

system offers detailed and comprehensive guidance to each issue as it comes. Students will find this a quite invaluable guide to modern naval history. The last chapter, moreover, offers a very sensible and balanced review of the book's findings which again will gently steer the reader into understanding what the naval history of this period is all about.

From the point of view of naval history both as an accessible record and explanation of events, and as an intellectual discipline, *Naval warfare 1919–1945* is a truly remarkable book and is highly recommended to all readers of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. The wider naval war between 1939 and 1945 determined operational priorities for the British and explains how they allocated resources between the many theatres of war in which they were engaged. Since this allocation resulted in the loss of Singapore, Malaya and Burma – a strategic reverse that Churchill in 1944–45 was determined to rectify – it had major consequences for the rest of the Second World War and for the subsequent history of Southeast Asia. Even if you cannot afford the hard-back version, ensure that your local library gets a copy so as to encourage the eventual appearance of the paperback that you can and should afford!

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Islamic legitimacy in a plural Asia

Edited by ANTHONY REID and MICHAEL GILSENAN

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This volume contains selected papers from a conference held in April 2005 at the Asia Research Institute in Singapore, featuring contributions from seven non-Muslim and four Muslim authors, thus providing both outsider and insider dimensions to the study of Islam.

Preparing conference proceedings is always challenging given the usually disparate nature of the papers. Professors Reid and Gilsonan have done their editorial task well, ensuring that this volume coheres around several characteristic features and themes.

First is a didactic function. In the introductory chapter, Reid points out that Asia, as 'the home of the majority of the Islamic faithful is also the world's major laboratory of religious pluralism' (p. 1). Those ruling regimes throughout history that accommodated Asian pluralism flourished, while those that tried to impose an exclusivist approach to religious faith struggled and were eventually discredited. So, as 'diversity is being required of all societies as a price of survival in a globalised world, the historic lessons of plural Asian societies are particularly precious' (p. 5).

Several authors caution against identifying religious factors as the root cause of modern problems. Turner states that 'political Islam is the political consequence of the social frustrations, following from the economic changes of the global neo-liberal

experiments of the 1970s and 1980s' (p. 57). Metcalf, Ali and Reid make comments in a similar vein.

There are both synchronic and diachronic dimensions to this volume, providing a valuable depth to discussion. Several authors look back to colonial times. Kaptein observes that Dutch policy in the Netherlands East Indies at the turn of the twentieth century was one of both non-interference in practice of the Islamic faith and support for Islamic facilities and institutions. Özcan comments that British non-interference in the religious practices of Muslims in India earned them the favour of some Meccan jurists who declared that British India was part of *dar al-Islam*. This policy had a particular unanticipated result, according to Metcalf, who observes that: 'it was the framework of British rule, where "religion" was regarded as a domain of freedom for colonised subjects that increasingly encouraged Muslims to insist ever more that theirs was a "religious" and not a "political" cause' (p. 84).

A further characteristic of this volume is its hard-hitting critique of both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals and political groups. Tibi takes to task certain Islamic liberals who are the darlings of the West, especially Tariq Ramadan and Abdulaziz Sachedina. He also targets Yusuf al-Qaradawi: 'The influential contemporary Islamist ... the heir of Qutb though mistakenly classified by some Western Orientalists as a voice of "liberal Islam", flatly dismisses democracy as un-Islamic and [is] therefore to be rejected' (p. 36). Those who claim that Islamic self-critique is a contradiction in terms should take note of Tibi's chapter. At the same time, he is equally critical of 'Western cultural relativists who condemned European universalism while overlooking the absolutism of the others' (p. 31), citing the 'philo-Islamic Americans, John Esposito and John Voll' (p. 37). Later in the volume, Liow provides an insightful evaluation of the Malaysian government programme of Islamisation that 'has uncovered disturbing cleavages and generated negative undercurrents across Malaysia's plural society as it struggles to sustain the *Reformasi* drive and expand politico-discursive space' (p. 184).

This volume also wisely takes account of Islam in both majority and minority situations. Saeed contributes a valuable chapter focusing on debates among Muslim scholars and jurists down the ages regarding whether Muslims should remain in minority situations under non-Muslim rule. Özcan and Metcalf consider varying angles on the huge Islamic minority in colonial India. Detailed studies of Islam as a majority are provided by Ali, who considers Pakistan, and Kaptein, Feener, Fealy and Liow, all of whom focus on the Malay-Indonesian world, covering both the colonial period and today's scene. Feener and Fealy provide particularly valuable and critical insights into issues of great import for today's Indonesia, one of the most dynamic and promising laboratories for Islamic reformist and pluralist thinking. Malaysia with its 60:40 population split for Muslims:non-Muslims, serves as a key barometer for measuring Islamic pluralism in the modern world. Liow's study raises important concerns because of 'the emergence of Islam as a hegemonic force in Malaysian politics over the past two decades' (p. 168).

As to whether others will learn the lessons of plural Asian societies as hoped for by Reid, the volume falls down in one key respect, namely, the total absence of more strident, 'legalistic and literalist' (p. 8) Muslim voices who may not be comfortable with the pluralism espoused by this volume, but who themselves constitute part of

that very pluralism. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to get such voices to participate in conferences of the kind that gave birth to this volume.

All chapters in this volume, from the strongest (that of Tibi) to the weakest (that of Ali), provide a wealth of information about Islam's engagement with pluralism in diverse locations across the centuries. This work should serve as an important reference point for students of Islam in Asia for many years to come.

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Southeast Asia

Modern fiction of Southeast Asia: A literary history

Edited by TERRI SHAFFER YAMADA

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The short story is a neglected form. When literary critics and historians construct national literary canons, they often place short fiction as apprentice work to the larger achievement of the novel, which in turn finds its supremacy challenged by new genres in visual or electronic media. Yet the short story deserves attention in its own right; in many parts of Southeast Asia it has been a dominant literary form during crucial historical periods, often coinciding with social transitions that have produced mass literacy in colonial or new national languages. There are many reasons for this. The short story is relatively easy to write and publish in newly founded periodicals; it lends itself to pedagogical projects of language-learning; it arguably readily incorporates more traditional literary forms such as the folk tale; and its length makes it easy to translate in multilingual societies. As the essays collected in Teri Shaffer Yamada's *Modern short fiction of Southeast Asia: A literary history* illustrate, short fiction has been central to many modern Southeast Asian literary traditions, and E.U. Kratz's description of Indonesian literature as 'a literature of short stories' might plausibly be applied to other national and transnational traditions in the region.

Yamada's collection consists of a series of individual essays outlining histories of development of the short story as a literary genre in every Southeast Asian nation-state bar Brunei and Timor Leste. Given the fact that the short story's rise is often associated with growing literacy and the spread of print capitalism, this is also a story of modern nation-state formation, and in particular the formation, prescription and proscription of various forms of national culture. Most of the essays thus provide thoughtful placement of the literary form within socio-political contexts, and many also contain useful discussions of book history as well as more conventional close reading of selected literary texts. While Yamada's book's subtitle is misleading – it does not pretend to present a coherent literary history of short fiction in Southeast Asia – individual chapters do constitute valuable literary histories of the short story