

LESSON 2

The Southeast Asian Games: History, sports and community-building in Southeast Asia

Integrated essay

Introduction

In Southeast Asia, community-building or regional identity-making has usually been traced to or associated with political institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, 1967) and the short-lived Association of Southeast Asia (ASA, 1961), as well as with the idea of Maphilindo (Malaya, Philippines and Indonesia). While elite-led, top-down approaches like these were no doubt consequential, the role of sport competitions that promote more broad-based participation and cross-national people-to-people interactions cannot be underestimated. The imagining of bigger entities, like nations and regions, have been facilitated by the spectacles that accompanied international sports competitions. They serve as a linchpin around which solidarities, loyalties and a sense of competing identities are generated.

As a key platform of interaction between Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, the Southeast Asian Games or SEA Games represent a long tradition of accommodating foreign influences, embracing them, and also localizing at least some aspects of them. What converged in the SEA Games were sports that originated both outside and within the region, as well as the manners of appreciation and understanding by the people that are ineluctably their own. The following lesson plans are thus focused on using the SEA Games as a means of understanding how Southeast Asia built a regional community and formed a regional identity while at the same time presenting to the world a vision of what it means to be Southeast Asian.

Background of Southeast Asian Games

The Southeast Asian Games refer to the multi-sports competition held every two years among countries in Southeast Asia. Popularly known as the SEA Games, the sporting event was known as the Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games before 1977. Inspired by and modelled after the Olympic Games and Asian Games, the SEAP Games was also called the 'Little Asian Games.' The original members of the sports federation were Thailand, Burma, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Malaysia and South Viet Nam. Singapore was invited to participate in the inaugural games in 1959 when Cambodia, one of the original members, opted not to participate (Creak, 2012).

The name 'Peninsular' in SEAP Games indicated the limitation of participation in the competitions to countries in mainland and peninsular Southeast Asia. If viewed from the contemporary standpoint of acknowledging Southeast Asia as a region with an identity of its own, the formation of SEAP Games reflected the nascent and fragmented efforts at regionalism. However, the word 'Peninsular' was dropped from the name of the competition in 1977 to assume the current name of Southeast Asian Games or SEA Games when participation in the competitions was expanded to include the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei (Creak, 2013).

The idea for a regional sporting competition was proposed in 1958 by Luang Sukhum Nayapradit, then Vice-President of Thailand's National Olympic Committee. He recognized the need for a regional competition that would help uplift the capabilities of athletes in the region, while promoting interaction and goodwill among participating countries (Lim and Aman, 2015). In fact, the SEA Games represent the global-local connection. While the format and organization of the SEA Games resemble and undoubtedly took inspiration from the Olympic Games, the sports played in the Games included local sports such as *sepak takraw* and

Thai boxing, in addition to global favourites such as football, swimming and basketball. This provided a region-wide platform from which forms of traditional Southeast Asian sports could be projected onto the world stage and thus made known beyond the region.

Factors of establishing Southeast Asian Peninsular Games

What helped in the establishment of the SEAP Federation was a combination of factors and considerations, related both to sports and to the broader political context of the time.

One of the key motivations apparently was the desire by members of Thailand's National Olympic Committee to provide a platform by which performance of athletes within Southeast Asia could be uplifted and standards improved. There was a recognition of the prevailing low standards in sports in Luang Sukhum's blunt declaration that 'Our teams are not strong. Our standards are low.' (Creak, 2011). The desire for Southeast Asian athletes to gain competitive experience was further reflected in the vision of Lieutenant-General Praphat Charusathien, then President of Thailand's National Olympic Committee, that 'the SEAP Games would help countries improve their standards at future Olympic and Asian Games' (Creak, 2013).

In addition, the establishment of a regional sporting federation was also viewed as a community-building measure. It was widely recognized that competitive sports could provide a means of actively promoting intra-regional interactions, friendships and solidarity. It was also a means by which shared historical and cultural traditions could be acknowledged. Hence, the sporting federation would also serve political and diplomatic purposes, in addition to the expressed purpose of developing sports within the region.

This was an important consideration, given the context of the Cold War in the 1950s. The Cold War had developed as a result of political competition between the then-Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. For many years, right into the 1980s and 1990s, the world was divided between the two camps led by the superpowers. While the USSR and USA did not come into direct conflict, Asia, and indeed Southeast Asia as a region, saw the manifestation of Cold War hostilities first in the Korean War (1950) and then in the Viet Nam War. With these hostilities close to their doorsteps, the newly independent countries in Southeast Asia, which were sharply ideologically divided, were understandably soon embroiled in intense competitions in practically all spheres of human endeavours such as science and technology, education, arts and sports, as each nation attempted to demonstrate the superiority of the economic-political system they wished to promote for the rest of the world. While there was nothing in the SEAP declarations that explicitly excluded communist states such as North Viet Nam from the competition, the implicit understanding was that the aspirational solidarity and friendship of the SEAP Games was for non-communist countries in Southeast Asia (Creak, 2013).

The factors which may account for the establishment of the SEAP Federation were related both to sports as well as to the broader political context of the time. These reasons will help readers fully understand the origins of this competition. In summary, these factors were:

- a.** Interest among countries in the region in improving the standard of athletic performances;
- b.** Forging stronger ties with neighbours through the acknowledgement of shared historical and cultural traditions, not just for sport development but also for political or diplomatic purposes. The divisive nature of the Cold War engendered intense competitions between ideologically-opposed nations in practically all spheres of human endeavours. There was nothing in the SEAP declarations that explicitly stated the exclusion of communist states such as North Viet Nam, but it was understood implicitly that the solidarity and friendship that SEAP aspired for was between non-communist countries in the region (Creak, 2013).

The Evolution from SEAP Games to SEA Games

The Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) experienced changes throughout its existence due to the political context in Southeast Asia, which underwent dramatic developments. In this aspect, two events were particularly significant.

The first event was the change of the competition's name from SEAP Games to SEA Games in 1977. This was one turning point in the history of the SEA Games. The justification for removing the word 'Peninsula' from the name was the inclusion of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei into the sporting federation. The recruitment of these three nations was also due to the retraction of Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and Cambodia from the federation in 1975 (Creak, 2014). Faced with the prospect of a regional sporting federation comprising of only four countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma/Myanmar), the inclusion of new members from outside the peninsula was perhaps inevitable to ensure the continuity of the Games. The change in name thus reflected the broadened membership of the Southeast Asian Games Federation and has remained in use since then.

The withdrawal of Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia from the SEAP Games Federation was due to politics. One common trait among the original members of the SEAP Games Federation was, while not explicit, anti-communism. This can be seen from the fact that up until 1975, when Viet Nam was reunified by the communist party, North Viet Nam, already a communist state, was the only country in the peninsula that was excluded from the SEAP Games. With the reunification of Viet Nam and the shift of political control and power in Cambodia and Lao PDR to the communists in 1975, the underlying anti-communist position of SEAP Games came to the forefront, leading to the withdrawal of Lao PDR and Cambodia from the sporting federation. However, by the 1980s, as countries within Southeast Asia began to work towards greater collaboration and cooperation amongst each other, the communist countries in Southeast Asia rejoined the SEA Games (Creak, 2014). This inclusion of the communist countries in Southeast Asia was paralleled by the inclusion of the same countries into the regional organization of ASEAN. While this might signify a change in the original purpose of establishing the SEA Games and also ASEAN, the resulting dialogue, acceptance and accommodation of erstwhile enemies created a platform from which a regional identity could be developed through friendly competitive sports.

Notes: Throughout this Unit, names of some countries are different in different historical periods:

1. We would refer to Myanmar as Burma in events before 1989.
2. We would refer to Lao PDR as Laos in events before December 1975.
3. We would refer to Viet Nam as North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam in events before 1975.

References

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Supplementary resources

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Subject	History/Social Studies/Physical Education
Topic	The Southeast Asian Games: History, sports and community-building in Southeast Asia
Level	Lower secondary
Key idea	<p>Regional identity in Southeast Asia can and has been created out of diversities and commonalities by regional organizations and through regional events as well as everyday activities such as popular sports, art, and culture. This identity is continuously evolving and contributes toward the envisioning of Southeast Asia as a region for the future.</p> <p>The SEA Games originated from the SEAP Games, which were first introduced in 1958.</p> <p>The introduction of the SEAP Games in Southeast Asia was influenced by political, social and cultural factors in the 1950s.</p>
Key concepts	<p>Games</p> <p>Sport</p> <p>Solidarity</p> <p>Standard</p> <p>Team</p>
No. of periods/lessons	2 to 3 periods (1 period is approximately 50 minutes)
Facilities needed	<p>A/V equipment and Internet access to play the video clips (or hard copy with similar content)</p> <p>Sources and handouts for distribution</p>
Prerequisite knowledge	Students should know about some international sports competitions in the world and have some background about ASEAN.

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the evolutionary development from the Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) to Southeast Asian (SEA) Games. 2. Discuss the factors that played an important role in the development of the SEA Games. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze how a public spectacle such as the SEA Games helps in building communities at the national and regional levels. 2. Develop skills in team work, analysis and communication. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciate the role of sports competitions in developing national and regional identities. 2. Value team work as an effective way to complete a learning task.

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
Introduction [5 minutes]	<p>1. Hook activity: Video</p> <p>1.1 Present the video clip of the Southeast Asian Games.</p> <p>1.2 Discuss with the class. Suggested questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the video show? • Have you heard of the SEA Games? What do you know about it? Do you recall your country having hosted the SEA Games? When was it? Have you had a chance to watch SEA Games on TV or live when it was hosted in your country? • Have you had a chance to watch any international sporting competitions? What do you feel when you watch or hear about an international sports competition involving your own country? <p>1.3 Clarify the objectives of this lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and why did the SEA Games come about? • How and why did it evolve through time? • How do international sports competitions like SEA Games affect individuals and nations, particularly their sense of identity? 	<p>The teacher may use any short video clips showing the SEA Games, or parts thereof, which could fire up the imagination of the students about the SEA Games.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source 4: Suggested videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Opening of the 28th SEA Games in Singapore,’ (0.00-1:38), youtu.be/2KM1_2Qloao • ‘Greatest’ (0.00-2.00), youtu.be/XAcAX6dzPfc • Or comparable materials • Integrated essay on the SEA Games for more details <p>Note: For the purpose of customization, subtitles in the vernacular languages may be inserted/embedded in the video clip.</p>	<p>Students can use prior knowledge of the SEA Games. If students do not have any background knowledge, these sources can be a good introduction to the SEA Games.</p> <p>Students realize what the main questions are in this lesson. The students are able to answer these questions after finishing this lesson.</p>

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
<p>Development [40 minutes]</p>	<p>2. Teacher talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contexts that gave rise to the Southeast Asia Peninsular (SEAP) Games in 1959 • The subsequent changes to the Games in the 1970s • Level of sports development in the region • Relations among countries in the region • The Cold War context <p>3. Cooperative learning: Jigsaw activity (30–35 minutes)</p> <p>3.1 Divide the class into several groups with three or four members each.</p> <p>3.2 Distribute Handout 4 (pre-prepared) to each group. This worksheet specifies the tasks assigned to each group. Where there is access to the Internet, students shall be strongly encouraged to explore sources available on the Internet. Where Internet is not available, teachers shall download and share a copy of the videos as well as prepare a set of printed reading materials (Sources 1, 2 and 3 and Handouts 1, 2 and 3) that students may consult.</p> <p>3.3 Each group divides the Sources and handouts among its members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source 1, 'From Bangkok to Palembang: The Southeast Asian Games and a Cultural Approach to Studying Regionalism' and Handout 1 • Source 2, 'Sports as Politics and History' and Handout 2 • Source 3, 'Representing True Laos in Postcolonial Southeast Asia' and Handout 3 <p>3.4 All students who were assigned to Source 1 gather to work together to tackle the tasks specified in Handout 1. Similarly, all students who were assigned to Source 2 and Source 3 gather together.</p> <p>3.5 Students read their respective sources together and reflect on their handout.</p> <p>3.6 After twenty minutes, they will re-convene with their original group and share their findings. Then they discuss possible answers to the questions in Handout 4 (10–15 minutes).</p> <p>Alternative option: Teacher can break the lesson at this stage. Groups may plan to meet outside of class to prepare for a presentation before the next meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated essay on the SEA Games • Source 1: 'From Bangkok to Palembang: The Southeast Asian Games and a Cultural Approach to Studying Regionalism' • Source 2: 'Sports as Politics and History' • Source 3: 'Representing True Laos in Postcolonial Southeast Asia' • Handout 1 • Handout 2 • Handout 3 • Handout 4 	<p>The teacher lays the groundwork for a cooperative learning activity by first giving a brief lecture. Students understand the situation of the Southeast Asia Games and the fundamental introduction of the competition, which will help students to work in the following activity effectively.</p> <p>By working in groups and participating in cooperative learning, students develop learning skills in a social setting – cooperation, communication, leadership, followership, analysis and synthesis.</p>

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
Development 2 [30 minutes]	<p>4. Discussion</p> <p>4.1 Randomly call a group to share their findings on what are the key features of the SEA Games, how and why SEA Games came about and why and how it changed through time.</p> <p>4.2 After the presentation, encourage other groups to add to the points raised by the group that presented.</p> <p>4.3 Summarize the good points before moving on to the next major point, the role of the SEA Games on individuals, nations and regional identity.</p> <p>4.4 Call another group to present their findings on how the SEA Games possibly play a role in creating solidarity and strengthening identity among individuals, nations and the broader region. After the 5-minute presentation, encourage other groups to comment, add on, and refine the points raised by the presenters.</p> <p>5. Video</p> <p>5.1 As the idea of solidarity and identity could be very abstract to students, show a suitable video to make the idea clearer. An example is the story-music video 'Ordinary,' which is based on the life a famous Singaporean football player, Fandi Ahmad. Several parts of the video shown in Activity 1 (on the opening ceremonies of the 2015 SEA Games in Singapore) may also be useful.</p> <p>5.2 Alternative Option: Any video that shows the sense of pride and inspiration generated by sporting spectacles such as the SEA Games can serve the purpose of the lesson.</p> <p>5.3 Students share their impressions after watching the video.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated essay for suggested references. • Source 4: Suggested video, 'Ordinary' (12m 4s), youtu.be/W2uNwiZsFHs • Or comparable materials 	<p>With steps 4.1 and 4.2, students have a chance to learn from other groups and see whether the other students think similarly or differently. This can help students in considering and accepting different perspectives</p> <p>The concrete examples of solidarity and identity shown in the video helps students to understand these concepts.</p>

Section	Lesson Development	Resources	Rationale
<p>Closure [5 minutes]</p>	<p>6. Teacher talk Summarize the key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport and international sports competitions such as the SEA Games are more than a mere source of entertainment or leisure. • International sports competition such as the SEA Games stimulate the sense of identification and pride among members of a nation, thus, helping identity-formation among individuals • Long before people in the region could travel and interact to enable the development of a regional identity, the SEA Games and auxiliary competitions leading to it provided a venue that facilitated recurrent people-to-people interaction among various countries in the region. Such recurrent interaction helped in the gradual process of regional identity-formation. In addition, games for countries in Southeast Asia reinforced the idea that there was a regional grouping and that such a grouping was important. <p>7. Suggested home extension activities</p> <p>7.1 Students write a reflection essay on a chosen aspect of the lesson to demonstrate what they have learned.</p> <p>7.2 Each group comes up with a visual representation using drawing, comics, poster, use of appropriate apps or software, collage, paper mosaic, animation etc. – on one or a combination of the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEA Games through the years • The SEA Games and regional-identity formation • The SEA Games and regional solidarity and national identity. <p>For the following lesson, a gallery of posters shall be set up in the classroom. Groups will have a gallery walk to see other groups' output.</p>		<p>In this stage, students understand the key messages of this lesson through explanation from the teacher.</p> <p>Students can reflect the key ideas of this lesson from their understanding through the provided task.</p>

Sources and handouts

Glossary

- ASA:** the acronym for Association of Southeast Asia, an association that was established in 1961 to strengthen cooperation among its members – Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines – in various spheres. It was a predecessor to ASEAN.
- Cold War:** the state of political or ideological conflict between the group of countries led by the former Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR), which upheld socialism or communism, and by the United States of America (USA), which promoted capitalism.
- Federation:** the product of putting together a number of political or social entities to form a union.
- Maphilindo:** a federation consisting of Malaya, Philippines and Indonesia that was proposed in 1963. It represents a step toward the realization of the idea of pan-Malayanism that goes back to the Rizal in the 1880s.
- SEA Games:** the acronym for the Southeast Asian Games, an Olympic-like, biennial (every two years) multi-sports competition among countries in Southeast Asia.
- SEAP Games:** the acronym for the Southeast Asian Peninsular Games, the former name of the SEA Games.

Source 1: 'From Bangkok to Palembang: The Southeast Asian Games and a Cultural Approach to Studying Regionalism'

Founding the SEAP Games

The SEAP Games were the brainchild of Vice President of the Olympic Committee of Thailand, Luang Sukhum Naiyapradit, a modern-minded noble who in the 1930s had excelled at college sport in the United States. Luang Sukhum wanted to consolidate the increasingly regular sporting exchanges between Thailand and her neighbours in a regional multi-sport event similar to the Asian Games and Olympics, which many countries in the region were now participating in. These countries, he believed, possessed a similar climate and their people a similar 'physical appearance' as well as comparable sporting prowess. Based on these similarities, he believed regional sporting games would help the countries to improve their sporting standards and further regional cooperation. In May 1958, during the 3rd Asian Games in Tokyo, Luang Sukhum proposed the event to sporting officials from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya, and Viet Nam. The meeting ratified his proposal for a 'Little Asian Games' called the Southeast Asia Peninsular Games, formed the SEAP Games Federation to oversee the event, and planned games for every second year between the Asian and Olympic Games. The inaugural event in 1959 was scheduled for Bangkok in recognition of Thailand's leadership role. Thailand proposed 12 sports for the first games, including athletics, which was made compulsory, and other international sports such as football, basketball, and boxing. In addition, the meeting proposed including the indigenous regional game of *takraw* (rattan ball) as a demonstration sport, and it later became a full medal sport. The meeting also reputedly coined the term '*sepak takraw*'; a compound of the Malay and Thai names, which has since become the accepted international nomenclature. Although international sports were most common, the coinage and inclusion of *sepak takraw* injected regional content into the schedule.

In Tokyo and afterwards, Luang Sukhum and fellow officials reiterated the two major objectives of the SEAP Games. In an instrumental sense, they would enhance sporting standards in the participating countries, thus increasing their competitiveness in the Olympics and Asian Games. 'Our teams are not strong.... Our standards are low,' Luang Sukhum stated bluntly, and the SEAP Games aimed to reverse this situation (Bangkok Post, May 26 1958, p. 6). Secondly, the SEAP Games were established for the purpose of promoting regional solidarity. OTC president General Praphat Charusathian, protégé of the Thai dictator Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, heralded the event as a means of 'better[ing] the already existing bonds of friendship among the various member nations of the Games' (Bangkok Post, May 12, 1958, p. 6). (*continued* ➔)

A regional family

If organizers were enthusiastic about how the SEAP Games would further regional friendship, they were less explicit about the criteria for membership of this 'family' (kinship terms were used frequently). Yet there were clearly two considerations. First and most obviously, the SEAP Games were limited to the countries of peninsular Southeast Asia. This principle was relaxed with the last-minute inclusion of Singapore in the 1959 Games, which may have been a direct response to Cambodia's withdrawal, apparently due to its dispute with Thailand over the Preah Vihear/Phra Viharn temple (back in the news in recent years). Nevertheless, the peninsular principle remained fundamental until 1977, when the renamed SEA Games were expanded to Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei after communist Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia had withdrawn two years earlier. Behind the geography, however, were history, politics, and historiography. In the Thai and Lao languages, the SEAP Games were also known as *kila laem thong*, the *laem thong* or Golden Peninsula Games. The term *laem thong* has much in common with *Suwannaphum*, a mythical 'golden land' mentioned in Buddhist texts (and the name of Bangkok's airport, showing how poignant the motif remains). The 'golden land' myth has different versions throughout Southeast Asia. In the Indonesian one, which featured in the 2011 opening ceremony, 'Suwannadwipa' (golden island) was Sumatra. In the Thai case, intellectuals such as Luang Wichit Wathakan had spent the 1930s and 1940s asserting that the Golden Peninsula/Suwanphum encompassed all of mainland Southeast Asia and, most importantly, that the martially superior Siamese had historically been the dominant power in the region.

Culture and regionalism

The founding of the SEAP Games was a significant step in regional institution building. Although it was not the first regional event or body, predecessors such as the Southeast Asia League and Southeast Asian Treaty Organization were respectively short lived and had narrow strategic goals under the stewardship of the United States. The SEAP Games preceded the Association of Southeast Asia (1961) and Maphilindo (1963) as well as their more resilient successor, ASEAN (1967), and from the mid-1980s, the Indochinese countries rejoined the SEA Games well in advance of joining ASEAN. In 2007 Timor Leste also joined, reinforcing how the event fosters soft diplomacy.

More important than this diplomatic function, however, was the popular and cultural character of the event. Together with politicians like Praphat, the games involved thousands of ordinary people, from athletes and officials to spectators and fans following in the press. These human interactions, repeated biennially for over half a century now, have combined with cultural features of the format to give substance to the regional themes of the games. (*continued* ➔)

A series of familiar symbols and rituals were adapted in 1959 to reinforce the theme of regional amity. The SEA Games flag featured a light blue background, representing 'the water that surrounds, or the sky that covers the Southeast Asian Countries,' with six interlocking 'bright yellow gold rings ... intertwined to denote friendship, brotherly love and unity of purpose' (Bell 2003). The flame of the first SEAP Games in Bangkok was lit from torches brought from each of the competing nations, so that the games flame symbolically embodied the unity between them. Likewise, the athlete's oath was read as the national team captains draped the six national flags, symbolically unified, over a rostrum emblazoned with the six-ringed SEAP Games emblem. Also adopted were the Olympic procession and assembly of athletes, in which national teams enter the stadium and form ranks on the stadium field. By juxtaposing national and universal symbols, this display 'expresses cooperative unity, though a unity of ordered segmentation' (MacAloon 1984: 252). The scale and spectacle of such rituals adds to their cultural force, and contrasts with the staid character of political and economic meetings.

Source:

Creak, Simon. 2012. 'From Bangkok to Palembang: The Southeast Asian Games and a Cultural Approach to Studying Regionalism'. *Center for Southeast Asian Studies Newsletter*, No. 65. Japan: Kyoto University, pp. 15–17. www.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/edit/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/NL6515-17.pdf

Vocabulary

Amity:	friendship.
Brainchild:	creation, invention.
Coin:	to create, invent.
Consolidate:	to combine, bring together into a single event.
Drape:	to cover or wrap in cloth.
Emblazon:	to decorate.
Explicit:	clear, specific.
Features:	characteristics.
Further:	to encourage.
Historiography:	the writing of history, and its study.
Inaugural:	first.
Juxtapose:	to place side by side.
Martially:	linked to military power.
Nomenclature:	name (<i>usually</i> : a system of names or terms).
Oath:	solemn promise that one will do something.
Prowess:	skills, abilities.
Resilient:	flexible, strong, able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.
Rostrum:	platform.
Soft diplomacy:	managing international relations through activities that encourage cooperation rather than confrontation and power struggles.
Stewardship:	care, supervision.

Source 2: 'Sports as Politics and History'

History of the SEA Games

The SEA Games grew out of the Southeast Asian Peninsula (SEAP) Games, founded by Thailand as a 'Little Asian Games' in the late 1950s. The event has been held every other year since 1959 (except 1963), in the 'odd' years between the Olympics and the Asian Games. Thailand's Olympic Committee established the Games with two objectives in mind: to increase the standard of sport and to promote regional solidarity.

Membership of the SEAP Games 'family' was restricted, however. Firstly, the Games were, as the name suggested, limited to peninsular Southeast Asia – Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya, South Viet Nam and Thailand. The one exception to this rule was Singapore, which was included.

The second factor was Cold War anti-communism. Participants were either non-aligned (Burma, Cambodia) or anti-communist (the others), while North Viet Nam, the only communist country on the 'Golden Peninsula', was absent. In short, the SEAP Games were founded on the basis of Thai-centric anti-communist regionalism in mainland Southeast Asia. Since then the Games have adapted to broader changes in the region. After Laos, Cambodia and South Viet Nam withdrew due to the revolutionary upheaval of 1975, the event was expanded to include Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei. With the exception of Brunei, the countries participating in the renamed 'Southeast Asian Games' were members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the region's anti-communist bloc formed in 1967. Anti-communism also faded over time.

Foreshadowing ASEAN's expansion in the following decade, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam rejoined the Games in the 1980s. These days the SEA Games include the ten ASEAN countries plus Timor Leste.

Echoing John MacAloon's (1984) foundational work on Olympic spectacle, the SEA Games have embodied changing ideas of regionalism while also providing opportunities to assert nationalism and act out the region's many rivalries. Together with the global and civilizing image of sport, this blend of national and regional themes seems to account for the event's endurance and adaptability over the past 50 years.

Participating in national success

How, given these concerns, did the SEA Games in Laos turn out to be such a national triumph? The answer lies in the power of sporting events to create nationalist fervour that is both popular and participatory. I cannot say if individual pre-Games critics, such as residents near That Luang changed their minds during the event itself. But the Games triggered widespread popular enthusiasm when, even days before, a lack of interest and derision had threatened to derail the entire undertaking. (*continued* ➔)

From senior National Sports Committee officials to fans and market traders, Laotians repeated simply that they were 'proud' (*phum chai*) – not only to be hosting the SEA Games, but particularly proud of the Lao team, which won 33 gold, 25 silver and 52 bronze medals. The headline figure of 33 golds comfortably exceeded what had seemed an ambitious target of 25 – again for the 25th SEA Games! – and smashed its previous best of five in 2007. Like hosting the event itself, the phenomenal haul of medals was made possible by extensive foreign support, especially in the form of coaches and training camps, but this mattered little to fans. Though it failed to win a medal, the men's football team epitomized Lao PDR's success, capturing the country's imagination as it made the semi-finals for the first time in decades. Star striker Lamnao Singto became an instant national hero, scoring twice against Indonesia to take the team through.

Throughout the Games, national colours and nationalist imagery were ubiquitous in shirts, flags and slogans. Enterprising locals set up roadside stalls selling counterfeit goods. At less than one US dollar for a headband or a small flag, a few dollars for a shirt, and five for a large flag or twenty for a massive one, these goods were far more affordable than official merchandise.

Participation was oral and aural. En masse at events and after football matches, fans chanted '*Lao su su! Lao su su! Lao su su!*' ('Laos, go go!' or, literally, 'Laos, fight fight!'). This slogan became the rhythm of the Games as people clapped, blew horns and beat drums in time with it.

Like all good slogans, it was also printed on t-shirts, headbands, and even cars. Blanket television coverage took participation into restaurants, markets and homes, not only in Vientiane but throughout the country. Even the phenomenon of Lao people watching Lao television was notable: the much slicker Thai TV is usually far more popular. Support for the Games blurred the usual distinction between official and popular nationalism. The crowd erupted on several occasions when Somsavat's face was flashed onto the screen at the National Stadium or his name announced by officials. After winning gold in taekwondo, Phouthavong Outhasak instantly scaled the grandstand to embrace Somsavat first – and only then his parents. While the SEA Games united athletes, fans, organizers and politicians as participants in national success, Somsavat was literally and symbolically their 'chief' (*pathan*).

Source:

Creak, Simon. 2011. 'Sports as politics and history', *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 14–19. asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Creak-2011-SEA-Games.pdf, pp. 16–17

Note: Somsavath Lengsavath was the president of the Laos 25th SEA Games Organising Committee (LAOSOC).

Vocabulary

Aural:	loud.
Blanket television coverage:	widespread broadcasting of a programme on all channels all the time.
Counterfeit:	fake, copied.
Derail:	crash, to prevent a plan from succeeding.
Derision:	mockery.
Echo:	to copy.
Embody:	to represent.
Erupt:	to burst, explode.
Fervor:	excitement.
Foreshadow:	to predict.
Foundational:	first and central.
Grandstand:	main stage, platform.
Haul:	harvest, something obtained.
Notable:	noticeable.
Regionalism:	with a focus on the region.
Revolutionary upheaval:	revolution.
Rivalry:	competition, conflict.
Slicker:	with higher production value.
Ubiquitous:	everywhere.
Undertaking:	event.

Source 3: 'Representing True Laos in Postcolonial Southeast Asia'

The politics of the SEAP Games

First held in 1959, the South East Asia Peninsular (SEAP) Games (Lao: *Kila Laem Thong* or simply Siap games) appear to have been the first regional sporting festival in post-colonial Southeast Asia. Although American archival records suggest a US embassy official in Bangkok played a decisive role, the vice-president of the Olympic Council of Thailand (OCT), Luang Sukhum Naiyapradit, a modern-minded noble and keen sportsman educated in the United States, is usually credited with initiating the SEAP Games. Cambodia and South Viet Nam expressed in-principle support for the idea and in February 1958 the OCT agreed to host the inaugural games that December. In May, Thai officials met with national representatives from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya, and South Viet Nam during the third Asian Games in Tokyo, and the meeting ratified the event, calling it a 'Little Asian Games'. The SEAP Games were to be held every second year, 'between the Olympic and the Asian Games' meaning the first edition, to be held in Bangkok to honour Thailand's role in initiating the event, was delayed for a year until December 1959. Cambodia did not compete in Bangkok, seemingly due to deteriorating relations with Thailand over the disputed Khao Pra Viharn/Preah Vihear temple on their shared border.

But the self-governed British territory of Singapore was invited at the last moment, and six teams took part as planned. The right to host subsequent SEAP Games was to be rotated according to alphabetical order, but this schedule was not adhered to. After Burma organized the second games in Rangoon in 1961, the scheduled host for 1963, Cambodia, cancelled that year's event, at least in part because of the poor state of relations with Thailand over the temple issue. The 1965 games were then passed to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) after Laos baulked for financial reasons. Revealing the gulf in sporting standards and funding, the Indochinese countries would never host the SEAP Games in that format. The event returned to Bangkok in 1967, Rangoon in 1969, and Kuala Lumpur in 1971, while Singapore, independent since 1965, organized the games for the first time in 1973. In 1975, the fall of South Viet Nam to the communist North and communist revolutions in Laos and Cambodia led these countries to withdraw. With only four countries remaining, the games were expanded in 1977 to include Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei, and renamed the South East Asian (SEA) Games.

While a detailed study of the SEAP Games has yet to be undertaken, the event appeared to have two main objectives. The first of these was a sporting one. In a letter to his regional counterparts, OCT President Lieutenant-General Praphat Charusathien [...] identified the need to 'raise the level of the competition among nations of Southeast Asia', and suggested 'the SEAP Games would help countries improve their standards at future Olympic and Asian Games'. Luang Sukhum was blunter on this point: 'Our teams are not strong. Our standards are low'. Similarly, the Olympic Council of Malaysia later recalled that the SEA Games countries were of a similar sporting level so could provide even competition and help each other improve. Results would indicate that sporting standards varied considerably in the region, an impression reinforced by the failure of Laos, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam to host the event. Still, it was notable that the first reason given for founding the SEAP Games was national sporting progress to foster improvement at the Asian and Olympic Games. (*continued* ➔)

The second stated goal of the SEAP Games was to foster regional solidarity. Praphat told the Bangkok Post the games would 'also better the already existing bonds of friendship among the various member nations of the Games', and Luang Sukhum reinforced this objective of the games in Tokyo. The idea of forging regional solidarity through the games was symbolized by the official emblem of six interlocking rings, displayed on the flag and the logo of each edition of the games. According to the statutes of the SEAP Games Federation: 'the bright yellow gold rings symbolize the six original Southeast Asian Countries. They are intertwined to denote friendship, brotherly love and unity of purpose.' The motif of interlocking rings was clearly adapted from the Olympic rings, invented in 1914 as an international emblem of the Olympic movement. The use of kinship terms also recalled the theme of Olympic fraternity. Just as the statutes invoke brotherly love, Thailand liked to refer to the games as a 'small family affair', suggesting a familial intimacy between close neighbours. Furthermore, the official SEAP Games flag featured the six gold rings on a blue background, to denote 'the water that surrounds, or the sky that covers the Southeast Asian Countries'. While this symbolism could of course apply to any group of countries, it was further evidence of the theme of regional solidarity...

In the dawning age of post-colonial nationalism, the imperial implications of *laem thong* had faded into less aggressive expressions of regionalism. Still, the Thai name of the SEAP Games invoked a post-colonial regionalism in which Thailand was the paramount power. This possibly accounted for Thai efforts to block the entry of Indonesia and the Philippines in the early 1970s; these regional powers would not only have expanded the games beyond the peninsula, they would have threatened Thailand's dominant position within the grouping. As Cambodia showed by withdrawing from the SEAP Games in 1959 and 1963, connotations of Thai hegemony – and the historical resonances these contained – could undermine rather than boost regional amity. It was revealing, therefore, that there was no such resistance in Laos. Laos competed in every edition of the games up to 1975 and reports in the Lao language, which is closely related to Thai, used *Kila Laem Thong* (Golden Peninsula Games) interchangeably with the more neutral Siap Games (SEAP Games). Lao officials seemed happy to look up to Thailand as a sporting *ai* or *phi* (big brother), to use the Lao kin term commonly used for larger friendly countries. The games provided a sportive reflection of the RLG's (Royal Lao Government) close relationship with the Thai government, rooted in a common policy of pro-American anti-communism.

Though never stated, this anti-communism – or at least not being communist – was the second criterion for participating in the SEAP Games. Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, South Viet Nam, and royalist Laos were all stridently anti-communist allies of the US, while Burma and Cambodia were non-aligned. On the other hand, North Viet Nam, the only communist country on the so-called golden peninsula, did not take part.

Source:

Creak, Simon. 2013. 'Representing True Laos in Post-colonial Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics in the Globalization of Sport'. Bromber, K., Krawietz, B and Maguire, J. (eds), *Sport Across Asia: Politics, Cultures and Identities*. pp. 109–134. New York: Routledge.

Vocabulary

Amity:	friendship.
Archival records:	archives, historical documents.
Balk:	to be unwilling to accept.
Blunter:	outspoken, straightforward.
Bonds:	relations.
Dawning age:	beginning of a new era.
Denote:	to mean.
Deteriorating:	declining, becoming worse.
Foster:	to support, to promote.
Hegemony:	power, leadership, predominance.
Inaugural:	first.
Intertwined:	connected, overlapping.
Intimacy:	closeness.
Kinship:	family/clan relationships.
Notable:	memorable.
Paramount:	principal, dominant.
Resonance:	vibration, here similar to memories.
Seemingly:	apparently.
Subsequent:	next.
Standards:	requirements, norms.
Statutes:	regulations.
Stridently:	loudly.
Undertake:	to try, to initiate.
Withdraw:	to leave, to pull out.

Source 4: Suggested videos on the SEA Games

27th SEA Games in Myanmar

www.seagfoffice.org/27th.php

Source: Southeast Asian Games Federation.

Opening Ceremonies of the 28th SEA Games

(2h 10m 28s)

youtu.be/2KM1_2Qloao

Source: SG Sports TV. 2015.

Watch segments from 0:00 to 1:38

'Greatest' | Songs of the 28th SEA Games

(3m 47s)

youtu.be/XAcAX6dzPfc

Source: SG Sports TV. 2015.

The making of 'Greatest' | Songs of 28th SEA Games

(2m 56s)

youtu.be/f1CVJ8fJXAo

Source: SG Sports TV. 2015

'Ordinary' inspired by the story of Fandi Ahmad | Songs of 28th SEA Games

(12m 01s)

youtu.be/W2uNwiZsFHs

Source: SG Sports TV. 2015

Handout 1

Linked to Source 1: 'From Bangkok to Palembang: The Southeast Asian Games and a Cultural Approach to Studying Regionalism'

1. Who was Luang Sukhum Naiyapradit? What role did he play in the establishment of the SEAP Games?

2. Tick (✓) all the factors that were considered in developing the idea of a region-wide multi-sporting competition

- shared characteristics among people in the region
- same level of sports development
- the need to uplift the standard of athletic performance
- the need to promote harmony among neighbouring countries

3. TRUE or FALSE: Tick (✓) in the box under TRUE if the given statement is true based on the reading. Tick (✓) in the box under FALSE if not.

	TRUE	FALSE
a. Thailand played a leading role in the formation of the Southeast Asian Peninsular Games (SEAP).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. All the founding members of the SEAP took part in the first SEAP Games in 1959.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. All countries in Southeast Asia were invited to join the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Communist countries in the region were welcome to join the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. The transformation from SEAP to SEA Games meant loss of former founding members.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. The establishment of the SEAP was a very important step towards building an institution for a regional community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. SEAP was established earlier than other important regional bodies such as ASA, Maphilindo and ASEAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. SEAP/SEA Games were held every four years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. SEAP/Games were held on the same years as the Olympic Games or Asian Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What were the symbols and rituals used in the SEAP/SEA Games? In your view, how do they help in developing a sense of community and camaraderie within the region?

Handout 2

Linked to Source 2: 'Sports as Politics and History'

1. Tick (✓) the countries that were the original members of the SEAP Games. Name one or two characteristics that are common to the original member countries.

<input type="checkbox"/> Philippines	<input type="checkbox"/> Singapore	<input type="checkbox"/> Viet Nam
<input type="checkbox"/> Burma	<input type="checkbox"/> Cambodia	<input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia
<input type="checkbox"/> Thailand	<input type="checkbox"/> Laos	

2. What were the main factors, according to the article, that influenced the decision to form the SEAP?

3. Which countries left the SEAP Games in 1975 and which new ones were added?

<i>Leaving members</i>			
<i>New members</i>			

4. Based on the author's discussion of Lao PDRs' hosting of the 2009 SEA Games, how do you think international competitions such as the SEA Games help in strengthening coherence and identity of a nation?

Handout 3

Linked to Source 3: 'Representing True Laos in Postcolonial Southeast Asia'

1. TRUE or FALSE: Tick (✓) in the box under TRUE if the given statement is true based on the reading. Tick (✓) in the box under FALSE if not.

	TRUE	FALSE
a. The first Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games were held in Bangkok in 1958.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. All original members of the SEAP federation were located in peninsular and mainland Southeast Asia.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. All original members of the SEAP federation participated in the first SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Indonesia and Singapore both played host to the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Cambodia and Laos were among those which hosted the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. The Philippines had participated in the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. When the SEAP Games became the SEA Games, the membership or composition of the sports federation did not change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. North Viet Nam was not a member of the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. The SEAP Games were called 'Little Asian Games' because it was patterned after the Asian Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. The high level of sporting capabilities of the countries in the peninsula/mainland prompted the establishment of the SEAP Games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Why was the name 'Peninsular' in SEAP dropped to become SEA Games in 1977? What could be the symbolic importance of that?

3. What were the factors that influenced the decision to form the SEAP?

Handout 4

Group No. _____

Members of the Group; please put an asterisk (*) to indicate the leader.

1. How did the SEAP Games come about?

2. Why did the SEAP Games become the SEA Games? What were the factors that led to the expansion of the membership of the Games?

3. In what specific ways have the SEA Games contributed to the building and strengthening of community spirit among countries and within the region?

