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Book Reviews

Asia

Australia's ambivalence towards Asia: Politics, neo/post-colonialism and fact/fiction
By J.D. D'CRUZ and WILLIAM STEELE
Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2000. Pp. 399. Notes, Bibliography, Index. DOI: S0022463403210481

This long book has at its heart Blanche D'Alpuget's *Turtle Beach* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), a novel encapsulating Australia's attitude towards Asia today and in the past. *Australia's ambivalence towards Asia* spends several chapters preparing the reader for its critique of the novel and the film adaptation of the same name. It begins and ends by hammering home the belief that Australia is a racist nation and that white Australians from the very beginning of their stay in that country mistreated Aborigines and subsequently other people of colour who came to it.

To prove that Australians are bigoted and racist, the book uses complex and sometimes opaque terminology. It establishes the concepts of 'concrete' and 'abstract' societies, for example, to analyse the major differences between Asian and Western societies (although it bends over backwards to stress that this in no way essentialises or 'fixes' these societies in broad stereotypes). The authors also utilise the tools of psychoanalysis to describe the 'early whites deposited' on Australian shores as 'children of the empire, socialised into it, and brutalised and petted by it, who could not imagine themselves or others in any but a hegemonic/abject binary' (p. 25).

As that last quotation indicates, the book is a minefield of jargon. Its message would be lost in technical terms and convoluted post-modern syntax, except that it repeats its main points over and over again: white Australians from the very beginning of their stay in this country mistreated Aborigines and subsequently other people of colour who came here. Their racism was 'concealed within the Trojan horse of liberalism' (p. 26) and Australian racism persisted, despite the dismantling of the White Australia Policy in the mid-1960s, the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 (outlawing racist acts) and the official policy of multiculturalism introduced about the same time (pp. 27–8). The touchstone, the benchmark for all of this, is *Turtle Beach* (or *TB* as the authors call it).

The long introduction and first few chapters prepare us, the readers, for their analysis of *TB*. They use a close reading of the text to make their point that 'The *TB* texts can (and do) overtly and more literally present a message of cultural evenhandedness while persistently and covertly undermining such a message' (p. 31). They do this by counting the number of times Malaysians are compared to animals or other non-human things such as plants. However, in doing this the authors omit quotes from *TB* in which Australians, for example, are likened to 'over-flowing garbage bins in a florist shop' (*TB*, p. 212). This last metaphor by Blanche D'Alpuget should indicate one of the problems with this work: its authors see many things as sinister that may simply be a product of her writing style. The persistent use of convoluted metaphors and similes in D'Alpuget's original

novel is not confined to comparisons between Malaysians and animals; she likens Australians, Vietnamese, Chinese and shopkeepers of indeterminant race to animals, plants and the wind. D'Alpuget could not write simply, and she could not resist a metaphor. Her over-written novel is not a broad enough sample from which to discern levels or even types of Australian racism. This novel and the film based on it do not occupy the central, permanent place in the Australian psyche which *Australia's ambivalence towards Asia* claims they do.

The second major problem with this work is that it is out of date. Former Prime Minister Paul Keating's arrogant assumption that Asia would embrace Australia now seems benign compared to (the present Prime Minister) John Howard's downgrading of Australia's relationship with Asia in favour of its American alliance. *Australia's ambivalence toward Asia*'s references to Hansonism were dated even when it was written. Its authors talk of 'present-day supporters of Pauline Hanson' (p. 25) as if she were still a going concern. They say, for example, of their critique of Hanson that 'Some other[s] . . . have also maintained a sustained challenge against Hansonism' (p. 16). However, well before their book was published Pauline Hanson was no longer in power, and her party no longer led the charge against certain types of immigrants.

Now the common enemy is no longer the 'Asian' immigrant but the 'illegal' immigrant (illegal under Australian law but not international law). The *Tampa* Incident changed Australian politics forever. Today one does not have to go looking in novels for the attitude of Australians to the 'Other'. Today in Australia the 'Other' is the Middle Eastern asylum-seeker rather than an Asian. If Australia's current approach to asylum-seekers has unwittingly brought much of *Australian's ambivalence toward Asia* up to date, it has also made its narrow focus on one novel even more tendentious.

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Southeast Asia

Cultural crisis and social memory: Modernity and identity in Thailand and Laos
Edited by SHIGEHARU TANABE and CHARLES F. KEYES
London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002. Pp. xii, 312. Plates, Notes, Bibliography, Index.
DOI: S0022463403220488

'Social memory' has been the subject of recent attention within anthropology, history and other disciplines. This volume, with its introduction and eleven articles, represents the 'state of the art' in the study of social memory in Thailand and Laos. All but two articles deal with lowland Tai-speaking communities or issues of national relevance in Thailand. In addition, Grant Evans compares the history and meaning of statue-making in Thailand and Laos, while Nicholas Tapp writes about Hmong living in Chiang Mai. Despite this Tai-speaker and Thailand focus, the editors should be commended for crossing national and ethnic borders, allowing the reader to survey some of the common themes and processes unfolding among people who share a common cultural base (in the case of the Tai-speakers) and national location. The diversity of regional and ethnic scope in the Thailand pieces itself is impressive, with articles focusing on communities from

Mae Hong Son and its Shan majority in the far northwest corner of Thailand to Hmong living in Chiang Mai, Tai-speakers in Northern and Northeastern Thailand, and the Buddhist-Muslim South. The reader finds no essentialised, homogenous Buddhist Thailand here; instead, the nation is rightly seen as shading off into neighbouring polities and societies despite the artifices of national borders and hegemonic histories.

The title of the volume includes the terms 'social memory', 'modernity' and 'identity', all within the setting of 'cultural crisis' in Thailand and Laos. The articles range over these topics, though not very evenly. Several articles are only tangentially about social memory. As noted by Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles Keyes in their introduction (p. 9), the volume does draw unity from the fact that all of the authors confront the struggle of people to maintain meaningful identities, social practices and conceptual schemes amid the rapid social and cultural changes that mark Thai and Lao modernity. The most sustained theoretical treatment of social memory and its relationship to modernity and identity comes in this introduction, which also provides sufficient general background on issues of modernity and identity in Thailand and Laos to make the entire volume easily accessible to those not intimately familiar with these two countries.

The first section, 'Embodied memories in cultural crisis: Spirit possession and ritual', begins with Tanabe's article, which examines the nature of Khon Muang (Northern Thai) personhood. He details some challenges to personal and social identity presented by Thai modernity (such as increased geographic mobility), and discusses the contemporary role of spirit mediumship – itself undergoing significant changes. Rosalind Morris also relates Northern Thai mediumship to Thai modernity, pointing to the way mediumship exists in tension with 'officially legitimated rites' and how the history of mediumship has been refigured as 'the newly valued sign of a vanishing tradition' (p. 70). She focuses her attention on two competing rituals, one an officially sanctioned life-extension ritual for the city of Chiang Mai, the other a medium-driven praise ceremony for spirits of the city's northeast corner. Tapp provides a counterpoint to the focus of Tanabe and Morris on embodied practices. Drawing on interviews with Hmong inhabitants of Chiang Mai, he notes the shift towards a self-conscious morality constructed from the sharp contrasts his consultants perceived between the idealised village and the 'decadence of urban existence' (p. 97). He argues that space must be made for both embodied and narrative processes in the formation of historical consciousness, and stresses the centrality of forgetting (for example, the hardship, poverty and isolation of Hmong village life) in social memory formation.

The next section, 'Nationalist monuments: Competing social memories', is perhaps the most thematically consistent section of the volume. Keyes delivers a detailed analysis of the controversy that erupted in 1996 over a Thai historian's study of Thao Suranari (Yaa Mo), who was purported to have led the Khorat (Northeastern Thailand) resistance to Vientiane's invasion of 1827 and whose statue holds a prominent place in the city. Keyes draws out competing understandings of Yaa Mo's place in 'Thai' history, including official nationalist discourse, academic historiography and the beliefs and practices of people who revere Yaa Mo as a spirit with the power to intervene in their lives. While the academic discourse drew the heaviest fire from nationalists for its critical view of official history, Keyes argues, '[the fact] that Thao Suranari should be remembered as a powerful local spirit rather than a national heroine is very threatening to those who would have the past recalled only in the service of national unity' (p. 128). Nicola Tannenbaum recounts

the context that precipitated the 1990 erection of a statue of Phaya Sihanatraja, the nineteenth-century 'founder' of the Shan-majority province of Mae Hong Son (northern Thailand). She also notes the tension between local memories and recent campaigns to construct local figures as 'Thai' heroes who (anachronistically) defended the nation. She finds that the case of Phaya Sihanatraja is consistent with a larger trend whereby ethnic diversity has been 'identified as "provincial", and Thai, rather than "ethnic" and separatist' (p. 148). In some ways, Evans' analysis of what he calls 'statuemania' in Laos and Thailand provides a vital context to the previous two articles. In this ambitiously comparative article, Evans applies some recent literature on statues and nationalism to Thailand and Laos, and draws out and contrasts some significant trends in statue-making in each country. One of the most satisfying aspects of the article is the author's efforts at exploring the particularities of statue-making in these Theravada Buddhist societies where (for example) until recently the only statues were of Buddhas and deities.

The section entitled 'Commoditisation and consumer identities' begins with Kyonosuke Hirai's ethnographically rich account and analysis of changes to the housewarming ceremony that accompanies a married couple's occupation of a new house in Lamphun (northern Thailand). Hirai persuasively argues that the post-ritual party has become a way for wives, especially those who work at a nearby industrial estate, to display their autonomy and earning power without breaking from the cultural values attached to being a 'good housewife'. The article highlights the agency of the factory women/housewives and provides a vivid case of the change-within-continuity that others have noticed in similar contexts; see, for example, Mary Beth Mills, *Thai women in the global labor force: Consuming desires, contesting selves* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Kasian Tejapira's 'The postmodernisation of Thainess' defies summary. He takes the reader through a breathless and witty tour of the ironies of Thai identity work in the commodified, media-saturated world of Thai consumerism. He sees an increasing decentring of 'Thainess': 'an unanchoring of referential poles, a decline of cultural authority, a de-essentialisation of national identity, a clearing of ethno-ideological space, a liberation of national identity signifiers, a collapse of linguistic boundaries, an influx of commodities-as-signification units, and a resultant semiotic chaos' (pp. 220–1). But this excerpt does little justice to Kasian. He successfully pulls off the playful and ironic writing style current in cultural studies, and in terms of style and conceptual provocation the article really is a *tour de force*.

The final section, 'Remembering, social memory, and history', returns more directly to issues of social memory. Ryoko Nishii reviews Buddhist-Muslim relations in Satun Province (southern Thailand), including extensive intermarriage and frequent conversions by spouses in mixed marriages. The local ideology holds that 'husband and wife must be of the same religion' to ensure the transfer of merit from the living to the dead. Nishii then takes up the case of the death of a Buddhist convert to Islam. Due to the particular circumstances of his death, his largely Buddhist birth family and his Muslim wife became embroiled in a tug of war over his body. Nishii argues that the dispute has entered the social memory of the area, reinforcing the ideology that 'husband and wife must be of the same religion', and that Muslims and Buddhists must be willing to compromise in order to coexist. The study of social memory certainly needs more accounts like this, with its focus on 'social memory as it emerges'. Like the articles by Evans and Kasian, Thongchai Winichakul's 'Remembering/silencing the traumatic past:

The ambivalent memories of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok' is one of the most ambitious in scope and (though time will tell) perhaps among those most likely to have lasting importance to Thai studies. Thongchai examines ambivalent memories of the 6 October 1976 massacre in Bangkok, charting the changing memories and meanings given to the event by various participants and observers over the years. He argues that to this day, the event remains in the realm of the 'politically unspeakable' and historically incomprehensible, silenced and shunted to the side because it fails to fit comfortably into hegemonic discourses of benevolent rulers, just institutions (like the *sangha* and monarchy), and progressive democratisation. In the final article, Masato Fukushima reflects on some of the more general theoretical questions about social memory that the volume has raised.

Cultural crisis and social memory springs from a panel at the Sixth International Conference on Thai Studies in Chiang Mai in 1996, and the editors have done a considerable professional service in making these important works available in published form. The volume also joins several other recent edited volumes dealing with social memory in specific parts of the Asia-Pacific region (for example, *Cultural memory: Reconfiguring history and identity in the postcolonial Pacific*, ed. Jeannette Marie Mageo [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001] and *The country of memory: Remaking the past in late socialist Vietnam*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001]). The time is ripe for more comparative work on the relationship between social memory and modernity in Southeast Asia and Pacific; this volume moves us closer to that point.

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Indonesia

Making blood white: Historical transformations in early modern Makassar
By WILLIAM CUMMINGS
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002. Pp. xiii, 257. Figures, Notes, Bibliography, Index. DOI: S0022463403230484

In this study, William Cummings sets out to identify and examine the social, cultural and political effects that the advent of literacy had upon the Makassarese during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period he calls 'early modern Makassar'. The Makassarese are one of several linguistically- and culturally-related ethnic groups who inhabit the Indonesian province of South Sulawesi. The best known of their neighbours are the Bugis, Mandar and Saddan Toraja peoples, with whom the Makassarese share a number of cultural concepts, such as ascriptive status and an important notion of *siriq* ('self-worth', 'shame'). All four groups also share myths that tell of how the founding rulers of kingdoms and smaller polities were white-blooded *tumanurung*, beings descended from the upper-world to rule over the common people. The Makassarese also share a script with the Bugis and Mandar peoples, and Makassarese and Bugis genres of writing closely correspond with each other.

The book is divided into two parts, with each part made up of three chapters. Part I, called 'History-making', opens with a summary of the debate about how Indonesian

historical texts are best evaluated. This is followed by an overview of what the author considers are 'the main story lines and episodes in the accepted narrative account of early modern Makassar' (p. 34). This overview focuses almost exclusively on Gowa, which by the mid-sixteenth century had become the most powerful and important Makassarese kingdom in both economic and military terms. Chapter 2 provides some background on the writing system and genres of Makassarese literature. The sacredness with which the Makassarese view written texts is strongly emphasised by the author.

Chapter 3 sets out a number of arguments which are important to the second half of the book. This chapter aims to show how 'writing transformed Makassarese perceptions of the past' (p. 58) by drawing contrasts between oral traditions and written histories. The author asserts that Makassarese oral traditions have been 'passed from generation to generation with little change' and can 'shed light on conceptions of the past before the advent of written histories' (p. 63) in the sixteenth century. Cummings argues that Makassarese oral traditions focus almost exclusively on a community's origins (the *tumanurung* myths), its *kalompoang* (sacred objects) and its links with Gowa (p. 89). He states that Makassarese oral traditions 'placed comparatively little attention on genealogy and rulers' (p. 71). In support of his arguments, Cummings presents two oral traditions, one collected by the Dutch anthropologist Hendrik Chabot in the first half of the twentieth century and the other written down in a local manuscript, probably in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. The author collected none of the oral traditions presented or referred to in this or later chapters.

Cummings places particular emphasis on the position of the *kalompoang* in these stories. Leonard Andaya argues that these objects were the centrepieces around which early Makassarese and Bugis communities formed and that whoever discovered such objects became the recognised head of a community ('The nature of kingship in Bone', in *Pre-colonial state systems in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and Lance Castles [Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975], pp. 115–25). Most historians working on South Sulawesi, however, view the *kalompoang* as belonging more to the sphere of local status strategies rather than as causal explanations for the development of complex society.

Cummings contrasts what he considers the main features of oral traditions with written histories, in which the focus is mainly on individual rulers. He concludes that in the written histories of 'early modern Makassar' 'individual rulers replace the sacred *kalompoang* and places as the conceptual anchors for understanding and recalling the past' (p. 74). The written histories used as a contrast in this chapter and throughout much of the book are the well-known chronicles of Gowa and Talloq. As the author points out, Western scholars have commented on the terse and matter-of-fact nature of these chronicles, as they have for the Bugis chronicles of Bone and Wajoq, and have emphasised the uniqueness of this quality among Indonesian historical traditions. Following the late Jacobus Noorduyn, the author considers these features to have been indigenous developments but differs from Noorduyn by suggesting that these chronicles began to be composed in the sixteenth century.

A major problem with this chapter is the author's use of oral traditions as a guide to understanding Makassarese conceptions of the past before the advent of written histories. Most scholars with experience of oral traditions will surely consider that those of the Makassarese, as in other societies, reflect more on how the past is conceived in the present than how it was conceived several centuries ago.

Having collected oral traditions in Makassarese and Bugis-speaking areas of South Sulawesi, I would suggest that Makassarese oral traditions which claim to speak for the past have a wider and somewhat different focus than the author believes. The function of many these traditions is to set out political relationships between former ruling groups and their settlements. In the comparatively few examples in which *kalompoang* feature, their relevance is mostly confined to their association with the first or later rulers. A number of Makassarese oral traditions are summarised in Wayne Bougas' study of Bantaeng ('Bantayan: An early Makassarese kingdom 1200–1600 A.D.', *Archipel*, 55 [1998]: 83–124), which is not in the book's bibliography. Contrary to the author's statement, Makassarese oral traditions do give significant attention to rulers and genealogies. Oral genealogies are common in former Makassarese polities, where they serve two main functions: to set out political relationships between high-ranking nobles and to provide proof of continuity for a ruling family. Indeed, Ian Caldwell has argued that the stimulus for the adoption of writing in South Sulawesi was to record the genealogies of the ruling elite, beginning about 1400 among the Bugis in the eastern half of the peninsula ('South Sulawesi A.D 1300–1600: Ten Bugis texts' [Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1988]).

The author's claim that the composition of the Gowa and Talloq chronicles began in the sixteenth century is also highly debatable. Some of the sources used to write these chronicles, such as written genealogies, undoubtedly existed at the point but the stimulus for writing the chronicles may not have been entirely indigenous. The question of where this stimulus may have come from has been examined in detail by Campbell Macknight ('South Sulawesi chronicles and their possible models', in *Vasco da Gama and the linking of Europe and Asia*, ed. Anthony Disney and Emily Booth [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000], pp. 322–32), which also does not appear in the bibliography, most likely due to the period of time that elapses between submission of a manuscript and actual publication.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Making-history', argues that the advent of literacy led to radical changes in the way the past was understood, interpreted and used by the Makassarese. Chapter 4 contends that the ability to compose written histories with detailed genealogies led to an increasingly hierarchical and ranked society, where rulers 'eclipsed *kalompoang* as the most sacred objects in the land and as the cultural forces of social and political life' (p. 124). The author acknowledges that ideas of rank and hierarchy were not new to Makassarese society, but maintains that the complex ranked social order seen as a 'classical' feature of that society was propelled by literacy and took shape in 'early modern Makassar'. Cummings argues that an important factor in this process was the incorporation into written histories of previously oral stories about white-blooded *tumanurung*, from whom nobles claimed descent. Writing enabled descent to be traced with great accuracy and the degree of white blood quantified to determine correct rank. This helped create a greater divide between white-blooded nobles and red-blooded commoners. While writing clearly facilitated greater accuracy in tracing descent, surely the main driving force in any heightened social stratification in this period was Makassarese culture itself rather than literacy.

Chapter 5 suggests that, in parallel with the increased hierarchicalisation of Makassarese society, a process of 'political centerization' focused on Gowa was also taking place. This process of 'political centerization' refers to how the Makassarese came to perceive Gowa as the centre of their world, as 'a locus of cultural values and ideas' and

an 'exemplary center' (p. 149). The author argues that Gowa achieved this position by being able to control and manipulate the past. This process included the seizure of the *kalompoang* of other Makassarese communities and, as the first Makassarese kingdom to accept Islam, the ability to control the historical interpretation of the origins of Islam in the region. Another important factor in this process of 'political centerization' was the outward spread of written histories from Gowa. Other Makassarese communities came to see Gowa as a yardstick for their own past and began to model their own written histories on its chronicle. However, many Makassarese from outside Gowa will dispute the author's argument that they perceive all things Makassarese as originating in that particular centre. The Makassarese who inhabit the regency of Jeneponto, where the former polities of Binamu and Bangkalaq were located, perceive themselves rather than Gowa to be the source and centre of all culture.

The final chapter examines the influence of written histories, and literacy in general, on how the Makassarese conceived their culture. Cummings believes that in 'early modern Makassar' writing enabled a mental shift, which made it possible for the Makassarese to first conceptualise the core cultural concepts that help regulate that society. Here the author presents an intriguing argument but one cannot help but feel that the importance of literacy and written texts in general is being overstated.

Making blood white is a well-written, imaginative and ambitious book and the author is to be commended for attempting to take a new approach to the study of South Sulawesi's past. Regrettably, the failure to take full advantage of the existing literature for the region mars the study.

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Dependence on green gold: A socio-economic history of the Indonesian coconut island Selayar
By CHRISTIAAN HEERSINK
Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999. Pp. xiii, 371. Maps, Notes, Bibliography.
DOI: S0022463403240480

The 'green gold' of this history is the windfall profits from the copra trade that brought a substantial degree of prosperity to a small island off South Sulawesi in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. And just as 'all that glitters is not gold', so too did the wealth from coconuts prove illusory in the longer term, leaving as its legacy an image of Selayar as 'an infertile, poor and insignificant area' (p. 70). Yet this study is not your usual tale of a bustling regional centre 'doomed' to economic and political marginalisation 'in the context of increasing colonialism and capitalism' (p. 321). That is very far from the intent of the author. Instead, Christiaan Heersink meticulously sets about uncovering a past that shows how such processes of incorporation were not inevitably linear or even necessarily disadvantageous, that political protection by the core coupled with economic flexibility at the periphery provided opportunities as well as limitations, and that political and economic subordination were not inexorably synchronised or even mutually dependent. To view it otherwise, he argues, is to explain socio-economic developments from a purely Western perspective

that does not do justice to the agency of local actors: European planters and colonial bureaucrats were not the only dynamic instruments of change in Southeast Asian polities even during the period of 'high colonialism'.

To substantiate these claims, Heersink embarks on a detailed historical reconstruction of Selayar from 1600 to 1950 that does great credit to his skill as a researcher and to the truly amazing richness of the material held on this place in the Ujung Pandang collection of the Indonesian archives (*Arsip Nasional*). He divides the study into five chronological phases that correspond to major fluctuations in the economic and political fortunes of the island's inhabitants and their subsequent social developments. Thus he identifies an initial early-modern period from 1600 to 1850, when a local political-cum-commercial elite dominated the economy and external influences were still relatively superficial. After 1850, however, coconuts began to replace shifting agriculture as the mainstay of the insular economy, leading to regional shifts in the balance of power between regencies in favour of those more suited to palm cultivation. The consolidation of colonial rule in the early decades of the twentieth century coincided with the heyday of the island's prosperity but at the cost of a 'perilous dependency' on world copra prices and the undermining of traditional authority. The crash came in the 1930s as market prices plummeted, technological advances created a demand for alternative oleiferous crops and social tensions spawned opposition groups. The final traumatic decade of the 1940s was one in which external powers, both Dutch and Japanese, extended their control over most aspects of the island's economic and political life and culminated with the disappearance of Selayar as a separate administrative unit in 1949. While the sources are inevitably more detailed on coconut cultivation and the copra trade post-1880, Heersink is careful to balance his narrative and allocate an equal number of chapters to the earlier centuries. This is no mean feat given the breadth of the history he relates and is consistent with his desire to look at both the continuities and changes in Selayarese society.

The focus on what is usually termed a 'marginal' area constitutes the great strength of this study and its major historiographical contribution. There are two fallacies that Heersink sets out to disprove. The first is the more general interpretative framework whereby the history of insular Southeast Asia is usually cast in terms of impotent local states versus external commercial dynamism while the second, somewhat related one is the view of indigenous societies as reduced to states of stagnation, decay and piracy through the effects of European trading policies. Through demonstrating that this was manifestly not the case on Selayar, he exposes the conceit behind this Eurocentric perspective and its failure to recognise the significant local differences between the history of the island and that of the rest of South Sulawesi. The more mechanistic notions of cores and peripheries so much popularised by the world system approach of Immanuel Wallerstein are shown to lack subtlety and often to be very far from the actual course of events. Instead, Heersink argues, the locals had 'never had it so good' and prospered on the fat of the land (or in this case the coconut) even down to the lowliest of labourers. Moreover, on several occasions the Selayarese were even able to confound the lure of market forces and refuse to cultivate commercial crops like cotton or coffee, preferring those that gave them 'the highest and most stable return for labour, even though in a capitalist sense they were not always the most profitable ones' (p. 132). This ability to reveal the force of local agency, together with the minutiae of historical reconstruction

that give equal treatment to political machinations, business rivalries, estrangements and elopements among the inhabitants, give the study a compelling immediacy that should make it a valuable model for other works in a similar vein.

Despite these considerable strengths, however, there is also a certain density of prose that does not make the book a particularly light read. It is almost as if the sheer weight of detail bears down somewhat too forcefully on the narrative. In fact, the arguments might have been sharper and carried more moment if there had been a more conscious selection of the material included and the book somewhat shortened. There is also a certain inconsistency in the main argument: on the one hand, Selayar is held up as an example to show how colonial and market incorporation does not necessarily lead to exploitation and poverty and yet, on the other hand, that is just the fate the island ultimately endured. At one point (and somewhat belatedly on p. 325) Heersink draws an interesting parallel between his own study of copra and Norman Owen's work on abaca in the Bicol region of the Philippines (*Prosperity without progress; Manila hemp and material life in the colonial Philippines* [Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1980]). However, Heersink strangely fails to comment on the import of Owen's title 'prosperity without progress' and its implied historical assessment of the trade even though the situations seem very analogous. What is lacking here, I feel, is a theoretical understanding of the nature of vulnerability – the economic, social, political, environmental and cultural exposure to risk – and how this concept so succinctly encapsulates Selayar's predicament. Of course, this is being rather unfair to the present work as 'vulnerability' belongs to another discipline's 'armoury' rather than that of history. It is more a statement about the value of interdisciplinary approaches. Vulnerability, however, would have provided a better sense of integrity to what the actual study talks about. Despite its title, the book is not solely about copra but about a lot of other crops as well: in fact, the first serious discussion of coconuts does not occur until a third of the way through the work (p. 135).

Dependence on green gold is a thorough work of history that rewards careful reading. It is almost as much an ethnography as it is a chronicle and should prove of invaluable assistance to all those currently working on local autonomy in Indonesia and beyond. Hopefully, it will also prove a timely corrective to those inclined to make too sweeping statements about the nature of colonialism in Southeast Asia.

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Voices of the puppet masters: The wayang golek *theater of Indonesia.*
By MIMI HERBERT
Honolulu and Jakarta: University of Hawaii Press and Lontar Foundation, 2002. Pp. ix, 251. Photographs, Appendices, Bibliography. DOI: S0022463403250487

The author, Mimi Herbert, describes the book as 'an account of a personal excursion into the world of the *wayang golek* puppet theater of Indonesia' (p. 9), which 'resonated with my experience as a sculptor and printmaker, a director of children's theater and a former drama student, and a scholar of Asian art history' (p. 10). While at first she wanted to write 'a history of the origins of puppet theatre', she

> quickly realized that the puppeteers are as fascinating as the puppets. The project shifted to an oral history of *wayang golek*, told in the voices of puppet masters themselves. Their interpretation of the ideas embedded in the structure of the wayang, their individual philosophies, and their personal reminiscences, interspersed with anecdotes of supernatural events, convey the world of the *wayang golek* theater directly and personally, in a way that traditional analysis cannot. (p. 10)

The main part of the book presents ten 'composite interviews' (front flap) with people involved with the puppet theatre in West Java, such as puppet makers, performers and/or academics.

The book shows the artists – some of whom are not 'puppet masters' in the sense of being active puppet performers (*dalang*) – as real people who have different backgrounds, interests and voices. It is a valuable addition to recent scholarship that pays attention to the individual personalities of different puppeteers, thus challenging the tendency of older scholarship to limit the discussion to an abstract, general notion of 'the' puppeteer. (For example, see the essays on individual puppeteers by Andrew Weintraub, Richard Curtis, Suratno, René Lysloff and Hardja Susilo in *Puppet theater in contemporary Indonesia: New approaches to performance events,* ed. Jan Mrázek [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 2002]).The chapters give glimpses of the artists' thinking, their lives and the world in which they live.

'First, I fell in love with the puppets themselves, as sculpture', writes the author (p. 10). The interest in puppets as artistic objects – more than an interest in the theatre, despite the title – permeates the book, but it also shows something about the relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer. The artists mention specific puppets, often heirlooms with magical powers, which have special significance for them.

The Introduction includes some interesting points, but unfortunately too often sources are not cited. Despite the Introduction's focus on historical development of *wayang golek*, there is no evidence of serious research such as reading of primary historical sources. A useful discussion of more recent developments is included, but here again the lack of references is disappointing. The Introduction does not have the kind of thoughtfulness that makes good scholarship exciting, there is no real argument or critical reflection, and the descriptions tend to be rather 'thin' and do not show a profound understanding of this form of performance.

The ten chapters, 'composite interviews', centre on the artists' words (presumably excerpts from responses to Herbert's questions?). They constitute the main and the most valuable part of the book, and I quite agree with Herbert's own description, quoted above, which articulates their virtues. However, I would also like to point out some problems. It is unclear when the interviews took place – disappointing, considering the developments of the past few years that have had a significant effect on people's lives. It is unclear what questions were asked and to what extent the artists' narratives were shaped by these questions. For example, most of the chapters begin with a summary of the history of *wayang golek*. Is this to be taken as evidence of the artists' interests or Herbert's questions? The same point could be made about the emphasis on magical heirloom puppets. It is unclear to what extent the artists' statements were edited. Regardless of

what languages are involved, cross-cultural representation involves translation. Critical comments, largely absent in the book, would help readers to understand the background against which the puppeteers' remarks were made. The easy transparency – the claim that the reader reads what the puppeteers said – is to some extent an illusion and its appeal somewhat superficial. I do not regret the lack of scholarship *per se*, which can be excused by saying that this is a popular publication, but these omissions impair the reader's ability to understand who the puppeteers are, how they think and 'where they are coming from', and prevent the book from presenting a truly rich, in-depth, complex picture. In this and some other ways, the chapters are not entirely unlike popular magazine articles.

Understandably, the puppeteers tend to present a favourable image of themselves. While it is surely good to hear what each artist has to say, this cannot replace a fuller, more complex image of each puppeteer that can be presented by a scholar who bases his or her account on a variety of sources, including interviews. Puppeteers and puppets have multifarious lives, but in many ways they are most intensely themselves – as puppeteers and as puppets – during a performance. There are some nice but very brief descriptions of performances in the book, but they are too sketchy to give a sense of individual puppeteers in action. It is as if I wanted to give someone from another culture an idea about Picasso and his art by presenting excerpts from an interview with the artist, but without showing his work. So, while I am in certain respects enthusiastic about the aims and approach of the book and while I think that it has been partly successful, it has also taught me to appreciate better the difficulty of such an effort, and the value of rigorous and thoughtful scholarship.

The book is richly illustrated with photographs and a few drawings. Like the text, the majority of the images show puppets divorced from the performances, and only very few show performances – clearly, puppets as objects ('as sculpture', or perhaps as collectibles), rather than puppets in performance, are the main interest of the author. Some photos show people, including those interviewed. In some cases, the pictures remind me of photographs for in-flight magazines – the objects, people and the world seen in them are clean, colourful, photogenic and glossy. In many cases, however, the puppets and people's faces overwhelm the photographs with their character and life, contributing to the enjoyment of the book. Photographs are well coordinated with the text: for example, an heirloom puppet visible in a photograph is discussed by a puppeteer in the text.

The book can be compared to another richly illustrated book on *wayang golek*, Peter Buurman's *Wayang golek: De fascineerde wereld van het klassieke West-Javaanse poppenspel* (Amsterdam: A.W.Sijthoff, 1980). While both books concentrate on *wayang golek* puppets as objects, Buurman's focus and most valuable contribution are found in his detailed survey of the iconography and classification of puppet characters. It is fascinating in its own way, and is useful for understanding certain aspects of the puppets and of the knowledge of the puppeteers, such as the variety of characters and the distinctions made among them. In contrast, Herbert's book gives glimpses of individual puppeteers' feelings about specific puppets, and shows how each is made and viewed by particular people. While Buurman's book provides only a very brief and generalised account of a stereotypical puppeteer, Herbert's book presents actual living puppeteers – in this area, her study is significantly more valuable. Both books present only superficial

introductions into performance technique and the complexity of the performance event, and neither book provides a 'thick description' of actual performances or evokes their richness and power. Both books introduce *wayang* stories radically condensed and more or less divorced from the way they are performed and from the performance event. While Buurman presents a summary of one play and gives some sense of the standard plot in addition to summarising the Indian epics, Herbert presents a larger number of particular versions of plays as summarised by the artists. Herbert gives a sense of the recent developments in *wayang golek* and shows it as a part of the present world, something that Buurman fails to do. Thus, the two books are different enough to complement each other, and Herbert's book does not simply repeat the information in Buurman's study but shows *wayang golek* in a significantly different light. The book is a welcome addition to the more scholarly, more in-depth writings on *wayang golek*.

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Duo Donggo justice: Conflict and morality in an Indonesian society
By PETER JUST
Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2001. Pp. xi, 263. Photographs, Notes, Glossary, Bibliography, Index. DOI: S0022463403260483

In his lively ethnography of morality and dispute settlements among highlanders on Sumbawa Island, Peter Just considers the paradox of how legal systems with allegedly fixed rules result in variable and unpredictable outcomes. Following John L. Comaroff and Simon Roberts's *Rules and processes: The logic of dispute in an African context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), Just criticises rule-centred and individual manipulation approaches to legal anthropology. He also rejects 'the equally reductionistic teleologies of class interests' (p. 24) in favour of an approach that highlights moral assumptions that guide and at times overrule the legal principles themselves.

Just's book presents an engaging and well-contextualised discussion of a considerable body of legal anthropology literature. There is also a refreshingly candid assessment of anthropology's 'crisis of representation'. However, Just's discussion of postmodernism's political critique never transcends the ethnographer and informant. He sidesteps the intra-group, positioned identity issues that would not bode well for his book's plan to present *the* moral ontology behind the Donggo legal system. Ultimately, though, Just makes a substantial case that he has observed the Sumbawa highlands at a point when a fairly unified moral community still prevails.

Much of *Duo Donggo justice* is written in an accessible, personal style, with the 'thick description' format of Geertzian interpretive anthropology. The book humorously reveals the flavour of what fieldwork in rural Indonesia is like for the foreign anthropologist, with its lack of privacy, eagle-eyed trading, double-take understandings and tragic sorrow at premature death. In the first chapter about his key fieldwork teachers, Just notes wryly that 'life in the field came to resemble life in grad school: an endless round of coffee, cigarettes and conversations with old men' (p. 43).

Just's second chapter on 'Donggo in historical perspective' describes an indigenous society, once in a ritually 'elder sibling' position to the colonial-era sultanate, which has lost its cosmological collateral in recent decades. After being missionised by both Catholics and Protestants, then pressured by anti-Catholic pogroms and the lure of material goods, the Donggo have come to accept world religion (particularly Islam) as part of modernity's irresistible package. By 1981, the village where Just worked included 2,352 Muslims, 720 Catholics and 94 Protestants.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how underlying cultural values are used creatively to address imported Islamic laws on inheritance and brideprice by seeking 'compromise and concord over absolute right' (p. 126). Because compliance with elders' judgements is 'more or less voluntary' (p. 117), solutions must be designed that are consensually accepted. This system makes Donggo justice swift, inexpensive and generally autonomous from the impinging Indonesian state. Chapter 4 on 'moral ontology' analyses local interpretations of emotions and indigenous Donggo cosmology. Engagement with Karl Heider's writings on Indonesian emotions, Daniel Lev's writings on law, or Jennifer Nourse's writings on birth spirits would have been welcome supplements.

Just's presentation of three dispute cases appears only in the last third of the book after the author has prepared the cultural groundwork thoroughly. These settlements indeed defy our expectations of the rules of evidence, precedence or even guilt, in order 'to inform and to teach' (p. 175), and to achieve 'the repair of sounds and speech' (p. 187). The first two cases involve failed betrothals, although the disputes ostensibly concern a delinquent youth beating a gossipy older woman (whom it turns out he never hit), and a Sumbanese Catholic cleric killing a goat (which it turns out he never harmed). The third case concerns a young man renouncing his engagement to an uneducated village girl when he achieves illustrious prospects as a lowland police officer. The prevalence of conflicts relating to marriages is tied to traditional early betrothal and subsistence farming systems that are crumbling under the material pressures of ecological degradation and outmigration in pursuit of education.

From its surface tone this book might be considered somewhat out of touch with many contemporary political economy analyses of Indonesia. Yet despite the absence of theoretical arguments concerning the Indonesian state or globalisation, Just does present insightful snippets of the state's inexorable march: the Javanised wedding reception as internal cultural critique, the military officer's signature sunglasses as ciphers of violence, the embarrassed shedding of personal names for generic Muslim ones as a means of social advancement. Given the astuteness with which Just presents a largely consensual legal system, it would have been ever so appropriate for him to tackle comparisons with the recent dysfunctionality of the national legal system. Herein lies this book's greatest unmet challenge: to contrast an apparently successful indigenous dispute resolution system with the financial bidding war that the state system seems to have become. Or, in light of Just's Donggo analysis, are we foreigners wrongly expecting Indonesian murderers to be sentenced only for their actual crimes when their potential for murder and community breach is really at issue? On these matters, it would be appropriate for Just to write further.

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Puspakrema*: A Javanese romance from Lombok*
By TH. C. VAN DER MEIJ
Leiden: CNWS, 2002. Pp. 230. Tables, Notes, Bibliography.
DOI: S002246340327048X

The *Puspakrema* is a Javanese text from Lombok which relates the story of a prince of supernatural powers who is kidnapped as a young child by a golden peacock and taken in by a poor vegetable seller and his wife. He later goes on a quest for a cure for infertility on behalf of the childless King of Sangsyan. The prince travels far beyond the world of mortals to the heavens, where he uses his magical powers to come to the aid of a number of divine kings. Although he begins his adventures at just four years of age, the prince's reward is a succession of wives – three heavenly women and an earthly bride whose hand he wins only after he has proven his prowess by subduing wild beasts and defeating fierce enemies and has established his own kingdom. In common with many textual genres from Javanese and Malay traditions, the text is a frame story designed for oral performance, with considerable repetition and redundancy, flat characters and stock expressions and actions.

At first glance this book appears to be a philological study in the classical Leiden tradition. All the usual ingredients – an edited text, a translation and a commentary – are there, but there are some interesting twists and surprises. The book begins with a brief introduction, immediately followed by the text and translation while the contextual material – two chapters outlining the textual principles of the edition and two chapters providing two different frameworks for understanding this work, a Lombok context (Chapter 5, 'Texts among the Sasaks') and a context for the modern Western reader (Chapter 6, 'Reading silences') – are placed after the translation.

In the introduction we learn that the *Puspakrema* is a text from a remote village on the slopes of Mount Rinjani in north-eastern Lombok; that it is a Javanese 'song' or narrative poem written in metrical verse form comprising 520 stanzas in 14 cantos; and that the work was apparently unknown outside Lombok, where the number of extant manuscripts indicates it enjoyed widespread popularity. Some general information is provided about Sasak and Javanese literary traditions. Our attention is then directed to the story itself.

The author, Th. C. van der Meij, explicitly states that the study is 'first and foremost concerned with the story' (p. 2) and to this end places the text and translation before the main discussion. Quashing my normal philological instincts, I respected the author's wishes and read the story in its entirety before the commentary. As we learn in Chapter 6, van der Meij wants us to experience the story, to be aware of what an 'odd' story it is and to appreciate its exotic nature. By 'exotic' here he does not mean foreign, but refers to something whose 'contents are out of the ordinary' (p. 196). Van der Meij makes some interesting and valid points about the ways in which modern readers are removed from the actual context of the work and forced to operate in an imagined and culturally distanced context. Ultimately, however, the narrative may prove too exotic to allow for the kind of modern decontextualised reading the author urges us towards. While I enjoyed the story, I did seize gratefully on the explication of the text in Chapters 5 and 6.

In Chapter 5 (which for me was the most interesting), we learn something of the use of texts like the *Puspakrema* in rural Sasak society. The work is a product not of court literature, but of local writing in which the vernacular Sasak language gives way to

Javanese, which would have needed to be interpreted for the local populace. Texts served as ritual instruments in life and agriculture cycle ceremonies. For example, the text is recited in ceremonies to mark the rites for the seventh month of pregnancy and even the copying of the *Puspakrema* manuscript used in this edition on 6 May 1944 was carried out to mark the sending of buffalo to the field.

There are a few typographical errors and some missing items in the bibliography. I could not find a reference to the fact this was the author's thesis, though I believe this is the case. The philological chapters describing the manuscripts used (Chapter 3) and philological principles adopted (Chapter 4) are dense and most readers will probably choose to skip over them. While textual experts will recognise this material as the core business of philology, these chapters sit somewhat uncomfortably between the translation and the rest of the volume. While they were undoubtedly crucial in the original thesis, they might have been better as an appendix in this published version.

Van der Meij notes modestly that the translation is 'a double translation' (p. 197) since it is a translation from Javanese via the author's native Dutch language to English. It is, nevertheless, very readable. Overall, the adventurousness in this volume is welcome. Those intrigued by literary form or wanting a taste of the exotic would certainly do well to start their explorations with the *Puspakrema*.

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Malaysia

Cross-cultural encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay fiction
By ROBERT HAMPSON
Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000. Pp. xii, 248. DOI: S0022463403280486

This book is written primarily for those interested in literary criticism, and would be appreciated most of all by someone who has read closely Joseph Conrad's novels set in the Malay world. Many readers of this journal, however, will be grateful for the way Robert Hampson locks his analysis of Conrad into a series of reflections on the development of the field of Malay studies.

For those who want to know as much as possible about Conrad's own experience of the Malay world, and the real-life people and events upon which he based his tales, we already have Norman Sherry's *Conrad's eastern world* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966) and Jerry Allen's *The sea years of Joseph Conrad* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965). Much detective work has been undertaken there to learn about the world of Almayer, Lingard, Babalatchi and the others. Hampson focuses on an analysis of Conrad's Eastern fiction in the intellectual context of the period, particularly the emergence of Malay studies. He reaches back to Renaissance voyages to delineate 'the discursive formation' which produced the 'textual tradition' of 'writing Malaysia'. This tradition owes much to William Marsden and Thomas Stamford Raffles, and then gains from the work of A. R. Wallace. The latter, as Hampson explains, brings the Enlightenment project to its peak with his 'comprehensive mapping of flora, fauna and inhabitants of the Archipelago'.

By the time Conrad was writing, Malay studies had changed course. Uncertainties and self-questioning were more prominent: 'ideas of civilization and progress, Self and Other, which had been taken for granted were now open to question'. The senior colonial official and novelist, Hugh Clifford, who corresponded over many years with Conrad, was even disturbed about the way the white observer might be seduced by Malay culture – might be 'denationalized'. What is more, Clifford at times expressed doubts as to whether the Malays were really better off as a result of their encounter with 'European civilization'. In these and many other areas, Hampson's discussion of Malay studies is so detailed and carefully researched – more detailed than one might expect in a literary study of Conrad – that I wish he had also responded to the pioneering investigations into this 'textual tradition' by Henk Maier (*In the center of authority: The Malay* hikayat Merong Mahawangsa [Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1988]) and Amin Sweeney (*A full hearing: Orality and literacy in the Malay world* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987]).

Hampson is particularly useful regarding developments in the concept of 'race'. In the early nineteenth century Marsden had placed the Malays in a civilisational hierarchy, but it was a cultural rather than a genetic one; in Hampson's words, 'there is no suggestion of fixed essences'. Raffles (as the late Anthony Forge argued so well) was determined to stress the essential homogeneity of humankind, and even doctored the illustrations in his *History of Java* to convey more effectively this humanistic vision to his readers. Half a century later there was certainly a stress on racial essences. Wallace was concerned to spell out the particular characteristics of 'the Malay' – impassive, slow and deliberate in speech, 'circuituous in introducing the subject he has come to discuss'. Later, in the writing of Clifford, 'the Malay' is said to 'scamp every bit of labor' and the average Malay woman is described as having a 'facile heart'. Writing about Aceh in north Sumatra, Clifford described one of his characters as feeling that he was encountering the 'Malay race unspoiled by European progress and vulgarity'. In another instance, describing a particular Malay chief, Clifford went on to reflect on the general characteristics of Malay *rajas*. As Hampson puts it, 'the narrator observes the individual and then claims to know the species'.

Conrad himself engaged in stereotyping. He wrote of the 'discrete courtesy' of the Malays and the 'tender softness common to Malay women', and often insisted on the power of racial barriers. 'There are liberties one must not take with the Malay', observes one of his narrators, and the character of Almayer is portrayed as having to consider the implications of doing his duty 'to his race'.

For the postmodern reader, the saving grace in Conrad's writing is his self-doubt – the very fact that he seems to find it increasingly difficult to 'represent the Malay people in terms of a common humanity'. As Hampson explains it, in Conrad's later works set in the Malay world he becomes more and more concerned about these problems. He moves on from the attempt to 'give voice to his Malay participants' and to 'represent Malay realities', and he begins to focus on the 'problematics of representing another culture'.

Another issue likely to be of interest to the historian of Southeast Asia is that in Conrad we see a heterogeneous archipelago. Hampson notes that in *Almayer's folly* and *Outcast of the islands* Conrad's 'Eastern World is . . . an area of overlapping cultures – Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Arab, English, Dutch, Chinese, Malay.' Conrad's sensitivity to this complexity is probably assisted by his identity as an English writer who is also a Pole, and the fact that his own experience of the archipelago is 'mediated' through Arab

rather than European trading networks. In Conrad's writing about the Malay world even the superiority of Europe was sometimes brought into question – and this at a time many would consider the highpoint of European imperial power in Asia. In *Karain*, for instance, the 'native' Karain is presented 'in European heroic terms; there is more than a hint of Tennyson's Ulysses' about him, and for this reason the story 'involves a problematising of European cultural hegemony'.

Here as in many areas Hampson probes the writings of Conrad, suggesting interpretations that many readers may never have pondered. In so doing he helps to identify Conrad's place both in Malay studies and in the disassembling of European colonialism. With Conrad we seem to encounter the dawning of a new era when the 'Enlightenment project of mapping and describing' was being 'subverted' by uncertainties and self-questioning.

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Thailand

Making merit, making art: A Thai temple in Wimbledon
By SANDRA CATE
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003. Pp. xiv, 218. Photographs, Notes, Bibliography, Index. DOI: S0022463403290482

This is the first major study by a non-Thai academic of the murals at Wat Buddhapadipa in Wimbledon, London, which were painted by teams of up to twenty-eight Thai painters under the leadership of Panya Vijinthanasarn, Chalermchai Kositpipat, and Sompop Butarad between 1984 and 1992. The author, Sandra Cate, draws upon Thai ethnography and anthropology rather than specifically Thai art history, although her approach is well supported by her evidently considerable knowledge of Thai art and the complexities of Thai modern art practice. It is very clearly written and describes many more features of the commissioning and painting of the murals than have hitherto been publicly available in English – or in this form in Thai, for that matter – particularly given its empirical base in Thai vernacular texts and very detailed interviews with leading patrons and artists. Based on the author's 1998 Ph.D. thesis, this book thus does not merely constitute the most important study of this temple's murals, but is also an important text for understanding Thai neo-traditional art and its social base in the 1980s and 1990s.

Perhaps the most ethnographically significant chapter deals with 'Long-distance merit making'; the author has been able to assemble details of how and why the temple in distant London was financed by a surprising range of officials and institutions ranging from the Prime Minister to the National Lottery (pp. 21–2). There are some useful citations of the ethnographic literature on the ritual exchanges implied in merit making and on the gift of sacrifices to the king which imply that 'the merit accrued from this particular donation attaches to the king, further increasing the donor's status as a merit maker'. From a different angle, it becomes a subtle form of social control. As one informant notes, 'You cannot refuse a request connecting the king, especially when the request directly promotes Buddhism' (p. 26).

The following chapter notices various clashes of authority between the 'Thai' and the 'international', between the status of the past and modern Thai conceptions of authority, and between new generations strutting newfound economic wealth and aspects of what I would see as loyalty and patronage exchange value structures acquired through master/apprentice and teacher/student relationships. These are handled in the context of the important controversy between *Phujatkaan* [Manager] magazine and some Silpakorn University loyalists in 1995, which receives here its first systematic and informed analysis in English.

Cate carefully analyses the iconographic scheme of the temple as presented by the artists but tends to take what the artists say about their knowledge of pre-1980s Thai mural painting too much at face value. There are many levels to the education in Buddhist narrative, ranging from the formal textual level of the *Traiphum* texts down through written expositions to the oral *mélange* which is constituted by childhood stories and local transmission as well as (probably in some cases) minor variations in sermons by local monks. How much of which kinds of narrative was deployed by which artists would be the art historical problem here, rather than working back from the actual narratives and their sometimes clearly self-serving rationalisations by some of the artists.

Cate's analyses of the way the experience of 'going outside' could be redeployed by some of the artists to advance their status on their return are quite instructive. I would have preferred to see more questioning of Thai artists' weak international identities as well, since none of the artists mentioned became a major figure on the British or European art scenes, unlike many Chinese artists who moved to North America or France. There is also much hocus-pocus from the artists about Thais not having the same feelings as Westerners (pp. 138–9), a statement which should be analysed for the structure of ignorance it reveals as much as what it tells us about the emotional sensibility of some artists.

Cate has quite a bit to say about the inception of Thai neo-traditional art and the relation between Panya and his teacher Tan Kudt (pp. 63–4, 139–41). In fact Panya was not with Tan Kudt for very long, and since Tan Kudt brought up one of his daughters to read Thai classical literature aloud to him as he painted over about 15 years, it is also doubtful that Panya or Chalermchai had quite the same education in Buddhist texts or early nineteenth-century classical literature that this book might lead the ordinary reader to assume they did.

Tan Kudt is an interesting figure because of what is ignored about him in this study: a political position, passionate enjoyment of Thai dance, Italian opera and, apparently, a passionate resistance to kitsch. Apart from actually having known the underside of Thai life by actually working as an elephant mahout in his late teens, he was also the head of the student organisation at Silpakorn which was part of the movements opposing military dictatorship in the late 1950s. His own reconstruction of traditional painting styles cannot be understood without recognising his mastery of Thai dance, for which he was renowned at Silpakorn. In the 1970s he was a close friend of two radical artists, Tang Chang and Pratuang Emjaroen. After 1979 he is reliably known to have given money to communists who were on the run from the right wing. He also used to paint listening to Italian opera, a habit transmitted by his Italian teacher Bhirasri/Feroci. Neither Chalermchai nor Panya, despite their international exposure, seems to have had this cultural knowledge or this political bravery. No other recent neo-traditionalist artist from Silpakorn appears to have had Tan Kudt's depth of relation with what is later

reconstructed as the Thai avant-garde, or his open acceptance of foreign cultural forms in music, despite being a master Thai dancer.

These criticisms of the lacunae about neo-traditionalism now are not aimed at Cate, the value of whose work is clear, but at a widespread view in Thailand and elsewhere which takes understanding of Thai art out of the context of struggles about life, and about false art. There will be a much stronger and precise art historical understanding when these are included.

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Vietnam

Opusculum de sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses (A small treatise on the sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese) – A study of religion in China and North Vietnam in the eighteenth century.
By FATHER ADRIANO DI ST. THECLA. Translated and annotated with introductory essay by OLGA DROR, Latin translation in collaboration with MARIYA BERZOVSKA. Forward by K. W. TAYLOR; preface by LIONEL M. JENSEN.
Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2002. Pp. 239. Notes, Glossary, Fascimile of Original. DOI: S0022463403300487

It is amazing that a work that challenges the contemporary understanding of Vietnamese history and culture in all major fronts takes a most 'conventional' form, as an annotated text according to the account of an Augustinian missionary describing the various religions in northern Vietnam and China. Working in eight languages – Latin, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Hebrew, French, Italian and Spanish – Olga Dror, a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, guides us through Father Adriano di Thecla's account into a fascinating world of worship in the eighteenth-century Red River Delta.

The book is filled with details that will surprise even those familiar with Vietnamese religious practices and its relationship with those in China. For example, the goddess Liễu Hạnh, paired in northern Vietnam with Trần Hưng Đạo as the father and mother of the people, was in fact a prostitute or geisha (pp. 47–9). Another example is the *Hội Minh*, an assembly for pronouncing the oath of faithful service to the king. Although we know something about such ceremonies from the *Đại Việt Sử ký Toàn thư* chronicles, until now there has been little understanding of the details involved. We now learn that it took place in the last month of every year (p. 119) in 'a very spacious square enclosure constructed of reeds, which can be entered from both the sides and from the front' (p.132). This choice of an open field for the ceremony, and the offerings (a bull, steamed rice, and wine mixed with the blood of a chicken) remind us of the practices of uplanders such as Lao and Mường.

It is even more intriguing to see the figures being offered sacrifices during the *Hội Minh* ceremony, the leading two being Kinh Dương Vương and Lạc Long Quân (p. 130). Many other spirits were being honoured as well, such as Mount Tản Viên and Phù Đổng Thiên Vương. Here, most strikingly, there was no mention of the Hùng Vương, nor was there anything about the Trưng sisters**.** This is unthinkable to a modern

person who has any notion of Vietnamese history: the two most prominent nationalist icons of twentieth-century Vietnamese historiography were either absent from the altars or else too inferior to be mentioned by the author. This is happening in the most 'traditional' part of Vietnam as late as the mid-eighteenth century. It certainly explains why both the temples of Hung Vương in Việt Trí and the Trưng sisters in Hanoi were only built in the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note in this context that while the Lý, Trần and Lê rulers held ceremonies on Tản Viên for paying tribute to the ancestors of the Việt people (as recorded in the *Toàn thư*), the twentieth-century members of the Politburo of the Vietnamese Communist Party have shifted it to the Hùng Vương temple.

Even more intriguing is Dror's discussion on the cult of Bạch Mã (White Horse spirit). In his manuscript Father Adriano di St. Thecla made it explicit that the Bạch Mã temple in the heart of the '36 streets' of Hanoi was dedicated to Ma Yuan (Mã Viện), a Chinese general in the first century CE (pp. 144–5). A different translator might easily dismiss this account by claiming that Father Adriano made a mistake here – that the two 'Ma' had in fact nothing to do with each other, since the Chinese surname 'Ma' is also written with the character for 'horse' – and would have good reason to do so. To all contemporary minds it is inconceivable that Ma Yuan, who suppressed the heroic Trưng sisters' rebellion and who was the embodiment of Chinese invasion and colonisation, could be worshipped anywhere in Vietnam. With a fresh mind and sharp eyes Dror has done an amazing search and shows us that instead of making a mistake, the missionary offered a unique opportunity for us to review Vietnamese worship in a different time and space.

According to Dror, temples for Ma Yuan existed not only in the old capital Hanoi, but also in Cổ Loa, as well as in Thanh Hoá and Phúc Yên provinces. Furthermore, she found that in Bắc Ninh where people worshiped the Trưng sisters, they also worshipped Ma Yuan in the same temple (pp. 46–7). All of these are found in northern Vietnam, which is striking. Being located in Chinese temples or *hội quán* (Ch. *huiguan*, buildings associated with groups of people originating from a common area in China) in southern Vietnam, the Ma Yuan cult was believed to have been brought into Vietnam by the overseas Chinese. This was because Ma's official title *Fubo* (*Phúc Bá*, 'pacifying the sea waves') specifically met the need of the merchants who often risked their lives crossing the sea, and he was a powerful Chinese figure who was perceived as able to protect the interests of the Chinese in Vietnam. But as Dror shows, there are many more dimensions to this issue. It now seems to me a strong possibility that the story was the other way around – that the Chinese adopted the Ma Yuan cult from the Vietnamese, as when they arrived it was already widespread as the veneration of a local deity on Vietnam soil. This also explains why Ma was called a '*bentugong*' (Viet. *bản thổ công*), meaning 'local spirit'.

In short this work makes it clearer than ever that there was no definite boundary between 'great' and 'little' traditions, between urban or court culture and rural culture, and between 'Chinese' and 'Vietnamese'. It is even more admirable that such significant findings are carefully annotated and cross-referenced with an enormous body of sources from both classic and contemporary scholarship. This is a first-class piece which marks a new stage in Vietnamese studies.

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All the way with JFK: Britain, the US, and the Vietnam War
By PETER BUSCH
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Death of a generation: How the assassinations of Diem and JFK prolonged the Vietnam War
By HOWARD JONES
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Almost forty years ago Arthur Schlesinger Jr suggested that had President John F. Kennedy lived to see his second term in office, he would have withdrawn US advisers from Indochina. The assertion touched off an insoluble debate among historians and Camelot loyalists over whether Kennedy could have saved the sixties from the Vietnam War. Presumption favoured the affirmative until the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1970. The revelation that Kennedy had authorised the coup that led to the killing of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu in 1963 appeared to belie the contention that the administration was looking for a way out. The President surely realised that the assassination would lock him, morally and politically, into a fresh nation-building project that would easily outlast a second term in office.

But this is precisely what the President did not believe, according to Howard Jones's exhaustively researched study. Throughout his administration, Kennedy persistently approved moves to escalate the war – increasing the number of advisors, introducing helicopters, napalm and defoliants, approving covert raids against the North, and finally toppling the Diem regime – in the belief that each step would bring the United States nearer to a graceful exit. At the time of his own assassination Kennedy had approved the withdrawal of 1,000 of the 16,000 US troops by the end of the year, and had plans for a complete pullout by the end of 1965 – a schedule he intended to hold to, Jones contends, even if the result were the collapse or neutralisation of South Vietnam. This is a point made previously in less detail by David Kaiser in his *American tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2000), and Jones refers in similar terms to the assassinations of the two leaders as a 'tragedy', but the two studies under review bring us closer to understanding the mentality that made such a course seem rational to hardheaded realists in Washington and London.

While Kennedy's advisors harboured no illusions about the determination of Hanoi or the Viet Cong, they had persuaded themselves that they possessed a winning strategy in the Strategic Hamlet Programme. Beginning in 1962, the South Vietnamese army forced villagers to abandon their homes and move to fortified settlements where their movements could be controlled. The aim was to isolate the Viet Cong from sources of supply and to link the villagers to the Saigon regime. Although the plan aroused scepticism among officials close enough to witness its implementation, it had the crucial backing of a figure many Americans attributed with subduing the most recent communist insurgency in Southeast Asia: Sir Robert Thompson. With his starched khakis and jungle wallah manner, Thompson impressed Roger Hilsman and other Kennedy advisors as a sorely needed authority on counterinsurgency. Peter Busch has given us a close look at Thompson and the work of his British Advisory Mission to Vietnam

(BRIAM), dispatched to advise Saigon on anti-guerrilla techniques used in the Malayan insurgency. Thompson's solution combined peasant relocation with pop psychology. 'SUCCESS leads to KILLS', he assured Washington in Dale Carnegiesque terms, 'KILLS to CONFIDENCE, CONFIDENCE to better INTELLIGENCE and INTELLIGENCE to greater SUCCESSES' (Busch, p. 125). Busch withholds judgement on Thompson's interpretation of the Malayan experience and concentrates instead on measuring his influence, which was, unfortunately, extensive. Operation SUNRISE swept through three provinces north of Saigon in March 1962, loading villagers onto trucks and depositing them within moated encampments where they were issued plastic identity cards. There were signs of trouble from the start – the men, for instance, had fled before the troops arrived – but the decisive action filled Washington with optimism that the countryside would gradually be brought under control.

The steady enlargement of Thompson's pacified 'white areas' would allow Kennedy to scale back the combat advisory force. Jones contends that Kennedy maintained a consistent opposition to both total withdrawal and Americanising the war, despite persistent pressure in the latter direction from his military staff. The President recognised, as many of his advisors did not, that placing even a platoon of combat soldiers in Vietnam would put US prestige at stake and open the door to more demands for troops. Holding the line would require continued headway on pacification and a fine touch with US public and Congressional opinion, which in the wrong mood could make Vietnam a test of presidential leadership. On both scores Kennedy's aides saw the Diem government, and specifically Nhu, as a problem. Nhu made himself strategic hamlet czar and proceeded to destroy the programme's mystique by scattering hamlets around the countryside, irrespective of white or red areas. Scrimping on funds, he forced relocated peasants to build their own enclosures, with the result that dozens of settlements were broken up by their enraged inhabitants or the Viet Cong. When critical articles appeared in the US press, he expelled reporters, restricted their movements, and in one case sent thugs to beat them up. US officials were equally upset by the frank assessments of the war appearing in the *New York Times* and other papers, but they preferred subtler methods of spin control.

Kennedy would have preferred to oust Nhu, but the brothers were like 'Siamese twins' and Diem's political dependence on his brother and Madame Nhu, his sister-in-law, grew along with the Americans' displeasure. Jones argues that 'through it all, Diem demonstrated an uncanny ability to recognize realities' (p. 283), but his real fault was failing to keep up with the delusions circulating inside Washington. By the end of 1962, the administration was sure that the war was being won in the countryside and that a coup would stabilise the Saigon leadership. The precipitating event came in summer 1963, when Diem's arbitrary ban on prayer flags precipitated running confrontations between security forces and Buddhist monks in Hue and Saigon. The self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, and Malcolm Browne's photograph of it, destroyed the image of Diem's regime that had been carefully created for the US public. Amid the press backlash, Kennedy let his guard down long enough to allow a troika of determined anti-Diemists – Hilsman, Michael Forrestal, and Averell Harriman – to set the coup in motion.

Did the assassinations of Diem and JFK prolong the Vietnam War? Jones observes that the errors of both the coup strategy and strategic hamlets were plain before Kennedy went to Dallas. Johnson inherited an unstable post-coup government incapable of stopping the collapse in the countryside. The cast of advisors remained the same, but while Kennedy faced deep divisions among his staff, Johnson found nearly unanimous support

for bombing North Vietnam, now seen as the only hope for shoring up the deterioration in Saigon. Jones finds that the difference between the two presidents was mainly one of 'style and emphasis' (Jones, p. 444), but a chasm of altered circumstance separates them as well – a gap created, some historians have claimed, by the decisions Kennedy made.

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The country of memory: Remaking the past in late socialist Vietnam
Edited by HUE-TAM HO TAI
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. Pp. xiii, 271. Figures, Notes, Bibliography, Index. DOI: S0022463403330486

The seven essays in this collection are concerned with public memory in Vietnam. Framed by an introduction and afterword by the editor, Hue-Tam Ho Tai, they focus on ways of remembering the conflicts of the twentieth century in that country, and make use of a wide range of materials, including prison memoirs, funerary rituals, commemorative shrines, paintings, tourist brochures and advertisements, and films. Peter Zinoman's essay is a discussion of the way the official state narrative has shaped personal recollections in revolutionary prison memoirs. Shaun Malarney discusses funerary rituals in his contribution. Christoph Giebel provides a reading of the museum and shrine to Tôn Đức Thắng, the southern revolutionary leader who succeeded Hồ Chí Minh as President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the first President of the unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Nora Taylor explores the art scene in the DRV since World War II. Laurel Kennedy and Mary Rose William's chapter discusses representations made to tourists through travel brochures and advertisements. Hue-Tam Ho Tai's own contribution addresses the gendered, specifically female and feminine representations of the past. Finally, Mark Bradley's essay is concerned with representational issues in recent Vietnamese films. All of the contributions to this collection are elegantly written and richly interpretive.

In the introduction, Hue-Tam Ho Tai states that 'public memory' in these essays refers to 'ritual performances, speech acts, visual media and other cultural activities that are articulated and made available or accessible to others rather than kept secret' (p. 7). The essays are not concerned with 'clandestine counter-hegemonic communities of memory' (ibid.). A practical consequence of this position is that the Vietnamese state is the most important agent shaping public memory in these essays. Indeed, she writes of the 'coercive intensity of totalitarian commemoration' and argues that 'forgetting may be the only escape from the tyranny of enforced memory' (p. 8). However, the state is not the only actor that shapes memory and forgetting is not the only response available.

Few essays in this collection recognise the possibility for an autonomous public memory in Vietnam, crafted neither by the state nor in opposition to it. Shaun Malarney's detailed and lucid essay is an exception. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, it is concerned with funerary rites in Thịnh Liệt commune, a community located south of Hanoi. During the American War, the state instituted a new funerary rite to formally recognise those who had fallen in service to the nation. However, it was inadequate in

meeting the religious needs of the families of the fallen, who instituted their own rites to care for the souls of the fallen and to admit them to the community of ancestors who care for the family. Malarney makes clear that these rites were supplemental, not oppositional, to the funerary rites of the state. In addition to the family, other possible sites of public memory autonomous from the state and not explored in this collection, might be among friends, in the workplace and in the local neighbourhood.

The essay by Malarney avoids the second main weakness that characterises the other essays in this collection: they generally fail to examine in any systematic or rigorous way the social responses by Vietnamese or others to the memory practices and representations described. A memory is not simply a representation of the past but also the reception or response to that representation. The essays frequently attend to the meanings of the practices and representations they describe, but they do not show how those practices and representations were accepted or rejected or how they motivated people to think or act in particular ways. The essay by Kennedy and Williams on tourism discusses the 'establishment of a Europeanized identity, ambiguity in references to the 1945–1975 conflict, depiction of that war as a provincial event, portrayal of U.S. involvement as a social activity, and historical minimization' (p. 156) in Vietnam. However, the essay pays no attention to the tourist reception of these representations, and no indication of the effectiveness of the tourist industry's narrative is given. Mark Bradley's discussion of the emergence of 'counter-memory' in Vietnamese cinema after *đổi mới,* of 'residual or resistant strains of remembrance . . . that withstand official constructions of the past' (p. 199), is eloquent and perceptive. Unfortunately, Bradley does not examine the critical or popular reception of the films he examines; no indication is provided of box office figures or Vietnamese responses to any of the films he discusses.

In the afterword, Hue-Tam Ho Tai highlights other absences from this collection – public memories of soldiers who fell as members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) who do not figure in the state's memory projects, and memories of the Vietnamese overseas. On 30 April, 1975, communist forces entered Saigon. In Vietnam, 30 April is celebrated as Reunification Day; however, among many overseas Vietnamese it is the Day of National Shame (*Ngày Quốc hận*). Memories of fallen ARVN soldiers in South Vietnam exist at both the personal and collective level, as do the memories of the Vietnamese overseas. It is unclear, however, whether either can be properly located in the sphere of 'public memory' discussed in this collection. The essays and Hue-Tam Ho Tai's reflections indicate the need for a critical reconsideration of the traditional public/private, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic, memory/counter-memory binaries in the study of collective memory.

This collection of essays is a valuable contribution to the recent body of scholarship on memory in Asia. It contains adept interpretations of several memory practices and representations in Vietnam and points to the role of the state in their production. It raises important general questions about the role of other agents in the production of public memory and the reception of and responses to such productions. Perhaps most importantly, this collection depicts the richness and complexity of the ways in which different groups remember the conflicts of the twentieth century in Vietnam.

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