“Masters of Their Own Destiny”
Asians in the First World War and its Aftermath

November 9-10th, 2018
Chamchuri 10 Bldg., 7th Floor, Chulalongkorn University

An International Conference and a Photography Exhibition
organized by the History Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University
and the Institute of Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia (Trasec – CNRS)
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Pr. XU Guoqi (The University of Hong Kong)

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Portraits of Asians engaged in the Great War drawn by Eugène Burnand

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An International Conference and a Photography Exhibition organized by the History Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University and the Institute of Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC – CNRS)
The Institute of Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia (Irasec) is a French leading research centre dedicated to the study of the Southeast Asian region, based in Bangkok (Thailand). Engaging the humanities and social sciences in an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective, it analyzes the major developments that affect the Asean countries. Deeply anchored in the Thai academic landscape, the center is developing international academic networks, in particular between Asia and Europe. Irasec intends to stimulate debate within scholarly circles and enhance public awareness of the region. The institute copublishes books with international academic editors in French, English and more infrequently in Southeast Asian language. It provides free access to its online publications.

The Center of European Studies (CES) created in 1997, is an upgrade of the Chulalongkorn University European Studies Programme (CUESP) funded by the European Commission since 1993. Its main objective is to provide an academic excellence in European Studies in Thailand and the ASEAN region and promote a co-operative network between Thai/ASEAN and European scholars through a stimulating intellectual environment. It is also to disseminate knowledge and up-to-date information on European affairs within Thailand and the ASEAN region by the means of international workshops, conferences, training programmes, teaching and publications.
“Masters of Their Own Destiny”: Asians in the First World War and Its Aftermath
Foreword

We are extremely happy to welcome you to the international conference “Masters of their own Destiny: Asians in the First World War and its Aftermath”. It is a great opportunity to organize this conference and this photography exhibition, here in Bangkok, at Chulalongkorn University. This “modern educational institution” was created by King Vajiravudh in 1917, at the same time as he made a decision to lead Siam into WWI, as a way to reinforce his kingdom’s position vis-à-vis the Western powers, as an equal ally.

This conference is the result of a fruitful scientific partnership between the History Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University and the Institute of Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia (Irasec). It could not happen without the great financial and logistic support of the Center for European Studies (CES), Chulalongkorn University. A considerable amount of time and energy has been invested by our two teams in the organization of this event. Let them be warmly thanked here: Wasana Wongsurawat, Din Buadaeng, Amekha Sritaboot, Bertrand Bayet, Pichayapat Naisupap, Chantana Chainaken, Sébastien Lambalot and Paul Abela.

This conference has also been made possible thanks to various partners and sponsors here in Bangkok. First, the French Ambassador Jacques Lapouge, his predecessor Gilles Garachon, Fabian Forni, Counsellor for Culture and Cooperation and the German Ambassador Georg Schmidt, Vera Clemens, third secretary, Joachim Hecker, Counsellor for Culture and Cooperation: Both embassies have highly supported the academic event. Pascale Favre, director of the Alliance française was also very supportive. The River Books Publishing House, Paisarn Piemmettawat and Mom Rajawongse Narisa Chakrabongse, the descendant of Prince Chakrabongse who was a key decision maker of Siam’s participation in WWI, contributed to the realization of the photo exhibition. François Doré (The Librairie du Siam) kindly offers his portraits of the famous Swiss painter Eugène Burnand for the exhibition at the Alliance française.
We also get the precious financial support of the French label Commemoration 1914 - 18 which shows the interest of French institutions to decentre the Western worldview of the conflict in order to take into account the important contribution of the Asians to the conflict. We also thank the French institutions who help us to find the pictures and have done their best to send us the pictures: the Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD), the Service Historique de la Défense and La Contemporaine.

Last but not least, we are happy to welcome all of the participants from Asia (Thailand, India, Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam), from Europe (France, Germany, Belgium and UK) and from Canada. We are particularly grateful to Professor Xu Guoqi (The University of Hong Kong) for accepting to be the keynote speaker. As the author of *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Oxford University Press), *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Harvard University Press), and *China and the Great War* (Cambridge University Press), he is the most qualified to inaugurate the conference by offering a global view of this shared history.

Let us warmly thank you all and wish you all a fruitful and stimulating conference.

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Contributors

Olga V. ALEXEEVA is Associate Professor of Chinese History at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQÂM). Her current research focuses on the history of early Republican China with particular reference to China’s involvement in WWI. She has written on a range of related topics, including “Experiencing War: Chinese Workers in Russia During the First World War”, The Chinese Historical Review (2018) and Les Chinois à Saint-Pétersbourg. Histoire et portrait d’une communauté en mutation (Québec, PUQ, 2015).

Currently French lecturer at the Department of Western Languages, Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok, Alexandre BARTHEL is a doctor in history graduated from the University of Caen, France. His thesis focuses on the origins of the Thai anti-communist policy during the 20th century, using both Thai and French archives and is entitled Anticommunism and authoritarianism in Siam: from the reign of King Vajiravudh to the first years of the Cold War.

Thep BOONTANONDHA has been a lecturer in history at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University. His MA thesis, conducted at Chulalongkorn University, dealt with the question of King Vajiravudh’s relations with the Siamese military which was published by Matichon Publishing in 2015. Thep is currently preparing a PhD at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Japan on the military power of the Thai Kings between 1925-1955.

Din BUADAENG is a PhD student in History and Social Sciences of Asia at Université Paris Diderot. The topic of his PhD thesis is Memories, Commemorations and Sites of Memories: The First World War in the Contemporary Thai History (1919-2017).
Stefan HELL holds a PhD degree in History from Leiden University (Netherlands). His research interests are international affairs in Southeast Asia and between Asia and Europe, as well as the history of international and regional organisations. He has been working as a consultant to international organisations in Asia for the past 20 years and is currently based in Myanmar. He is the author of number of publications among which Siam and the League of Nations: Modernisation, Sovereignty, and Multilateral Diplomacy, 1920-1940 (2010) and Siam and World War I: An International History (2017), both published by River Books in Bangkok.


Padej KUMLERTSAKUL is an Adviser for Defence, Maritime and Environment at The National Archives since 2008. His research interests are on the use of the Chinese labourers and labour management in military operations during the First World War, as well as British military campaign at Tsingtau.

Satarupa LAHIRI, graduated from Jadavpur University and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Her MPhil thesis was titled Everyday Life of the Indian Soldiers during the First World War. She is currently pursuing a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her area of research is on medical practice and personnel of the Indian Army during the Second World War. Her research aims at building a conversation between the military and medical history of the Indian army, while locating herself at the juncture of ‘social history of medicine’ and ‘new military history’.
Mireille LE VAN HO is an archivist-palaeographer, graduated of the Ecole des Chartes and an honorary chief librarian. She directed various departments at the Sorbonne Library, at the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (now La Contemporaine), at the Mazarine Library (Institut de France). She was the director of the library of the Conservatoire national des Arts et Métiers (CNAM). She is currently doing researches on the colonial and immigrant labor force in the French industry and published in 2014, Des Vietnamiens dans la Grande guerre: 50 000 recrues dans les usines françaises (Vendémaire, 2014).

Denis MARÉCHAL Graduate of the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris with a Phd D on La photographie: Quelle source pour l’histoire?. Denis Maréchal has been an historical adviser at the Memorial of Caen and at the World Center for Peace at Verdun. He was in charge at the Institut National Audiovisuel (Ina) of the development of audiovisual archives in Social and Humanities researches and organized number of conferences followed by publications as Quelle est la place des images en histoire ? (Nouveau Monde, 2008) coedited with C. Delporte, L. Gervereau, or La guerre après la guerre. Image et construction des imaginaires de guerre dans l’Europe du XXe siècle, coedited with C. Delporte, C. Moine et I. Veyrat-Masso (Nouveau Monde, 2010). He is an historical adviser today.

Pr Tul Israngura NA AYUDHYA teaches European History at Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. He gained his M.A. in medieval and modern European history from Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, Germany, and his doctorate from School of History, Queen Mary University of London, UK. His research originally focuses on gender and family relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as cultural history of early modern Europe. Recently, he has extended his research interests to the representation of genders, emotions and senses of men and women as depicted in twentieth-century wartime self-writings.

Joy L.K. PACHUAU is Professor of History at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research interest includes history of Portuguese expansion in Asia, history of Northeast India and the visual history of the region. Prof. Pachuaau’s recent publications include The Camera as Witness: A Social History of Mizoram, Northeast India (with W. van Schendel, CUP, 2015); Christianity in Indian History: Issues of Culture, Power and Knowledge (eds with P.
Malekandathil and T. Sarkar, Primus 2016) and Landscape, Culture and Belonging: writing the History of Northeast India (eds. with N. Bhattacharya), CUP, 2018 forthcoming.

**Bhawan RUANGSILP** is currently Assistant Professor and Head of the History Department, Faculty of Arts, and Deputy Director of the Center for European Studies (CES), Chulalongkorn University. She obtained her doctoral degree in history at Leiden University. Among her published works is Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

**Jan SCHMIDT** is Associate Professor at KU Leuven. He received his MA in Medieval and Modern History and in Japanese Studies from Heidelberg University. His researches focus in particular the impact of the First World War on Japan within its East Asian and global context. His monograph Nach dem Krieg ist vor dem Krieg. Medialiserte Erfahrungen des Ersten Weltkriegs und Nachkriegsdiskurse in Japan (1914-1919) Postwar is Prewar—Medialized Experiences of the First World War and Postwar Discourses in Japan, 1914–1919 and The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: Global Entanglements and Japan, China and Korea, 1914–1919, co-edited with K. Schmidtpott, will be published in 2019.

**Radhika SINGHA** teaches modern Indian history at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research interests focus on the social history of crime and criminal law, identification practices, especially in relation to colonial governmentality, borders and border-crossing. The mobilisation of human, fiscal and material resources from India for World War One has become a second, often intersecting research track. By bringing military history into conversation with labour history and working with different spatial frames she hopes to reassess India’s location in this global conflict.

**Boonpisit SRIHONG** is currently a PhD student at the History Department, Chulalongkorn University. With background in law, he completed his master’s degree in Thai History from Chulalongkorn University. His MA thesis dealt with the work of a Siamese journalist, critical of the French agenda in Siam. His main interests are the
history of prints in Siam and Southeast Asian ‘sea-port’ countries, and the influence of mass media on governance and politics.

**Claire Thi Lién TRAN** is the director of Irasee, a French Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia based in Bangkok. After completing a PhD at the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, she has been Associate Professor at Paris Diderot University till 2016, teaching History of Southeast Asia. Her publications focused on the Catholic minority and relations State/religions in Contemporary Vietnam and also on the Elites, Press and Gender History from a biographical perspective. She is the coeditor of the annual publication *Asie du Sud-Est 2017, Bilan, enjeux et perspectives* and is preparing a book on the Left Catholics in Vietnam.

**Salma WASI** has recently submitted dissertation titled Feeding the Indian Soldier: Food and Colonial Military Service, c. 1882-1946 for Master of Philosophy degree at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. She is currently enrolled in the PhD Program in the same institution.

**Wasana WONGSURAWAT** is an assistant professor at the History Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Her research interests include modern and contemporary Chinese history, nationalism and transnationalism, the Cold War, and the history of the Chinese diaspora. Her most recent publications include the edited volume “Sites of Modernity: Asian Cities in the Transitory Moments of Trade, Colonialism, and Nationalism,” (Springer, 2016) and the article “The Social Capital of Being Chinese in Thai Politics,” in the edited volume “The Sociology of Chinese Capitalism in Southeast Asia,” (Springer, 2019).

“Masters of Their Own Destiny”: Asians in the First World War and Its Aftermath
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The idea of such a conference emerged in Paris at the beginning of the commemoration process of the First World War centenary. While the Asian soldiers and workers were mentioned as a mass of colonized people engaged to serve their masters, the voices of around 1723,000 Asians (more than 70% of the non-Western people participating in the war), who came from 1914 to 1920 to Europe to fight and work on the front or on the home front, still remain a large unexplored field of research. The cultural history—which take into account the global community of culture between the home front and the front, and the history from below which attempts to account the perspective of common people, have still to question the daily life, the exceptional encounter with the European societies, and the cohabitation with Western common people, that these individuals experienced. Not to mention the discovering of other battlefields in the colonized regions in the Middle East.

Organizing the conference together in Bangkok to approach the war from an Asian perspective seems to us particularly relevant. From the perspective of the elite of the three Asian countries who engaged in the war (Japan, China and Thailand) as from the perspective of these hundred thousands of Asians people who committed themselves to fight or to work so far from their home, the narrative of this experience by Asian individuals lead us to deal with their vision of their own destiny. Thus, this conference considers this exceptional mobility to Europe of these numerous individual experiences of the First World War as a major step of the collective and individual trend in Asia, to become “masters of their own destiny” and had left noticeable political and social legacies in Asian countries during the twenties and thirties, to begin with the peace treaties at the Versailles with their expectations and disillusionments.

Several works have been published in recent years on the First World War from an Asian perspective: Nicholas Tarling, Asia and the First World War (The University of Auckland 2014); Guoqi Xu, Asia and the Great War: A
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Shared History (The Greater War), (Oxford University Press, 2017); Heather Streets-Salter, World War One in Southeast Asia: Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict (Cambridge University Press, 2017). The perspective of this conference is to consider the First World War as a key moment which permitted, for the first time in history, important migrations of people and circulations of ideas, objects, and technics between Asia and Europe in both ways. The aim of this conference is to highlight the Asian individual and collective trajectories, marked by their desire to become the “masters of their own destiny” in the colonial and total war context. It is the matter of joining together the perspectives of global history, micro history, and history from below. A biographical approach with the illustration of the individuals’ “non-standard” experiences could allow us to measure the impact of particular experiences of war and of Europe on their lives as well as on their family circle.

It is the question of analyzing their experience of war, their conditions of life and states of mind in Europe as well as the return to their homeland from diverse sources (the army’s postal censorship commission, intimate letters, press, photographs, memoires, diaries and literary work, and many more). How did Asian workers or soldiers seize that exceptional opportunity to “take charge of their own destiny” at both the individual and national level? How did the Asians apply that “exceptional” experience of the First World War and expatriation to their personal and social life? What was the impact of these individuals on the political, economic, social, and cultural destiny of the Asian people under colonial rules? The transition from individual aspirations by using experiences from Europe to political aspirations in coming back to their homeland, in other words their capacity to become “masters of their own destiny” will be particularly explored.

We hope that this conference will provide better understanding of the role of Asians in the First World War and the legacies of the war in Asia, thereby contributing to the writing of a World History of the First World War. Far from being a very peripheral event for Asians, this issue occurring at the beginning of the previous century marked a key stage on the long Asian March to Modernity, which had started at the end of the nineteenth century and is still a major issue today.
A Photographic Narrative of the Asians at War

Photography Exhibition
Ground Floor, Chamchuri 10 Building
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

The First World War was the first conflict to be photographed and the first in which pictures were actively exploited and controlled in support of the war effort. From WW1, photography became a powerful and established medium of mass communication. Most of these pictures are coming from the French archives and the private archives of the Prince Chakrabongse. The pictures come from three majors archival holdings in France: The Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD), The Service Historique de la Défense and La Contemporaine. An important part of these visual sources were mainly produced by the Section photographique des Armées, created in 1915 by the French Ministry of War to counter the strong German propaganda. Beside the official visual archives, these institutions have also collected private albums of amateur military photographers.

What do we know about the daily life of these hundreds of thousands of Asians coming massively on the European and Middle East battlefields between 1914 and 1919? What do we know about their experience of discovery in European societies and of cohabitation with Western common people in radically difference cultural and climatic contexts, plunged in the hell of trench warfare or of weapon factories? Among the great diversity of sources (the army’s postal censorship commission, intimate letters, the press, memoires, and diaries), which can tell us more about their life experience of total war from below, visual materials constitute a key perspective. These photographs constitute a more intimate perspective of these men at work or at the frontlines even if most of them were staged.
The Great War as Asia's Shared history

Pr. XU Guoqi
The University of Hong Kong

This talk focuses on the following issues: the importance of the Great War to Asia and Asia's contributions to the war; How did the war become a shared history of Asia, and the long lasting legacy of the war in Asian collective development.
Asian Soldiers, Workers and Intelligentsia in Europe: Experiences of Mobility

Session 1: Asian soldiers on the European front
Discussant: Stefan HELL (independent scholar)

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Fuel and the First World War: Cooking Experience of Indian Troops

Salma WASI
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

In recent years a new development in the historiography of the First World War has focused on the Indian troops’ experience of food, medicine and diseases and explored its role in maintaining their moral and loyalty on the frontline. Adding to this existing body of research my paper explores the cooking experience of the Indian Troops with the changes coming in the fuel and the cooking arrangements during the First World War, looking at the war in general and focusing on the Mesopotamia theatre in particular.

In the Mesopotamia theatre there was the shortage of wood and coal since the beginning of the war, as it was locally not available due to naturally low forest cover, the big portion of which was consumed by the large number of troops marching in the region. All necessities of fuel were directly supplied from India, which very often resulted into a crisis situation due to shortage in shipping or wood reserve back at home. In this context, in 1916, oil fuel was experimented for cooking in the army for the first time in the oil rich Karun region of the Mesopotamia theatre. This paper investigates the way new cooking arrangements to use oil fuel were experimented with newer technologies at military cantonments in Bombay and Rawalpindi. Overall, this paper examines the availability of fuel, the various types of cooking arrangements and the cooking experiences of Indian troops with it.
Between Fealty and Freedom: 
The DeserTERS of the Indian Army 
in World War I

Satarupa LAHIRI
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Loyalty, fealty and freedom are the primary attributes for being a soldier. But what about those who abandoned their post, service and thus their brethren at war? What is desertion –betrayal or escape? The paper will look into the lives, experiences and psyche of the soldiers who deserted the Indian Army during the First World War from the various theatres of war, like France and Mesopotamia. In this context the paper will analyse the various forms of desertion, ranging from walking across the trenches and joining the other side, to self-inflicting wounds and committing suicide.

A discussion of the varied causes that instigated the soldiers will help one in understanding how individuals, while being part of a collective responded to war-front stimuli. The paper will also discuss the government’s take on these ‘war criminals’ as well as how their abandoned compatriots perceived them. On the other part of the globe, the repercussions that the families of these ‘deserTERS’ faced back home, to accommodate the whims of the authorities’ regarding the suitable mode of punishment will bring out the flux within the colonial administration and the effect it had on its subjects.
National Pride and Identity: Siamese Expeditionary Force in the Great War

Bhawan RUANGSILP
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

“We are like Hanuman volunteering for Vishnu to fight against the Yaksa”. In trying to explain the role of the Siamese troops sent to Europe to assist the Allies in their struggle against Germany and her associates, and to make sense of the mission he volunteered to accomplish, a Siamese soldier, Kleub Gesorn, drew comparison from the good vs. evil plot of an old-aged, Indian-influenced Thai literature.

Siam’s participation in the First World War offers a case study which can shed light on how modern Thai national identity and personal identities were developed at its early stage. In this context, Siam’s emerging national identity should, however, not be viewed only as an awareness of difference from other nations but also as a sense of belonging to the new world order, which was coming into existence as a result of the Great War. This international war became a place to express a sense of national pride, to which the Siamese Expeditionary Force could claim to contribute.
The discovery of “a World of possibilities”: Daily life, hopes and disillusionsof Vietnamese during WWI

Mireille LE VAN HO
Archivist, Honorary Chief Librarian, Paris

During World War One, 90,000 Vietnamese went to France to support the war effort. Around 50,000 peasants from the Red River Delta went as workers in gunpowder and weapons factories. Translators and non-commissioned officers were mainly recruited within the Cochinchinese rising middle class.

Under military control in the factories and in the cantonments, the Vietnamese recruits were, however, in daily contact with French people. They wrote to their family their fascination for modernity and technical progress and their will to take advantage of their stay in France to improve their living conditions on return. Some of them also developed a very critical vision of their working conditions and of the French society at war. Their state of mind worried the colonial administration in Indochina so much that it reinforced the military postal censorship.

My paper analyses the reports from the Postal Censorship Service. French and Vietnamese inspectors read, censored and compiled about 600 letters a day. These sources give us to hear the workers’ first impressions, their adjustment efforts, their love stories with French women, their discoveries and disillusion, but also their strategies for the post-war period. This experience of war and exile would be decisive back to Indochina, facing the traditional hierarchies and colonial domination in Indochina. Until the popular uprisings of the early 30’s.
War Experiences of Chinese Labourers in Russia, 1914-1921: A Legacy of Pain and Pride

Olga V. ALEXEEVA
Associate Professor of Chinese History, University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM)

Like its European allies, Russia recruited and employed thousands of Chinese labourers during WWI. Between 1915 and 1917, over 160,000 Chinese came to Russia to work in the coal mines in the Ural region, construct railways in the polar zones of Northern Russia, cut timber in the Siberian taiga, load and unload boats on the docks of Petrograd and Riga on the Baltic Sea and to do various kinds of manual labor all over the Russian empire. With the outbreak of Russian Revolution, Chinese laborers found themselves trapped in a foreign land, in the midst of the civil war. During their unexpectedly long and dramatic stay in Russia, they had taken part in major historical events that shaped the history of the 20th century, thus marking China’s first active involvement in global events far from its shores.

Why did Russia decide to use Chinese workers behind the front lines? How were these laborers recruited in China? What happened to them once they arrived in Russia? How did they settle back into their communities after the trauma of their wartime experiences? Did they bring back to China new ideas and new skills? By analysing various materials from Russian archives (reports of local officials, labourers’ contracts, letters and petitions of Chinese labourers to the Russian authorities, memoirs of Chinese labourers drafted into the Red Army during the Russian Civil War), this paper aims to shed a new light on the wartime experiences of the Chinese in Russia and on China’s participation in the conflict on the Eastern front.
Chinese Labour Corps in the Western front

Padej KUMLERTSAKUL
The National Archives, London

The centenary of the First World War in 2014 has triggered a wave of commemorative activities across the academic community as well as the public at large. This reflected the shift from both a predominantly Eurocentric to global focus, as well as from a military, to a broader social and cultural history emphasis. In China’s case, the war coincided with a profound transformation of the Chinese society and ultimately led to the culmination of the process of national self-determination. China’s greatest contribution to the allied effort during the war was the sending of tens of thousands of labourers to work behind the European front lines. They were to replace local labourers’ mobilized for the army and to perform all kinds of works related to the allied war effort: construction of military fortification and industrial rebuilding of roads and railways; production of explosives or bombs; repairing tanks; clearing corpses and wounded from the battlefield.

This paper is based on the records of War Office registered files relating to the use of labour in various theatre of war, Directorate of Military Operations on Chinese Labour Corps and other relevant sources held at The National Archives in United Kingdom. While discussing some of the Chinese experiences of war, it will focused on the colonial mentality and its effects on labour management.
The Great War and the Labour Corps: 
Notes from the Lushai Hills 
(Northeast India)

Joy L.K. PACHUAU
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

The paper will use the memoir of a Labour Corps veteran from the then Lushai Hills [now Mizoram, in India] to explore the reception in the Hills of the colonial government’s call to join in the war efforts. The Lushai Hills had been colonized for a little over two decades and Sainghinga, the author of Indopui “The Great War”, was one of the many who responded to that call. The Lushais had only recently adopted a script, and Sainghinga, being among the early ones to have a formal education was made Interpreter.

Even though the Lushai/Mizo past was filled with stories of movement and migration, this was the first time that people from their community were travelling overseas using modern means of communication and the memoir narrates the wonder of overseas travel. The memoir was written close to the beginning of the Second World War, almost twenty years after the return from France. In spite of that, the mood, the sentiment and the details of their time in France are quite vivid. The experience of travel across continents, encounter with various kinds of people and the culture shock they faced are evident in the memoir.

Besides Sainghinga’s memoir, the paper will also explore other articles and essays that were written in a monthly newsmagazine called Mizo leh vai regarding the people’s observations about the Mizo contribution to the war efforts.
The First World war and the making of King Vajiravudh image as a Jomtub of the Nation

Thep BOONTANONDHA
Waseda University, Tokyo

King Vajiravudh took Siam into the First World War on 22 July 1917 as an ally of the Triple Entente. On the one hand, bringing the nation into the Great War was an opportunity to rescind the unequal treaties, which Siam had been forced to conclude with Western powers since the reign of King Mongkut. On the other hand, the war participation gave a great chance to King Vajiravudh to create and present his image as a war hero and a great king. Despite his position of Jomtub—the supreme commander of all Siamese armed forces, the king’s reputation among the military had suffered considerably as a result of a number of conflicts, which he had come into with the soldiers since his time as the crown prince. In this situation, the participation in the First World War seemed to offer a solution to increase his popularity and prestige in the eye of soldiers, and civilians.

In the same tradition of King Naresuan, who has been inscribed in Thai history as a great king and a great warrior, King Vajiravudh sought to perpetuate his name as a war hero, with a victory in the Great War for Siam under his leadership as the Jomtub of the nation. However, an alliance with Britain and France was not to be accepted unconditionally, while many Siamese still resented their past imperialist aggressions against Siam, sympathized with Germany, and wanted Siam to maintain her neutrality in the war. This paper will analyse King Vajiravudh’s strategy and policies to convince the Siamese to take the Allies’ side in the First World War and strengthen his status as the supreme military leader of the kingdom.
Adaptation and Self-assertion: Prince Charoon and Thai-Western Relations during and after World War I

Stefan HELL
independent scholar

Prince Charoonsakdi Kritakara was arguably the most prominent Thai diplomat and one of the most influential foreign policy makers before, during and after World War I. Prince Charoon was the driving force behind Siam’s entry into the war, the mastermind behind sending the Siamese Expeditionary Force to the battlefields of Europe, he signed the Treaty of Versailles, and he represented his country at the League of Nations from its inauguration in 1920 until the prince’s death in 1928. This paper will attempt a first political biography of Prince Charoon and will focus on the intensive period between 1914 and 1928, during which we can observe the prince navigating European and Asian culture through his thought process and actions.

Born into a position of great privilege in Siam as the grandson of a king, Charoon represented his kingdom and its interests in Europe for nearly two decades, while at the same time sincerely embracing western culture and norms in his position as a senior diplomat. He thereby helps us to understand the dynamic between cultural adaptation and self-assertion, which underpinned all foreign policy decisions and many domestic developments in Siam during this period. The paper will be based mainly on primary sources held by the National Archives of Thailand, the National Archives of the United Kingdom, and the Archives of the French Foreign Ministry.
A World War Closely Studied – Japanese Academics, Bureaucrats and Military Officers in Europe

Prof. Dr. Jan SCHMIDT
KU Leuven

The Empire of Japan became the first belligerent Asian power in the First World War when declaring war on Germany on August 23, 1914. The occupation of the German leased territory of Qingdao in November 1914, the German colonies in Micronesia and its participation in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 with the five “major powers”, are rather well known. But as for China and Siam that were long deemed to have been mere bystanders of the First World War, the war became also an object of thorough active observation. During the war, many Japanese became witnesses of wartime societies in Europe and later in the US. Their observations were often instrumental for informing policies in the Interwar Period.

This paper aims first to give an overview of the immense efforts of the bureaucracy, the armed forces and the academics undertook to study the war and of the lessons they conveyed back home. Second, from the hundreds of Japanese sent to Europe and to the US, two representative cases will be introduced: Maruyama Tsurukichi, a Home Ministry Bureaucrat, and Shiba Chūzaburō, a Professor at Tōkyō Imperial University. General Muraoka Chōtarō, who had not been sent himself but had played a central role in the Japanese effort to study the war will be briefly compared. In conclusion, the impact of these “witness” accounts will be discussed and situated in the larger context of the forgotten active role of Asians in the war.
Asian Individuals and the Circulation of New Ideas, Knowledge and Technics

Session 4: Asian activists and the making of new political networks
Discussant: Claire TRAN (Irasec, Bangkok)

Session 5: The making of new Elite and the Emergence of new Professions
Discussant: Bhawan RUANGSILP (Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok)
The Comrades of War Association: Political networks and the 1932 Siamese Revolution

Din BUADAENG
University Paris Diderot, Paris

The Comrades of War Association was created by King Rama VI in 1921 as a response to the American ambassador’s recommendations. The primary objectives of the association were to create unity among the volunteers of the First World War, help out those in need, and keep good connections with other such associations at the international level. Funded by the royal purse, the association seemed royalist by nature.

In contradiction with this conventional image, however, this paper argues that there existed an informal political network of volunteers, built upon close ties during and after the years in France, and grouped around some important members of the association. Behind the harmless public face of the association lay a space for many volunteers to reinforce their dissatisfaction with the Siamese Absolutist State. Among other reasons, many volunteers faced difficulty in acquiring positions in the hierarchical bureaucracy after being decommissioned upon their return from war.

Their experience in Europe, the post-war economic crisis, the last years of King Rama VI and his death in 1925 all contributed to a radical vision of politics up to the point that a republican revolution was planned albeit not accomplished. Two volunteers eventually became the founding members of the People’s Party (Khana Ratsadon) in Paris, and many played important roles before and after the 1932 revolution. Under the new regime, the association benefitted greatly in financial terms and many volunteers obtained better positions in the bureaucracy.
The Shape of Home-coming: Indian Soldiers and Labourers in Global Conflict, 1914-21

Radhika SINGHA
Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

The “multi-plex politics” of colonial empire have provided a useful frame for historians searching for ways to write a less Euro-centric history of World War one. One the eastern side of the Indian Ocean Japan’s rising power emerged as a source of anxiety for the government of India. The other concern was to seal off recruiting zones in Punjab from anti-imperialist propaganda flowing along Punjabi settler and sojourner nodes dotting the routes from Southeast Asia to the prosperous Pacific rim.

On the other side of the Indian Ocean in East Africa, and the Middle East, manpower and material resources from India assisted Britain to emerge from the war, having extended her territorial possessions and spheres of influence. The reliance on Indian military personnel to secure Britain’s over-extended empire, meant that the “end of the war” was a very stretched out experience for them. Managing the shape of their return was important to civil and military authorities in India. Suspended leave, suspended de-mobilisation and pressure to re-engage, in a context marked by implosions along India’s frontiers and seething political movements, helped the emergence of veteran “constituencies”. The nature of war experience was therefore textured by the ways in which that experience came to an end, and by the permanence or evanescence of the trace which war-service left on minds, bodies and the official record.
King Vajiravudh and the May Fourth Movement: Resonance of Asian Participation in the Great War

Wasana WONGSURAWAT
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In terms of political prestige and pragmatic negotiations, it would appear that Siam’s minimal investment in the Great War under the leadership of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) was one among the more successful cases of Asian participation in World War I. The Chinese involvement, on the other hand, was an epic failure. Hence, the rise of the May Fourth Movement, which remains one of the greatest and most influential socio-cultural movements in modern Chinese history. Yet, the profound effects of the May Fourth Movement—a reaction towards China’s failure in the Great War—significantly influenced the postwar policies of King Rama VI—whose decision to enter the war has been perceived as one of the greatest achievements of his reign.

Vajiravudh’s reaction towards the May Fourth Movement is quite telling of the complex power structure of quasi-independent states in the Asia-Pacific region. The success of Asian participation in the Great War was a success of an inter-dependent relationship with European colonial powers. Failure, on the other hand, ushered in an era of anti-European imperialist nationalism. As the May Fourth Movement blossomed into the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, the First United Front, and eventually the KMT’s Northern Expedition that united the Republic of China under one internationally recognized government, the Siamese absolute monarchy was moving steadily towards its demise in the 1932 Siamese Revolution.
The First World War and the development of Chinese political activities in Siam

Alexandre BARTHEL
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The effects of the First World War on China were also felt in Siam in two main indirect ways. Siam was primarily affected by an increase of the Chinese immigration which, at the same time, changed in nature as indicated by the rise of the number of women entering the kingdom. The First World War and its consequences on the Chinese nationalism also affected the politicization of the Chinese population in Siam. If the nationalist movement existed already before 1914 in Siam, it became more active from the May 4th Movement of May 4th onward, while in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the creation of the Chinese Communist Party the communist movement in Siam emerged in the 1920s.

This work intends to study the Chinese political evolution in Siam from 1914 to the late 1920s through the experience of Siao Hut Seng, a major figure of the Chinese nationalist movement in the Southeast Asian kingdom, as well as that of Tham Chin Sam, the director of the newspaper Khiao Seng, the first leftist newspaper published in Siam. The publication of the Khiao Seng preceded the foundation, within the Guomindang, of the “Second Branch”, the first communist political organization established in Siam. Finally, the response of the Siamese authorities to the ongoing political developments in the Chinese community, in particular the policies of censorship and deportation, will also be discussed.
Nguyên Xuân Mai (1890-1924), graduate from the École de Médecine and director of the indigenous hospital in Hanoi, enrolled in May 1916. Naturalized French soon after his arrival in France, he was sent to the Aisne and the Vosges as an auxiliary doctor. Awarded France's War Cross and Legion of Honor in 1918, he succeeded in staying in France to complete his PhD in 1921, despite the opposition of the French Governor Albert Sarraut. Back to Indochina, he was stonewalled, as his numerous claims to the Colonial administration for a position and salary corresponding to his status of French doctor went unheeded. Disappointed and war-wounded, he came back to France in 1925 and worked as military doctor in Algeria. Back to his homeland in 1929, he died at the age of 39, because of permanent injuries and inhaled mustard gas. He just get in extremis, the disability pension, he was claiming since 1918.

This paper highlights the itinerary of this medical doctor characterized by a strong desire to become “master of his own destiny” in sizing the opportunities to bypass the colonial order. As a French medical doctor, he experienced life on the Front but also discovered life in the French society. I will deal with what WW1 meant very concretely in his personal life in terms of human and professional experiences, cultural and identity adjustments, hopes and deceptions and the impacts on his family.
Postcards from Europe: The Siamese Pilots in WWI and the Formation of a New Professional and Political Elite

Boonpisit SRIHONG
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

A postcard from B. Tejagupta postmarked ‘ISTRÈS Bches DU RHONE’ dated 20 June 1918, was sent to M.L. Gorai in England. Other postcards bore the same imprint: a double circle surrounding a seven-petal flower resembling a purple jasmine blossom adorned with wings and the words ‘CORP D’AVIATION SIAMOIS EN EUROPE’. These postcards were sent by volunteer soldiers of the Aviation Corps of the Siamese Expeditionary Force. The ‘personal’ stories of B. Tejagupta and other Thai soldiers are rarely a subject for Thai historical studies as they were praised as part of the collectivity of the Siamese Expeditionary Force.

From the postcards sent from Europe and collected by some Thai Philatelists, one can not only identify the names, ranks and divisions of the senders. One can also establish their social background, thoughts and desires. A picture of their lives at war in Europe can be pieced together. This paper shows how the Siamese pilots trained in France during and after WWI were to play an important role in the developments of the Royal Thai Air Force, and a new profession of pilots in Siam. It also shows how this experience shaped their political views and ultimately affected their decision-making from the Siamese-French Indochina crisis (1940-1941) to the end of WWII.
TOPIC 3

Digital Ressources and Visual Sources
First World War

1914-1918-online. A Global Publication Project in the Digital Age
Oliver JANZ (Freie Universität Berlin)

Film archives on Siamese forces engaged in World War One:
Analysis of visual sources
Discussant: Claire TRAN (Irasec, Bangkok)

Portraits of Asians engaged in the Great War
drawn by Eugène Burnand
"Masters of Their Own Destiny": Asians in the First World War and Its Aftermath

The Asians in the First World War
Digital Ressources and Visual Sources

Presentation of Oliver Janz (Freie Universität Berlin): 1914-1918-online. A Global Publication Project in the Digital Age
&
Film Screening of the Siamese expeditionary force during the First World War (ECPAD) followed by a debate with Denis Maréchal (Ina, Paris), Tul Israngura na Ayudhya (Chulalongkorn Univ) and Claire Tran (Irasec)

November 10th, 2018

Auditorium of the Alliance Française de Bangkok
179 Thanon Witthayu, Lumphini, Pathum Wan - 10330 Bangkok
World War I changed life on all continents like no previous historical event. However, the First World War was not only a global, but also a long war. In many respects, it began before 1914, and it lasted far beyond 1918. These historiographical perspectives form the basis of *1914-1918-online*. *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. The encyclopedia represents the First World War in its full breadth: as a transnational, pan-European and global event which reached beyond 1918.

*1914-1918-online* is not only the first online encyclopedia on the First World War which meets academic requirements, but is also to date the most comprehensive, with over 1,300 articles. Multiple links with the knowledge space of the internet, free access through Open Access, and publication in the English language guarantee high international visibility. Through semantic navigation and new forms of user participation, *1914-1918-online* is increasingly becoming a model for academic online encyclopedias in the humanities and an example for how research can be communicated to the wider public.
Film archives on Siamese forces engaged in World War One: Analysis of visual sources

Tul Israngura na AYUDHYA
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Denis MARÉCHAL
Institut National d'Audiovisuel Ina, Paris

During the First World War, the French Ministry of War, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, created a photographic and cinematographic section of the army (Section photographique et cinématographique des armées – SPCA) to carry out reports and films on the front. These images and films were broadcasted to the soldiers and to the home front and abroad, but also serve as material to study military operations. Heir to this SPCA, the ECPAD (Communication and Audiovisual Production Establishment of Defense) broadcasts and enhances the images of its first reporters and plays a major role in the collection of private photos and videos taken or collected by official and amateur photographers and filmmakers. The screening of film on the Siamese Expeditionary Force during the First Word War, will be followed by a debate moderated by Claire Tran (Irasec) with
The silent footage in black and white on the Siamese participation in the World War One presented here has been made by the SPCA in 1918-1919. It describes the following events:

- The visit of Prince Charoon, Minister of Siam at the Glorieux Hospital at Bevaux near Verdun, March 15, 1918
- The arrival of the Siamese expeditionary force in Marseille and its arrival in Istres station in August 1918.
- The arrival of the Siamese contingent in Dourdan training camp by trucks (Essonne) September 11, 1918
- The visit of the Siamese troops to the Palace of Versailles and their travel by train to the front, September 22 and 23, 1918
- A parade of Siamese troops in Germany and decoration ceremony for the flag of the Royal Army of Siam in Neustadt (Palatinate), March 13, 1919
- Victory Day in Paris July 14, 1919
- The visit of General Phraya Bijai, representing the king of Siam Rama VI to the Pau and Cazaux aviation camps on February 28, 1919
Portraits of Asians engaged in the Great War drawn by Eugène Burnand

Thanks to François Doré from the Librairie du Siam, the Irasec and the Alliance Française are pleased to present 10 original portraits of Asian soldiers painted by Eugène Burnand (1850-1921). They are part of his collection of soldiers of the Great War drawn between 1917 and 1921 by the Swiss painter. After studying at the École des Beaux-Arts in Geneva and in Paris, the landscape painter became interested in other genres such as religious painting. He was also passionate about engraving and illustration, collaborating with periodicals like L'Illustration. He is most well-known, however, for his series of pastel and pencil portraits representing soldiers of the Great War. During his military mission in Paris in 1917, he stayed at rue d'Assas, near the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where passing troops were housed. He drew his first models there and then traveled through France, including Marseille and Montpellier, where the French and British colonial troops were stationed. His models were paid but some refused payment as they considered it an honour. Most are identified by name, some only by rank, unit, or country of origin.

Burnand organized his first exhibition of about eighty portraits in May 1919 at the Musée du Luxembourg. Then, with the help of the Allied military authorities, he continued his project by producing a catalog of soldiers who participated in the conflict. He was impressed by the multiplicity of nations involved in the conflict and the variety of cultures represented. He wanted "to study the modern soldier from a psychological point of view" and add to this initial program, more ambitious intentions, such as ethnographic interest. Eugène Burnand's series of soldiers’s portraits was the subject of a book foreworded by the French Marshal Foch, The Allies in the War of the Nations, published in 1922, shortly after his death.
Of the one hundred and four drawings by Eugène Burnand, thirteen represent Asians:

- Roshan Dean (Cambelpoor, Adook), Indian Army Soldier
- Sunder Sing Haldice, Hindu Non-commissioned officer (Sikh)
- Kothava Sema (Assam) Auxiliary of the Indian Army
- Chan Mohamed (Beloutchistan) Beluchi Auxiliary of the Indian Army
- Le Tiep (Phu Luong, Thua Thien Province)
- Lai Van Chau (Saigon) Tonkinese fighter
- Le Naplong (Hanoi) Annamese worker
- Chua Wanenangoun Francis (Bangkok) Siamese soldier
- Chinese worker (De Chingtas, province of Chang-Fong) (anonymous)
- Japanese Master Navy (anonymous)
- Indian Army Soldier (anonymous)
- Burmese. (anonymous)
- Gurkha (anonymous)
"Masters of Their Own Destiny": Asians in the First World War and Its Aftermath