

Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine - 1st Issue 2013

DATELINE BANGKOK

FCCT/OnAsia
Photojournalism
Contest





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FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND

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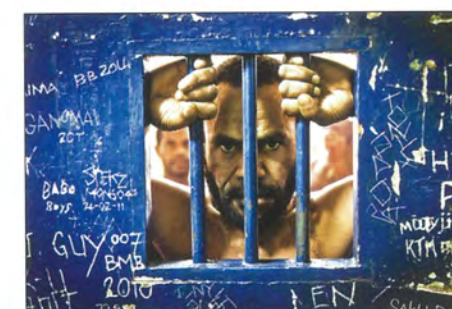
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Cover Photo by: Vlad Sokhin

Soi Whispers

Remember, you read it here first... 26

Take a front line seat at world events and be part of the buzz in the region by joining the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand.

Found at the heart of Asia's news and providing a hub of conviviality and professional commitment, the FCCT is a must for anyone wanting to engage in our times.

Frequent programme nights reveal and explain current affairs. Meet friends, colleagues and leading figures from the region's business, government, diplomatic and media circles at the bar. Press conferences, film nights and international receptions all happen here.

Members have special privileges: exclusive Internet access; this unique quarterly magazine for free; a weekly bulletin detailing upcoming events; insight into path-breaking photography and art, Jazz on Friday nights, special gourmet nights, and more. For street cred and sustenance in these trying times, the FCCT is the only choice.

Feeding The Machine

Dateline magazine looks at the stories behind the stories. All offerings will be considered, from articles and photo essays to letters, analysis, gossip, etc. Soi Whispers had to be cut from this 32 page issue for space reasons but will return ASAP.

Please send material to editor.
(jimpollard_1999@yahoo.com).
Submissions are paid for with glory and bar/ restaurant coupons.

President's address at the AGM

By Nirmal Ghosh, President FCCT



As always, it has been an interesting year. This board is packed with working journalists, many of whom are on the road a lot of the time. I am proud to say that my colleagues are some of the most respected working journalists in Thailand. It was an experiment on how the FCCT could run with such a board. The results were mixed, but the board did what it is supposed to do as a board – deliver programs, and provide advice on critical decisions. We all have to remember that this is voluntary work, and it is almost like having a second job – especially, I have to say, for the president. Good luck to the next one!

Upon the departure of Thanutra Theerasuphaset – Pink – we had Richard Holt as manager for a while, and then took on Khun Thanaporn – Joy – who is an experienced professional manager. She is moving on to greener pastures, hopefully, and Chananya – Pear – will be acting manager from tomorrow. We have taken on Thananchakoom Khanchua to help her, and look forward to a long and productive association. A special thanks indeed is due to all our staff, from the office to the bar to the kitchen, and all those who help us, giving freely of their time because the FCCT is worth it – people like Julian Hadden, Paul Wedel, Jeanne Hallacy, Lekha Shankar.

Membership fees are the backbone of the FCCT. But programs are the life blood. We held a number of remarkable programs through the year. We started the year with dinner with the Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, an event we will be repeating on March 11. At the dinner, sponsors stepped up to donate money both to the FCCT, and the FCCT's efforts to help

upcountry schools in need. Board member Umesh Pandey took personal interest, inspected the schools, and some of his pictures can be seen on our Facebook page.

Dr Surin Pitsuwan, the Asean secretary-general, and Noeleen Heyzer, the UN undersecretary general, spoke at the club. Cambodian opposition politician and human rights activist Mu Sochua spoke, as did Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim. We had a bunch of programs on Article 112, on Myanmar, and we had author Amitav Ghosh.

We also screened a number of outstanding documentary films, kept the Photo Contest running for one more year (huge thanks to Patrick Barta and OnAsia and other partners on this), raised funds for Dateline, and maintained our International Films Series, thanks to the indefatigable Lekha Shankar.

We have had a series of exhibitions on the walls but clearly we need more time invested in organizing and curating exhibitions. A planned Friday night showcase of photographers will, I hope, be implemented by the next board. We also decided to have a plaque giving the names of photo contest winners and mentioning photo contest sponsors. And we decided to have a memorial plaque made, with the names of journalists and cameramen killed in the line of duty in the region. A core group is consulting on the names. We also have reciprocal agreements with a couple of other foreign correspondent clubs, like FCC South Asia in New Delhi, and FCC Malaysia in KL.

Now the FCCT is in a comfortable financial position, in terms of reserves. Since we are a club and not a business reporting to shareholders and paying dividends, making lots of money is not the objective. I have maintained that we should plough money back into member services. Accordingly, for the first time, we paid to fly in prominent speakers – including Mu Sochua and Anwar Ibrahim. This means also putting them up in a hotel. We see this as a worthy investment and, in fact, something that must be done.

We have also continued to improve the clubhouse, and kept prices down as best as we can. Midway through the year our point-of-sale system with the new cards finally kicked in – much to everyone's surprise, including me – and it is working very well.

I want to make one proposal to be worked on in terms of its implications, by the next board, and then put up to vote on at the next AGM – that every paid-up member in good standing of the FCCT should get one vote to cast for the next board at the AGM. Consider this a formal proposal in the interest of democracy and being a stakeholder in the club. This should be put up to the vote at the NEXT AGM, and correspondent members can vote after having a whole year to appreciate the implications and potential side effects. Whether or not the proposal passes is not really relevant; what is relevant is we once in a while review our rules and let members have a voice.

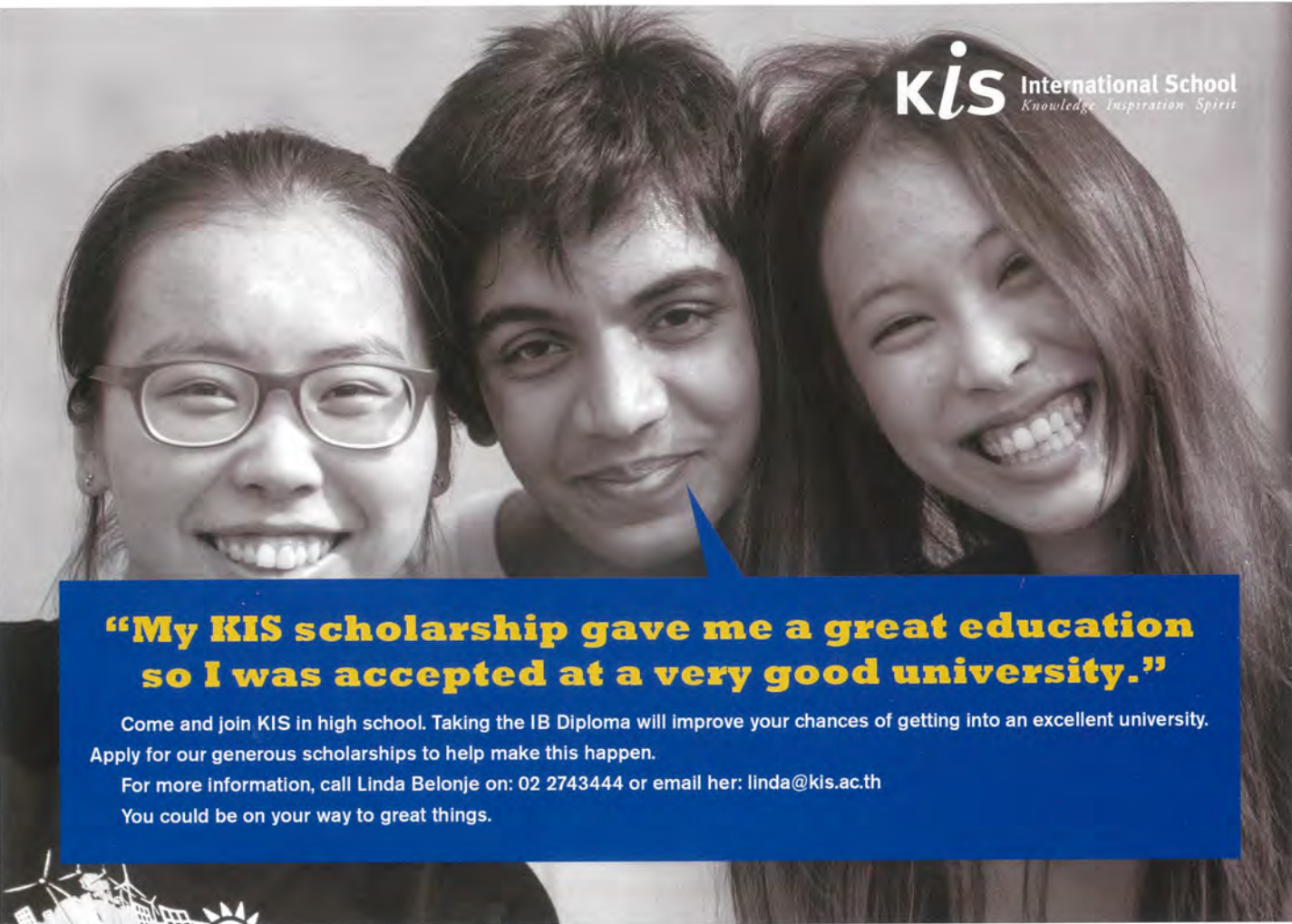
I also propose that the slots on the board below the top three – president, first and second vice president – be opened not just to correspondents but to journalist members as well. We need good people for the board. I would also urge those of you who are interested, to volunteer as part of a program subcommittee, to help organize programs and also get to know a little more about how that part of our operation runs. It is not an easy task, but it is key to the FCCT's viability.

There has also been controversy. There is always room for debate, but the FCCT does have to walk a tightrope. We have to navigate the realities of Thailand. Board members' roles are mixed; while on the board we are responsible to the club's members and to the institution. We are proud of the FCCT's track record and have a few scares to show for it. This is a space for free and constructive debate on critical issues of the day, a space for throwing light, in a rapidly shrinking space for such debate in Thailand's emotional political landscape. This is what the FCCT stands for. May that never change.

With our sincere thanks for backing the FCCT Year-End Party

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FCCT Photojournalism Contest 2012

More than 375 photographers from across Asia submitted over 6,000 images for the sixth-annual FCCT Photojournalism Contest. Major topics of interest for photographers this year included Myanmar's political opening, environmental degradation across Asia, and the loss of traditional ways of living in countries as diverse as Japan and Papua New Guinea. Judges selected winners in four categories: Spot news, Feature Photography, Migration (a special category sponsored by the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand), and Photo Essay. In addition, the judges selected one Photographer of the Year to recognize the photojournalist who submitted the single most outstanding body of work among all the participants. FCCT and OnAsia would like to thank all our sponsors for agreeing to support this year's contest: Indorama Ventures Public Company Limited, The Delegation of the European Union in Thailand, Diethelm Travel Group, Star Alliance, TQPR Thailand, Bloom Digital Photo Lab and Documentary Arts Asia.

Patrick Barta has been guest editor for this Photojournalism Contest issue.

About the Sponsors

INDORAMA

Indorama Ventures Public Company Limited is one of the largest vertically integrated polyester chain producers in the world whose products serve major players in the food, beverage, personal and home care, health care, automotive, textile and industrial sectors. Indorama is a major supporter of FCCT and its events. It provided significant financial support for prizes for this year's contest.



The Delegation of the European Union in Thailand represents European Union interests in Thailand and promotes human rights and other development issues. It provided financial support for a migration issues category in this year's contest.



Diethelm Travel Group has 55 years of experience providing full travel services and is one of the oldest and best-known travel service providers in Asia, with offices in Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. It has a worldwide reputation for first-class travel. It provided significant financial support for prizes in this year's contest.



Star Alliance is a global airline network that includes Thai Airways and other major international carriers. It provided round-trip plane tickets in Asia for contest prizes.



TQPR Thailand is a leading independent firm dedicated to providing consultancy services and value-added results to local, regional and global clients. TQPR provided administrative and consulting support for promoting this year's contest.



Bloom Digital Photo Lab is one of Bangkok's most-trusted photo imaging labs and a long-time partner of the FCCT. It provided high-quality prints of the winning images for exhibition at the FCCT clubhouse and other services.



Documentary Arts Asia is a Thailand-based not-for-profit organization that supports the production and dissemination of documentary photography and film in Asia. It runs a two-story gallery in Chiang Mai and manages a number of other programs to promote documentary work, including workshops and an artist-in-residence program that enables photographers and filmmakers to spend up to three months working on cultural, environmental or human-rights projects.



Winner:
Munir uz Zaman

Rohingya Muslims, trying to cross the Naf River into Bangladesh to escape sectarian violence in Myanmar, look on from an intercepted boat in Teknaf on June 13, 2012. Dozens of people died in Western Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2012 after attacks erupted between Buddhists and Rohingyas, creating a regional humanitarian crisis.



Honorable Mention:
Christophe Archambault

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi waves as she crosses a crowd of supporters at an electoral rally west of Yangon, on February 7, 2012. After spending much of the past 20 years as a political prisoner, Ms. Suu Kyi was elected to Myanmar's parliament later in 2012.



Honorable Mention:
Kauser Haider

Ashamoni, one and a half years old, died with his family in a landslide in Chittagong, Bangladesh.



Winner:
Alex Hofford

A Philippine diver works near a skipjack tuna fishing net using a plastic air hose connected to a rusty compressor onboard a boat at the surface. Compressor diving is one of the most dangerous methods of fishing with many fatal injuries often due to decompression illness, or "the bends." Compressor diving is also a major contributor to overfishing in the Philippines.



Honorable Mention:
Akhlas Uddin

A day labourer takes a drink from a bottle while working in a small plastic recycling factory in Bangladesh. Her job is to separate different-colored bottles, then wash and dry them for a daily wage of about US\$1.25 to US\$1.50.

Category: Migration

Sponsored by the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand
For the best photos documenting Asian migration

Winner: James Robert Fuller Burma to Buffalo: Resettled to the USA

This essay is part of a long-term project about an ethnic Karen family resettled from Myanmar, also known as Burma, to the United States. About 84,000 refugees from Myanmar were resettled to the U.S. between 2007 and 2011 – the largest group at over 27% of U.S. refugee arrivals. The photo project documents the transition of identities within the family and their changing notions of “home.” It arrives at a time when political reforms in Myanmar are changing the debate for many migrant families. Eligible for U.S. citizenship, but encouraged by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others to return home, they are presented with a genuine choice of how and where to build their future.



Top: Ta Ju (49) walks with his wife She She (47) and three of his children to visit fellow ethnic Karen refugee friends near their home in Buffalo, New York on August 28, 2009.

Bottom: Ta Ju (51) stands in front of his house with his Burundian friend and co-worker in Buffalo, New York on March 4, 2012.



Sher Naytoo (19) talks with local boys who are curious about his small motorcycle in Buffalo, New York on August 21, 2009.



She She (50) stands in the hallway of a church after delivering her younger children to Sunday school at a Karen-owned Baptist Christian church in Buffalo, New York on February 26, 2012



Sha Ehpaw (11) waits for the community bus to take her and her family to a church purchased by the Karen Baptist community for their growing congregation in Buffalo, New York on February 26, 2012.

Category: Photo Essay
Winner: Kazuhiko Matsumura
 For the best photo essays taken in Asia

Subtle Beauty

This is a story about the lifestyle of Maikos and Geikos in Kyoto, which survives despite rapid social and economic change in Japan. Many girls aspire to become a Maiko, but most of them give up because of the strict lifestyle. They entertain guests, mainly rich men, in exclusive parties that require them to be elegant, polite and beautiful, but entertaining, too. They live in a house with a Madam who trains them. After several years as a Maiko, when they are over 20 years old, they become a Geiko.

Right: This is the day when Ichiraku, 20, becomes a Geiko from a Maiko.



Below: Maikos and Geikos have to practice dance in the morning and afternoon. They have to move perfectly in order.



Right: Umeyae, 21, and Umechie, 16, are cleaning a room. Every morning, they have to do laundry and clean their accommodations and the teahouse where they entertain guests.



Above: Tomitae, 16, is playing a party game called Tora Tora. She is a tiger, and her guest is a military commander. Her guest wins, because a commander has more power than a tiger.

Tamaha, 39, is drinking alcohol. When she was young, she didn't have much tolerance. To increase it, she would become inebriated many times.



Two schoolgirls are watching two apprentice Maikos. They are taken with their beautiful costumes.



Tomitae, 16, is going to town by bus to shop on her day off. Because she is not wearing makeup, nobody realizes that she is a Maiko.

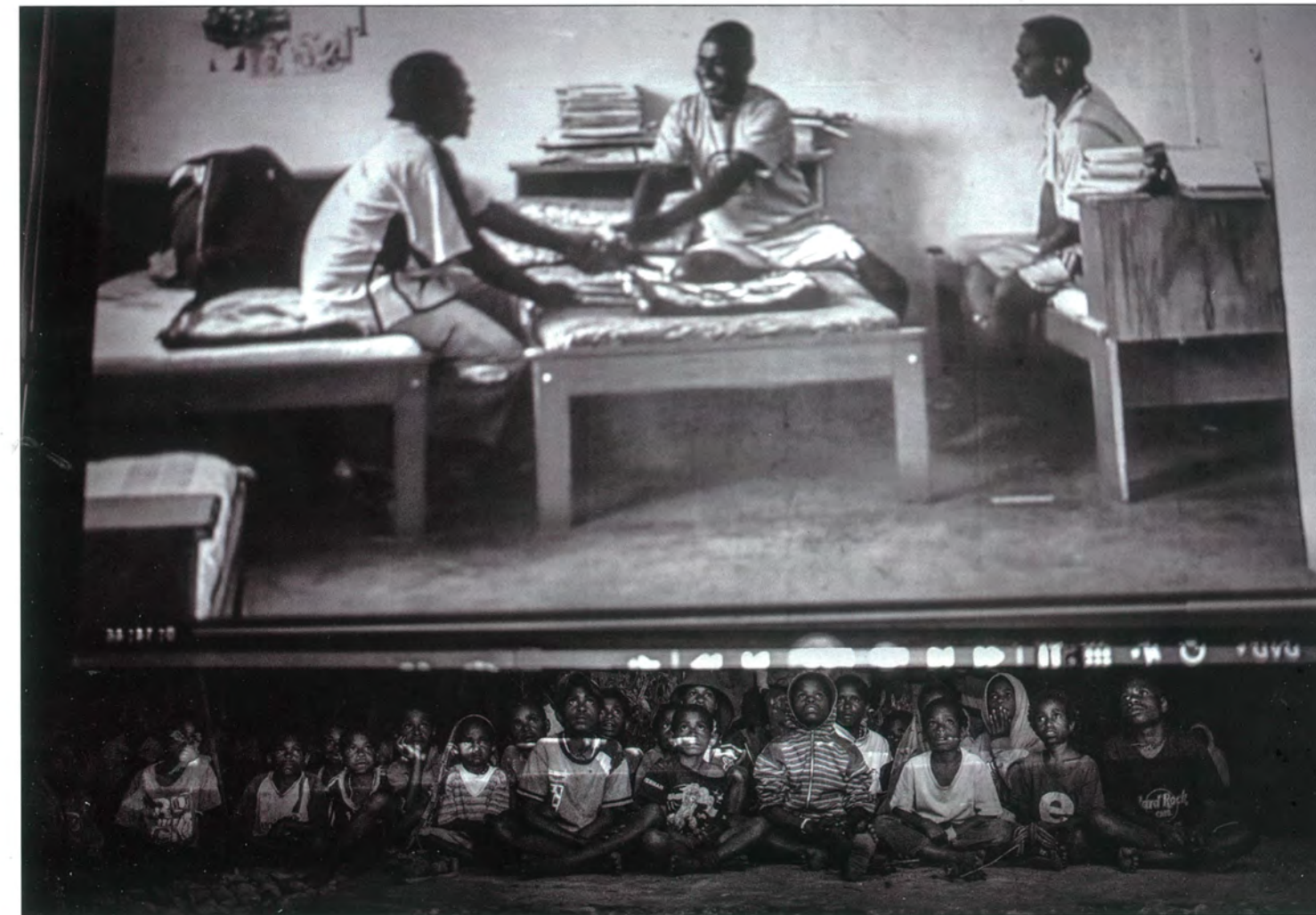


Photojournalism

Category: Photo Essay

Honorable Mention - Andri Tambunan

For photo essays taken in Asia



Against All Odds: HIV/AIDS Epidemic Among Indigenous Papuan

The impoverished provinces of Papua and West Papua are home to only 1% of Indonesia's 230 million people, but they have almost 40% of its HIV/AIDS cases, with an estimated 3% of adults HIV-positive. Each year, the number of recorded cases of HIV increases by almost fifty percent. This project aims to put a face to this regional crisis.



Top: Children and parents watch a movie on HIV/AIDS. Such movies are effective educational tools, but aid groups lack funding to screen them as often as they would like.

Bottom: A man wearing traditional Papuan attire gets tested for sexually transmitted diseases at a public clinic. The result was positive.



Top: Yayasan Harapan Ibu of Mother's Hope Foundation, a local NGO, demonstrates condoms at public places. Condom use is often opposed or disregarded by religious and community leaders, and many people are embarrassed to buy them.

Right: The body of Dewi, 20, is carried by her uncle to be cremated. She died after contracting HIV from her husband. Dewi kept her status secret from her family and used a traditional healing method of cutting her body to let "dirty" blood out to cure her illness. It is common for family members to keep their status secret due to shame and fear of discrimination or punishment.



Family members mourn the death of Eddie, a 30-year-old school teacher who just minutes earlier died from AIDS. Despite his education, Eddie didn't seek medical treatment because he was afraid friends and family would learn about his status.

Middle: Ophira, 18, has been HIV-positive for a year. She is recovering from injuries after falling off her motorcycle. Ophira doesn't take her antiretroviral drugs regularly and rarely comes to the clinic because she is afraid others will learn of her status.



Left: Mama Yuli holds two ARV pills on the 8th year anniversary of undergoing antiretroviral treatment after she contracted HIV from her husband. Mama Yuli once weighed 30kg, but with ARV, she is now healthy. In Papua, only 12% are undergoing such therapy.

Violence Against Women In Papua New Guinea

Statistics indicate that in Papua New Guinea, two thirds of women are exposed to domestic violence and about 50% become victims of sexual assaults. Sorcery-related brutality is common; in the case of an unexpected death in a village, its residents sometimes accuse a random woman of causing the death and torture her, forcing her to admit she is a witch. Cases of violence against women are rarely brought to court. Most assailants are kept in prison for a couple of days and then released. Rejected women are often kicked out of their homes and onto the street, where they then became easy targets for Raskol gangs.

Right: A woman shows a photo of the torture of another woman who was accused of being a sorcerer. The crowd tied the victim to a tree, beat her and burned her with a hot iron bar. It was interrupted by a passing 75-year-old Swiss nun; now the woman is in hiding.

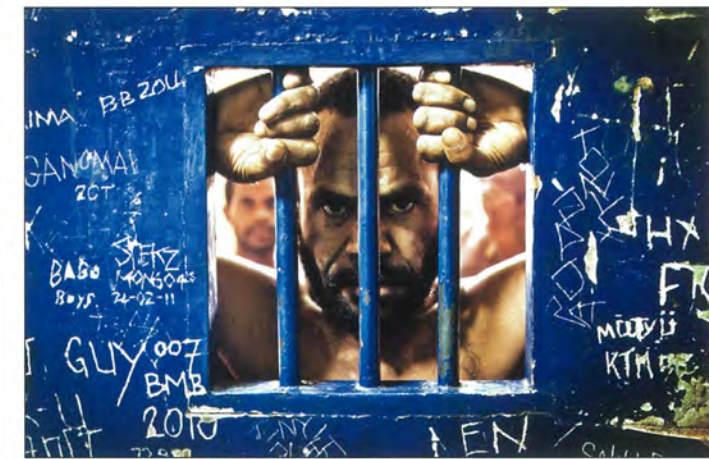


Right: Members of the Raskol gang "Dirty Dons 585" in Port Moresby. All of them committed a set of rapes and armed robberies.



Left: In April, 2012, 6-year-old Julie was assaulted by four men. The men raped the girl for eight hours and left her in the street. Julie is now receiving psychological treatment. Her tormentors are awaiting trial.

Below: Andres, 39, is waiting for a court trial after being accused of multiple rapes.



Below: Hellen, about 38 years old, lost her leg in 2005 during a fight with her drunk husband. He chopped off her leg with a bush knife in front of their children. He later died in prison. She now lives with his sister.



Cargo Cult

Cargo cults are religious groups in Melanesia focused on obtaining “cargo” (material wealth) from the Western world through rituals. Followers believe their ancestors destined the cargo for them, but crafty Westerners took possession of it. Followers of the “John Frum” cargo cult in Vanuatu built big wooden aircrafts, landing strips and bamboo control towers, duplicating some of “white men’s” in hopes they would attract real airplanes with cargo. Islanders still believe in the mythological John Frum, who appeared in 1937 and told natives to go back to their old traditions; in exchange, locals would receive cargo. Local myths say John will return with goods on the date of February 15.

Right: Locals perform a customary dance during the celebration of John Frum’s Day.

Below: Followers of the Prince Philip movement hold portraits of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Some villagers believe he is a divine person and brother of John Frum, and will someday return.



Below: A village chief and leader of the John Frum movement, 80-year-old Isaac Wan, in his house. On the 15th of February each year he wears a U.S. military uniform given to him by U.S. soldiers decades ago.



Above: An old man stares at a plane in a local airport. Cargo cult followers believe all welfare material will come from the USA, as John Frum promised.



Left: Followers of the John Frum cargo cult raise the American flag every day. The flag is a powerful symbol of “cargo,” such as canned fish and other benefits of Western civilization.

Last of the Dani

The Dani people populate the Baliem Valley in Indonesia's West Papua province. They first came into contact with modern civilization in the 20th century; before, they lived in the Stone Age and many practiced cannibalism. When West Papua joined Indonesia in 1969, officials pressed locals to abandon their traditions, while cheap Indonesian and Chinese goods flooded the region. Only a few people still live by the old customs, but even they listen to radio, ride taxis and use mobile phones. Many of these "last Dani" are over 70 years old.



Suroba, 65, holds the mummy of an ancestor who died about 300 years ago. Suroba asks tourists for money to take pictures.



Asike Halu, 67, near an ATM. Asike makes money from tourists, allowing them to take photos of him.



Senaila, over 70, near his house with an “Angry Birds” pillow. He bought it for about US\$9 and uses it when sleeping on the floor of his hut.



Christiana Margaretipo, 21, with her son, holds a mobile phone. She shares the phone with her brother and often calls relatives in other villages.



Yeskiel Helopere, 41, charges foreigners to take pictures of him. Rather than using banks, Yeskiel converts money into pigs, the most valuable animal on Papua.



Abinus Kuban, 10, holds a ball, which he uses to play with his friends.



Otopina, 16, stands with a bicycle near her house. Her father bought it for about US\$50 and shares it with kids from the village.

Photographer of the Year - Vlad Sokhin

Photojournalism

About the Judges

Dirk Claus is Photoeditor Asia for Stern Magazine in Hong Kong and now in Bangkok. Formerly he was head of Stern.de's photo department from 2001 until 2008, and head of the Picture International Photoagency in Hamburg from 1997 until 2001. He has also worked as a photography assistant and producer in Amsterdam and Hamburg and holds a master's degree in international multimedia journalism from Bolton University.

David Longstreath is a freelance photographer based in northern Thailand who worked previously as an Associated Press photographer and editor for 30 years, the last 15 based in Bangkok. Over the years he has photographed historic events from the death of Pol Pot and the funeral of Mother Teresa and worked in countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Cambodia, and Myanmar, as well as in the U.S. He was part of team that won a Pulitzer Prize for its photographic coverage of Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential election.

Pornchai Kittiwongsakul is a photographer for Agence France Presse / Getty based in Bangkok. His work has included assignments covering a range of regional news stories in recent years, including the 2010 political violence in Bangkok, conflict on the Thai-Cambodia border, ethnic fighting in Myanmar, and unrest in southern Thailand.

About the Photographers

Christophe Archambault was born in France and studied tropical geography before shifting to photography in the late 1990s. He worked as a free-lance photographer based in Paris for a few years before joining Agence France Presse in 2000 as a picture editor in Paris. Christophe was posted to New Delhi in 2004 as a picture editor/photographer and then moved on to Bangkok as a photographer in 2008. He was named AFP's chief photographer for Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos in 2010 and has covered all main events in Thailand since 2008, including years of political unrest and the 2011 flooding.

James Robert Fuller is a British photojournalist who has been based in Southeast Asia since 1999. Using the northern city of Chiang Mai as his base, James has documented ethnic conflict in the Thai-Burmese borderlands, traditional boxing in rural Thailand and social issues

in Cambodia. James' work for international news media began in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. His images of the aftermath featured in *Things As They Are: Photojournalism in Context Since 1955* published by World Press Photo, and have been projected at the Visa Pour L'Image photojournalism festival. James has since worked for The New York Times, The Guardian, Paris Match, Sydney Morning Herald and Marie Claire, to name a few. His current ongoing projects document ethnic Karen refugee resettlement and Burma's remote ethnic militias.

Kausar Haider was born in Bangladesh and is a documentary photographer who prefers to work with social issues with a humanitarian focus and travel photography. He completed his graduation in photography from Pathshala, South Asian Media Academy. He is devoted to traveling and photographing subjects including a story on handicapped children in Nepal 2010. His latest project is called “A Hall Full of Cinema,” which was exhibited internationally at the Angkor Photo Festival and the Delhi Photo Festival. At present he is documenting the issue of landslides in Chittagong.

Alex Hofford is a Hong Kong-based photojournalist. Much of his work focuses on marine conservation issues. Alex has traveled extensively in East Asia and crossed the Pacific to document shark finning, tuna over-fishing and plastics pollution. He is currently a stringer for the European Pressphoto Agency (EPA). Alex is British, was born in Cambridge, and has a young family.

Kazuhiko Matsumura started work in 2003 as a reporter for The Kyoto Shimbun Newspaper in Kyoto, Japan. In 2005 he became a staff photographer. He continues to shoot local news, sports and other stories.

Vlad Sokhin is a Russian/Portuguese documentary photographer residing in Sydney, Australia. He studied photography at IADE Creative University (Lisbon, Portugal) as well as photojournalism and documentary photography at the TCI Emerging Photographer Program. He was a participant of the XXV Eddie Adams Workshop (USA, NY) and several photojournalism and documentary photography workshops. He is represented by German photo-agency “Agentur Focus” and he collaborates with the United Nations Human Rights organization (OHCHR). His work has been exhibited and screened in the United States, Russia, Portugal, Georgia,

and Turkey, including VII Agency gallery in New York and the Visa Pour L'Image photo-festival in Perpignan. He has received various photography awards and his work has been published in many international newspapers and magazines, including National Geographic, GEO, International Herald Tribune, Marie Claire and others.

Andri Tambunan was born in Jakarta, Indonesia before moving to the United States at the age of ten. He picked up the camera for the first time in high school and received a degree in Photography from Sacramento State University with an emphasis in Fine Art. In 2008, after years of working in the corporate world, he quit his job and decided to travel the world. He believes that photography is and has always been an instrument of social change. He returned to the U.S. in 2009, sold most of his possessions, and started to pursue photography with an emphasis on social documentary issues and has worked on documentary projects in the USA, Indonesia, China, India, Haiti, and Thailand. He is currently based in Jakarta, Indonesia, focusing on long-term documentary projects on social issues that often go unnoticed or rarely receive media attention. His photographs have received recognition from Pictures of the Year International (POYi) Emerging Vision Incentive, Reminders Project Asian Photographers Grant, and International Photography Awards (IPA).

Akhlas Uddin began his career as a freelance photographer in 1995. Though best known as an art photographer, he has also worked in social documentary, story telling, and weddings, as well taking on corporate photography assignments. He has been recognized with numerous photographic awards including the Asahi Shimbun award. He was awarded a photographic distinction from “AFIAP,” or Artist International Federation of Photographic Art, from FIAP Italy in 2010.

Munir uz Zaman is from Bangladesh and lives in Dhaka. He started his career as a photojournalist in 2005 with a local news agency after finishing his higher diploma from the South Asian Institute of Photography (Pathshala). In 2007 he started working with DrikNEWS and in 2008 he joined Agency France Presse. His photographs are published widely in the world's leading newspapers and magazines.

Painting with a Needle: The Remarkable World of Thai Hand Embroidery

Stand before the gorgeous Thai watercolour painting, admiring its cleverly balanced composition, gloriously harmonized colours, and meticulous attention to detail. Leaning forward, I am startled to realise it isn't a painting at all, but a embroidery made up of thousands of delicate, hand-dyed silk threads precisely stitched into a stunning work of art.

Welcome to the world of Thai hand embroidery. In rural and remote locations throughout Thailand, villagers earn extra income to improve the lives of their families and communities by drawing upon their innate artistic talent, creating astonishingly detailed embroideries that you can admire and even purchase as a wonderful memento.

Sophisticated Thai hand embroidery has its roots in a Royal Project originally championed by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. In the mid-1970s, the Queen established the SUPPORT Foundation to help Thai people in the southern provinces to become more self-sufficient by generating a new income stream doing Thai hand embroidery. At the same time, the project would encourage the wide adoption and preservation of a traditional Thai handcraft technique that has been handed down through many generations of skilled artists.

To start off the project, the Queen arranged for experienced teachers to train villagers in southern Thailand to be artisans, mastering the techniques of traditional Thai embroidery. They were given kit bags containing wax paper templates and the coloured silk thread needed to make their works of art. Beginners started out with simple projects such as small flowers and animals, while more experienced embroiderers moved on to larger and more complex patterns.

As the popularity of the Thai hand embroideries grew and the villagers



became more adept at their craft, the Queen commissioned first-rate artists to create more elaborate embroidery templates reminiscent of watercolour paintings. In 2001, a special studio area was set up at Chitralada Palace, the royal residence in Bangkok. Here, artists create embroidery templates that capture the essence of "Thainess", the things that make the Kingdom unique. This includes episodes from Thai literature, local lifestyles and customs, cultural traditions, historical murals, and scenes from Thailand's indigenous nature including wildlife, plants and flowers.

A treasured piece of fine artwork, a Thai hand embroidery is made from slender silk threads that give it a smooth, subtly textured and shiny appearance. The artisans who craft these works of art follow the embroidery templates provided by the SUPPORT Foundation. To maintain hand-crafted authenticity, they even dye the raw silk thread into hundreds of subtle hues themselves, then use the coloured thread to carefully recreate an exquisite reproduction of the original.

The SUPPORT Foundation program has grown from the southern provinces to include over 10,000 trained artisans throughout Thailand. Thai hand embroiderers have become so skilled that, in 2007, the Queen commissioned an annual competition to find the most superb works

of art and inspire future generations of Thais to uphold the tradition.

As part of this year's celebration of three auspicious royal birthdays: His Majesty the King's 85th Birthday on December 5th 2012; Her Majesty the Queen's 80th Birthday on August 12th 2012, and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's 5th cycle (60th) birthday on 28th July 2012, the SUPPORT Foundation is holding an exhibition of the best in Thai hand embroidery from all across the country at the Queen's Gallery from August until mid-November, 2012. The Queen's Gallery is located at 101 Ratchadamnoen Klang Road, near the Democracy Monument in central Bangkok.

If you want to purchase a work of genuine Thai hand embroidery, it's available to the public only at the Queen's Gallery. During the SUPPORT Foundation exhibition that runs through November, a large selection of Thai hand embroidery is being sold on the gallery's fifth floor. In addition to artwork, embroidered clothing, bags and book covers are on sale. The Gallery Shop on the ground floor will also offer Thai hand embroidery items after the exhibition, depending upon availability.

With Thai hand embroidery, not only will you have a rare and distinctive keepsake of your Thailand holiday, or a wonderful gift for somebody back home, you will have a handcrafted item made with love and care and the deepest respect for Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. It's Thainess you can touch and cherish forever.



Contact:
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"Nang Loi"

Painter: Staff of the SUPPORT Foundation's Embroidery Template Section, Chitralada Palace

Embroiderer: Embroiderers of the Bangsai Arts and crafts Centre of the SUPPORT Foundation, Chang Yai Sub-district, Bangsai District, Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya province

Embroidery time: 10 months

"Source of Life"

Painter: Staff of the SUPPORT Foundation's Embroidery Template Section, Chitralada Palace

Embroiderer: Embroidery teachers of Chulabhorn Camp, Khok Kian Sub-district, Muang district, Narathiwat province

Embroidery time: 1 year



"The Embroiderer"

Painter: Pinij Ployphum, Staff of the SUPPORT Foundation's Embroidery Template Section, Chitralada Palace

Embroiderer: Orawan Chaiyo, Embroidery teacher of Sakon Nakhon province, and of Sri Buathong group, Ang Thong province

Embroidery time: 1 year

Soi Whispers was snipped from the last issue of Dateline Bangkok for grim reasons of space: the deaths of Cambodia's King Father Norodom Sihanouk and eco-activist Chut Wutty, and journalists Naoki Mabuchi and Dan White. Sadly, Barry Wain, the former editor of The Asian Wall Street Journal, has joined them. He died in a Singapore hospital from complications following a pancreas operation six months earlier. In the early 1980s, Wain's Thai visa was pulled for unwelcome coverage of the monarchy. His last visit to the club was to launch his book Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times. Wain had also authored The Refused on the plight of Indochinese refugees in the wake of the Vietnam War. He managed to combine tough, penetrating journalism with courtesy and professionalism, and was in many ways exemplary. If Mabuchi was marked out by his courage and tenacity, Dan White's great gift to the world was unfailing humour combined with powerful distaste for injustice and humbug. Dan detested hypocrisy and dishonesty, and had an uncanny ability to make thugs and bullies look foolish. A favourite story was revealing. While covering the funeral of Princess Diana, he was resting after a long walk through London laden with cameras. The public mood was strongly anti-press after the princess's fatal Paris accident. Somebody in the crowd jumped out of nowhere and punched Dan in the face. "It's all your fault," raged the crazed attacker. "No it's not," said Dan indignantly. He always laughed when he told the story, and maybe that is what made it so funny.

The FCCT must never be above criticism. In a secret communication with this column, an exasperated regional correspondent based in Bangkok vented his frustration with the club, our vaunted cradle of free speech and profound thinking. "There is currently an economic meltdown in Vietnam and open fighting in the politburo with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung barely holding on to his post, while pro-democracy bloggers, academics and journalists are jailed on an almost monthly basis; there is a landmark election coming up imminently in Malaysia which Prime Minister Najib Razak's National Front coalition could well lose; Singapore's Catherine Lim gave a devastating speech to National University of Singapore graduates lambasting Lee Kuan Yew, and

his People's Action Party appears adrift--losing elections and confronted by corruption charges and infrastructure failures that make the island's hyper-efficient image seem a total sham; a rank outsider, Jokowi, has become governor of Jakarta and is a likely presidential contender in the region's biggest nation; there will be a general election in Cambodia in July, but opposition leader Sam Rainsy remains in enforced exile in Paris while NGO leaders get a bullet in the head; the Philippines is taking China to court over the South China Sea disputes and there is a new US secretary of state who served in this region and is likely to strongly back Manila and Vietnamese dissidents, and may refocus other US policies in these parts. But none of this is of interest to the FCCT. Month after month, its programmes are focussed on only one topic: Burma, Burma and more Burma."

Such criticism is absurd, of course, since it takes no account of all the programmes on lèse-majesté, expat literature and hilltribe crochet in between the Burma/Myanmar programmes. After such a scathing attack, it would probably be wiser not to mention the recent lifting of the Burmese blacklist, so here goes: Myanmar's dubious role of honour included virtually every long-term journalist based in Thailand. Arguably the best thing about cancelling the blacklist was that it helps skewer the perverse notion that the quality of a journalist's work improves with being denied access. Apart from not getting hurt or arrested, there is no real upside to being shut out of a country. It is an operational hindrance and stifles accuracy. Proximity always informs a story and how it should be handled. In this respect, there has been a rather odd and disturbing development in the case of Burma/Myanmar. Journalists who have finally regained access have been shocked by how incredibly expensive the country has become. Are the humourless military censors being replaced by faceless bean counters in international news organizations who will simply not countenance funding the journalism of old? Could be.

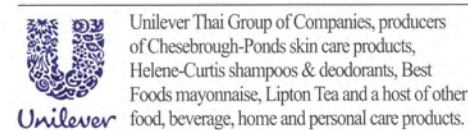
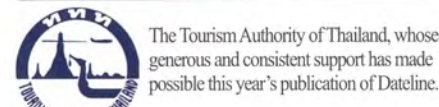
Access does have rewards for some. Mildly envious, photographer Jim Coyne recently dropped a line to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Zoe Daniel: "Of the 28 photographs in the Dateline Bangkok special feature Myanmar issue

(not counting the double truck spread of you and Aung San Suu Kyi, or the group shot of the board), 19 of the photos were taken by you, totalling a whopping 67.85% of the photos. This is not a complaint, mind you, nor am I offended by it whatsoever; I just thought you might find it amusing."

Remember, you heard it here first.

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