“My Teacher is a Policeman:” Postcolonial Nation-Building through Thai Border Patrol Police Civic Actions

Part of IERES’s Visiting Scholar Roundtable
Co-sponsored by the Sigur Center for Asian Studies

with

Sinae Hyun
University of Wisconsin-Madison

How does the history of a small band of police forces in the border areas of Thailand elucidate the characteristics of the postcolonial nation-building process in Southeast Asia? This talk will introduce a history of the Thai Border Patrol Police and its civic actions to examine the interconnectedness between postcolonial nation-building processes and the indigenization of American Cold War politics by the local elites from the early 1950s to 1980. To facilitate a sharper analysis, this presentation will focus on the following three questions: First, in what context did the police force become the key cold warrior in Thailand? The first part of the discussion will introduce the historical and political context that created this special paramilitary force by the U.S. and Thai governments in the early 1950s. Second, in what context did the Border Patrol Police transform into an agent of civic action? This section will discuss the history and characteristics of Border Patrol Police’s “development for security” programs in the remote areas of northern Thailand to identify the role this project played in expanding state surveillance and instilling national loyalty among the border populations. Third, how does the history of the Border Patrol Police illuminate the indigenization of Cold War politics against the historical backdrop of postcolonial nation-building processes in Southeast Asia? This final section will investigate the ways in which the Border Patrol Police’s transformation and its civic actions can broaden our understanding of the gradually indigenizing nature of the American-led Cold War politics in conjunction with the process of building modern nation-states in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia.

Sinae Hyun is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Born and raised on Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, she came to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies focusing on Southeast Asian and Cold War history.

Thursday, February 28, 2013
4:00 – 5:00 pm
Voesar Conference Room
1957 E Street NW, Suite 412
Please RSVP at http://go.gwu.edu/Hyun

This event is on the record