

only be made whole if it acknowledges the many other fragments of its history' (p. 133).

The third part of the book, 'Oral history and heritage', begins with Emilie Wellfelt's 'The anthropologist as heroine', an account of Cora Du Bois's work in prewar Alor and the people's postwar recollections of her. Those have changed, as those who knew her have died, and a new generation has taken over the corpus of Du Bois stories. Chou Wen Loong and Ho Sok Fong deal with the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement, founded in 1930 some fifty years before leprosy became curable. Some 280 residents are left. A final chapter returns us to Singapore. The lightermen who worked on the River were driven out as it was cleaned up and made a tourist attraction and containerisation rendered them superfluous at Pasir Panjang. They tell their story in their own way, not quite the Government's.

Not wishing to write a nationalist 'grand narrative', a historian of Southeast Asia has to wonder how this material should be included, rather than merely passed by with a sigh or a tear. Can these be more than fragments? — or, to change metaphors, more than rocks that the historiographical tides both expose and cover up?

NICHOLAS TARLING

New Zealand Asia Institute, The University of Auckland

Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500–1700

By TARA ALBERTS

New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xviii + 242. Figures, Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

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The history of Catholic missions in Southeast Asia, unlike those in Japan, China and India, is not well-known. Focusing on the development of Roman Catholicism between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in three geographical areas — Malacca, Siam, and Vietnam (Tonkin and Cochinchina) — Alberts traces the story of how the Catholic faith was introduced, took root and developed.

This is a study of the success and failure of Western missionary enterprises in Asia, describing the perceptions and presentation of evangelism from both perspectives: those of the various groups of missionaries and of their converts. Mapping collaborations and conflicts among different actors of the period, Alberts analyses the 'nature of conversion and the

relationship between religious belief and practices' (p. xvii). In particular, she attempts to answer the puzzle long-posed by historians of Christian missions: Why did Christianity flourish in certain places and not in others? Which methods and strategies ensured success and which failed?

The book is comprised of an introduction, nine chapters and a conclusion. The chapters are organised in three sections outlining missionary structures and networks, missionary methods, and the experience of converts. Drawing from annual reports, letters, narratives, and histories written by missionaries and also by others, including diplomats, travellers, and merchants, Alberts skilfully weaves together the complex stories of how Catholicism was propagated and received in different localities, under diverse political, social and cultural situations.

Beginning in 1511, Catholicism was introduced to Southeast Asia under the Portuguese patronage system (*padroado*). After a century of experimenting with *padroado*, Rome established the Papal Congregation for Evangelisation, the *Propaganda Fide* (1622), to take charge of missionary activities in foreign lands. This overlay of jurisdiction created tensions between the independent-minded missionaries and their Vicars Apostolic appointed by Rome for the mission territories. Five major groups from various European countries — the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, Jesuits, and Parisian Foreign Missionaries (MEP) — laboured side by side on mission lands, often in nationalistic and ecclesiastical competition. Each of these groups had a distinct missionary method which was sometimes at odds with the others, which often resulted in one group undermining another's mission.

The reception of Catholicism depended not only on missionary methods, but on local potential for conversion. The political situation in Portuguese Malacca differed greatly from the peaceful court of Siam or the two estranged kingdoms of Tonkin and Cochinchina. In the former case, the missionaries had full colonial support, whereas the lands of the Thai and the Vietnamese were neutral to hostile to Western influence. Church authorities agreed that to attract converts, some modification of European ecclesial customs should be made. The point of tension was the question of how much accommodation should be allowed. Missionaries differed on how to present themselves to the natives — as monks, holy men, merchants, scientists, or healers? The introduction of Catholic devotion, catechism, images, and other Catholic materials were the competitive ground for winning converts. By using accounts from opposite sides of missionaries describing what was really at stake on the ground, despite the official rhetoric, Alberts gives a fascinating and balanced account of the encounters between missionaries and their potential converts.

Adaptation to local cultural and religious customs was done not only by missionaries but also by local converts. Native clergy and lay confraternities were created to help the few missionaries to carry out their evangelising tasks effectively. Consequently, lay leadership often produced a version of the faith perhaps not entirely in conformity with the ecclesiastical demands. Post-Tridentine Catholicism stipulated the proper administration of the sacraments, but exceptions were often made at the local levels; again, a contested point. The spread of popular Catholic devotion which sometimes exceeded missionary control was another point of friction. All of this tells us that the lived religion developed and practised within communities could differ from the missionary's personal concept of the faith.

An important contribution of this book is recounting the experiences of women converts and slaves. Their roles in spreading the faith, often under-discussed in standard mission accounts, give us an alternative story of evangelisation. In some cases, Catholic women were the patronage of the local missions as well as effective evangelisers to their pagan neighbours. The connection between missions and slavery remained a challenging issue, given that religious doctrine was often used to justify the status quo. Orthodoxy did not always translate into orthopraxy.

Alberts's work reminds us of the complex dynamic of conversion. After centuries of evangelisation, Christians are still a minority in Southeast Asia. The book highlights a number of factors that might have helped or hindered their progress: the colonial support for the missions, the reception by local rulers, the compatibility of Catholicism with local beliefs and religious needs, and the myriad approaches by missionaries to effectively convey their messages. No single factor, however, fully explains the variations between regional acceptance of the faith. Ultimately, the lay women and men, not the missionaries, were the main actors on the local scene, and they alone would make a lasting impact.

Informative as it is, the book still suffers from minor issues, mainly typographical errors which may be unavoidable, since most footnotes are reproduced from the original Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, and Latin archival materials. The author's lack of knowledge of Vietnamese language renders many native names of people and places — complicated by the diacritical marks — incomprehensible. Despite this limitation, the book's extensive and encyclopaedic usage of newly introduced archival materials demonstrates the erudite, careful and thorough approach of the author, which ensures the book's lasting value.

The study of the Catholic missions still has much to learn from native sources which can add significant voices to the narratives presented by Alberts. Until that happens, and it might take many years, this book will

be an authoritative work for studies of Christianity in Vietnam and Thailand. Scholars of Southeast Asian and religious studies will find the book indispensable for studying the patterns of Western and native encounters prior to nineteenth-century colonialism.

ANH Q. TRAN

Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University

Cambodia

Aid dependence in Cambodia: How foreign assistance undermines democracy

By SOPHAL EAR

New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. Pp. 185. Figures, Tables, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

The Cardamom conundrum: Reconciling development and conservation in the Kingdom of Cambodia

By TIMOTHY J. KILLEEN

Singapore: NUS Press, 2012. Pp. 354. Maps, Figures, Tables, Photographs, Notes, Index.

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These volumes offer two very different, but complementary, perspectives on contemporary development questions in Cambodia. Both argue that they address the core issues that are shaping not only development in Cambodia but around the world and both offer insights which the authors hope will affect development pathways for the best. For Timothy Killeen the most pressing issue is how nations like Cambodia balance the need for economic development and wealth generation with the preservation of biodiversity and precious natural resources. For Sophal Ear the issue is that of aid dependence and the way that such dependence works to cripple national economies and stunt not only economic growth, but also social and political change towards a more equitable society. Read in tandem these two books provide valuable insights into what is happening in Cambodia and offer worthwhile advice to development agencies, donors, and governments about how best to shape their engagements.

To begin with *The Cardamom conundrum* by Timothy Killeen. Killeen frames his book around a bit of a straw man, i.e. the ‘conundrum’ of the title in which Cambodia is faced with making a choice between economic development based on resource exploitation versus a ‘green’ choice of