Introduction

Piyanart Bunnag
This issue of *Asian Review* offers six contributions, under the theme of “Memories of History: Understanding Present Situations.”

The issue starts with Montira Rato’s paper on ‘Land reform in Vietnamese literature,’ concerning the land reform programme of the 1950s, a traumatic episode in Vietnamese history that most Vietnamese want to forget. The writer traces how the land reform is remembered through literary texts and from what point of view it has been related.

The four subsequent papers deal with themes relating Thailand with other Asian countries. In ‘The Chinese community in Bangkok during the second half of the nineteenth century,’ Piyanart Bunnag explains that the Chinese community in Bangkok was formed and grew steadily since the first decade of the Bangkok period. Chinese immigrants and their descendants gave contributions to the modernization of Thailand and to the growth of Bangkok as an economic center in terms of trade, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.

‘The network of Indian textile merchants in Thai society’ by Inthira Sahee analyses the patterns of immigration and trade together with the process of adaptation of Indian cloth merchants within Thai society from the second half of the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth, with its main focus on the formation of trading networks among Indian cloth merchants, both within and outside Thai society.

The fourth paper, ‘The Japanese army and Thailand’s southern railways during the Greater East Asian War, 1941–1945’ by Puengthip Kiattisahakul examines Japan’s war-time policy towards Thailand, the way in which the control over Thailand’s southern railways was exerted, and the impact of this action on the Japanese army, the Thai Railway Department and most importantly on the Thai local population.

The last paper on themes relating Thailand with other Asian countries is ‘The concept of “development” and the Thai
government's policies to develop the Northeast, 1951–1966' by Somsri Chaiwanichaya. The writer explains how development policy towards the Northeast was influenced by geopolitical concerns over the growth of communism in Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam which at that time were under the influence of the Soviet Union and China.

This issue closes with 'The proactive cosmopolitan foreign policy of the European Union: The Burmese issue reconsidered' by Piyapat Bunnag. The writer examines the European Union's foreign policy towards Myanmar from a constructivist perspective with a main emphasis on the objectives of human rights and democratization. She discusses the appropriateness and limitations of both ASEAN and EU approaches towards the issue.

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