

## Book Reviews

### Asia

*Home and Hegemony: Domestic Service and Identity Politics in South and Southeast Asia.*

Edited by KATHLEEN M. ADAMS and SARA DICKEY.

Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000. Pp. viii, 307. Notes, Index.

This volume consists of a dozen essays on domestic service in South and Southeast Asia, focusing primarily on the concept of identity as a relational construct, negotiated between domestic worker and employer in a highly personalised but strongly contested arena shot through with the multiple asymmetries of nationality, race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. In giving attention to domestic service, part of the agenda here is to problematise the classic public/private dichotomy, to debunk the view that home space is 'neutral, and intellectually uninteresting' (p. 5) and to insist as Diana Wong ('Foreign domestic workers in Singapore', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 5, 1 (1996), p. 132) has, that, 'the Janus-character of the home as a *domestic* site – as a place of shelter and care, as well as abuse – assumes its full potential in the home as a *work* site'. Hegemony is multiply and constantly made and remade through interaction and negotiation and this process is seen to 'inhere in everyday, informal, and often relatively inchoate aspects of living' and not simply in 'formal and articulable ideological systems' (p. 7). By elucidating the way female employers and female domestic workers negotiate their identities *vis-à-vis* the 'other (woman)' in a context where 'physical and emotional intimacies ... challenged the maintenance of clear-cut personal and cultural boundaries between master and servant' (p. 187), *Home and Hegemony* joins the ranks of a number of scholarly works which bring the undervalorised but fraught terrain of domestic service and reproductive labour into focus.

As the editors observe, the substantive essays in this volume fall into two groups. The first give attention to employers and domestic workers within their own nations, where sameness and otherness, woven around hierarchies of caste, race, ethnicity, region and class, are intricately negotiated but also steeped in historical consciousness and accepted as somewhat 'natural'. The emphasis here is on the fluid micro-politics of identity construction captured by interrogating ethnographic texts such as narrative accounts which employers and domestic workers tell of each other as each attempted to claim the moral high ground *vis-à-vis* the other (Sara Dickey's chapter on Tamil Nadu); the language of fictive kinship and family which masked the exploitative nature of labour extraction (as described by Saubhagya Shah for Nepal and Jean-Paul Dumont for the Visayas); and humour and jest as means of temporarily erasing, and subsequent realigning, household hierarchies (Kathleen M. Adams on the Toraja).

The second set of essays focuses on transnational domestic labour where not only are questions of difference stretched across yet another divide, that of nationality (which often also connotes distinctions of race, religion, language and economic development), the bodily absence/presence of the domestic worker at 'home' and 'away' for long periods raises important issues and may have long-term consequences on both the ideological foundations and material form of the 'family' and 'nation'. As Michele Ruth Gamburd perceptively argues in the context of Sri Lankan transmigrant women working as live-in domestic servants in the Middle East:

Domestic service in conjunction with international migration pulled women out of their own households. Family work that had once been a woman's universally accepted "sacred calling" intrinsic to her identity as wife and mother was now performed for strangers who commodified her labor power, paying her a salary in international currency. New consciousness of class and gender roles allowed and encouraged the critical reevaluation of these hegemonic structures of power, inequality, and dominance. (p.186)

Moving the focus to women's ambiguous relationship with the state in the context of the Indonesian government's ambivalent support for female labour migration, Kathryn Robinson (p. 276) argues that while on the one hand, women are incorporated as citizens in terms of their gendered role in the patriarchal family within which they are to be accorded protection, such gender specificity recedes when citizens are redefined as a 'human resource' for economic development. As an export commodity, these female migrant workers are seen to be outside the protection of the Indonesian state, where their conditions of work are determined by the strictures of the host society as well as profit-driven labour supply agencies.

Collectively, while I would differ from the view that these essays approximate 'a single unfolding story of domestic service inequalities ... in South and Southeast Asia' (p. 284), most are well-written accounts which draw on rich ethnographic material and perceptive observations. For a well-woven story to be stitched together from these variegated accounts, much still needs to be done in tracing the filaments stretched across the frontiers of time and space, connecting individual stories into a web of different contours. As Karen Tranberg Hansen (p. 290) notes in the concluding chapter, this is an essential task, begun in some of the chapters (most clearly exemplified by Gamburd's piece in my view) but far from finished, if we are to find answers to 'the vexing questions arising from the global reproduction of paid domestic service within the next century'. The micropolitics of identity negotiation in the reproductive industry need to be firmly situated in larger local and global sociopolitical realities and transnational connections. As Parrenas ('Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor', *Gender & Society* 14, 4 (2000): 569) notes, what we are witnessing today is an 'international division of reproductive labor', that is 'a transnational division of labor that is shaped simultaneously by global capitalism, gender inequality in the sending country, and gender inequality in the receiving country'. The international migration of women as domestic workers provides the connecting threads linking systems of gender inequality in different places.

*Home and Hegemony* provides a vivid picture of the women of South and Southeast Asia as they engage in active negotiation: they 'articulate, assert, challenge, suppress, realign, and co-opt varying hierarchies of identity' (p. 10). Domestic workers in particular emerge from the pages as those who struggle to better their life chances for their families, enduring journeys of travail, abuse and ambiguities, and yet capable of meeting life with perseverance, humour, and often, a sense of moral victory. What is perturbing, however, is not only the relative absence of men in these narratives, but the recurrent images of male figures as truants, often inept and self-serving in their roles as fathers and husbands. Perhaps this is an unavoidable bias in using domestic service as a prism to understand gender politics. Nevertheless, what I would hope for in a sequel to this volume would be an investigation which inserted men's identity negotiations more centrally, making clear that domestic and reproductive labour, and attendant identity transformations, need not be women's work but certainly and usefully, men's business too.

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*Die Dänen in Indien, Südostasien und China (1620-1845)*

By STEPHAN DILLER.

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag (South China and Maritime Asia, 8), 1999. Pp. viii, 430. Tables, Illustrations, Plates, Bibliography, Index.

Stephan Diller's study of Danish enterprise in India, Southeast Asia and China was originally written as a thesis at the Otto-Friedrich Universität in Bamberg, Germany. As such, the book provides an impressive synopsis of the state of research on trade in the East Indies between the early seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. As one can expect from a published thesis, this study features extensive and well-documented footnotes, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of both primary and secondary sources in several European languages. Students and scholars interested in the broader subject of Danish-Asiatic trade will find that this book summarises the present state of research. Some may find that it provides an excellent steppingstone from which to pursue further research on this oft-neglected sub-field of East India Company trade. As the author himself explains, the present work is not intended to pursue an economic history of Danish East India engagement, nor does he embark on discussing the affairs of the Protestant missionaries.

Chapter 1 addresses the foundation and structural organisation of the Danish East India Companies and delves to some extent into the alliance and treaty-making activity of the Danish companies with sovereign lords in South Asia. Chapter 2 examines the growth and development of trade between the years 1620 and 1845 whereby the focus is placed on Danish country-trade, maritime and overland intra-Asian, as well as long-distance trade with Europe. The author uses this occasion to identify and discuss associated topics, such as the transformation of markets, the shift in political structures in Asia, as well as the ever-interesting issues of smuggling and piracy. Chapter 3 is concerned with the growth and pattern of the Danish intra-Asian trading network. It traces Danish activities from Persia to China, spanning across key ports on the Arabian Peninsula, the Coromandel and Malabar Coast, Island and Mainland Southeast Asia, as well as Canton. Chapter 4 provides a study and explanation of Danish political neutrality in the context of East India trade. Diller places the origins and evolution of this policy against the background of political dynamics in Scandinavia during the seventeenth century. He argues that neutrality not only facilitated the growth of Danish trade with Asia, but also evolved into a clever politico-commercial tactic employed by the Danes. Chapter 4, finally, explores the various economic and political factors that led to the dissolution of Danish colonial possessions in Asia, particularly the sale in 1845 of its territorial possessions in India to Great Britain.

Readers of this journal may be disappointed to find that Diller's exposition focuses primarily on India and China, and that specific coverage of Southeast Asia – although prominently announced in the title of the book – is limited to nine pages (pp. 245-53). Despite this brevity, the author raises a number of points relating to the opening of Danish posts in Aceh, Banten, Japara, Macassar, Mergui and Tenasserim. The office in Aceh was active as early as 1626 and the value of gold shipments from this Sumatran port to Danish India (Tranquebar) amounted to between 70 and 80 bahar per year. Apart from gold, trade with Sumatra covered silver, base metals, precious stones, pepper and tropical produce. Factories were opened in Japara and Banten in 1625. Diller highlights that the operations in Banten stood under the direction of the English East India Company. The Danes learned of the lucrative trading potential at the ports of Tenasserim and Macassar from Portuguese, mestizo and Muslim traders from the Coromandel coast; they successfully negotiated with the Siamese to open trade links with Mergui and Tenasserim and established the first trading contacts between these Andaman ports and Tranquebar in 1621 and 1623 respectively. Links with Macassar on the island of Sulawesi were established in 1623. Diller reports that the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) showed concern about the rise of

Macassar as a trading hub in general, but also was particularly disturbed by the two Danish ships that called annually at Macassar from the late 1620s onwards. Danish competition with the Dutch in the spice trade, specifically cloves, induced a price collapse on the markets in Southern India by the 1830s. The extent of the collapse transpires from Diller's elaboration on p. 252. By 1639, the price of cloves had fallen because of Danish "mass imports" into Southern India to about one quarter of the VOC's list price of 1618. Against the backdrop of this price slide, the VOC reportedly intensified its efforts to gain control of the clove market in Macassar in the course of the 1640s. By 1667, the Dutch company had gained control of the entrepot, and the Danes, together with other foreign traders, were forced to suspend their activities in Macassar.

Diller's study makes for excellent reading, and can be recommended to any one interested in the history of Danish colonial expansion in the East Indies, the history of East India companies, or maritime historians interested in the patterns of trade between India, Southeast Asia and China.

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### **Southeast Asia**

*Südostasien Handbuch. Geschichte - Gesellschaft - Politik - Wirtschaft - Kultur.*

Edited by BERNHARD DAHM and RODERICH PTAK

München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1999. Pp. 684. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index.

This volume is a multi-authored handbook written in the German language. It features a series of articles by key contributors, as well as illustrations, maps, statistics, bibliography and index. The book takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Southeast Asian states and societies that includes all of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), i.e. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines, plus the former Portuguese colony of East Timor.

The joint foreword by Bernhard Dahm and Roderich Ptak examines Southeast Asia as a concept, its entry and use in the German language. The editors also explore a series of related historic terms and concepts that are known from other languages and cultural peripheries including terms from the Malay, Arab and Chinese vocabulary, e.g. 'nanyang', 'laut tengah', 'negeri dibawah angin'. Alternative models are provided by political organisations like ASEAN, or by the research published by scholars like Denys Lombard who sought to apply the Braudelian 'Mediterranean' to the Southeast Asian sphere of interaction and exchange.

The main articles are arranged in seven parts. Part I features articles by Michael Parnwell, Thomas Höllmann, Volker Grabowsky and Bernd Nothofer that explore the foundations of Southeast Asia, including aspects of geography, space and natural surroundings, the region's languages and traditional peoples, as well as demographics and population dynamics. Part II features contributions by John Villiers, Hermann Kulke, Ptak, Jurien van Goor and Dahm that trace the history of Southeast Asia from ancient times to decolonisation. These contributions lead into Part III where Tilman Frasch, Ptak, Dahm, Michael Vickery, Grabowsky, Georg Stauth, Gisela Reiterer, Hans Rieger, Barend Terwiel and Wilfried Lulei provide short profiles on individual Southeast Asian nations plus East Timor, and the milestones in their national development since the end of World War II. Part IV subsequently takes on various perceptions of Southeast Asia, and explores the dynamics of the region with South Asia (Kulke), the Near East (Mona Abaza), China (Mary Somers Heidhues) and Europe (Claude Guillot). Religious developments stand at the heart of Part V, with feature articles on Hinduism and animist religions (Martin Ramstedt), Buddhism

(Frasch), Islam (Olaf Schumann) and Christianity (Reinhard Wendt). Part VI bears the title 'literatures, arts and material culture'. The articles by Annamarie Esche, Rainer Carle, Sangsri Götzfried and Ursula Lies venture into the literary cultures of selected Southeast Asian countries, specifically Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. Two separate contributions by Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo and Arnold Körte are dedicated to traditional arts and handicrafts (traditional motifs, the art and purpose of tattooing, textiles and their production, metal, wood and leather artifacts), as well as architecture, urban planning and the preservation of historic sites and monuments.

Regional cooperation and economic development, finally, stand at the heart of section seven. Two articles plus one set of statistics prepared by Susanne Feske and Anne Booth explore the state of ASEAN as a forum, and the state of economic development at the turn of the twenty-first century. These latter contributions are of particular interest in the wake of Southeast Asia's recent currency and economic crisis. The statistical profile featured on pp. 595-616 may even arouse the interest of experts of the region since Booth has juxtaposed select statistical data from as early as 1960 with corresponding figures from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, resulting in some rather striking comparisons and surprising insights.

This volume is clearly designed as a repertoire of information on the region, and as such succeeds well in this basic intention and function. Anybody from a seasoned expert to a student of Southeast Asian history, economy and culture, and even persons taking only a cursory degree of interest in the region, will find that this book satisfies a broad range of interests. It is certainly a handy volume to have sitting on one's bookshelf for reference.

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*Political Culture and Ethnicity: An Anthropological Study in Southeast Asia*

Edited by TOH GODA

Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1999.

Based on field reports for a 1995-97 Japanese Ministry of Education sponsored project on 'The Social Anthropology of Politics in Southeast Asia', this volume is rather uneven, plagued by both shoddy editing and meandering content, even if some chapters offer topical, intriguing information. The unusual definition of 'Southeast Asia' is immediately noticeable. Three chapters concern the Philippines and one each, Malaysia and Indonesia, with the remaining two chapters stretching the boundaries of the region to encompass Taiwan. Mainland Southeast Asia is not covered at all. Moreover, while the predominance of probably not habitually Anglophone authors makes some problems of language perhaps inevitable, more careful editing would have helped immensely. Distracting from the content are editorial faults ranging from problems of grammar and usage to the misstatement of names in citations and bibliographic entries.

The premise of the volume is an examination of the 'anthropology of politics in Southeast Asia' (p. vi), or as defined in the introduction, the comparative study of political cultures and formation of ethnicity under the process of modern nation-building. Indeed, a major focus of all the chapters is ethnicity, especially the transformation of *adat*, or traditional political praxis, in particular ethnic groups (the first four chapters) and identity formation (the final two chapters). A seventh chapter, Artemio C. Barbosa's discussion of fishing practices and lives in fishing communities on Leyte in the Philippines, does not really fit, even though the author does mention in passing 'political' issues such as the organisation of self-policing mechanisms for conservation of maritime resources. In

fact, this chapter highlights a weakness shared by several chapters: the fact that the 'political' is too often obscured or ignored in preference for interesting but tangential ethnographic detail.

Hisashi Endo's contribution on challenges to *adat* in Negeri Sembilan from broader political and economic processes and Islam is insightful, but seems more a restatement of some of Maila Stivens' works (cited heavily throughout) than a really original contribution. Goda's own chapter on peace pacts among the Bontok of Northern Luzon is enlightening but a bit diffuse, focusing more on the (also significant) question of land reform than peace negotiations *per se*, and running off onto an extended tangent about the difficulties of translating elements of cultural context to be expressed in English or Tagalog. Ultimately, though, Goda does make his point that locals are best able to negotiate peace among one another since they are able to communicate effectively with one another and have a tradition of such negotiations on which to draw. Similarly, Satoru Mabuchi takes a long time – distracted by lengthy accounts of important individuals – to explain that the roles and responsibilities of village headmen and the men's age-grade system have diminished over time, thanks largely to government-led administrative reforms and out-migration from the village by young men in search of work, in coastal Ami, Taiwan. Tadashi Kitamura's discussion of distinctions between commoners and aristocrats and the position and titles of community chiefs in East Lombok also meanders a bit, with far more detail than really necessary on specific lineages in the area. Moreover, he touches only briefly on the impact of Islam on local ethnic identity and politics, a potentially very intriguing and topical line of inquiry. Yasuaki Tamaki's study of ethnic identity and inter-group relations among the Dumagat, Tagalog, and Tingguian of northeastern Luzon is one of the better chapters in the volume, investigating how ethnic identity is formed and maintained amidst migration, government policies on ethnic minorities, and intensified exchange and interpersonal relations among groups. Finally, Shunichi Horie's contribution on the alternating ascendance and obscuring of Taiwanese identity is similarly valuable, full of relevant detail and touching more clearly than any of the other chapters on the links between ethnic identity and concrete political action.

Overall, this volume is useful for the different approaches to the anthropology of politics it proffers. However, the book will probably be of primary interest to specialists of the areas discussed than to a more general audience. All the authors clearly draw upon extensive anthropological experience in their respective field sites, imbuing their chapters with impressive local colour and well-grounded impressions of underlying socioeconomic and political processes. Even if the volume has its weaknesses as a coherent whole, the chapters themselves are worth reading, at least for those with the expertise to engage in debates over these particular sites of contestation.

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### Indonesia

*Warisan Leluhur: Sastra Lama dan Aksara Batak [The Heritage of the Ancestors: Ancient Batak Literature and Scripts]*

By ULI KOZOK

Jakarta: École Française d'Extrême-Orient and Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 1999. Pp. 158. Maps, Tables, Illustrations, Bibliography, Index [In Indonesian].

In this work Uli Kozok presents a practical guide for researchers hoping to read and translate Batak texts, as well as to make it possible for more to be written (by hand or word processor) using Batak scripts. Given the amount of graphic variation, the lack of adequate existing guides to the

language and the simple fact that the scripts are used rarely now, Kozok faces a difficult task. Like many writing systems in the archipelago, the Batak scripts ultimately derive from the Indian Pallava script. By examining the variations in Batak scripts, Kozok confirms earlier suggestions that in general writing among the Batak began in the south and spread north. The five main Batak sub-groups (Karo, Toba, Simalungun, Angkola-Mandailing and Pakpak) share a common linguistic heritage and in practice significant borrowing of terms takes place, but each is distinct. So too there are five main variations of the Batak script, but as with the spoken language clear boundaries between them are not always readily apparent.

A substantial part of *Warisan Leluhur* is devoted to describing and displaying the many variations in how Batak letters have been written and printed in different periods, places and publications. For this it is particularly valuable and will surely save future students of Batak texts from spending enormous amounts of time puzzling through existing variations. Kozok's analysis is based on careful examination of some 400 Batak texts inscribed on bark, bamboo, bone or paper, half of which are Karo Batak, and the remainder Simalungun, Toba and Angkola-Mandailing Batak (only a handful of Pakpak-Dairi texts have been located). Three-quarters of extant Batak texts are concerned with magic, spells, and the spirit world (*hadatuon*) and were written and preserved by *dukun* (traditional healers), typically on bark. A second set of texts includes letters written by or for rulers, most commonly spelling out the dire consequences of stealing from or otherwise offending the issuer. Third, among the Karo, Simalungun and Angkola-Mandailing in particular, are found lamentations that record the writer's grief at exile, the death of loved ones or unrequited love.

Additional sections of this short book describe the physical characteristics of bark, bone, and bamboo texts, the processes of making them, and the main genres most common to each medium. Brief segments introduce readers to writing Batak letters and using diacritical marks properly, as well as transliterating and translating short Batak language passages. These few pages and exercises cannot function as a true primer, but they do convey the demanding work facing a student of Batak texts. Interestingly, Kozok has created a set of Batak computer fonts for typing Karo, Pakpak, Simalungun, Toba and Mandailing. They are available for purchase (and can be viewed at Kozok's website: <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/indo/naskah.html>) and may well have a greater impact on the survivability of Batak than *Warisan Leluhur* itself.

The fate of Batak texts is a familiar one. Like many other literary traditions throughout the archipelago, significant numbers of Batak texts collected by missionaries, colonial civil servants and others lie unused in European archives, perhaps as many as 2,000 in total. Some texts are incomplete, damaged and poorly preserved. Catalogues from many of these European collections are available, while descriptions of collections in Sumatra or Java are becoming available only gradually. With over 90 per cent of Batak texts located overseas and thus inaccessible to most Indonesians, often these collections have only been examined in depth by one or two Dutch language specialists (*taalambtenaar*), to whom we owe a heavy debt for a lifetime of work. Even so, in many European archives and museums Batak manuscripts sit uncatalogued and even uncounted.

The fate of Batak texts and writing in the wake of modernisation, colonialism and state advocacy of Bahasa Indonesia highlight the different social world that these texts originally inhabited. Readers interested in this world gain only titbits from this book. Questions such as, what cultural force did Batak attribute to writing?; what was the relationship between literacy and social power among the Batak?; did this literary heritage shape Batak reactions to such processes as modernity, religious conversion, and nationalism?; will find no answers here. This is regrettable, for despite Kozok's clear intent to offer a practical guide for those hoping to read and

produce Batak texts, practical considerations cannot easily be separated from the social and cultural world of the Batak. Nevertheless, *Warisan Leluhur* fills an important gap for which students of Batak will be grateful.

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*The Spell of Power. A History of Balinese Politics 1650-1940.*

By HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT

Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996. Pp. ix, 389. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index.

This book is a well-researched political history of Bali, Indonesia, from the seventeenth century to the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1942. Using the principality of Mengwi as his primary example, Henk Schulte Nordholt first draws a vivid and detailed image of political life in pre-colonial Bali and then follows the permutations of Balinese power structures through the different phases of the colonial period. This is clearly a major contribution to the study of Hindu Balinese polities, and sheds light on the development, structure and process of similar political systems throughout Southeast Asia. With Bali's rich oral history and textual tradition as one of its major sources, this study also raises and addresses important historiographical issues.

The political landscape of pre-colonial Bali as depicted by Schulte Nordholt was marked by constant competition and unstable alliances among a number of major polities or 'royal centres' (including Mengwi) and their branches or 'satellites'. Although the analysis appears to follow Stanley Tambiah's 'galactic polity' model of Indic states in the region, the rich detail of this study reveals a complexity of political life which challenges previous attempts at generalisation. For example, the Geertzian model of Balinese polities as 'theatre states' quickly crumbles away as Schulte Nordholt unravels the material foundations and often violent mechanics of power in Mengwi. Indeed, the strength of this book lies in the challenges it raises for those inclined towards abstraction rather than in providing yet another model of Indic polities in the region. Even Tambiah's model, with its primary emphasis on the metaphors of space identifiable in local political discourses, could be challenged on the basis of this account, in so far as it reveals an equally significant pattern of reliance on networks of personal relations in the practice of Balinese politics.

This study leaves no doubt that the rise and fall of Balinese polities (*negara*) was an extremely dynamic process, even as they struggled to convey an image of order and continuity through the symbolic construction and ritual enactment of royal authority in relation to a broader cosmological vision. While the arrival of the Dutch in the nineteenth century in itself marks one of the most profound incisions in this already tumultuous Balinese political history, the establishment of a rigid colonial administration system in combination with a policy of 'self rule' (*zelfbestuur*) equipped some of Bali's re-endorsed rulers with 'a stronger position of power than would have been conceivable under the old royal system' (p. 192). A major material dimension of this power arose from local administrators' manipulation of colonial taxation and agricultural production schemes. A major conceptual shift was the replacement of the original *negara* with 'regencies' featuring clearly defined territorial boundaries.

Not all of Bali's *negara* and their ruling dynasties survived the transition, and those who did were not equally successful in profiting from collaboration with the Dutch and the traditionalisation of Balinese politics within the colonial state. Nevertheless, Schulte Nordholt describes how many members of royal families and their branches found a new and enduring power base in their role as Dutch-educated administrators (and later on, as bureaucrats and politicians

within the Indonesian state). The telling of this compelling saga, of power lost and regained, is one of the most remarkable outcomes of this research. Indeed, if there is anything to disappoint the reader, it is that this gripping tale of power permutations stops where it does, in 1942. If it continued on to the present, this study would stand to provide a potent critique of contemporary Balinese politics, a post-colonial scenario in which some of the descendants of the aristocratic rulers of pre-colonial Bali are still major political players. Even as it is, I would hope for this book to become available in Indonesian translation and be added to the history curriculum of local schools.

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*Visible and Invisible Realms. Power, Magic and Colonial Conquest in Bali.*

By MARGARET J. WIENER.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xiv, 459. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index.

This book aims to supersede post-colonial accounts wherein the power and knowledge of the colonisers have remained the dominant concern. Margaret Wiener well acknowledges the need for a deconstruction of the knowledge systems that enabled colonial domination, and employs a Foucaultian model of analysis to this effect. Her more innovative argument, however, is that such an analysis does not help us to understand the experience of the colonised. A Western self-critique of colonial power may be sufficient to convey an idea of how we would have felt if we had been in the position of the disempowered. It is not sufficient to help us appreciate the cultural perspective of the colonised. In this book, Wiener provides compelling evidence that post-colonial studies, in so far as they lack anthropological understanding, are doomed to remain one-sided and fundamentally flawed.

Adopting an anthropological view of colonisation, as an 'encounter' of people from different cultural worlds, Wiener suggests that Balinese worlds were all but invisible to their Dutch colonisers. In a dramatic historical illustration of how misunderstandings shaped these encounters, the author draws our attention to the *puputan*. Superficially '*puputan*' refers to the massacre of members of the royal household of Klungkung (and Badung) in 1906 as they walked into the gunfire of the Dutch military wearing their finest attire and armed with no more than ceremonial daggers. Wiener suggests that what appeared to the latter as a pompous and fanatical act of collective suicide was to the former a visible acknowledgement that their particular world (*sekala*) was indeed 'finished' (*puput*). The origin of the Klungkung royal power and the cause of its demise, however, were understood to be located in the invisible world (*niskala*). To the course of metaphysical events leading up to the *puputan*, the Dutch, like vultures descending upon a dead horse, were no more than the accidental beneficiaries.

Wiener explains how in Bali the gods and other invisible agents are (or were) the ultimate source of all power, and defeat is no more and no less than irrefutable evidence that, for one reason or another, this power has been withdrawn. She goes on to explore at length how Balinese theorise 'power' (*kesaktian*) as 'the generation and reproduction of connections between a person and the invisible world, especially the gods' (p. 10). How these invisible entities intervene in human affairs depends not so much on their inherent characteristics as it does on maintaining proper relations with them through ritual observances. Ritual observances on a collective level, such as the annual exorcisms of demonic entities (*buta kala*), were organised and sponsored, at least in part, by Balinese kings on behalf of the inhabitants of their realm. Wiener concludes that in Bali 'power [in the more political sense] entailed a capacity to mediate with invisible forces on behalf of one's followers' (p. 56).

In anticipation that the Marxist objection to religion as ideology or the issue of rationality may be raised at this point, Wiener stresses that *kesaktian* is also a practical matter and a personal achievement. *Kesaktian* is ultimately about getting things done one's own way. Though it can be inherited or received as a gift, its maintenance requires unwavering perseverance and supreme alertness. Indeed, the more 'sakti' a person is the more in danger also of falling from high places. The tempting of kings and others with unusual ambitions into taking foolish decisions leading to their ruin was not beyond Bali's deities, and certainly was part of the job description of its demons. As far as rationality is concerned, it seems the Balinese were more focused on the undeniable realness of effects than the relative rationality of different causal explanations, content perhaps to let history tell the tale of power. As for the concealment of the mechanics of power within Balinese theories of power, however, the objection may be raised that the secret of power was deliberately kept secret. Judging by Wiener's own examples of causal speculation in magical terms, it seems that failures attracted the most lively discussions among Balinese. Power - while it remains intact - is an enigma, as is knowledge ('those who know don't talk', p. 80).

The author may be applauded for uncovering in the narratives of the Klungkung dynasty of Balinese kings an idiom of power relations that had remained more or less invisible or alien to Dutch invaders, and would have remained so without a thorough anthropological investigation. However, the limitations of a conventional post-colonial studies paradigm are not transcended completely.

In the process of retelling Bali's colonial history from the perspective of Klungkung, the most prestigious royal centre of the island's southern lowlands in pre-colonial times, this book illustrates the apparently universal allure of 'power' even as it endeavours to convey the vast differences pertaining to specific cultural modes of accumulating, maintaining, exercising and understanding power. Wiener's double vision reveals that cultural differences in the negotiation of power and knowledge are significant, and suggests that they do matter. However, even though her counterweight to colonial discourse is clearly the narratives of a small aristocratic elite, these local narratives of power are not subjected to the same process of deconstruction.

This leaves an important issue untouched. The kings of Klungkung had maintained their own local structure of domination for centuries; legitimising their power by commemorating another, much earlier invasion in which their own Javanese ancestors are said to have defeated and colonised Bali (p. 301). The 'post-colonial' memory of this event is carefully preserved and textually embellished through the medium of genealogical histories of royal succession (*babad*). Experiences of colonialism in Bali, it seems, did not begin with the age of Western imperialist expansion. Wiener does not seek to expose the power discourse of a Balinese elite as one that has produced a class of dominated people and a world of subjugated knowledge all of its own. Celebrating their views as a voice of cultural resistance, she may be reinforcing knowledge structures that still aim to silence the vast majority of Balinese 'commoners'.

This book is important for demonstrating how anthropology may enrich more conventional political theory approaches to the study of post-colonial societies. However, the challenge is not simply to stress the significance of cultural knowledge for the political organisation of different societies, but to stress the human consequences of these differences. Only through a critical evaluation of others' approaches to the fundamental problems of knowledge and power distribution can we hope to better understand and improve our own. To ignore that people in other societies - like us - have a distinct capacity to wield knowledge and power in questionable ways, is to deny them a part of their humanity, even if they themselves were to welcome such a denial.

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## Malaysia

### *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*

By T. N. HARPER

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. xviii, 417. Tables, Bibliography, Index.

Few Malaysian historians would dispute the central argument of this book that despite the ups and down in their foreign policies since Malaya's independence (1957) and Malaysia's formation (1961), Britain's 'late colonialism' after 1945 belatedly attempted to shape the modern nation-state of Malaya. Britain left some durable and some not so durable legacies.

It is a refreshing change to find a few sober truths on Britain's important post-war role restated in a historical examination on the transfer of power and the end of empire, especially when they come from the pen of a British scholar. T. N. Harper makes a frank admission when he states this of Britain's role on page 362:

The dialectic of late colonialism was that the satisfactory conclusion of the business of empire demanded its transfer into trustworthy hands; the need to keep it in those hands made the transfer of power a much swifter process than it was intended to be. Once this dialectic was acknowledged and accepted as unstoppable all the British could do was to make the government as pro-western, capitalist and clean as it could. And it is in geopolitics, the fortunes of British investment and the fate of the Western democratic tradition that Britain's unfinished business with Malaya lay.

Britain tried to salvage its prestige, and decolonisation was, 'at least in part, to make the world a safer place for British business'.

In an earlier study, another British historian Nicholas J. White (*Business, Government, the End of Empires: Malaya, 1942-1957*, Oxford University Press, 1996) denied a claim made by several Marxist-oriented scholars that the British government and the British big business had entered into any 'neo-colonial' collusion with the Alliance Government of UMNO-MCA-MIC on the eve of the transfer of power. Harper states that Britain promoted but failed to achieve a 'Malayan' nationalism and a 'Malayan' and 'Anglophone' culture. Although Britain tried to promote inter-racial understanding through the Communities Liaison Committee in 1948 and mooted the formation of the Malayan Chinese Association in 1949, the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance was not its creation, but the initiative of the Alliance leaders themselves.

What then are the areas where Britain really made a positive contribution to the new nation-state of Malaya? The author says Britain's most important contribution was community development. 'The British sought to break down the divisions of a plural society, and create an integrated economic and political entity, bound together by a shared allegiance, a common culture and the obligations of active citizenship.' Britain attempted to draw the Chinese into the mainstream of Malayan life, 'to give them a stake in the land, a role in local democracy and even to protect them against the temptations of Communism and ethnic particularism through the spread of Christianity'. Malay self-help, Malay leadership and strategies to alleviate Malay rural poverty were promoted 'with a long-term movement of economic uplift within the Malay body politic to give voice to a strident economic nationalism'.

However, in describing Britain's role as 'a civilising mission' in this period, because it taught or allowed the locals to help themselves, Harper makes this claim sound gratuitous. In fact, Britain had no choice once it had embarked on decolonisation. Since the granting of independence was unstoppable, it had to suitably instruct and promote the local people's emancipation. It even had to make compromises, or fail to protect its own future interests. Much of what Britain did for Malaya, therefore, was also in its own self-interest. (Britain has been similarly criticised for its belated

promotion of democracy and fundamental human rights in Hong Kong just before it returned the territory to China, when Britain had 100 years earlier to do so but failed to do it.)

Harper rightly regards the Emergency as the watershed of the period in the making of the new nation-state. But this period also saw the British commitment to human rights and freedom of speech in Malaya subordinated to the struggle against Communism. Seeking to combat communist subversion and influence, Britain introduced extremely draconian legislation – the Emergency Regulations of 1948 – parts of which survive within Malaysia's Internal Security Act of 1960, Sedition Act (revised in 1969), Societies Act (amended in 1981), Official Secrets Act (amended in 1986) and Essential (Security Case) Regulations (1975). These laws have been attacked as infringements of the fundamental rights of citizens, but defended by successive governments as necessary for the political stability, harmony and national security of the country. Freedom as a flower was not fully nurtured just before the transfer of power.

Modern Malayan politics, Harper reiterates on page 378, 'was born against a backdrop of war and insurgency creating a system of Government, in the words of a Whitehall mandarin, "combining autocratic rule with the new democratic processes in a typically Malayan way"'. Britain did attempt to introduce a system of parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy and independence of the judiciary, but over the years constitutional amendments have further eroded many of these institutions.

The book is presented in nine chapters, but the historical narrative and analysis do not read easily. The author labours heavily with a thick description of a well-trodden and familiar background of the period from 1945 to 1957, much of which could have been abbreviated, and as a result his interpretations and new research data do not appear as striking as they should. The most original chapters are Chapter 4, 'Rural Society and Terror', and Chapter 7, 'The Politics of Culture'. In the former, Harper describes rural societies living in terror during the Emergency due to the acts of violence by Chinese rural estate workers and Malay villagers, which indirectly triggered the communist rebellion. The Emergency 'scarred and remade the landscape itself, through massive and demographic change'. In the latter, he describes how the colonial attempts at inculcating an Anglophone 'Malayan' consciousness and national culture had failed due to the strong challenge of the Malay cultural movement 'to reinvent the Malay language as the singular idiom of national life', and at the same time colonial policy had imparted strategies to allow the latter to enforce their 'own vision of the nation'.

Overall, this is a thorough and solid study in which the author displays a masterful command of the data, and successfully links the historical with the contemporary. It makes a valuable contribution to the studies of the Malayan Emergency and on the transfer of power from British rule to local hands.

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*Orang Asli Now: The Orang Asli in the Malaysian Political World.*

By ROY DAVIS LINVILLE JUMPER.

Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999. Pp. x, 204. Maps, Tables, Figures, Index.

This is a story that continues to unfold. The book under review is a sequel to Roy Davis Linville Jumper's previous work entitled *Power and Politics: The Story of Malaysia's Orang Asli* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), which was the first political history of the Orang Asli.

Jumper's study formally consists of five parts and a concluding section that leaves an *ouverture* for the story to continue. The author has tried to apply the perspective of 'political ascendancy of this small minority of tribal peoples in their long standing quest for greater self-identity' (p. xv) outlined in his Preface, for all the sections of his research. The book's primary objective is to unravel the negotiations of the Orang Asli political movement in their attempt to secure greater clout in the Malaysian political processes – in a spatial context which the Orang Asli perceive to be their own.

The quality of this book may be measured on three counts: comprehensiveness, issue-orientation and analytical awareness. For an academic 'first', the most significant contribution this study makes is that it fills an inexplicable void in Orang Asli studies – a void which only Jumper's timely, painstaking and thoughtful research on political matters of the Orang Asli has come to address. For this, all peoples interested in Orang Asli studies and affairs owe him a great debt of gratitude. Jumper commands a comprehensive range of fieldwork based data, and a mapping out of not only mainstream phenomena, but of the nooks and crannies of the ethnographic landscape by interviewing a whole range of people and organisations. The one criticism we have at this juncture is that Jumper's research might have been better served with a little more attention to archival data.

The author has a clear eye for the issues at stake in his work. Part I of the book provides the backdrop by presenting the environmental setting of the Orang Asli in the Malaysian political world. Parts II through V build up his argument by examining the anatomy of the Orang Asli political movement; the search for hegemony; the four phases of the evolution of the Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POSAM) – a national Orang Asli association – from its position of hegemony to party status. These chapters locate the story of the Orang Asli's fight on the dis-continuum from local and provincial to national and international ideas of identity, and it stresses notions of transitionality, syncretisation and assimilation.

These sections, which are interspersed with highly articulate analyses, go a long way towards the third goal of analytic awareness. It is a pity that Jumper could not report direct interviews due to the sensitivity of the topic under research. Unfortunate as this is, it diminishes the excitement of the negotiations which the Orang Asli are engaged in and which would have enriched our knowledge tremendously. Nonetheless, by incorporating the conversation with his informants into the general text of his study, Jumper is able to provide explicit glimpses in his text, of the play of power and politics of the Orang Asli in the formation of their identity. It must of course therefore fall to researchers of Orang Asli studies to use this available data and observations in order to sort out the dynamics of Orang Asli identification. The author's study on the under-researched topic of Orang Asli affairs in Malaysia contains so much that is subtly observed and lucidly phrased that it deserves its place on the shelf of every researcher on Orang Asli affairs and Malaysian politics as a whole.

Jumper clearly demonstrates how the Orang Asli are not passive, but active agents with political skills and prowess to determine their futures. He concludes with the hope that future research will look into these areas and that the story will continue. Whatever the outcome, the journey of the Orang Asli and research on Malaysian politics promises to be an exciting one.

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*Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*

By R.S. MILNE and DIANE K. MAUZY

London and New York: Routledge, 1999. Pp. x, 225. Maps, Notes, Index.

Minor inaccuracies and some startling assertions aside, this readable and well-organised book is to be welcomed as a brief and convenient update to existing accounts of political life in Malaysia. It covers Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's ascent to and exertion (including accumulation) of power, developments in key policy areas under Mahathir, the question of succession to Mahathir and a concluding evaluation of Mahathir's leadership.

The first chapter, subtitled 'how Mahathir came to power', deals briefly with this question but is more an overview of the Malaysian political system of which Mahathir became Prime Minister in 1981. Remarkably, the authors use the near-oxymoron of hegemonic consociationalism to describe Malaysia. The Malayan, and later Malaysian, political system has never met all the requirements of a consociational system and is therefore not one, period. (Does sharing some features make all animals mammals or all mammals human beings?) It has always been controlled or dominated by the Malays, although this fundamental feature was somewhat masked before government power was more aggressively asserted and exercised for the benefit of the Malays after 1969. Chapter 2 ('Mahathir's assertion of executive power') examines not only Mahathir's actions in maintaining his leadership of UMNO (the main ruling party) and his exercise of existing executive powers, but also his largely successful actions in increasing executive power in relation to other government institutions, thus further weakening the country's already weak constitutionalism.

Chapter 3 begins the policy section with an examination of how economic policy, including privatisation, is impacted by the important objective of improving the economic position of Malays and by less publicly defensible undertakings such as strengthening UMNO's financial position, political patronage and economically controversial prestige projects. The authors clearly convey that the record is mixed at best, even without the disturbing frequency of scandals involving corruption and other liberties taken in financial management. More explicitly political, Chapter 4 examines the federal government's response to Islamic resurgence and handling of non-Malay discontent and relations with Sabah and Sarawak. One wonders whether the authors would continue to judge the government's efforts, which are mainly Mahathir's, to contain the Islamic challenge as 'largely successful' in light of the clear gains made by PAS in the 1999 election. Chapter 5, on human rights, construes the term very broadly to include the 'far from level' (p. 116) playing field of the electoral process and the government's control of the press, non-governmental organizations and other interest groups in the interest of not only stability and development but also of controlling and pre-empting threats to the ruling party. Mahathir's activism is especially evident in foreign policy (Chapter 6), which the authors see as 'two-track' in nature (p. 143), combining Mahathir's personal inclinations and outspokenness with the ordinary pursuit of the country's substantive interests.

Chapter 7, on succession, and the postscript are largely about Anwar Ibrahim, his background, beliefs, rise, relations with Mahathir and eventual fall. The latter process demonstrated once again 'Mahathir's determination to wield the unseparated powers of government to the full' (p. 187), besides his low regard for orderly succession. The final chapter returns to Mahathir's beliefs and ideas, including his increasingly unrealisable 'Vision 2020'. Focusing on the dimensions of innovation-rationality and democracy-authoritarianism, it also provides a pointed and generally balanced assessment of Mahathir's stewardship.

Perhaps the erosion of democracy and of institutional checks and balances, within both the polity and UMNO, deserves highlighting as Mahathir's single most important negative legacy, as it

underlies and exacerbates other problems or failures under his rule. Mahathir's achievements are considerable, arguably the most impressive of any Malaysian Prime Minister to date. However, to continue Michael Leifer's medical analogy in the foreword, the doctor's confident extension of 'medical infallibility' (even if this exists) to politics is seriously misplaced. To make matters worse, other goals also intrude. His preoccupation with facilitating personal power and rule, and the consequent failure to embrace holistic medicine in administering to the body politic, has led to system decay - that is to say, to institutional erosion, a stunted civil society and weak accountability - and the resulting symptomatic increase in abuse of power, corruption, conspicuous projects that ignore economic rationality, and uncertainty in political succession.

Able and ambitious leaders who also enjoy power are generally reluctant to relinquish it, even to an anointed successor. They often also act against the long-term need to fashion political and governing institutions for lesser beings than themselves. True, on this score, Mahathir has but continued the handiwork of his predecessors. However, his determined accumulation of power throughout his long tenure has pushed the erosion of democracy and constitutionalism into the area of widely perceived negative returns. Past mistakes, as well as achievements, should inform future action; a new and urgent task thus awaits his successors and the country. But, yes, when will Mahathir relinquish his leadership?

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### Myanmar

*Études Birmanes en Hommage à Denise Bernot*

Edited by P. PICHARD and F. ROBINNE.

Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient 1998. Études Thématiques 9. Pp. 449. Maps, Figures, Photographs, Tables. (In French and English)

This volume was compiled in honour of Denise Bernot, founder of a chair of Burmese language and civilisation in Université de Paris IX Dauphine. After a three-page 'Portrait' which provides details of her personal life, a ten-page 'Introduction' comments on her professional career. Bernot shaped a generation of French 'Birmanologues', and strove to create research tools such as dictionaries and bibliographies. The rest of the volume consists of chapters on archaeology, ancient and modern history and art history, linguistics, and anthropology. Many of these represent the first meaningful contributions to their subjects in a long time. Taken together, they give a glimpse of the wealth of fascinating and important material that awaits future scholars when Burma once again becomes an active participant in the scholarship of the region.

The first section, 'Sources and Resources', includes two papers on Pagan inscriptions. Tilman Frasch analyses a text originally written in 1207-08 but preserved in a copy dating from after 1350. The text records the donation to a pagoda of a huge region: most of the northern part of the kingdom! Frasch concludes that the donation may be connected to an attempt to incorporate the kingdom of Tagaung into the empire. U Tan Thun, one of the doyennes of Burmese historiography, discusses inscriptions discovered during recent excavations in Pagan. One, originally written in 1223, was previously only known in a copy of 1785; it lists *pitaka* donated to a monastery library. U Tan Thun translates the inscription, but unfortunately does not compare it with the copy. Others contain such interesting features as the use of Mon in a text dated 1129, a record of a land dispute, with a term meaning rice nursery bund, the first reference in a Pagan inscription to this term. J. C.

Eade contributes a chapter on horoscopes written in ink on Pagan temple walls during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These occur in clusters, possibly representing families. He infers that the horoscopes imply 'a large and well-established population in Pagan' in this period, but one could postulate as an alternative that people may have come here from elsewhere to cast their horoscopes out of a feeling of respect for the monuments.

U Myo Myint, true to the spirit of Denise Bernot, provides a bibliographic essay on King Mindon (1857-78) with the objective of providing assistance to future scholars interested in this 'important but neglected' subject. He discusses various genres of the period, and concludes by advocating more research on the 'internal', 'structural' dimensions of Mindon. P. Herbert, on a related topic, describes a *parabaik* or palm leaf manuscript in the British Library which contains an 'illustrated record of royal donations' made between 1853 and 1857, the first five years of Mindon's reign. Illustrations, reproduced in black and white, Burmese texts and English translations are given. The author concludes that 'careful depictions of dated historical events and life at the court...distinguish this manuscript as one of exceptional merit and interest'.

The second section, 'Images and Monuments', begins with a chapter by P. Gutman on a series of Buddhist reliefs found near Selagiri, in Arakan, not far from the spot where the Buddha appeared to King Candrasuriya, who then had the famous Mahamuni image carved. The first relief in the series was found in 1924: a red sandstone 'typical of the sculpture of the earliest Arakanese cities of Dhannavati and Vesali'. Five more reliefs found in 1986 are now in the Mahamuni shrine. The author's interesting conclusion is that 'the Selagiri reliefs illustrate the spread, in the sixth or the seventh century, of Mahayanist influence from the schools of Northeast India to Arakan...'

C. Raymond brings together information from a variety of sources on the personage known as Wathundage, whose name derives from Vasudara, found in stories of the historical Buddha. In Arakan this figure seems to have enjoyed a special status during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

C. Bautze-Picron compares medieval depictions of Jatakas in Burma and East India. Jataka illustrations became rare in India after the Gupta era. Nevertheless, some 'parallels' can be discerned between the terracottas of the Ananda temple of Pagan and of Bengal. On a stele that recently appeared on the art market, two scenes are added to the traditional last eight events in the life of Sakyamuni, which are not part of the cycle in India, but do appear on steles from Bangladesh. Further information suggests that relations between Burma and Bihar, begun before the thirteenth century, continued in later years, and that Burma may even have become a refuge for Mahayanists of the Vajrayana school.

P. Pichard also discusses relations between Burma and neighbouring countries, in the context of monastery design. Pagan includes remains of 500 ancient monasteries, representing a line of evolution from the second-century type found at Taxila, to later forms increasingly divergent from the Indian originals. Monasteries are spread all over Pagan, and occur in various juxtapositions with other structures such as temples and stupa. Ordination halls seem to have been quite scarce at Pagan; only about twelve have been identified. Apparently most monasteries did not have their own; perhaps there were links between ordination centres and satellite monasteries, which would imply a highly centralised monastic organisation.

Although Burmese and Srilankan monastic layouts differed significantly from each other, they shared one important trait: division into four quarters, marked by vacant places at the centres where the axes, marked by paths, met. This contrasts strongly with India, as well as such Southeast Asian Buddhist countries as Thailand and Laos, where complexes came to be dominated by temples or stupa, located at the centre. These and other observations suggest that the subject will provide fertile ground for future analysis.

D. Stadtner discusses glazed tiles found at Mingun, across the river from Mandalay. The tiles were meant for the huge Pahta-daw-gyi pagoda, but for some unknown reason were not installed. Instead they were dispersed in the twentieth century. Several hundred are thought to be stored in a shed in Mandalay. Some are in Yangon, others in private and public collections. Only about 30 plaques are currently available for study. Some depict topics found in other sites, but others, such as Buddhist councils and palm-leaf copyists, famous pagodas, Arahant in shrines (*pyathat*), and even a nat theme ('Lake of the Lord of Taung-byon') are new. The author raises several questions that cannot yet be answered, such as why were plaques never installed, and why the tradition of narrative plaques was revived after a long period of desuetude?

In Part III, 'Views and Contacts', J. Leider discusses evidence of Muslim influence in the Mrauk-U period. Three or four Arakan kings seem to have used Muslim names between the early fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and Muslim-style coins were minted there. He argues that 'We are definitely dealing with self-conscious Buddhist kings...governing and employing Muslim subjects...'. G. Bouchon comments on a letter written in Melaka in 1516 by Antonio Dinis, who had been at Martaban in 1514-16, to two court pages in Portugal, asking for a new job. In July 1514, two Portuguese factors were sent to Martaban to establish a factory. Dinis became factor, but said he had to leave after two years because of the hostility of the local population.

M. A. M. Guedes, noting that we still lack an anthology of Burmese historiography, discusses remarks on the Portuguese in Burmese sources in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, in particular, the various sources referring to the colourful De Brito and the historicity of his putative son and daughter by an Arakan princess. According to an inscription of 1871-77, they built a stupa in the Irrawaddy area, and eventually became local nats.

S. Pasquet delves into the story of a 'diplomatic mystification': the story of three 'Chinese princesses' supposedly sent to the court of Amarapura in 1790. Chinese sources confirm that King Bodawhpaya sent ambassadors with tribute to China in that year. The Great Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty also contains a detailed description of the arrival of the three princesses supposedly sent back with the embassy. Chinese sources do not mention them. This account is reminiscent of similar stories found in many other parts of Southeast Asia. There may be some kernel of fact in this particular account, because three Chinese princesses are mentioned in a 1795 British report. Burney, the British Resident in Burma, 1830-37, says the three were in fact of Yunnanese origin. By piecing various facts together, Pasquet concludes that 'The story of the three Chinese princesses is nothing but an example of a game', wherein border groups used various strategies, including falsification of ambassadorial reports, to reopen closed trade routes.

Yin Yin Myint contributes a chapter on 'The Chinese of Burma', but confines her analysis to those who came by sea from coastal China, beginning in the seventeenth century. The omission of Chinese coming by land obscures a very important contemporary phenomenon. This article explicitly wants to emphasise the assimilation of maritime Chinese, but current events are shaping a different story.

L. E. Bagshawe, writing on Western education in Burma to 1880, begins by covering the familiar ground of the British colonial government's problems encountered in trying to instituting policy laid down in London, based on the more familiar Indian situation, in very different circumstances in Burma. He then introduces an original perspective by pointing out parallels with developments in England, showing that Burma's isolated location sometimes actually allowed it to be in the vanguard of change rather than relegated to a state of retardation.

Part V, 'Tour of the Territory', contains a very interesting ethnographic study by B. Brac de la Perrière on the evolution of *nat* worship over the last 200 years. The article convincingly accounts for the survival of the *nat* festivals despite the disappearance of Burmese royalty in 1885 by

integrating local and royal cults, and evolving new roles for the spirit mediums. The article starts out to achieve this by noting that 'December' in Burmese is Nadaw, 'nat-royal', because royalty used to pay homage to the *nats* at this time. In the nineteenth century the ceremony revolved around the presentation by the royalty of new *nat* statues. The pre-eminent December ritual seems to have been transferred from Mt. Popa to Taungbyon, paralleling the transfer of the capital from Pagan to Mandalay. The transfer may have been accompanied by the institution of permanent statues in local sanctuaries, replacing '*nat* pots'. It seems that in ancient times, local shrines had no statues of *nats*, which were limited to the royal cult. Nat mediums suggest that Mindon revived their profession. This perhaps is their memory of the effects of the shift of the royal *nat* festival from Popa to Taungbyon. In the nineteenth century local cults became royal, ritual was centralised, and mediums became more important. After royalty disappeared, the mediums were able to keep the cult alive.

In the final chapter, F. Robinne combines ethnographic and ecological insights to provide an account of the complex relations among the various groups inhabiting the shores of Inle Lake. Denise and Lucien Bernot made a trip there in 1971, which gave rise to several joint publications. They were interested in the Intha (a Burman group) and the lake environment; Robinne is more concerned with a 'complex but coherent "whole"' that the Thai, Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman inhabitants of the region constitute, in his opinion. Buddhist festival markets form an important network of exchanges binding the Intha and other groups, as do the complimentary planting of crops on well-watered soils and the rearing of cattle, important for ploughing, on drier slopes.

The final two sections contain articles on linguistic and bibliographic topics. These are followed by a bibliography of Denise Bernot's works, a bibliography of works on Burma, 1985-98, and abstracts of the articles in the book. Unfortunately the abstracts of the French articles are in French alone (and in English alone for the English articles).

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### **The Philippines**

*Clash of Spirits: The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island.*

By FILOMENO V. AGUILAR, JR.

Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998. pp. xiii, 313. Bibliography, Index.

Filomeno Aguilar's complex and imaginative book seeks to break new ground in the interpretation of Philippine history and society through an examination of the sugar production dominated society of Negros Occidental province. In his study, Aguilar builds on the earlier works of a number of historians and anthropologists and deepens his text with gleanings from extensive archival research and insights gained from talking to a number of the province's residents, poor and rich alike. His primary objective is to transcend the 'conventional understanding' of Negros and the Philippines which, he claims, sees the country's society and history as 'unchanging', a view he labels 'ossified' (p. 4). Aguilar argues that the native perception of the changes that Philippine society was going through will better illustrate the rationale of Philippine history and society than previous works (p. 7). The result of Aguilar's effort is a unique interpretation of Negrenses society and history that has implications for the broader Philippine experience. To a significant degree the author succeeds in his task, although his interpretation is flawed by its more extreme arguments and conclusions.

Central to his interpretation is the concept of *dungan* or 'power', which transcends superficial notions of power in their usual economic, military or political senses, and includes notions of

spiritual and magical strength or dominance. Throughout Aguilar's narrative the principle theme is that of a dialectical struggle between the *dungan* of historical actors so that the *dungan* of the early missionary friars is stronger than that of the local rulers; the *dungan* of the later merchant capitalists becomes superior to that of the nineteenth-century Spaniards; and finally, the *dungan* of Negros' Chinese mestizos emerges triumphant over Europeans and American planter competitors. It is the perception of strong *dungan* that is manifest in the successful gambler, and it is the *dungan* and the gift-giving of the successful gambler/*haciendado* that cements the relationship between the hacienda owner and his workers. It is this strong *dungan* that the sugar elite use against both Spanish and American colonisers to achieve autonomy within the colonial context.

Aguilar begins his narrative and introduces his interpretative framework by examining the broad contours of Philippine colonial history starting with the arrival of the missionary friars and moving through time to the establishment of the sugar economy in Negros in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the consequent rise of 'Mestizo Power'. It is not until the final chapter that the full impact of the American colonial period is discussed though the interpretative pattern is already so well laid that the era can be analysed quickly. What should be noted, is that despite his archival research and detailed footnotes, Aguilar does not add appreciably to our knowledge either of the sugar industry or of historical events as they played out in Negros. Rather, by placing the industry's development and major events in Negros' history within his alternative interpretative framework, Aguilar's description of figures such as Juan Araneta or stories of the Negrenses' plunder of the Philippine National Bank take on new meanings. This is the value of his work.

All this being said, there are some problems with Aguilar's cultural interpretation when his analysis overreaches his data. An early and important example is his interpretation of the 1849 Protestant marriage of the merchant capitalist George Sturgis to Josefina Borrás. Aguilar describes the marriage and its symbolic meaning within his *dungan* interpretative framework and makes frequent references to the Sturgis wedding in subsequent interpretative portions of the book (pp. 25-6, 61-2, 159 and 187), which further highlights the wedding's importance. To Aguilar the wedding, held in defiance of the friars, 'represented a pivotal juncture in the capitalist penetration of the Spanish Philippines' and increased native cooperation with the new capitalist economy (pp. 25-6). However, Aguilar's interpretation is based on an account that appeared in 1925 long after the event, which opens the quotation about the wedding to question. As well, no economic data is presented to support Aguilar's assertion that the wedding had an impact on native elite economic behaviour and, in fact, foreign merchant houses were already well established by the time of the wedding. And finally, the ceremony was not held on land where the friar's *dungan* power was located, but in Manila Bay on the deck of a British warship. A more reasonable interpretation of the circumstances of the wedding is that friar *dungan* was not seriously challenged by merchant capitalism but, rather, by the military weaponry of a British naval vessel where Sturgis and his bride sought sanctuary.

There are other instances where the errant actions of a single friar are suggested as being more the rule than the exception (pp. 139-40), and where the depredations of Babaylan religious followers are said to be active challenges to Spanish dominance, when, in fact, they were defensive in nature as the area of Spanish control reached deeper and deeper into the former safe havens of folk religious followers (contrast pp. 165-70 with pp. 157-8). Unfortunately, Aguilar's interpretations sometimes drift towards apologetics for what he sees as Filipino shortcomings, a sort of literature of victimisation, in which responsibility is avoided. For example, Aguilar asserts that modern Filipinos prefer form over substance and posits a specious anti-Sinitic argument that this alleged characteristic is the fault of Chinese *mestizos*.

They [the Chinese mestizos] became experts at the learned imitation of religion, language (Spanish and the vernaculars), mode of dress, and other aspects they found desirable - thus fostering the modern Filipino penchant for the copying of form, thinking it equivalent to substance.' (p. 60)

Elsewhere, Aguilar claims that Jacob Gould Schurman, who advocated Filipino self-government in 1902, really articulated 'a policy that may be designated as "racist corporatism"' and he then attempts to hold Schurman and his policies responsible for Filipino elite gun-wielding violence that occurred decades later (p. 191).

Ultimately, Aguilar's *dungan* based interpretation of Philippine society does not introduce a native perspective that is any less 'ossified' than the 'conventional understandings' he criticises. Nowhere in this study is there an indication of how genuine social change might occur. Rather, the complexities of Philippine society and history are reduced to a contestation between power wielders and aspirants and his analysis even locates Ferdinand Marcos' rapacious exploitation of the Philippines (p. 203) as little more than another manifestation of this timeless *dungan* Filipino characteristic.

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*The Philippine War, 1899-1902*

By BRIAN McALLISTER LINN.

Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000. Pp. xiv, 427. Maps, Photographs, Index.

Through the prism of Filipino nationalist and American revisionist historiography, the Philippine War has been viewed as a moral rather than a real historical problem defined by the simplistic syllogism 'since imperialism was bad and national self-determination is good then what ought to be true must be true'. According to this view, American imperialists designed and executed a strategy to conquer the Philippines through the employment of naked military aggression twined with a consistent, protracted and racist pacification programme. Turn the archipelago 'into a howling wilderness' and 'educate 'em with the Krag' became the guiding principles. American imperialism subverted the natural evolution of the Philippines, thus exacerbating ethnic, religious and class divisions and retarding post-colonial political and economic development. No unreconstructed imperialist, Linn argues the Philippine War 'was a far more complex and challenging phenomenon than either of these superficial interpretations acknowledge' (p. 328).

The present work represents an expansion of the author's highly praised *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (1989). In his first book, Linn assessed counterinsurgency operations by examining four regions in Luzon. *The Philippine War* studies the war in its entirety. Divided into halves the first eight chapters cover conventional operations in Luzon and their extension in the Visayas in 1899; the final six chapters explain American successes in conducting guerrilla warfare and implementing pacification campaigns within selected regions in 1900-2.

A narrative military history, the book rotates around two fundamental themes. Linn systematically examines the performance of the US Army in conventional and counterinsurgency operations as well as in its competence in civic actions and the pacification programme. The book also studies the complexities of Filipino resistance to foreign control. Simply expressed: did the Americans win the war or did the Filipino revolutionaries lose it? Linn concluded the truth rests

somewhere in the middle — a combination of Filipino political and military miscalculations and US military and naval effectiveness.

Linn argues American involvement in the Philippines was both opportunistic and pragmatic as well as accidental and incremental. Manila represented a bargaining chip in American efforts to lever Spain out of the Caribbean and win access to trade in Asia. 'As the consequences of their actions unfolded', the McKinley administration and commanders on the ground 'expanded their horizons from Manila to Luzon, and then the entire archipelago, but each time they were following less a premeditated course than seeking to deal with an immediate crisis. Each decision, in turn, committed them further' (p. 5).

Even though war with the United States did not serve nationalist leader Emilio Aguinaldo's interests he sought a military solution to buttress his flagging political authority over his fractious confederates. Aguinaldo simultaneously created a European-style standing army to wage manoeuvre warfare in Luzon while preparing to conduct a decentralised guerrilla war in the provinces. Lacking any direction from Washington, the American command reacted to Aguinaldo's strategic initiatives. Confronted by the dual thrust of Aguinaldo's strategy, Major General Elwell Otis reciprocated by fighting positional operations together with initiating McKinley's 'benevolent assimilation' programme within the expanding territories under US control. Through the end of 1899, the American strategy of denial succeeded in defeating the Army of Liberation in Luzon, undermining the legitimacy to the Filipino declaration of independence and disrupting the formation of a central government. With his conventional forces smashed and isolated in Luzon by a tightening US Navy blockade – prevented from importing foreign arms and shifting reinforcements or exercising any real control over subordinates in the provinces – Aguinaldo belatedly resorted to irregular warfare. In Linn's view, Aguinaldo erred first in provoking hostilities and then waiting too long to shift to irregular warfare. His final error evolved from the internal contradiction of reverting to a protracted guerrilla strategy of attrition predicated on a short-term gamble that McKinley would lose the 1900 election. While the insurrectionists adapted easily to guerrilla operations, the changed nature of the struggle weakened even further Aguinaldo's little more than titular political authority.

The advent of guerrilla warfare compelled the US Army to occupy large portions of the archipelago. The war 'became a series of regional struggles, bewildering in their complexity' (p. 185). Guerrilla warfare also necessitated a corresponding alteration in American strategic priorities. 'Benevolent assimilation', focusing on a number of progressivist civil actions and social reform programmes, remained a consistent thread in US policy. The US Army began construction of a modern infrastructure, improved health and sanitation, built and staffed schools and provided the first genuine law and order experienced in the Philippines in decades. This 'policy of attraction' offered a number of rewards for collaborationists – municipal offices and commercial opportunities for the *principales* and peace and security for the peasantry. Unable to move from their home areas but too weak to recover territories under American occupation, the insurgent leadership, refusing to countenance land redistribution, instead resorted to terror tactics – extortion, forced labour, and impressed military service – to continue the unequal struggle. Their actions only served to alienate potential support and encourage indigenous resistance. According to Linn, the majority of Filipinos never supported the insurgents. The stick of 'chastisement' complemented the carrot of 'attraction'. Circumspect in granting Major General Arthur MacArthur too much credit for hastening the end of the guerrilla war, the author concedes the American commander 'deserves credit for recognizing that Otis's programme placed too much emphasis on civic action and not enough on coercion' (pp. 326-7). After McKinley's re-election, the army directed its counterinsurgency efforts against the guerrilla 'shadow' governments and rebel

sympathisers in 'friendly' local administrations. The bigger stick policy bore immediate results – a number of insurrectionist leaders surrendered in the first months of 1901, climaxing with Aguinaldo's capture in April. In the final analysis, the nationalist movement failed because Aguinaldo's assorted governments really only represented the small *principale* oligarchy; its only substantial support base rested in the Tagalog-speaking regions of south and central Luzon. The combined application of 'attraction' and 'chastisement' drove a decisive wedge between the nationalist leadership and its never very substantial geographic and popular base.

The cycle of violence spiralled in the last months of the war as the US Army escalated its punitive measures and the Filipino resistance resorted increasingly to terrorism. The last campaigns in Samar and Batangas produced the most notorious atrocities of the nasty little war. Linn laments the 'water cure', the Balangiga Massacre and the Waller Affair 'are now received as typifying the entire war'.

Linn sets himself two essential tasks. First, he attempts to provide an authoritative narrative of the war in the Philippines based upon exhaustive archival sources. Because the Philippine War stands as the most successful counterinsurgency ever conducted by the United States, Linn maintains the conflict should serve as 'the logical starting point for the systematic examination of military intervention, civic action, and pacification operations' (p. 328). Second, the author seeks to redress the last 30 years of revisionist and nationalist myth-making marked by present-minded and politically correct judgements on American involvement in the Philippines. On both scores, *The Philippines War* more than fulfils its mandate.

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*Closer than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy*

By ALFRED W. MCCOY

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. Pp. xx, 425. Photographs, Notes, Index.

This book, at first glance, seems anomalous. Academic interest in 'men on horseback' has shifted from military politics, authoritarianism and dictatorship to social movements and civil society, which thrive in conditions of (re)-democratisation. Read more closely, however, Alfred W. McCoy's latest book is actually a path-breaking piece, for it is not only a comparative examination of two 'classes' of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), but also a story of state formation and the kind of coercive state agency that emerged in post-colonial Philippines.

McCoy highlights the differences between the Classes of 1940 and 1971 in terms of how military socialisation and their soldiering experiences affected their relationship with the Philippine state. Officers who valued and defended the honour, integrity and professionalism of the military dominated the Class of 1940, the first batch to complete the brutal four-year training at the PMA. This ethos helped preserve 'class solidarity' as that class tried to cope with the degeneration of Philippine politics and the constitutional state. Yet it was not strong enough to protect itself from Ferdinand Marcos, who broke down its solidarity by co-opting some members, marginalising others and, as dictator, imprisoning leading officers who opposed him. The class retired with its vaunted unity dissipated by division within its ranks. All that remained was its resilient belief in constitutionalism and a parallel distaste for military intervention in politics, a sentiment that Filipino *Realpolitik* had consigned to a mere yearning. It was no surprise then that the Class of 1940 supported the Aquino presidency, seeing in it the opportunity to once more depoliticise the military.

The Class of 1971 was its antipode. Going through the same brutal training as its elders, its

subsequent experience was quite different. Fresh from the academy, these young lieutenants were thrown into battle against formidable armed threats against Marcos – the separatist Moro National Liberation Front and the revolutionary Communist Party of the Philippines. Unlike the Class of 1940s engagement with its own communist insurgency in the 1950s, the Class of 1971 fought its internal wars and tortured and killed its opponents (the accounts of torture in the book are appalling) not as an instrument of the state, but as a self-styled partner of the state. From Class of 1971 emerged the first Filipino ‘men on horsebacks’, who, like their Thai, Indonesian and Argentine counterparts, symbolised a shift in state development from a decentralised, election-based, patronage system to a centralised, individual-dominated, repressive order.

The coup against Marcos in 1986 by members of the Class of 1971 was thus not part of a multifaceted struggle for democracy, as it has often been regarded. It was a not unexpected move by a faction of the ruling elite to grab power once the dictator had lost control. Unfortunately for the Class of 1971, its coup failed and its reputation was saved – ironically – by the anti-Marcos movement, the same force that it and its former boss had tried to destroy. The subsequent coups against Corazon Aquino were attempts to accomplish what it was unable to complete in 1986 – to become the new rulers of the post-Marcos state. These, fortunately, also ended in failure.

This book’s other value is its view of state formation as a gendered process. *Closer than Brothers* is the first study of post-colonial Filipino masculinity and its relationship to Philippine politics. In the PMA, Filipino masculinity was the starting point of military socialisation as cadets were trained to become the male protectors of the *Inang Bayan* (Mother-land). McCoy successfully maintains this link between gender and story throughout the text and therefore avoids the pitfalls of post-modernist studies on the military that tend to be excessively theoretical with very thin empirical grounding.

One understands that the author had to work within page limits imposed by the publisher, and this has led to some imbalance in the narrative. McCoy does not allot equal space to the two class’s experience with domestic insurgencies, in the latter case proceeding directly to accounts of torture, mutiny and coups that made the Class of 1971 infamous. This creates some unevenness in the comparison of the two classes.

One likewise recognises that as a book on manhood, the focus will be on men. However, I think the use of masculinity studies as a theoretical underpinning would have been enriched with a somewhat expanded treatment of the women these officers married or had relations with. It has been common knowledge that officers of the Class of 1940, and those immediately following, sought spouses with talents similar to those of their husbands. The military did background checks on these women, and acted as matchmaker to ensure that they would complement the professionalism of their husbands. These spouses were college educated and, while not allowed to work by a macho military culture, were not lacking the ability to make a mark on society. This mutual respect and professionalism did not last. The military’s descent into *cacique* politics was mirrored in its relations with women, both in the Class of 1971’s notoriety in keeping mistresses and second families, and in its torture of female political detainees.

These observations however must not distract readers from the book’s primary contribution to military studies. The book helps the Philippines ‘catch up’ with Indonesian and Thai scholarship of the past forty years. There is more. As an undergraduate at the University of the Philippines, I once listened to Professor McCoy explain how the Marcos cronies’ takeover of the sugar industry brought about massive poverty on Negros Island. It is refreshing to know that 20 years later, he is still very much in his elements – exposing the malevolence of those who abuse power in the Philippines. For this reason alone, I am most appreciative of his extremely readable work.

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**Vietnam***Ho Chi Minh*

By PIERRE BROCHEUX

Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000. Pp. 235. Bibliography, Index, Notes. (In French)

This new biography of Ho Chi Minh is the latest in a series of biographical studies produced by a publishing group in France called *Références/Facettes*. The stated objective of the series is to depart from the traditional narrative approach to biographical writing, and to focus instead on the public image of the subject, as well as to single out a number of salient issues that define the character and the lifework of that individual. In such a way, the organisers of the series hope to throw fresh light on what may otherwise be a familiar topic.

The Vietnamese revolutionary Ho Chi Minh appears to be an ideal case study for such a project. During his lifetime, Ho was a highly controversial figure, praised by some as an Asian sage, reviled by others as a Machiavellian agent of the feared Comintern. In the three decades since his death, the dispute over his legacy has by no means abated, and even today it inspires widespread and sometimes acrimonious disagreement, both within Vietnam and abroad.

If the public image of Ho Chi Minh has often appeared to mask reality, this was a phenomenon that was deliberately promoted by Ho himself. Notoriously reticent about his own life, he was famously dexterous in using deceptive tactics in order to disguise his broader objectives. The debate over his motives began in the 1920s, when he emerged in Paris (under the pseudonym Nguyen Ai Quoc, or 'Nguyen the Patriot') as an enthusiastic advocate of Vietnamese independence and the dismantling of the French colonial regime in Indochina. Shortly after, however, he became a founding member of the French Communist Party and served for two decades as one of the primary agents of international communism in Asia. Even after he was named president of a new Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the fall of 1945, he persisted for many years in denying his long years of service to the cause of worldwide revolution, preferring instead to cloak himself in the benign image of the avuncular 'Uncle Ho' beloved to millions of Vietnamese children.

French scholar Pierre Brocheux is well qualified to undertake this study. A senior lecturer at the University of Paris, he has written widely on various aspects of modern Vietnam, and is intimately familiar with the historical sources relevant to the Vietnamese revolution, including the voluminous colonial archives at Aix-en-Provence, in southern France. He is conversant in several languages, and has earned the respect of colleagues in the field for his careful scholarship and his quest for historical objectivity. These qualities are prominently in evidence in the study under review here.

In line with the guidelines established for the series, the author devotes several opening chapters to an investigation of the public image of Ho Chi Minh in the eyes of his contemporaries, as well as of succeeding generations. He also surveys the biographical literature, including the three autobiographical pieces written by Ho Chi Minh himself that were published in Hanoi under assumed names. Almost all such sources, as Brocheux points out, are highly partisan in flavour (some critical and some hagiographic), and it therefore falls to his charge to locate the real man underneath.

In Part II, the author turns to the substantive events of Ho Chi Minh's life, from his childhood and early maturity, through his long career as an anti-colonialist leader and revolutionary, and concluding with his achievements as president of the DRV, as well as a leading figure in the socialist camp. Throughout, the author is careful to avoid being swayed either by Ho's critics or by his acolytes, in a careful effort to produce a balanced assessment of a highly complex personality. He concludes that whereas Ho was probably motivated by sincerely humanitarian considerations, he

was implacable towards his adversaries and fully capable of sacrificing the lives of thousands of his compatriots on the altar of his chosen cause. Although pragmatic in his selection of tactics, he nonetheless possessed a utopian streak that led him – apparently to the end of his life – to overlook the manifold weaknesses of Marxism-Leninism. Unassuming in his personal demeanour, he yet connived in the creation of his public image and was fully convinced that human beings required firm leadership from ‘superior men’ such as himself.

I have some reservations about the structural model adopted for this biographical series. The thematic approach can be daunting for the reader who is not already intimately acquainted with the life of the subject. The fact is, even well informed individuals today often have only a vague idea of Ho Chi Minh and his role in the history of our era. By the same token, the emphasis placed by the organizers on the subject’s public image - while clearly in tune with current trends in the academic world - can sometimes overshadow the more crucial task of seeking an understanding of the subject’s actual achievements and inner character.

For the most part, Brocheux manages to avoid falling into this trap, although his treatment of Ho Chi Minh’s childhood experience and revolutionary career is perhaps too brief and cursory to support some of his broader conclusions about his character and inner motivations. To give just one example, the final section dealing with the possible influence of Confucian values on Ho Chi Minh’s worldview, while quite interesting, is highly speculative and lacking in any concrete evidence. Still, in the aggregate the author has provided us with an honest and balanced portrait of one of the most complex and influential individuals of the twentieth century. For that achievement, all those who seek a deeper understanding of the Vietnamese revolution and its impact on our era should be duly grateful.

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