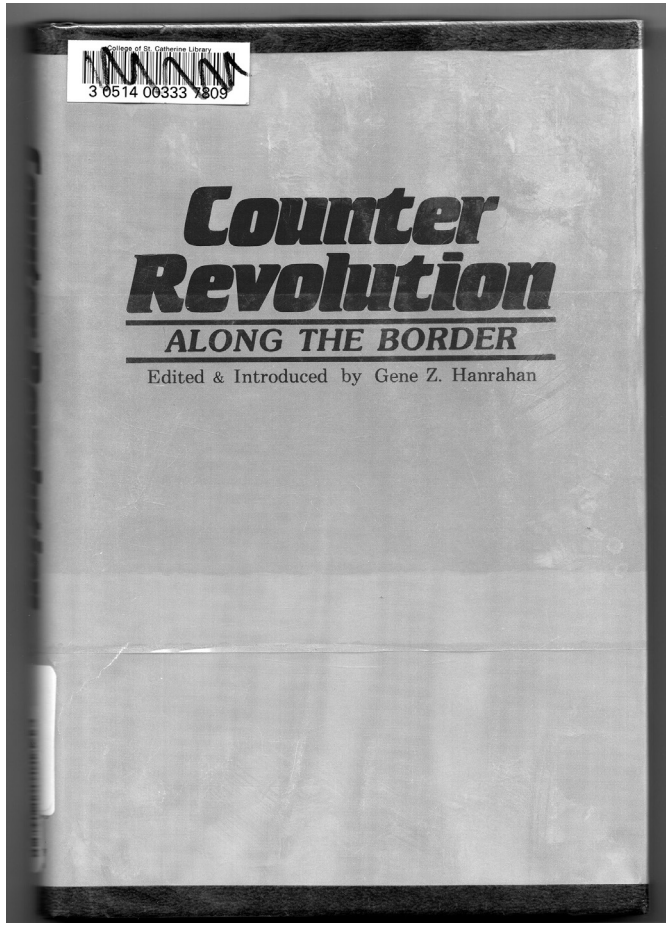
G
for **GHOST / GHOSTWRITER/ GENE Z. HANRAHAN**

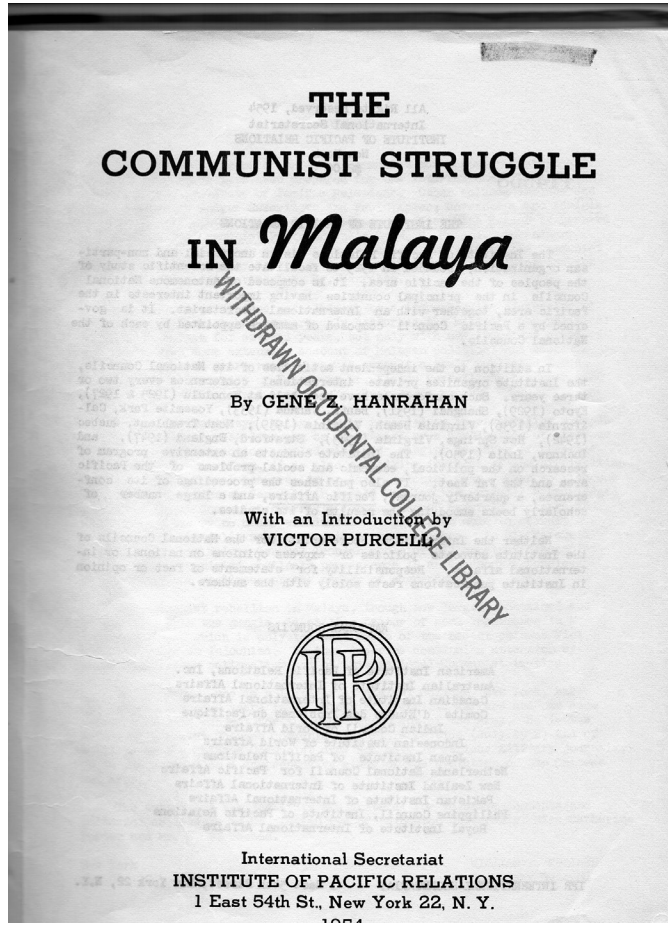
On Southeast Asia as a geography of ghosts (the continuing involvement of the dead on the affairs of the living), the production of history through the work of ghostwriters and the history of Communism in Southeast Asia. To end with the figure of Gene Z. Hanrahan, the supposed 'author' of The Communist Struggle in Malaya (1954) – the first authoritative text on the history of the Malayan Communist Party. However, the existence of Gene Z. Hanrahan is open to question. He is an author dreamt up / produced by his books.

Resonating terms:
Geography









Selected collection of books by Gene Z. Hanrahan, part of exhibition *The Name*, installation with 16 books, single channel HD projection, 6 channel sound, 15 min 51 seconds.

H
for **HUMIDITY**

About the prevalence of water (and water vapours) in Southeast Asia, the pressure of the environment (as ambient oppression), imbalance between the inside and the outside, and the sweat of labor.

Resonating terms:
Heat
Hydrography
Hydraulics
Hydrology

I
for **IDENTITY/ INSCRIPTION / IRRIGATION**

On the relationship between identity, inscription (tattoos, writing) and irrigation (inscription of the Earth.)

Resonating terms:
Imitation
Invulnerability

J
for **JELLYFISH**

On the proliferation of jellyfishes in Southeast Asia (due to pollution) and the notion of "Jellyfish Tribes" (shape-shifting tribes in the Zomia area.)

K
for **KINSHIP / KINGSHIP**

On the system of cognatic kinship in Southeast Asia (transmission of power through maternal and paternal lineages), and a mapping of contemporary Southeast Asian kinship ties in ruling families.

L
for **LAI TECK/ LEGIBILITY**

On the relationship between illegibility and fungibility in Southeast Asia as connected to its long, subterranean history of shape-shifters playing major roles in political events. To end with the figure of a man known as Lai Teck – one of the 50 or so aliases of the Sino-Vietnamese who was the Secretary-General of the Malayan Communist Party from 1939-1947, and who was also a triple agent working for the French, British and Japanese during World War II. He was later revealed as traitor and said to be killed in Thailand in 1947, though very little of him remains known to this day. In the figure of Lai Teck is inscribed the play of historical and political forces that swept across Southeast Asia, and in his mutability, a model of a nascent Southeast Asian subjectivity.

Resonating terms:
Labour
Language
Localization

Film stills from *The Nameless* (a film about Lai Teck), double channel HD projection, 12 channel sound, 21 min 15 seconds, 2015

M
for **MANDALA**

An analysis of non-Euclidean organization of space in Southeast Asia, through how ancient, pre-colonial empires of the regions understood the notion of territory, as radiating outwards from centers without physical limits. This is in contrast to the western model of empires, which are drawn inwards from clearly demarcated borders. This conceptualization of space was first theorized by Kautilya in the 2nd Century BCE, who wrote on the mandala system of governance in the Arthashastra, a Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy.

Resonating terms:
Magic
Manpower
Map
Metempsychosis
Mimesis
Mobility

N
for **NATION/ NARRATION / NARCOSIS**

On the narcosis of narration and nation

Resonating terms:
Nomadism

O
for **OCEANS / OPIUM**

On the connection of Oceans and Opium: the trade that links India (production), distribution (Singapore) and consumption (China) by looking at
the opium trade in the 19th Century: production in India and distribution in China, with Singapore as a nodal point for exchange, the same sea route that was central to transmission of memes across Southeast Asia – a meeting point between Indian and Chinese cultures.

Resonating terms:
Orality
Origin
Outlaw

P
for **PADI / POLITICS / PLATEAU**

Politics in pre-modern Southeast Asia is Padi politics. Its mantra: to concentrate the population and hold it in place, and its key condition: creating such state space was easiest where there was a substantial expanse of flat, fertile land, watered by perennial streams and rivers. Against the practices of swidden (slash and burn) agriculture practiced by the tribes of highland plateaus. To connect with Gregory Bateson's study of the plateaus of intensities in Balinese paintings (appropriated by Deleuze and Guattari).

Resonating terms:
Periphery
Piracy
Puppets

Q
for **QUEEN**

On Queens (mythical and historical) of Southeast Asia.

Resonating terms:
Question
Quotation
Quaking

R
for **RESONANCE**

About metallurgy in Southeast Asia and the technology of gong-making (key instrument in Southeast Asian tribal rituals). The term 'resonance' also forms a model of how to think the unity of Southeast Asia.

Resonating terms:
Region
Ritual

S
for **SLAVERY / SOUL**

On the connection between the concepts of Southeast Asian slavery, historical slavery in Southeast Asia and the animistic concepts of soul (and soul stuff).

Resonating terms:
Sea
State
Society
Space
Spells

A shadow play, puppets made of buffalo skin, and projection of image (*Interrupted Road Surveying Singapore*, 1865 by Heinrich Leutemann) upon puppets.

Details from *Ten Thousand Tigers*, Live Performance with 4 performers, automated objects and multi-channel sound, 63 mins, 2014

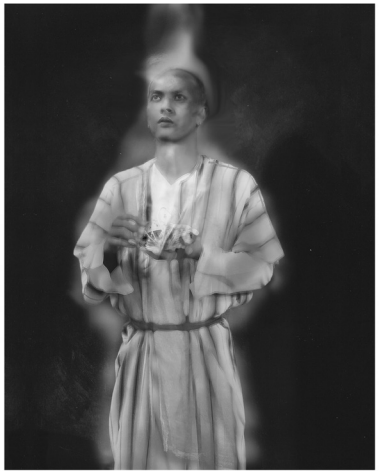
T
for TIGER / THEDOLITE

To begin with an analysis of the print, Unterbrochene Straßenmessung auf Singapore (Interrupted Road Surveying Singapore) by Heinrich Leutemann, which illustrates the encounter of the British chief surveyor (George Dromgold Coleman) with a tiger in the Singaporean jungle in 1835 during a surveying trip. The tiger attacked only the theodolite – an instrument for surveying, but not Coleman's party – which was made of Indian convicts on forced labor. From this single image, in which different civilizations as well as different modes or being confront each other, we extrapolate a network traversing the nature/culture division.

Resonating terms:
Theatre

U
for UTAMA

To begin with a mapping of the genealogy of Sang Nila Utama – the mythical founder of Singapore – a family tree which stretches to South india kings, Alexander the Great and Kind Solomon, from which we ponder the mysteries of origin.



KING SOLOMON
ancestor of Alexander the Great

ALEXANDER THE GREAT
ancestor of the founder of Singapore

The ancestry of Sang Nila Utama. Images from *Utama - Every Name in History is I*, installation with single channel SD video, 23 mins, and 20 paintings, 2003

V
for **VAMPIRES / VAGINAS**

On the Malayan myth of the vampiric pontianak – ghosts of women who die during childbirth) and the Javanese legend of Ken Dedes, the wife of a local governor whose genitals glowed with fire.

Resonating terms:
Vision
Voice

W
for **WERETIGER**

On the myth of Weretigers as embodiments of man-animal symbiosis. Such transformations take place in water – the most liminal of elements.

Resonating terms:
Water

X
for **XENO**

On the relationship to the outside/outsiders.
To consider:
Xenocracy (government by a body of foreigners)
Xenodochial (hospitality to strangers)
Xenagogue (guide, someone who conducts strangers)
Xenophilia (love of strangers)
Xenophobia (fear of strangers)
Xenomania (inordinate love of foreign things)
Xenogamy (cross fertilization)

Y
for **YIELDING**

On the spirit of Yielding – an attitude to things and forces, lending itself to sympathetic magi.

Resonating terms:
Yearning
Youth

Z
for **ZONE / ZOOMORPHISM**

On the shatter Zones of refuge (forest, mountains, archipelagoes), which are also the Zones of Zoomorphicism, against the Zone of Control (Zombies and Zoos)

Resonating terms:
Zoography
Zoophilia
Zomia
Zombies

–

Ho Tzu Nyen is a Singaporean artist who works in a variety of media including films, video and automated installations and theatrical performances. Born in Singapore in 1976, and currently residing in Berlin and Singapore, he graduated with a degree in Creative Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, followed by a Masters in Research in Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore.

Interested in historical and philosophical texts, Tzu Nyen frequently explores subjects such as the structure and power of myths in his art, often revealing stories as discursive tools used to shape the present. His projects are characterized by the transformation of a network of ideas into intensive experiences.

He has had one-person exhibitions at The Guggenheim Bilbao (2015), DAAD Galerie (2015), Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012), the Singapore Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and Artspace, Sydney (2011). He participated in exhibitions such as the 6th Moscow Biennale (2015); 3rd Ural Industrial Biennale (2015); 10th Shanghai Biennale (2014); the 2nd Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2014); Homeworks 6 (2013); the 6th Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art (2009); the 1st Singapore Biennale (2006); the 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (2005); and the 26th Sao Paulo Biennale (2004). His works have been shown at institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2015); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2015); Guggenheim New York (2013); Witte de With (2013, 2012); ZKM, (2013, 2007); Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2011).

His theatrical works have been presented at the Asian Arts Theatre, Gwangju (2015); Wiener Festwochen (2014); Theater der Welt (2010); the KunstenFestivaldesArts (2006, 2008); the Singapore Arts Festival (2006, 2008).

His films have been presented at the Berlin Film Festival (2015); Sundance Film Festival (2012); Cannes Film Festival (2009); Venice Film Festival (2009); Locarno Film Festival (2011) and Rotterdam (2008, 2010, 2013).

Ho Tzu Nyen was awarded a DAAD Scholarship in Berlin (2014 – 2015) and the Grand Prize of the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize (2015).

Fragments From A Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia collates extracts from Ho Tzu Nyen's open-ended research project 'A Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia', which speculates about responses to the question 'What constitutes the unity of the region?' and proposes key concepts and histories, and mutating alphabetised schemas, that resonate beyond the boundaries of nation states. Within this publication, three definitions are included - W is for Weretiger, G is for Gene Z. Hanrahan, H is for Humidity - as well as an alphabetical index of resonating terms.

The research project 'A Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia' developed out of a residency undertaken by Ho Tzu Nyen at the Asia Art Archive in 2013.

Fragments From A Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia is a contribution to two interwoven experiments with curatorial form:

The exhibition *"Habits and customs of _____ are so different from ours that we visit them with the same sentiment that we visit exhibitions"* curated by Biljana Ciric, featuring works by 3-ply, Irena Haiduk, Ho Tzu Nyen, Siniša Ilić, Li Liao, Lu Huanzhi, and ocurrences of works by Eva Barto. February 20 - April 30, 2016, Kadist Art Foundation, 19bis-21 rue des Trois Frères, 75018, Paris, France.

The publication *"Habits and customs of _____ are so different from ours that we visit them with the same sentiment that we visit exhibitions"* edited by Biljana Ciric and Fayen d'Evie, and published by Kadist Art Foundation and 3-ply, featuring works by Lu Huanzhi, Ho Tzu Nyen, Li Liao, Irena Haiduk, Siniša Ilić and Eva Barto. Rizograph cover + 5 booklets, BW digital print. Edition of 500 (500 cover, 5 x 100 booklets, variable content). Pdf edition available at www.3ply.net.

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Design: 3-ply, Toby Tam and Biljana Ciric.

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3-ply is an independent publishing initiative that focuses on writing, editing, translation and publication as art practice. In exhibition settings, 3-ply operates as a shifting collaborative, investigating artist-led publishing as an experimental site for the production, transmission and archiving of knowledge. www.3ply.net

Kadist Art Foundation is a non-profit arts organization that believes the arts make a fundamental contribution to a progressive society. Its programs actively encourage the engagement of artists, often represented in its collection, with the important issues of today to promote their role as cultural agents. www.kadist.org