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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

KALI TAL

This slim volume has taken two years to assemble. The essays contained in *Southeast Asian-American Communities* were solicited through calls for papers in professional journals, newsletters and advertisements in Asian-American newspapers. Our respondents were few, and it has taken over twenty months to collect enough good material to publish an issue of *Vietnam Generation*.

The lack of scholarly response to our call for papers dealing with topics of importance to Southeast Asian-American communities is indicative of the reluctance of American scholars to take upon themselves the task of academic inquiry into the subject. American scholars are perhaps hesitant to venture into new and unfamiliar territory, and to undertake the intensive study and research necessary to explore and understand a foreign culture. Scholars who can write with ease and elegance of the effects of the Vietnam war on "American" culture may find Vietnamese-American, or Cambodian-American culture impenetrable.

Most of the essays published here are located in the disciplines of the social sciences. Faced with the reality of hundreds of thousands of Southeast Asian immigrants, social workers and social scientists have been exploring questions of assimilation, integration and cultural tradition as they assist refugees and immigrants with the problems of adapting to a new environment. Articles on education, mental and physical health care, and the adjustment process make up almost the entire body of literature on Southeast Asian-American communities.

Southeast Asian-American scholars are heavily represented in the body of social sciences literature dealing with Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese and Thai communities in the United States. But they, like other American scholars, are remarkably silent about other aspects of Southeast Asian-American life.

My intent was to compile a collection of articles which would cover the various aspects of life in these communities, including history, political culture, art, and religion. Quite obviously, this never came to pass. In the process of soliciting articles, I wrote to approximately sixty Southeast Asian-American scholars. Most never responded. Some did respond, and promised articles which never arrived. Others agreed to write for the issue, and then withdrew their offer at a later date. One or two quietly mentioned that there was strong pressure on them not to be associated with a "leftist" publication.

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I therefore offer these essays to our readers as the first of a series of attempts to promote scholarship on Southeast Asian-American communities. I will make this an ongoing effort, and urge all of our readers to consider researching and writing on topics of importance to the Southeast Asian-American communities of the United States.