

Anthropology 473
Spring 1985
Office Machmer 204
Hours Tu Thu 11-1
In Collaboration with Prof. Lucy Nguen

Cultures of Southeast Asia
J. Halpern
Class: Tu, 7:00-9:30
Machmer W-17

Course Perspective:

Summary

The geographic focus is mainland Southeast Asia, specifically the countries that composed what had been known as Indo-China as well as Thailand and, to a lesser extent, Burma. The term Indo-China implies cultural influences from India and China. These influences have been abundantly manifest historically from the Chinese side in the religion and state organization of Vietnam in the East and in the Theravada Buddhism and traditional ruling structures in the countries to the west (Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Laos). These countries also share a common experience with French colonial rule and involvement in wars which have included, most recently, American participation in what has been called in this country the Vietnam War. The cultures and politics in this area need, however, to be understood primarily in terms of their own unique ways of life and their own histories and not as simply derivative from outside influences. This is the essential point of departure for this course.

Our focus is on social and family structures from an anthropological point of view. This approach also has both historical and comparative perspectives. The concerns which will be dealt with are the processes of growth and maturation within a family and the larger social setting including the role of the individual in the life course as it articulates with the family and household cycle. Closely linked is the nature of sex roles and intergenerational relationships. These roles also need to be viewed in their larger contexts which includes rural-urban, class and ethnic differences within a given society. The historical perspective also encompasses adaptation to change which has, at times, been sudden and drastic as an outgrowth of economic development in a peaceful context. There are also the political and military changes associated with war and its aftermath. Finally, there are the functions of family and kinship roles in the process of voluntary or forced migration.

Requirements

There will be lectures and voluntary discussion. The course requirements are a mid-term and a term paper. The central requirement is a student paper which is directly related to the lectures and a linked research project. The central part of the project is a life history-autobiography of family life. This can be obtained from the student's own experience or through interviews and needs to be related to the frame of analysis presented in the class lectures. The mid-term consists of a preliminary outline of the paper and a brief accompanying draft along with a discussion of the relationships of the student's project to class lectures and readings. The revised version of this paper is to be handed in on the last day of class. It is hoped that some oral presentations will be made. For those students making an oral presentation this will be counted as a supplemental contribution and there is a shorter essay required in that part of the final paper which links the life history to the class lectures. The mid-term paper is due on April 4. The last day of class is May 14. Final papers are due on this date.

NOTE:

This course is designed both for those who have an anthropological background as well as those who have not had previous background on social structural analysis. Those students who have not had this social science background will find the background readings necessary. To master the core concepts necessary to do an appropriate paper the general readings on social structure need to be combined with those on field work methodology (see listings below).

Readings

The class readings will be on reserve since there is no published text which is available. The readings are listed in conjunction with the lectures. Bibliographies to assist the student with specialized readings in conjunction with the term paper will be distributed subsequently.

* Students are encouraged to use the Human Relations Area Files in the Microfilm Reading Room. There are separate files of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Southeast Asia:

Charles F. Keyes, The Golden Peninsula, Culture and Adpatation in Mainland Southeast Asia (Keyes)

Family and Social Sturcture:

Peter Farb, Humankind (Farb)

Francis L.K. Hsu, Kinship and Culture (Hsu)

Methodology for Term Paper

James P. Spradley and David W. Mc Curdy, The Cultural Experience, Ethnography (Spradley A)

J. P. Spradley, The Ethnographic Interview (Spradley B)

J. P. Spradley, Participant Observation (Spradley C)

Outline of lectures and readings

1. January 29

Outline of course objectives and requirements.

Family and kinship, an introduction

Readings: Farb, Chapter 18; "The Family as an Institution," and Chapter 19; "The Human Ages."

The Vietnamese Family and the patriarchal tradition.

Readings: Keyes, Chapter 4, "Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam," especially sections on, Kinship in Traditional Vietnam and Cultural Traditions and Cultural Conflict in Traditional Vietnam.

2. February 5

Further discussion on kinship and culture.

Readings: Hsu, Chapter 1, "A Hypothesis on Kinship and Culture" and Chapter 2, "Notes on the Hsu Hypothesis."

Professor Nguyen: Some comments on the novel, Blood Brothers by Pham Van Ky as an insight into Vietnamese family relationships.

3. February 12

Further discussion on general principles of kinship and their relationship to Vietnamese society. Introductory perspectives on preparing a paper, things to observe.

Readings: Spradley C, Part 1, "Ethnographic Research."

4. February 19 (This is a Monday class schedule but the class will be held since we meet only weekly)

Life histories - their role and uses in anthropology. A case study from rural Laos, "the old man." What can we learn about the life cycle, family relationships and the larger society?

Reading: P. Branfman, with J. Halpern and J. Hafner eds., The Old Man: A Biographical Account of a Lao Villager

4. February 26

The village context in Laos and in Vietnam

Readings: F. Branfman, with J. Halpern and J. Hafner, eds., The Village of the Deep Pond, Ban Xa Phang Meuk, Laos;

Gerald C. Hickey, Village in Vietnam, Chapters 4 and 5, "The Kinship System," and "The family as a Social Group,"

5. March 5

Religion and Social Structure, the case of Theravada Buddhist Civilization and Village Life

Readings: Keyes, Chapters 2 and 3

6. March 12

Angkor Wat, history, symbolism, hierarchy and social structure

Readings: Bernard Groslier, Angkor, Art and Civilization, "The Men of Angkor, The setting and the materials,"

7. March 26 (March 19 Spring vacation)

Discussion of mid-term paper; family history and the life course approach from a Southeast Asian Perspective. Use of bibliographical sources for individual papers

8. April 2 Mid-term paper due

Sex roles in a patriarchal society, perspective from life and literature, Professor Nguyen

Anthropological perspectives

Supplementary Readings: Richard Coughlin, The Position of Women in Vietnam; Marilyn W. Hoskins, "Vietnamese Women: Their Roles and Their Options," in Changing Identities in Modern Southeast Asia, Ed. David J. Banks; Pierre Lusteguy, The Role of Women in Tonkinese Religion and Property (HRAF),

9. April 9

Literature as a source of values on society and the family, Professor Nguyen, The Tale of Kieu, Nguyen Du (Translated by Huynh Sanh Thong)

10. April 16

Growing up female in Thailand

Readings: Prajuab Tirabutana, A Simple One, The Story of a Siamese Girlhood

Supplementary Reading: Prajuab Thirabutana, Little Things

11. April 23

The Hmong in Laos and America

Film: Becoming American (30 min.)

Optional Reading: W.R. Geddes, Migrants of the Mountains, Chapters 3 and 4, "Social Relationships and Groupings," and "The Household and the Village,"

Readings on Indochinese in North America:

Mary Bowen Wright, "Indochinese," in Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, pp. 508-513 (This article may prove useful in student papers)

Basic background information some of which may also be useful for student papers is in, Elliot L. Tepper, ed. Southeast Asian Exodus: From Tradition to Resettlement, Understanding Refugees from Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam in Canada

Optional reading: Bruce T. Downing and Douglas P. Olney, The Hmong in the West

The American experience of people and their families from Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos and the relationship of their histories to other American immigrants and other Asian Americans presents a series of topics which may be covered in the final lectures or through student papers

12. April 30 Student papers or lectures as appropriate thur May 14.

Other alternate topics which may be covered:

Becoming a Prince, the career of Prince Phetsarath - a personal observation, with slides from a journey

Optional Reading: John B. Murdoch, transl. and David K. Wyatt, ed., Iron Man of Laos, Prince Phetsarath Ratanavongsa and "Prince Phetsarath," in J. Halpern, Government and Politics and Social Structure in Laos, A Study of Tradition and Innovation (also in same volume, "Memoirs of a Young Lao Official")

13. May 7

14. May 14 Final paper due