

is in decline, such trends do not necessarily dampen the intensity or efficacy of ritual due to the liveliness of emotive (pp. 276–82) and embodied (pp. 288–92) experiences.

In Chapter 12, Janet Alison Hoskins provides comments on the preceding chapters as an afterword. She contributes to the volume by probing “how Asian migrants may have different forms of religious experience from other migrants” (p. 305), a question that the other contributors have not squarely or extensively answered despite the focus of the book on “Asia.”

The major strength of the volume is its success in delineating the contours of religion as it is embedded in economic and political spheres of human lives. Without romanticizing religion as a transcendent reality or reducing it to a side-effect of capitalist activities, the chapters generally do a great job in illuminating the complex and shifting boundaries between the spiritual, material, and civic landscapes inhabited by transnational migrants.

This may be too demanding a request for an edited volume with such broad themes as *religion*, *migration*, and *Asia*, but I wish the sense of cohesion between chapters were a bit stronger. Some chapters speak to one another more stimulatingly and profoundly (e.g. 2, 6, and 8 center on “mission”; 3, 5, and 11 focus on capital/ritual). Consequently, the grouping of sections and conceptual buildup throughout the book have some room for improvement.

The book is suitable for the academic audience, including doctoral students, who are interested in religion, migration, and/or Asian diasporas. It would be more challenging for undergraduate students and the general public.

The study of migration and religion, like any interdisciplinary field, is challenged by the disparate set of theoretical idioms, canonical literatures, and conceptual paradigms that researchers of diverse disciplinary backgrounds bring in with them. This volume makes a valuable contribution by furthering the interdisciplinary dialogue and clearing conceptual common ground for future collaborations.

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Liberalism and the Postcolony: Thinking of the State in the 20th-Century Philippines

By Lisandro E. Claudio. *Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies*. Singapore: NUS Press in Association with Kyoto University Press, 2017. Pp. 227. ISBN 10: 9814722529; ISBN 13: 978-9814722520.

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Lisandro Claudio’s second book titled *Liberalism and the Postcolony: Thinking of the State in the 20th-Century Philippines* offers a discussion on liberalism and the Philippine state and society during some crucial political and intellectual periods in the country’s twentieth-century history. The author, a self-identified liberal, socialist, and critic of Maoist Marxism, has traversed critical junctures of the political and social milieu of the said century by identifying and highlighting non-conventional, nationalism-critical, and global dynamics-affiliated historical propositions and interpretations.

The book is an intellectual macro-history of the twentieth century; it problematizes the development of liberalism in the Philippines from a politico-economic standpoint and treats liberalism as a “modus vivendi”, a mediator of conflicting and contrasting political ideologies. Focusing on the academic careers and political endeavors of four select liberals of the era, namely Camilio O. Osias, Salvador Z. Araneta, Carlos P. Romulo, and Salvador P. Lopez, Claudio locates the intellectual

developments in the country in the larger regional and global area of ideas, zooming in and out the discussion of ideas and propositions of the four thinkers. As the author explains, his work “is about bureaucratic writers and pencil pushers, who aided the transition of a nation from colonial rule to independence” (p. 8). His work is a critical appraisal of the unnoticed contributions of Osias as the “nationalist-internationalist”, Araneta the “Filipino Keynesian economic planner”, Romulo the “Anti-Communist Liberal”, and SP Lopez as the “Liberal Intermediary” between generations of intellectuals, in producing knowledge and manifesting such political and social ideas to promote, directly and indirectly, the liberal praxis and postcolonial democratic hopes of Philippine society. Claudio narrates in a quasi-biographical manner. Working on each subject, he reconstructs the liberal world of each intellectual by chronologically identifying key events and turning points in their intellectual and political vocations. The book is composed of six chapters discussing the roots of liberalism as a global concept, and the ideas, thoughts, and propositions of the four subject liberals, and a short epilogue at the end in which the author pays homage to his grandmother, who for him is an unknown liberal herself. In his discussion, Claudio analyzes the primary works of each liberal, keeping close attention to the treatment of each work as the magnum opus of each liberal, as he adheres to the importance of canon-formation in determining the larger scale of influence and relevance of the said liberals. Moreover, the liberals chosen by the author were “dismissed based on a caricatured vision of liberalism”, wherein they were painted as “pro-American miseducators, reactionary anti-Communists, and effete hypocrites who compromised political power” (p. 19).

The main strength of the book lies in its literature of political ideologies, and how one global political idea was applied in a localized and regional setting. He rationalizes this positioning through the need to cross our ideological understanding from the limited geo-nationalist boundaries to expand the horizon to a global, post-national milieu.

This work solidifies the idea that liberalism in the Philippines, particularly in the twentieth century, was, or has always been, a state project. The choice of the four liberals, who manifested and enriched their liberal ideas under the auspices of state (and colonial) institutions, concretize the statist nature of the liberalism. The author points out that this character of liberalism is a manifestation of it being a practical frame of intellectuality – not revolutionary and not utopian (p. 6), and that there was a liberal revolution that inaugurated the Philippine state (p. 18). Moreover, he also made a case for liberalism as the leading idea that mediated the Philippines and the world in the twentieth century. With this, the author has a hyperinclination to this idea that in his framing of Philippine intellectual historiography, he puts other ideologies into the antagonists’ corner. He touches on sensitive topics that many historians might be wary to touch; Claudio indeed did not hesitate to make critical remarks to ideological collectives – whether against liberalism and his subject liberals, and to the ideologies beyond the intellectual fence he set – Marxists/Communists/Maoists, and fascists. Therefore, his work is both a historical assessment and a political commentary of the vicissitudes of established political ideologies of the century.

The author’s use of the term “postcolony” is intriguing and invites more discourse on the veracity of terminological impositions in history. Did he propose an alternative to “neo-colony”, a more popular term used to describe the Philippines after 1946? The use of the term is further elaborated by Claudio’s extensive justification of his historical-ideological proposition to liberalism – postcolonial liberalism. The rationale of the term rests on its use; he argues that postcolonial liberalism, as a concept: 1) exposed open-ended forms of nationalism, 2) accepts its origin, 3) is a method of mediation and governance, 4) seeks power to limit power, 5) is public politics conjoined with public accountability, 6) confronts inequality, and 7) is a gradualist philosophy that does not preclude change (pp. 150–54). Sounding like a marriage of two loaded academic concepts, colonial and liberalism, he treats it as a *tabula rasa*, disclaiming that this idea grew at the onset of existing colonial, economic, and scientific networks, and not as a *tabula rasa* of its own. Is the author reconfiguring liberalism, or merely relabeling it for it to have a sharper outlook, and for it to stand out amongst the sea of twentieth-century ideologies? My answer is both. As a student of history, I find it amusing that ideas are being refashioned to provide a better bird’s eye view of history, and at the same time, consider things a form of “garter stretch” so that more ideas can be used to understand the intellectual development of Philippine society.

It is noticeable that there are lapses when it comes to the balancing out of the discussion and sources on each subject liberal. For example, the chapters on Romulo and Lopez are extensive and data-heavy, whereas the ones on Osias and Araneta are relatively shorter. Moreover, looking at the materials, there is an apparent imbalance on the idea that each liberal was able to produce their respective ideas with corresponding “canons”. On the one hand, Romulo and Lopez were clear literary luminaries and were indeed notable in that field. On the other hand, Osias and Araneta were, historically and historiographically, relegated to the sidelines and footnotes because of an apparent disconnect with what were supposed to be the dominant tides in the political spectrum of the century. This observation leads us to the question of whether everyone has correlational value when it comes to knowledge production, despite the author’s strong claim identifying and labeling them as the foremost liberals in the postwar Philippines. It is also discernible that the author has strong reservations about diatribes and binary oppositions, but it is apparent that in many instances in his work, he has arduously embraced and submitted to them. For example, he has extensively set into opposition some intellectual traditions, and scholarly-constructed concepts such as Liberalism-Marxism, Liberals-Communists Left, Communists-Social Democrats, Third Worldism-Western Colonialism, among others. Although one can also interpret his approach as a form of highlighting ideas and distancing them from the cloud of vagueness, throughout his work this tendency is observable.

To conclude, Claudio’s bold attempt to propose a new understanding of the intellectual development of the past century engages the academic world to rethink the conventional boundaries of historical and political thinking, and traverse beyond the confinements of traditional national milieu. His work, which sheds light on the unknown and underappreciated Filipino liberals of the twentieth century, serves its purpose in codifying Filipino ideologues’ place in the chartered arena of local and global liberalism.

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Of Beggars and Buddhas: The Politics of Humor in the Vessantara Jataka in Thailand

By Kathrine Ann Bowie. *New Perspectives in SE Asian Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. Pp. xvi + 357. ISBN 10: 0299309509; ISBN 13: 978-0299309503.

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Kathrine Bowie’s *Of Beggars and Buddhas* is a mixture of historical and ethnographic studies of the Thai interpretations of the Vessantarajātaka based on her survey of its performances such as ceremonies and festivals in central, northeastern and northern Thailand. Furthermore Bowie treats the actual reception and status of the Vessantarajātaka in Thai modern society. Her discussions are supported by her encyclopedic knowledge of Thai history and rich data gathered through her longtime and extensive fieldwork in Thailand. *Of Beggars and Buddhas* is an excellent contribution to the historical and ethnographic study of Thailand as well as to the study of Thai Buddhist culture.

The Jātaka “Birth-Story” is a genre of Buddhist literature, which tells stories of former existences of the Buddha before he reaches the highest enlightenment. The Vessantara Jātaka is one of the most famous jātakas and tells a story of the prince Vessantara, who is regarded as the penultimate reincarnation of Gotama Buddha. As child, Vessantara makes a vow to perfect his charity-giving in order to become the omniscient (i.e. the Buddha). His limitless generosity brings the kingdom of Sivi to a crisis, and