

IN MEMORIAM:
ELIZABETH HOWARD MOORE (1949–2024)



CAPTIONS

1. Elizabeth in December 1955, family album, digitized by Su Latt Win
2. Elizabeth in 1963, family album, digitized by Su Latt Win
3. Meikhtila, Myanmar, 22 July 2017 © Theint Theint Aung
4. The Elizabeth Moore library, Yangon, 7 December 2017 © Theint Theint Aung
5. Field trip in Bagan, 24 December 2017 © Theint Theint Aung
6. Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore, 27 April 2019 © Theint Theint Aung
7. EuroSEAS Conference, Paris, 30 June 2022 © Nicolas Revire
8. EuroSEAS Conference, Paris, 30 June 2022 © Nicolas Revire
9. Wat Rong Meng, Chiang Mai, 10 November 2022 © Suppawan Nongnut
10. IPPA Conference, Chiang Mai, 12 November 2022 © Suppawan Nongnut

The name Elizabeth, née Howard, Moore is one that is likely very familiar to many readers of the *Journal of the Siam Society*. She not only published in JSS on several occasions (see the reference list at the end), she was also an active scholar in Thailand throughout the course of her career, making significant contributions to the study of this country's art and archeology. At the time of her passing on 13 January 2024, Elizabeth was Emeritus Professor in the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology, School of Arts, SOAS, University of London. This brought to a close her 34-year association with this academic institution, having been the first member of staff appointed to the newly formed department in 1990.

One of three children, Elizabeth was born on 28 August 1949 in Washington, D.C. to Paul Cushing Howard (1913–1968) and Margaret Huntington Whittem Howard (1913–2006). She had mentioned to both of us on separate occasions that she had a long family connection with Myanmar (Burma), one such incident being when she reviewed a colonial photo album, but neither of us knew the exact details. Her paternal grandparents, Randolph Lee Howard (1884–1958) and Mae Myrtle Cushing (1884–1956) were American Baptist missionaries in British Burma from 1910 to 1924 and Elizabeth's father, Paul, was born there in 1913. Randolph Lee Howard taught philosophy at Judson College in Yangon (Rangoon), becoming its president in 1921.¹

¹ These details can be found in Farouk Yahya. 2024. Elizabeth Moore (1949–2024), *Indonesia and the Malay World* 52: 150–154.

In 1971, Elizabeth graduated from Pomona College, in Claremont, California, with a BA in Art History. She spent the next decade working as a teacher overseas. During this time, she taught in Nairobi, Kenya (1974–1975), in Jakarta, Indonesia (1975–1976), and Singapore (1977–1979). During her time at the latter two locations she began to develop a growing interest in the art and archeology of Southeast Asia. In 1978, one of her close friends, Anne Tofield, founded the Friends of the National Museum of Singapore and Elizabeth became an active member of their study groups, giving her first public talk, titled "Indonesia and Kampuchea", as part of their Southeast Asian art lecture series in March 1980. While also in Singapore she first visited Myanmar (then still Burma) and Thailand. While the second half of her academic career focused primarily on Myanmar, her original interests lay in northeast Thailand's archeology and moated settlements in particular.²

To pursue this interest further, in 1981, Elizabeth enrolled in doctoral studies at the Institute of Archaeology (UCL) in London under the supervision of the late Ian C. Glover (1924–2018). She focused on the circular moated sites in northeast Thailand and completed her dissertation *The Moated Mu'ang of the Mun River Basin* in 1986. This was published in 1988 by the British Archaeological Reports series in Oxford as *Moated Sites in Early North East Thailand*. As one of her most influential works, this publication is still the "go-to" reference for the region's archeological settlement patterns today.

² Ibid.

In connection with her doctoral research, Elizabeth became interested in the use of aerial photographs shot by the British Royal Air Force over the area. Her interest led to a collaboration between the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and Elizabeth organizing, cataloging, and digitizing an invaluable collection of 5,800 photographs, taken by officer Peter Williams-Hunt (1919–1953) both during reconnaissance flights over Thailand during the Second World War and in the early 1950s while he was based in British Malaya (Malaysia) until his premature death there in 1953. The photographs also included aerial images of Angkor, Singapore, and Burma, the latter numbering just over 800.

This began Elizabeth's career-long interest in using the then new technology of remote sensing, including satellite imagery, to understand the archeological footprints left on the landscape only visible from above—air or literally, space. For instance, with the aid of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, Elizabeth persuaded the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab to have the Space Shuttle Endeavour take radar images of Angkor Wat.

Today, thanks to Elizabeth's foresight and collaborative spirit, copies of the Williams-Hunt collection are available at a number of locations worldwide. The SOAS library now houses the original photographs and a set of new images, while relevant photographs are also available in Southeast Asian institutions such as the National Archives of Malaysia, the Singapore National Library, and the National Library of Thailand. Furthermore, a full set of the re-digitized images was acquired by the Centre for

Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), University of Kyoto.

As mentioned above, Elizabeth's work during the initial years of her academic career at SOAS in the early to mid-1990s focused primarily on Thailand. Building on her doctoral work, she co-published with Smitthi Siribhadra *Palaces of the Gods: Khmer Arts & Architecture in Thailand* (1992). As with her work on moated sites in northeast Thailand, this new volume, generously illustrated with photography by Michael Freeman, is still one of the only comprehensive publications on Khmer temples of Thailand carried out at a time when the northeast region was still not easily accessible. It also marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship and collaboration with MR Narisa Chakrabongse and her Bangkok based publishing house, River Books. Four years later, Elizabeth co-published, with Phillip Stott, *Ancient Capitals of Thailand* (1996). This volume also contained photography from Michael Freeman and was produced by River Books under the Thames & Hudson imprint.

The 1990s saw Elizabeth's focus gradually shift to Myanmar. However, she remained actively involved in Thai archeology circles for the remainder of her career. She published *Shwedagon: Golden Pagoda of Myanmar* (1999) while eight years later her work *Early Landscapes of Myanmar* (2007), again with River Books, represents a significant watershed moment. This seminal work was the first comprehensive synthesis of the archeology of the country to be published and is arguably one of the most important works to date on the subject. Her fourth book, *The Pyu*

Landscape: Collected Articles (2012) was published five years later. Finally, just prior to her death, Elizabeth was able to complete and publish her last book, *Wider Bagan: Ancient and Living Buddhist Traditions* (2023), with contributing authors Win Maung (Tampawaddy), Win Kyaing, Kyaw Nyi Nyi Htet, and Kyaw Soe Htun.³ This work highlights her sensitivity to local beliefs and epistemologies in the interpretation of Myanmar's past, an area often dismissed by Western archeologists, as well as her insistence on the inclusion of Myanmar experts in her works.

Elizabeth held many appointments and positions throughout her career. From 2003 until recently, she was a visiting professor at the University of Yangon, Department of Archaeology. In 2013, Elizabeth became a visiting professor at the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, and at one time was a visiting professor with the Open Society Initiative at Yangon University. She served on the editorial boards of several SOAS journals including *Indonesia and the Malay World*. In 2014, Elizabeth served as the Chair of the SOAS Southeast Asia Centre. Furthermore, she twice served as Head of Department of History of Art and Archaeology at SOAS (1996–1997 to 1999–2000 and 2007–2008 to 2008–2009). She was promoted to Reader in 2009–2010 and to Professor in 2013–2014.

In retirement in 2014, Elizabeth was granted Emeritus status and remained extremely busy. She served as the In-Region Liaison for the newly established SOAS Alphawood Programme (SAAAP).

³ Bob Hudson reviews this book in this issue of the journal.

She remained a member of the SOAS Food Studies Centre and a retired member of the SOAS Southeast Asian Studies Centre. She also took an active role in building the educational infrastructure of Myanmar in the form of active mentorship and the donations of books to libraries in different parts of the country from her personal library that she brought to Yangon to help Alphawood alumni. For example, in addition to the Elizabeth Moore Library in Yangon, she donated to the Southeast Asian Arts Library to Dawei University.⁴

Elizabeth still frequently took part in academic events. She organised panels on Myanmar archeology on numerous occasions at the major in-region conferences such as SPAFACON 2021 and 2024 in Bangkok and IPPA 2018 in Hue, Vietnam and IPPA 2022 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, bringing together both Myanmar and international scholars.

She was also active at universities in Myanmar, including several invitations from Shan State Buddhist University. She continued to work closely with Myanmar archeological students. At the time of her passing she was working on a catalogue for the new museum in Bagan with some Alphawood alumni. She was also working on a paper looking at the development of new forms of Buddhist architecture and ritual in the post-Bagan period for the third volume of the SAAAP anthology *The Creative South* edited by Andrea Acri and Peter Sharrock (forthcoming).

⁴ These details can be found in Peter Sharrock (2025), Obituary: SOAS Professor Emerita Elizabeth Howard Moore (1949–2024), *Asian Perspectives* 64(1), forthcoming.

With the 2021 military coup Elizabeth left Yangon and returned to London, but continued to extend help to Myanmar students and academics who were having difficulty leaving the country. She had planned to relocate to northern Thailand in mid-2024 as she had been offered the position of visiting scholar in Chiang Mai University hosted by Dr Thanyarat Aphiwong. Unfortunately, illness prevented her from leaving and to take up the offer.⁵

We are both personally aware that up until the end during her struggle with cancer, Elizabeth remained surprisingly active. We both saw her on-campus at the start of term in September 2023; she also made an appearance at

the opening to Alexandra Green's *Burma to Myanmar* exhibition at the British Museum and appeared online at the SOAS Shan New Years event hosted by the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies. She remained active on the Facebook page for the Elizabeth Moore Library until the end of November 2023, with her final posts praising the achievements of her Myanmar students. SOAS has lost a great member, colleagues have lost a great friend, and Southeast Asia has lost a great scholar.

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- . 2013. Review of *50 Years of Archaeology in Southeast Asia: Essays in Honour of Ian Glover* edited by Bérénice Bellina et al. *Journal of the Siam Society* 101: 285–288.

⁵ Ibid.

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⁷ For a comprehensive list of Elizabeth H. Moore's publications up to 2016, see: <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/view/people/Moore=3AElizabeth=3A=3A.html>.

