Such mildly critical comments should not, however, detract from the significant contribution of *Red peacocks*. It could have been produced more elegantly, or checked more rigorously, but it will remain a unique intervention which should provoke further efforts to understand how various forms of modernist and traditionalist political ideology have flowed through Burmese society. In one section, the point is made that 'tragically, Burmese socialism lacked an appropriate means for eliminating human greed, suspicion and delusion; so throughout the Socialist period, even at the highest echelon, most leaders felt *loka nibban* (worldly bliss) meant material wealth' (p. 279). With the end of the socialist period in Burma, some things have not changed. Burmese authoritarianism, in its current variant, has sadly failed to change the impression that bliss comes from material wealth alone.

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Philippines

Amazons of the Huk rebellion: Gender, sex and revolution in the Philippines
By VINA A. LANZONA
Madison (WI): The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. New Perspectives in Southeast Asian Studies. Pp. xviiii; 370. Maps, Diagrams, Photographs, Notes, Appendices, Bibliography. Index.
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Within the Huk guerrilla forces, Vina Lanzona writes, attitudes to women were 'hesitant and contradictory'. This is an understatement. Practically all the top-ranking leaders were members of the Philippine Communist Party (PKP), which professed to treat women comrades 'on an equal basis with men' and to help them 'equip themselves for positions of leadership and responsibility'. And yet in reality, says Lanzona, the party advanced only a handful of women to high positions. The great majority of the women who lived in the Huks' forest encampments in the 1940s and 1950s were consigned to the traditional roles of cooking, washing, housekeeping and childcare, and the party was 'allowing most to serve the sexual needs of male leaders'. The military culture that prevailed in the camps was 'quite abusive', and as the rebellion faced defeat its male leaders increasingly held women to blame for its reverses, to the point that a 'climate of misogyny' came to prevail. Women, babies and families came to be seen less as assets that vitalised and sustained the movement than as 'problems', and when these 'problems' were debated the male leaders did not listen to women's opinions. In matters of sex and gender, Lanzona concludes, 'the Huks in many ways failed to liberate themselves from the very cultural traditionalism that they were fighting against'. The camps replicated, even exaggerated, the inequities of mainstream society.

In the course of her fieldwork, in the 1990s, Lanzona interviewed over a hundred Huk veterans – 70 women and 32 men – and it is around their fascinating testimonies

that she constructs her book. If she had not succeeded in tracking them down and winning their confidence, their individual and collective histories would have been lost, for now their generation is passing away. Most came from peasant backgrounds and spoke mainly in Tagalog, but their words are translated here lucidly, and their personalities and passions are captured vividly. Their recollections, thankfully, do not get buried beneath scholarly jargon, and are adroitly structured. The five semi-chronological, semi-thematic chapters discuss in turn the wartime, anti-Japanese phase of the Huk struggle; the post-war demobilisation and subsequent remobilisation of the guerrilla forces; the biographies of the most prominent Huk women; 'Love and sex in a time of revolution'; and lastly the legacy of the Huk women. Gender theory necessarily informs the study, but its incursions into the text are kept to a prudent and pertinent minimum.

For all these virtues, Lanzona deserves high praise. But perhaps the contradictions in Huk attitudes could have been delineated more sharply, their roots probed a little harder. Why was the gulf between theory and practice, between ideal and reality, so wide? Why were the traditional gender norms so entrenched, and what exactly were they? At different junctures they are variously called 'patriarchal', 'Catholic' and 'bourgeois', but these terms are not elaborated or given substance. Rather than explicating the contradictions, in fact, Lanzona compounds them with inconsistencies of her own. Seemingly torn at times between positive and negative evaluations, she confuses the reader by giving both. She relates, for example, that sex, gender and family issues were recognised by Huk leaders as 'crucial' and 'integral' to the movement, but says elsewhere that ultimately they were seen as 'peripheral and harmful'. At one point, she describes PKP policy statements such as 'The Revolutionary Solution to the Sex Problem' as 'creating a space' for women and being 'receptive' to women's problems, but at another point she laments how they provided 'no space for women to express their views and needs' and failed 'to address the coercion of women'. Inconsistencies also bedevil her periodisation of events, and her engagement with the debate about whether the PKP did, or did not, lead the Huks. On this question, she not only seems at different times to accept both sides of the argument, but also tosses two other possibilities into the ring — that the Huks were remobilised after the war by 'former' PKP leaders, and, bizarrely misconstruing another scholar, that the rebellion was a phase in the peasantry's prolonged struggle 'to undermine' the PKP's revolutionary role. Possibly these follies were just slips of the pen, but how are readers to know?

Previous works on the Huks have virtually ignored the involvement of women and the importance of gender issues, and Lanzona commendably remedies that deficiency. In redressing the past neglect, however, she occasionally tends to overcompensate, and to claim too much for her subject. She asserts, for instance, that the Huks, by mobilising women and professing (if not practising) sexual equality, 'instituted' a sexual and gender revolution in the Philippines — a judgement that slights the nationalist, radical and women's movements of earlier decades, movements she mentions fleetingly but then seems to forget. She contends that the Huks became one of the most effective anti-Japanese guerrilla forces during the war 'as a result' of mobilising women as well as men, a claim that patently elides the many other factors critical to their success. And finally she suggests that it was the Huks' mishandling of sex, gender and family issues that 'placed the movement on the defensive' and 'led to its permanent decline'.

The consensus view is that the Huk rebellion failed because it was confined to just a few provinces; because a 'revolutionary situation', contrary to the PKP's estimate, did not exist; and because the United States provided substantial military assistance to help the Philippine army suppress the insurgency. It is no doubt true, as Lanzona says, that as rebellion faltered the culture in the Huk encampments became more 'masculine' and the guerrillas became more isolated from their families and communities. But surely, these were the consequences of retreat and defeat, not the causes.

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Indonesia

Unfinished nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto
By MAX LANE
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The post-Suharto era proved conducive for the expansion and re-examination of Indonesian history and historiography, both academic and popular. There emerged a veritable 'history industry' in the past 10 years as hundreds of titles have appeared that relate one way or another to history and memory. One characteristic of this development, as one may expect, is the dominance of the popular-type as opposed to the academic or scholarly ones.

Entitled *Unfinished nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, the book under review here is one in the more recent batch of work on this subject. By foregrounding the role of mass mobilisation politics in the nation-building process, it offers a provocative interpretation of the history of twentieth-century Indonesia, as it goes against the grain of much of Indonesia's mainstream nationalist historiography.

Max Lane asserts that Suharto did not just fall from power. He was pushed out of it, not by the elite and foreign forces, as many believed, but by the consciously developed protest movement – he calls *aksi* – that involved the participation of the Indonesian masses. He then draws a link between this anti-Suharto movement and other movements that preceded it, tracing the origin to as far back as the mass organisations that developed in the early 1900s. By doing so, he forcefully argues for, without unfortunately the corresponding adequate demonstration of, the centrality of mass movement in the process of nation-building, which he equates to the national revolution itself. If *revolusi nasional* is commonly referred to in conventional historiography as the period of armed and diplomatic struggles against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949, and Sukarno often sought to appropriate it to refer to the struggles during his time, Lane expands the scope of the concept to encapsulate the entire process of nation formation and transformation that Indonesia underwent from the early 1900s up to the mid-1960s. This process was aborted, so he claims, by the counter-revolution spearheaded by Suharto's New Order. Anyone familiar with Pramoedya