

## Book Reviews

### Asia

*Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Destruction of the Tropical World*

By RICHARD TUCKER

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. Pp xiii. 551. Appendix, Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

Richard Tucker explores how the pull of markets resulted in rampant destruction of natural tropical ecosystems. In a world greatly concerned about ecological security, the book is highly topical; Tucker's scholarly analysis is a compelling read. Looking mainly at the period from the 1890s till the 1960s, he sheds light on American demand for tropical products as a principal underlying cause of resource destruction as investors cleared land to produce for the market; how America deepened the destructive ecological footprints left by Europe's 500-year domination of global trade; and how growing Japanese demand is following suit. His analysis lends weight to responsible consumption patterns as a factor in achieving sustainable development.

In this highly readable work, Tucker reveals what happened as American capital sought profits in the ruthless ways it knew best, including the exploitation of local elites' vested interests. He traces cause and effect through research that painstakingly knits together strands from history, economic and political power plays, chauvinism among powerful trading countries, globalisation and plain human greed.

The author is to be commended for successfully resisting the temptation to write an inflammatory book, replete with the apportioning of blame and condemnation of American and other imperialist capital. Instead he has presented a factual account, interpreted sensitively with a natural eye for human motives. The book should be obligatory reading for those in corporations, governments, international organisations, or donor agencies that seek environmentally responsible development policies and strategies.

In line with the journal's mandate, this review touches only lightly on the global scene (see box) so as to focus on Southeast Asia.

In Southeast Asia, Tucker reports on the impacts in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. In the Philippines, Americans started with sandalwood harvests from Negros Island forests for the China trade but the greatest impact came from farming (sugar, pineapples, tobacco, abaca) and timber exploitation yielding products with strong American demand. The Philippines temporarily became a leading sugar exporter, and in the 1950s export of forest products multiplied 15 times to a sixth of exports – and later declined to insignificance. By the 1960s a rise in pulp and paper capacity increased pressure on natural forests. By the 1970s, over 13 million acres of forest were treeless and squatters were moving in. Tucker considers the Philippines today 'probably the most ecologically degraded large country in the tropics'.

Starting with the coffee trade, American exporters eventually turned their attention to *Hevea* rubber, buying 70 per cent of Sumatra's production. The American motor industry had an insatiable demand for *Hevea* rubber, until synthetic substitutes emerged after 1950. After World War II, over 90 per cent of rubber came from tropical Asia (0.7 million tons each for Malaya and

Indonesia). However, direct American planting was dwarfed by smallholder cultivation that, by 1973, represented nearly 4.6 million acres of rubber on outer Indonesian islands, against only about 1.1 million acres on estates. In Malaysia, estates and smallholdings shared equally the 3.6 million acres of forest cleared by the 1970s; although the market influence was predominantly American, production was initially British and later local. The British were simultaneously creating oil palm monocultures there.

Generic impacts of America's insatiable appetite:

- American investments brought some economic prosperity and modernisation to the tropical countries, even if on an enclave basis;
- The 'insatiable appetite' of American markets was the leading fundamental cause of tropical resource destruction;
- Both rich and poor contributed to ecological degradation but the rich were by far the more destructive.
- Americans capitalised on the vested interests of local oligarchies, dictators and other elites who dominated land ownership in the tropical countries to capture and exploit natural resources (in Asia, the Philippines is said to best exemplify this);
- Transport infrastructure and later chainsaws and heavy-duty equipment facilitated access for ecological transformation and land clearing;
- In general, damage took the form of:
  - biological simplification by displacing native ecosystems with monoculture plantations;
  - collateral damage to ecosystems through: (a) cultivation of newly accessible lands by indigenous populations displaced by development; (b) fuelwood harvesting, e.g. for sugar refining – a cartload of sugar required half a cartload of firewood.

In the Pacific, Tucker reviews Hawaii as an extreme case: harvesting whales and sandalwood till near extinction; flooding the island with alien humans, plants (sugar cane and pineapples), and animal species (goats, cattle), so bringing new diseases, and displacing natural ecosystems; transforming dry areas through excess irrigation; polluting water with excess agro-chemicals; early decimation by alien diseases of the indigenous human population.

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### Southeast Asia

*O roteiro das cousas do Achem de D. João Ribeiro Gaio: um olhar português sobre o norte de Samatra em finais do século XVI*

Critical edition and introduction by JORGE M. DOS SANTOS ALVES and PIERRE-YVES MANGUIN. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997. Pp. 112. Maps, Tables, Photographs, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography.

Primary sources on sixteenth-century Aceh and the ports along the northwestern coast of Sumatra do not abound. One of the more important and longer pieces is the *Roteiro das cousas do Achem* by D. João Ribeiro Gaio, who served as the bishop of Portuguese-Melaka between 1578 and 1601. He is generally known to have advocated a more active policy towards Aceh, including a possible military move against that polity. In all likelihood the principal purpose of the *Roteiro* was to inform Goa and Portugal about the situation in and around Aceh and to gain support for an invasion project. The text was partly based on information furnished by a certain Diogo Gil whose biography is unknown, with the exception of the fact that he had spent several years *in situ* as a captive. The word *roteiro* in the title, it may be added, normally occurs in connection with nautical works, so-called 'rutters'; this does not apply to the present text, which is almost void of nautical data, sailing instructions and the like.

There are three different manuscript versions of the *Roteiro*, which, in Jorge M. Dos Santos Alves's and Pierre-Yves Manguin's modern edition, counts about 50 pages. All three versions were carefully analysed and compared by the editors. (a) The most recent version, conserved in the Museo Naval de Madrid, was prepared by Martín Fernández de Navarrete in 1792. (b) A second version is based on a poorly edited text available in the Service Historique de la Marine in Vincennes. The Vincennes manuscript dates from 1588 and is based on an earlier text that is now lost. (c) The third extant copy is a Spanish translation of another lost Portuguese version. The Spanish translation, also called the Manila version, was acquired by Charles Ralph Boxer in 1947. According to Alves and Manguin its lost Portuguese predecessor draws itself on the predecessor of the Vincennes text and that predecessor, in turn, rests on the lost original version of 1584. The text presented in Alves' and Manguin's edition generally follows the readings in versions (b) and (c). It features copious notes and philological explanations.

The importance of the *Roteiro* lies in the fact that it provides both geographical and military details not found in other contemporary works. This includes a number of special toponyms that the editors tabulate in the appendix. Unfortunately some names cannot be identified and will still need to be reconsidered in the future. The editors also present three near-to-contemporary maps showing Aceh and its vicinity. Two pieces are by Manuel Godinho de Erédia, who appears to have been less well informed on northwestern Sumatra than one is usually inclined to think. The weakness of Erédia's work is skilfully demonstrated in the introduction, which takes up about half of the book. More maps, by Pedro Barreto de Rezende and others, are listed in another conveniently arranged table.

By and large the introductory text provides a well-balanced account of the *Roteiro* placed within the context of its time. This may be said especially in regard to the many Iberian *conquista* projects proposed during the last decades of the sixteenth century. More work has now become available on these plans, one recent example being Manel Ollé's recently published *La invención de China. Percepciones y estrategias filipinas respecto a China durante el siglo XVI* (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 2000), which looks at the formulation of Spain's policy towards

China.

A key aspect of Aceh's military strength was its ability to raise a substantial number of troops within a short period of time. This can be related to demographic factors. According to the editors, late sixteenth-century Aceh hosted a total population of *circa* 120,000. Furthermore, they believe that some 40,000 people in all were then living along the stretch of coast between Aru and Aceh. There are good reasons for such assumptions, but it is equally true that Aceh probably had no durable houses and a primitive infrastructure as compared to many ports in other parts of Asia. Contemporary demographic estimates, therefore, may not be very reliable. One similar case is Melaka, the size and importance of which, I would think, was often exaggerated, particularly in the early sixteenth century, mainly to attract money and men from Goa to Southeast Asia and the Far East. In the times of Ribeiro Gaió various ideas of how to deal with Spanish interests in the area and how to gain control over rivals competing with one another, and the advocates of these contending policy options would of course also try their best to reap as many benefits as possible from the *Estado da Índia*. Thus, whether in purely numerical terms Aceh was as large and powerful as one might think after reading the *Roteiro*, remains a matter of debate. Needless to say, the editors are conscious of these problems and careful enough not to accept demographic figures uncritically.

Another facet of Aceh is its important position in Asian maritime trade, especially in connection with Gujarat, the Near East and the Islamic ports of the Malay world. The *Roteiro* does not provide very many details on these issues – as was said, it is essentially interested in military matters – but the last two chapters do at least sketch a rudimentary picture of the trading scenario extending from Cape Comorin to Japan. There is also ample information on the immediate hinterland of Aceh and some of its economic activities. The trade in pepper, vital for many Sumatran ports, is also addressed. Informative elaborations on these and many related points of interest may be found in the recent monograph of Alves (*O domínio do norte de Samatra. A história dos sultanatos de Samudera-Pacém e de Achém, e das suas relações com os Portugueses [1500-1580]* [Lisbon: Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999]).

The rise of Aceh constitutes an important element in a complicated mosaic – the history of early modern maritime Asia. Without doubt, the publication of Bishop Ribeiro Gaió's account makes a useful contribution towards a better understanding of this theme. Therefore, one ought to be grateful to the editors/authors for having made available the text of the *Roteiro* in the form of a carefully prepared and beautifully printed modern monograph. This is an excellent example demonstrating the importance of Iberian-language materials without which historical research on that particular period of Southeast Asian history cannot be successfully accomplished.

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*An Identity Dilemma: A Comparative Study of Primary Education for Ethnic Chinese in the Context of National Identity and Nation-Building in Malaysia and Singapore*

By INGRID GLAD

Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998. Pp. 352. Illustrations, Appendices, Bibliography.

This book, based not only on wide range of materials but also on interviews with Chinese language teachers, describes and analyses textbooks on Chinese Language and Moral Education in Malaysia and Singapore. The 'dilemma' mentioned in the title, according to the author, arises between a pride in Chinese language and culture to be taught in Chinese schools and a common national identity to be developed in their respective countries. From this aspect, the author traces the educational policies of both Malaya (Malaysia) and Singapore through the first four chapters (on the contents page, the title of Chapter 3 is missing). These historical analyses, which are well arranged and based consistently on the assumed objectives, are in themselves useful for understanding these two countries. However, a more useful, invaluable, important and unique contribution of this book is its detailed analyses of the textbooks of both countries, and interviews with Chinese teachers, which appear in Chapters 6 and 7. 'Primary Education Today', the title of Chapter 5, as well as the appendices showing the contents of Chinese language and moral textbooks, are also quite valuable. They provide one of the few opportunities to access this kind of concrete information so far. The socio-political background that brought about the differences in both countries' educational policies is also clearly and pertinently analysed. Present primary Chinese educational systems, the Chinese national type school implemented since 1961 in Malaysia and the government-aided Special Assistance Plan (SAP) school as well as non-SAP schools implemented since 1978 in Singapore, are the main focus in this study.

According to Ingrid Glad, in general, 'The Malaysian and Singaporean textbooks showed similarities in their outward manifestations of a national identity, in the wish to present their countries as united and stable nations' (p. 243). But Malaysian textbooks tend to 'tone down the Chinese influence and flavour' (p. 188. similar point appears on pp. 154, 159, 228, 229, 230).

Of particular interest, Glad concludes that 'textbooks and the current teaching approach are hardly conducive to fostering the critical thinking, originality and creativity necessary to initiate ...an authentic, lively local identity', and nothing in her 'research has indicated that there are central values that are alien to the West, but somehow shared by all Asian nations' (p. 244). This second point is mentioned because both countries' governments stress the necessity of teaching Asian values to the pupils. To overcome the first defect, the author proposes to adopt stories written by local authors in the textbooks (pp. 189, 198, 199, 237). This reviewer also considers this an appropriate point of view as the Malayan (Malaysian/Singaporean) Chinese literature that reiterates 'real inter-ethnic friendship' (p. 189) already has an excellent heritage of works.

However, the author also presumes that Chinese identity, either ethnic or cultural, inevitably contravenes a national identity. Until the mid-1950s, most Chinese in Malaya paid allegiance to their ancestors' country, China. The Chinese language itself was called *guoyu* (national language) not only by themselves but also even by the Razak Report of 1956 (see p. 78). Nowadays, almost all Malaysian Chinese consider themselves Malaysians, pay allegiance to Malaysia and can speak *Bahasa Malaysia* (*guoyu* now). In addition, other Southeast Asian nations have allowed private Chinese-language education in recent years. This situation seems to show that the Chinese cultural identity can be compatible with the national identity.

Lastly, there are several places in the text where more rigorous editing would have helped the work. For example, an index would have made the book more accessible, and only a portion of the original Chinese names are shown in Chinese characters. In addition, Chinese education was not synchronic. It might have been quite interesting if the author had shown how different Confucianism was when taught in the local Chinese schools in the late Qing era, Republican era and after the Malayan (Singaporean) independence. Finally, there are several mistakes in factual material; for example, Tan Kah Kee's trip to China, which resulted in his inclination towards the Chinese Communist Party, was not in the mid-1940s (p. 67) but in 1940; the defeat of China by Japan was not in 1894 (p. 66) but in 1895; and Singapore did not gain full independence in 1959 as shown on p. 88, but internal autonomy. While not meaning to diminish the importance of this work, such errors could have been easily avoided.

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*Chinese Business Networks in South-East Asia: Contesting Cultural Explanations, Researching Entrepreneurship*

Edited by EDMUND TERRENCE GOMEZ and HSIN-HUANG MICHAEL HSIAO.  
Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001. Pp. 205. Tables, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

This six-chapter book is the first part of a larger project in search of a better understanding of 'what we actually mean by the term "Chinese business"' (p. xi). The volume's stated objective is 'to identify the key areas of research on Chinese business in each Southeast Asian country' (p. 4).

Chapter 1, by the two editors, provides a frontal challenge of prevalent assumptions about Chinese capital: its dominance in Southeast Asia and ethnicity-based networking powers and potential. The authors have two major complaints about commonsensical claims. First, 'many of the popular notions about the influence of Chinese capital in the region are fraught with misconceptions' (p. 3) because they fail to look further than the few most prominent individuals in each country. Second, 'there is still very limited research into the formation and development of even many of the largest companies owned by [the ethnic Chinese] community' (p. 4). Therefore, the authors question the validity of such notions as 'Chinese commonwealth', 'global tribes' and 'co-ethnic business networks'.

The alternative research agenda the editors promote is to broaden the scope of research by examining ethnic Chinese capital alongside the state and society. A focus on the state leads to inquiry into how the evolution of state-business relationships in general affects the behaviour of Chinese enterprises both within and across ethnic and nation-state boundaries. The authors argue that firm-level data on ownership and control patterns, sources of financing, etc., are essential for understanding how ethnic Chinese dominance of sectors of the economy of each country has been changing. As such, there is 'a need to contest essentialist arguments that culture, shared identities and value systems determine ethnic business activity and typify a universal form of "Chinese capital"' (p. 36). But how a focus on the society can aid that purpose is less clearly explained in the text, since it is also recognised that 'culture and ethnicity are social phenomena' (p. 36).

Chapters 2 through 5 present respective reports on Chinese enterprises in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. Each of these chapters, written by authors

based in the societies they deal with (with the exception of Jamie Mackie of the Australian National University, who writes about Thailand), closely follows the agenda the editors/project organisers set out in the introduction. Space does not allow a detailed summary of the points made therein. Out of these five chapters emerges a construction of a country-specific historical sociology of ethnic Chinese enterprise, challenging the notion of a pan-Southeast Asian universalism. Each chapter ends with a call for broadening the research agenda through conducting micro- (i.e., enterprise-specific, inter-ethnic differences), historical-institutional, and society/country-specific research. These chapters are fairly even in the quality of research and provide smooth reading.

Chapter 6 is a case study of the growth of Taiwanese business operations (mostly small and medium enterprises) in Southeast Asia since the late 1980s. The author (I-Chun Kung) makes a special contribution to the literature through presenting a detailed field research report on the operations of Taiwanese investors in Malaysia (the most popular destination for Taiwanese investment in the region). Situated in the broad context of the socio-economic changes within Taiwan since 1987 and the diplomatic moves the Taiwanese government made toward Southeast Asia in the 1990s, Chung establishes a credible case of the push factor being political-economic, rather than ethnic. Chung's interviews confirm that culture does play an important role. Still, what expedites cooperative business ventures between Chinese from Taiwan and Malaysia is not a common ethnic identity, but the economic fundamentals of Malaysia and its ties with the rest of the world market.

The book meets its goals well. It establishes a good case for moving away from a heavy if not exclusive reliance on culture as a variable to examine institutions in each Southeast Asian country. The key message the book generates is that it is not so much that the ethnic Chinese have been successful in networking themselves out of the norms in the societies they live and operate, as that they learned to adapt to the changing norms of their environments. Such findings have important implications for researching developments in Southeast Asian Chinese investment in mainland China, a topic the various chapters only touch upon, but which motivates an explosion of interest in the whole subject matter in the first place. The book also provides a very comprehensive bibliography of literature produced within Southeast Asia about ethnic Chinese businesses.

The editors and contributors have taken a solid step in diversifying research on phenomena that both fascinate and frustrate academic research and policy-making alike. The book qualifies as required reading for college students, especially post-graduate students, of Asian Studies and Asian Political Economy.

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*Precious Metals in Early Southeast Asia*

Edited by WILHELMINA H. KAL

Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1999. Pp. 111. Illustrations, Bibliography.

This collection of essays deserves praise as it contains an interesting variety of professional insights as well as timely produced preliminary results of ongoing research. The book contains fifteen brief articles (plus an introduction) targeted for an audience of professional art historians, historians, archaeologists and archaeometrists who are primarily interested in ancient Javanese gold. As indicated in the Introduction, this book was the result of a three-day seminar focusing on 'precious metals in early Southeast Asia' that was held in 1996 (organised by the National Museum of Jakarta and the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam), the successor of another seminar held in 1993. The Wonoboyo hoard, a tenth-century or earlier Javanese collection of predominantly gold artifacts (approximately 9,000 objects of which 6,336 are gold coins and *circa* 600 are silver coins) was the main subject of the 1996 seminar. The 456-piece Suvarnadwipa collection, a presumably more temporally eclectic collection (ranging from prehistoric to early modern times, although not necessarily more variable than the Wonoboyo hoard), was the main subject of the 1993 seminar. Research on these two collections, especially the Wonoboyo hoard, forms the main theme of the book.

Although it would be helpful to critique each chapter/article individually, it is not practical. Thus, the following comments refer to the book in general with the exception of some chapters which are highlighted to emphasize particularly high-quality work and/or insights, or erroneous and ambiguous information.

Obviously, the title is somewhat misleading. The book would be better titled *Old Javanese Gold* as most of the content addresses just that. However, that title has been taken (John N. Miksic, *Old Javanese Gold* [Singapore: Ideation, 1990]) and apparently on more than one occasion (evidently the results of the 1993 symposium 'were published in Bulletin 384 of the Royal Tropical Institute, entitled *Old Javanese Gold (4th–15th century): an archaeometrical approach*' [p. 9]). Nevertheless, Nancy Tingley's chapter, 'The Boxer Codex, sixteenth century Philippine chic', integrates the Philippines and Eastern Indonesia (that is Maluku, although the main focus remains the Philippines) through an interesting analysis of the sixteenth-century Spanish 'Boxer Codex'. Although the article is mostly descriptive, it does demonstrate the variety of media other than the artifacts themselves that can be used to help analyse objects as they were used in their social contexts. In fact, a number of authors throughout the book effectively use data sources such as historical linguistics, historical texts, oral history, knowledge of religious and social doctrines and rituals, ethnographic observations, statuary and temple reliefs, archaeological objects and context, as well as the objects themselves. This is one of the book's strong aspects. However, the effectiveness has widely varying degrees of accuracy and success.

For example, Wilhelmina Kal attempts to look beyond Java in the chapter entitled, 'Ethnographic Goldworking and Symbolism as Source for Knowledge of Classical Gold'. She sets out to discuss eastern Indonesia but quickly narrows to more recent ethnographic accounts of southeastern Indonesia. The antiquity of goldworking in this area probably does not precede the proto-historic era (perhaps not even the early colonial period) and the techniques were more than likely initially borrowed (i.e., diffused into the area and/or seriously altered during colonial times, although the techniques, symbolism and types of objects were likely quickly localised). The point being, is this particular ethnographic account of southeastern Maluku



representative of traditional goldworking, use and symbolism in 'early' eastern Southeast Asia in general? Probably not. And, although Kal seems to be quite aware of the problems with analogy regarding ethnography/ethnoarchaeology *vis-à-vis* archaeological assemblages, this particular article strays from the main theme of the book. I am also not quite clear where the introductory and subsequent sections are trying to lead the reader, and the 'ca 1500 BC...' (p. 46) date for Dongson drums in eastern Indonesia is clearly in error. This would place the Dongson objects found in eastern Indonesia in a temporal context at least 1,000 to 1,700 years earlier than the period in which they were actually manufactured.

I am also puzzled as to why many early historical accounts were not more extensively utilised (this being a problem with several articles in the book), although several are listed in the bibliography. The descriptions (or lack thereof) of gold and other precious metal objects, goldworking/metalworking, trans-shipments, use, exchange, ornamentation, symbolism, value, context (social and physical), and so on are a wealth of knowledge. For example, Tomé Pires (*The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, trans. Armano Cortesao [London: Hakluyt Society, 1944]) mentions gold in almost every geographic entry. When writing about Maluku, Antonio D. Galvao's *A Treatise on the Moluccas ca. 1544* (St. Louis: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1970) states, 'no metal is found in these islands... they say that in some of them gold has been found in such a small amount as to leave them nothing more than the nostalgia for it'. The index of F. Hirth and W. Rockhill's *Chu Ju-Kua: His works on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Entitled Chu-Fan-Chi* (Taipei: Cheng-Wen, 1967) lists 26 entries for the subject heading 'gold'. Additionally, some of the accounts mention items that are exchanged that may relate to gold or other precious metal processing and manufacture. This also means that areas outside of Java that have few or no hoards still have plenty of data to be tapped.

Although it is perhaps unfair to Kal to highlight some of the book's shortcomings (Kal's last section on symbolism is interesting and valuable), it is important to emphasise the fact that further research can and needs to be conducted and that some of the articles fall short of their authors' scholarly potential.

For instance, I am a little confused after reading Timbul Haryono's chapter entitled 'Hierarchy of Precious Metal in Ancient Java: its Implications for Javanese Goldworking'. The author attempts to incorporate examples and data from all over Southeast Asia but I am not sure whether or not the content relates to the title and what exactly the main points are, although it is clearly evident that a professional understanding is there.

The main complaints besides those already mentioned are as follows. The book would be more true to its title if indeed areas outside of Java were given more research and ink. This may reflect personal bias, however. Precious metals, at least in early Southeast Asia, should include iron, tin, copper and bronze, and even metals such as mercury and 'tectites' (meteorites important for *kris* making). All of these metals at one time or another were certainly precious to early Southeast Asians, and in different ways depending on social/ethnic group affiliation, class, context, use and association with magic, power and mythical beings. However, expanding the book to include research into these other metals can quickly turn a short book into a multiple-volume encyclopaedia.

It also would be helpful to have more anthropological, archaeological and interpretive content. Most articles are primarily descriptive and/or procedural. This is useful, but more interpretation and even speculation would strengthen the overall content. The introduction should describe the two collections with which the content of the book is mostly concerned. In

addition, some explanation of precious metallurgy and a shift of some of the latter descriptive and procedural articles to the front of the book may help a reader with less knowledge of the subject matter.

On the positive side, chapters that are particularly worthy are John Miksic's, 'Clustered Gold Finds: Hoards or Sub-Assemblages?', Cecilia Levin's 'Classical Javanese Gold Reflects Some New Light on the Ramayana', Joseph Riederer's 'Analysis of Gold Objects', and Sri Soejatmi Satari's 'Modesty Plates in the Hindu Buddhist Period: Functional Use or More Ornament'. Miksic, after all, wrote the book on old Javanese gold and there is no need to praise his knowledge here. But, his warnings, advice and archaeological insights bring a different and complementary dimension that needs to be incorporated more thoroughly. Levin wonderfully discusses the Wonoboyo Ramayana bowl and how interpretations can inform about ancient Javanese culture, elucidating ancient ideal values and cultural 'heroes/archetypes'. Riederer mentions (p. 65) that 'my interest might or might not be of relevance here....' On the contrary, Riederer's insights, knowledge of archaeometrical and composition methods, and particularly his eight or so main points at the end of the article are extremely relevant and useful. Sri Soejatmi Satari also provides a richly descriptive article that concludes with two very useful interpretive paragraphs (I will not give them away here). I hope to see more of this in the future. Finally, the book contains some very fine photographs in colour and black-and-white (more would be useful, but it is costly).

Overall, the book is far more holistic than originally expected. It is a good contribution to the professional and research arenas. Any shortcomings are likely more related to funding, time restraints and difficulties of orchestrating an international crowd rather than any lack of professionalism. The book is short (111 pages) and that sort of brevity necessarily precludes detailed description, interpretation and discussion. It is hoped that all of the chapters will eventually be expanded in larger works as each contribution has significant potential. The subject matter is indeed alluring. But, as several authors highlight, it is not just the monetary and romantic value that we place on antique gold artifacts that is interesting, it is what the artifacts, (sub-)assemblages and the archaeological context can disclose about the people who manufactured and used these items that is truly fascinating.

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*Portugueses e Malaios. Malaca e os sultanatos de Johor e Achém, 1575-1619*

By PAULO JORGE DE SOUSA PINTO

Lisbon: Sociedade Histórica de Independência de Portugal, 1997. Pp. 334. Bibliography, Maps, Charts.

This book is one of the very few monographs exclusively focusing on Portugal's presence in one particular region of Asia during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It grew out of the author's dissertation and may be read together with two other recent accounts, namely Jorge M. dos Santos Alves' *O domínio do norte de Samatra ...* (Lisbon: Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999) and Manuel Lobato's *Política e comércio dos Portugueses na Insulíndia. Malaca e as Molucas de 1575 a 1605* (Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1999). Both of these texts, along with Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto's own work, provide excellent coverage of Portuguese activities in early modern Southeast Asia, thereby serving as

valuable complements to the many English and Dutch studies of that region. Sousa Pinto, it should perhaps be added here, makes excellent use of Iberian, French, Italian and English materials. Dutch archival sources were not consulted by him, but since he does not really go beyond the second decade of the seventeenth century, he does remarkably well without them, which I find acceptable.

The preface to his monograph, by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, draws attention to some early standard works on Southeast Asia, including the famous monograph by M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs ( *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962]). Sousa Pinto echoes certain trends and views found in these publications, for example on the possible reasons for the *Estado da Índia*'s decline. By and large, however, his study is an independent and fresh approach that offers new ideas and new results.

Portuguese Melaka is in the centre of the author's interest. The first chapter looks at basic conditions of trade and Melaka's economic situation. This is seen against the background of Melaka's competitors, especially Aceh and Johor. Institutional changes, in particular, are analysed at some length. Some findings – for example on the different *viagens* – go back to earlier research by Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz. Other interesting observations concern the so-called captaincies. Regarding the flow of individual commodities, not very much can be said, due to the nature of the sources. A further aspect touched upon is the 'gravitational' shift within the *Estado* – from South Asia to the Far East. This development was in part related to the growth of the Japanese and Chinese markets and the flourishing trade based on Macao. Perhaps a few more paragraphs on the Far Eastern scenario and the Macao–Melaka connection might have been called for.

Dutch activities, it is clear, had a crippling effect on Portuguese Melaka, especially after the VOC had learned how to ally itself with some of the local Malay lords in the Straits region. One of the early – and very spectacular – moves was the seizure of the *Santa Catarina*. Further research, combining insights derived from Portuguese and Dutch data, is now going on in Singapore and will shed new light on this affair and its broader implications. Another feature of the first chapter is that it also looks at 'less prominent' regions. Perak and Bantem are just two examples. One wishes that more extensive research would be conducted on these places that would also evaluate their role within the Portuguese trading system, or, more generally, their position in late sixteenth-century Portuguese historiography.

The second chapter presents the military and political scenario. *Conquista* projects, frequently encountered towards the end of the sixteenth century, changing attitudes *vis-à-vis* the Malay world, as well as some 'technical' issues like the maintenance of ships are examined in greater detail. There were also plans to set up fortresses in the region. This included projects in Johor, the Straits of Singapore and Bangka, but most plans were never executed, due to economic restraints and other adverse factors. Still, whether the *Estado da Índia*'s administration was really as inefficient as Sousa Pinto seems to think remains a matter of debate. Many documents, it is true, address financial abuses and other undesired developments, but may it not have been 'fashionable' then, at least in some cases, to file complaints for the simple purpose of attracting more support from Goa and Lisbon? Such a hypothesis would of course require further proof.

Furthermore, Sousa Pinto reminds us that certain individuals, such as D. Ribeiro Gaio, bishop of Melaka, were unusual personalities in the sense that they tried to provide new

incentives for the *Estado's* recovery and future growth. Indeed, the clergy undertook many efforts to improve Portugal's profile in the East. This was in part related to intra-Iberian rivalries that, towards the end of the sixteenth century, had grown to a geo-strategic 'game' of global dimensions. In my understanding, China and Japan constituted one (if not the) core region in that game. If so, then Southeast Asia acted as 'adjunct' to a highly complex scenario, and Melaka's struggle against its rivals may then be seen as one of its subordinated facets.

The third chapter is devoted to the geopolitical situation in the Straits region. The period between 1587 and 1603/4 was particularly fortunate for the Portuguese because Aceh and Johor were at odds with each other. Several events, including the arrival of the Dutch competitors, brought an end to this state of affairs. Henceforth Melaka found itself in a precarious situation. There then followed a short period where Spain and Portugal harboured plans to strike out against the VOC in a joint naval operation, but none of this came to a fruitful end.

The next chapter highlights essential characteristics of Malay society and urban life in Melaka around 1600. One interesting observation pertains to the religious sphere. In Southeast Asia, it is argued, Christianity and Islam were not opposed to each other as two gigantic and irreconcilable blocks. On the contrary, there was much tension within the Islamic camp and, now and then, certain Portuguese groups easily associated themselves with local power holders and merchants of influence. More generally, frequent religious dissent overshadowed diverging political interests, which in many a case was at the root of conflict and war. Further sections of this same chapter deal with Johor and Aceh. Jambi, Pahang, Kedah and other polities are also briefly discussed. Finally, some of J. Kathirithamby-Wells' ideas about the internal organisation and structure of the Malay sultanates are cast into doubt. One of the conclusions offered by Sousa Pinto is that the evolution of Aceh was, in some sense, diametrically opposed to that of Johor.

The fifth chapter moves to the 'micro' level, focussing on Melaka 'proper': its demography, the city's dependency on foreign food supplies, plans to improve agricultural output in the hinterland, the position of women in local society, the role of the Chinese and so forth. Essential features of the city's administration are also presented. This includes the offices of the *capitão-geral* and the *capitão da fortaleza*. Much space is again devoted to D. Ribeiro Gaio, whose biography would certainly merit a separate study. Further sections deal with the shifting functions of the *bendara* (*bendahara*) and the *tomungão* (*temenggong*). One *bendara*, D. Henrique, whose life is briefly outlined, was a very prominent and highly influential figure in the later part of the sixteenth century.

Unfortunately, there is no separate conclusion that might round off Sousa Pinto's findings. But readers are provided with two interesting annexes on genealogical questions related to the royal families of Johor and Aceh. This is followed by more than twenty transcripts of various Portuguese documents. The bibliography is finely organised and reliable. There are also some maps, including one that sketches the Singapore region along the lines of Manuel Godinho de Erédia.

The overall impression one gains of Sousa Pinto's book is definitively positive. The narration does not get bogged down in 'minor' concerns. It follows a broad perspective, either by presenting a synchronic view (often with a comparative dimension) or by choosing a diachronic approach, depending on the nature of each topic. It thus fills an important gap in our knowledge of both the history of the Malay sultanates at around 1600 and the history of Portugal's involvement in that region. To that extent it may be read as a continuation of

Thomaz' celebrated work on Melaka in the early and mid-sixteenth century. In conclusion, Sousa Pinto's study is destined to become a prized volume in the libraries of all those interested in the truly fascinating story of early-modern Southeast Asia.

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## Indonesia

*Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*

Edited by BENEDICT R. O'G. ANDERSON

Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2001. Pp. 247. Map, Tables.

Benedict Anderson opens his introduction to this volume with this bold statement: 'A seventy year old Indonesian woman or man today will have observed and/or directly experienced' (p. 9) a variety of incidents involving warfare, armed rebellion, social violence and state terrorism. Such a sweeping assertion immediately provokes one to seek to disprove it, to attempt a statistical and geographical analysis of the events listed in order to demonstrate the unlikelihood that all seventy-year-olds have experienced or observed such violence. However, upon reflection, Anderson's statement can be recognised as an important and powerful claim. If the terms he uses – 'observed' and 'directly experienced' – are viewed more broadly to include the possibility that violence can be experienced from afar, by way of narration, shared experience with a family member and friend, via mass communication technology – his point is perhaps uncontested. Amongst those who work with victims of trauma and in the study of the impacts of violence and tragedy more broadly, it is widely believed that 'secondary victims' exist. C. R. Figley and R. J. Kleber argue that trauma after violent events has a collective social impact: 'These people hear about the event, they perceive the suffering of the victims, and they have to cope with the changes caused by the event and the suffering' ('Secondary Victims: Beyond the Victim', in *Beyond Trauma*, ed. Kleber *et al.* [London: Plenum Press, 1995]: 77). As Karlina Leksono Supelli observed firsthand, the difference between 'witnessing' and 'experiencing' the violence of May 1998, for example, was blurred. She recounted a story told to her by the sibling of a girl who was an eyewitness: 'After accidentally seeing a Chinese girl raped by many people, my younger sister is so frightened and depressed. Her speech is incoherent and her body trembles every time sometime comes near her. For two weeks she was hospitalised' ('The May 1998 Tragedy', in *Perspectives On The Chinese Indonesians*, ed. R. Godley and G. J. Lloyd [Adelaide, Crawford House Publishing, 2001]: 57). Karlina is not alone when she claims that '(t)he politics of Indonesia has been for a long time the politics of violence.' However, this book seeks to take this argument further to demonstrate 'that violence in twenty-first century Indonesia has never been a legitimate monopoly of the state' (p. 18) and that the violent potential in civil society – through ethnic groups, 'official gangsters', middle classes, villagers and corporations – is equally significant.

This book demonstrates the way in which violence in Suharto's Indonesia became a legitimate course to justice in the absence of the Rule of Law. Suharto, and his cohorts like Benny Murdani, set the context within which non-state actors gained legitimacy for acts of violence carried out in the name of various causes. In post-Suharto Indonesia the increase in mob

violence and 'vigilante justice' is regarded as a continuation of this non-state violence, which was supported by the New Order's *premanisme* style of rule. As Geoffrey Robinson writes, Indonesia's political system was and continues to be 'wedded to the use of terror' (p. 241).

The main contention of the book is that 'even the vast machine of state violence never stood either alone or uncontested as Indonesia's present circumstances make only too plain' (p. 13). This is supported by the range and types of violence covered in its chapters which include youth activism, criminality, riots, anti-Chinese attacks and troubles in the *rawan* or 'troubled provinces' of East Timor, West Papua and Aceh (but excludes the most horrific massacres of 1965-66). Jun Honna shows how the lines between legality and illegality became so blurred under New Order rule. As Loren Rytter, Douglas Kammen and Joshua Barker demonstrate, this blurring led to the rise of extra-legal militia and 'official gangsters' sometimes working alongside, or in conjunction with, the military and political elites.

More needs to be said, however, about the monopoly of 'representations' of violence during this time. In a recent book Paul Brass argues this is where the real struggle for power takes place (*Theft of An Idol: Text and Context In the Representation of Collective Violence* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997]). James Siegel examines the use of language in the context of representations of the May 1998 violence, particularly the rapes, and succeeds in demonstrating the way in which even one term, 'trauma', was loaded with New Order terminology and sentiment. 'This dimension of trauma, the ineradicable stain, disrupting descent, making even legitimate descent shameful, returns Indonesia to an earlier era' (p. 115). Siegel is aware, perhaps, of the power of his own representation of the May violence to prescribe and so he includes an appendix containing the story of an ethnic Chinese man whose business was destroyed in the violence at Glodok. Siegel explains, 'I do not want to understate the strength of feeling of "Chinese" who were so savagely attacked' (p. 122). This appendix confronts all who research and write about violence and tragedy. When is it appropriate for the analysis, statistical methods and intellectual objectivity to give way to compassion for victims and to simply re-tell their stories?

This brings us back to Anderson's opening list. The 'histories' or representations within Indonesia of these violent events have until very recently been written and disseminated by the state. The story of 1965-66 is only now – 35 years later – being told by some of its victims, whilst others are still kept in silence through fear of what 'telling the truth' will bring. The 'truth' about the May 1998 violence which brought the Suharto rule to an end and the horrific events in East Timor a year later, are still waiting to be heard in the wider national discourse.

Yet at the same time that this important discussion about Indonesia's violent past is beginning, there is also a powerful preoccupation with shame, particularly amongst intellectuals and the middle classes, over that history. The editors of the journal *Media Kerja Budaya* recently expressed their feelings of dismay that Indonesia is perceived as '*primitif*' as a consequence of increasing violence in their country in an online article ('Massa Mengambang yang Tak Pernah Tenggelam', Pokok 1/06/2001, *Media Kerja Budaya Online*). This book, in fact, demonstrates the extremely complex and somewhat 'sophisticated' networks through which various types of violence are carried out in Indonesia – a legacy of the New Order. The result is a range of non-state 'institutions' or 'systems' trained in carrying out acts of violence. These violent acts are rarely spontaneous or indeed '*primitif*' in execution.

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*Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity*

By AUDREY KAHIN

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999. Pp. 368. Maps, Photographs, Notes, Bibliography.

Had this book appeared in 1997, it might have been filed with a handful of other excellent histories of West Sumatra, a fine contribution to Minangkabau history. But thanks to regional autonomy laws passed in 1999, and the unbridling of provincial dissatisfaction with the 'Javanese' central state, Audrey Kahin's book can be read as a model for region-centred histories of national-regional interaction in Indonesia.

Culturally, Minangkabau has long served as a counter to Central Java. Dutch colonial scholars spoke of a Minangkabau outward-looking dynamism as opposed to more feudalistic Java. And in the form of *Dwitunggal*, two-in-one, the Minangkabau vice president Mohammad Hatta represented reformist Islam, egalitarian traditions and the 'Outer Islands' in an archetypal political dyad with the more kingly, communist, nationalist and Javanese Sukarno. Kahin does not dwell on this Minangkabau exceptionalism, however. *Rebellion to Integration* is a history of West Sumatra the polity, not Minangkabau the cultural region, and regardless of cartographic correlations and popular patriotic discourse Kahin does not use the two terms interchangeably. If readers expect familiar descriptions of a much-vaunted matrilineal culture then they will be disappointed. The book is a comprehensive political history of Indonesia from a point of West Sumatran vantage.

Kahin begins the narrative with the 1927 'Silungkang' communist rebellion. With the rebellion centred at a relatively multi-ethnic mining camp and prompting a famous political report by B. Schrieke, 1927 marks the moment when histories of Minangkabau become histories of West Sumatra – less anthropological and more political. In the aftermath of 1927 the colonial state implemented stringent publishing restrictions and concentrated political dissidents in the Papuan prison camp Boven Digul. The 1928 *Sumpah Pemuda* consecrated 'Indonesia' in the nationalist historiography and focused all the various Minangkabau movements into a single, national movement. The *zaman pergerakan* gave way to a *pergerakan nasional*. Nationalism subsumed the older, internal 'adat versus Islam' debate that seemed central to Minangkabau society, and the region became better known as a birthplace of national leaders than a political staging ground unto itself. Kahin's book gives us an example of rigorous regional history in modern Indonesia, and it gives the lie to the assumption that modern West Sumatra (especially post-1958) was politically moribund.

The book is divided into four main sections: Late Colonial Rule, Achieving Independence, Region versus Capital, and Integration under the New Order. Throughout the first two sections, and in meticulous detail, the West Sumatran political interactions of nationalist leaders are described and analysed. The operations of Sukarno, Hatta, Sutan Sjahrir, and, in particular, Tan Malaka and the Murba Party, are illuminating. Since the revolutionary and 1950s national governments were at the highest levels Minangkabau-dominated, the overwhelming Javanese victory in the election of 1955 felt like a betrayal by the central state. The reaction to this election, the doomed separatist PRRI (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) rebellion, was Minangkabau heartbreak. Kahin writes, 'During the revolution, the Minangkabau had dreamed that in the independent Indonesia emerging from the struggle their own ideals of autonomy and egalitarianism would prevail.' If in 1957 the PRRI sought some autonomy, what followed would be 'war, defeat, and humiliation' (p. 229).



The third section, 'Region versus Capital', contains applicable lessons for issues of federalism, decentralisation, and autonomy, and could be read profitably by political scientists and planners. Kahin includes a thorough discussion of the 1979 'Village Act' that formally restructured the indigenous Minangkabau *nagari*, a confederacy of villages, along the lines of the Javanese *desa*. This destruction of the *nagari* is widely seen as the Soeharto government's most pernicious attack on Minangkabau society. The post-PRRI rehabilitation of West Sumatra under the leadership of Harun Zain is an ironic triumph of Soeharto's New Order in a region that had once defined itself as pro-democratic and anti-Javanese.

In the introduction and at points throughout the book Kahin invokes the spectre of Minangkabau exceptionalism. We are reminded of the myth of a Minangkabau indigenous democracy whose 'ideals of equality' are summed up in a traditional aphorism: sitting equally low, standing equally high (p. 71). Can the Minangkabau culture – which we are told traditionally 'emphasized decentralization and egalitarianism' – counterbalance the 'hierarchical unified concept' of the Javanese government (p. 251)? Kahin does not sustain this line of inquiry, however, perhaps because it would necessitate sweeping cultural generalisations that are incompatible with a detailed political history. Were the book to have concluded in 1996, then the answer would have been a clear 'no'. But in the post-Soeharto era new possibilities have emerged.

Kahin's research is both meticulous and expansive. From the early 1970s through 1999 interviews were conducted in Sumatra and Jakarta. A wealth of Dutch, Indonesian and Japanese archival and published sources and interviews were utilised. If most Indonesianist historians break with the Japanese Occupation – the massive shift in the quality and availability of archival sources is daunting – through diligence Kahin manages to recuperate a West Sumatran historical perspective that does not blink on and off with foreign occupation regime changes. It is a minor pity then that the Amsterdam University Press could not promote the detailed endnotes to footnotes.

This is an important book for historians of Indonesia, of course, but it will be particularly valuable to political scientists. Amid plans for the implementation of regional autonomy and discussions of federalism, and with the threat of national fragmentation *de rigueur* chatter at Jakarta seminar buffets, it is nice to have a bit of whence to balance the endless whithers.

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*Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia*

By PHILIP KITLEY  
Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000. Pp. xviii, 411. Illustrations, Tables, Bibliography, Index.

Indonesian media studies came of age in the 1990s, with the launching of impressive research projects and publications in Indonesia, Australia, the Netherlands and the United States dealing with various aspects of publishing, radio, television, film, popular music and the Internet. This finely textured, sensitive book on television in Indonesia from its inception in the late Sukarno period to the twilight of the Soeharto regime is a first of its kind, but without doubt not the last. The horizons of the Indonesian mediascape are continually shifting as new

technologies, services, stations, programmes, regulations and polemics emerge. Boundaries are difficult to locate: a newly launched Indonesian pay television station is scheduled to become available simultaneously in Jakarta and the Netherlands in 2001. The complexities of television production, consumption and regulation mean that no study can be truly comprehensive. Philip Kitley's account cues to dynamics of policy formation, regulation, public discourse and debate, and the construction of television audiences and the idealised Indonesian subject. On all of these matters, this study, based on numerous interviews with key players in the industry alongside close readings of television texts and journalistic materials, succeeds admirably.

*Televisi Republik Indonesia* (Indonesian Television or TVRI) began broadcasting in 1962 to cover the Fourth Asian Games held in Jakarta that year, distributing *gratis* 10,000 television sets among civil servants to spark interest. TVRI was not only Indonesia's official television broadcaster, it remained for most of three decades the only broadcaster, with regional studios in nine Indonesian cities established over a sixteen-year period. Indonesia is distinguished internationally as being the third country in the world to possess a domestic satellite system; the Palapa A1 satellite (reportedly named by Soeharto himself) was launched in 1976, serving as both symbol and medium of national union and unity. Kitley shows how television discourse was concerned with modelling and shaping the Indonesian audience, conceived alternately as family, childlike, public citizens, informed consumers and global citizens. New Order paternalist and corporatist values clashed frequently over issues including advertising (banned from TVRI in 1981) and foreign television imports. Overt criticism was muted, cast in what Kitley terms 'shadow language'; as TVRI was the only player, 'the government had no particular motivation to develop legislation' (p. 298) regarding television. Some Indonesian television shows, such as the puppet show *Si Unyil* (broadcast 1981–93), which mixed propaganda with gentle satire and parody, enjoyed a modicum of popularity. In contrast, the stifling *Keluarga Rahmat* (Rahmat Family) soap opera of the late 1980s was experienced by viewers 'as a feudalization of their lifeworld' (p. 176), though Ibu Subangun, the show's 'model bitch', was 'a character viewers "loved to hate"' (p. 162). In a theoretically stimulating chapter, Kitley demonstrates how TVRI's nightly news was state ritual attempting 'to represent a unitary view of society' (p. 211).

In the 1980s, a video boom, spillover transmission from Singapore and Malaysia, the introduction of satellite television and dish receivers, and crony capitalism contributed to the break-up of the government's television monopoly. Between 1989 and 1995, five commercial television broadcasting companies were launched. The commercial stations could not produce their own news programmes, though they could present their own 'soft news' or 'information programmes', some of which have been successful 'in encouraging the discursive participation of... audience[s] in social and political commentary and criticism' (p. 265). The commercial stations were also required to pay annual fees from their advertising revenues to support TVRI, which continued to function as a non-commercial service, disinterestedly addressing the national public. The deregulation of the industry was coupled with numerous public debates in the 1990s. Massive protests against the incompetence of Metama Raya, a private company formed by close associates of Soeharto in 1990 to collect annual licence fees from television owners, resulted in a return to a prior arrangement in which owners paid fees via the post office by 1992. Innumerable seminars on sex and violence and the impact of television on children were held during the 1990s. A 1995 news report that 150 expatriate Chinese advisers were working in Jakarta for the commercial channel Indosiar and that there were plans to translate

hundreds of Hong Kong television scenarios into Indonesian and produce them locally generated the 'Indosiar case', which played to 'deep-rooted resentment of the economic power of the Chinese community in Indonesia' (p. 295) coupled with a rhetoric of anti- 'cultural imperialism or colonization ... that would result in the domination of indigenous culture and the alienation of Indonesians from their own cultural values' (p. 292). Discourse did not always translate into action, however. Despite pressures from many sides and much discussion in the press, the government was not able to come up with an adequate broadcast law by 1996 (the outer limit of the time frame of Kitley's study).

This book is a powerful case for the role that television has played in the representation of the Indonesian subject. Extending Benedict Anderson's argument concerning the function of print literacy in the imagining of the nation, Kitley presents television as a privileged site where Indonesia as imagined community is continually reconstructed, redrawn, reimagined. *Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia* is not an easy read. It is sometimes overburdened with cultural study jargon. Kitley has a trained eye and is capable of writing engaging film analyses detailing camera work and framing (e.g., in his description of TVRI's news reports) – but this faculty is sadly underused in this study. Some readers might wish to see more detailed sketches of the industry's players and more ethnographic accounts of sites of television consumption, for as Kitley himself notes, 'television is *experienced* as a private, domestic activity' (p. 339). One wonders too about the sense of expending so much effort in explicating the legalities around Indonesia's broadcasting law, which had yet to be signed by Soeharto at the time when Kitley wrote this book. Be that as it may, for all students of contemporary Indonesian culture and politics, and anyone interested in the relations of media and nation in developing countries, this book is genuinely indispensable.

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## Laos

*Laos Culture and Society*

Edited by GRANT EVANS

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000. Pp. xi, 313. Bibliography, Index.

*The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos Since 1975*

By GRANT EVANS

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. Pp. xxiv, 216. Photos, Bibliography, Index.

*Theravadins, Colonialists and Commissars in Laos*

By GEOFFERY C. GUNN

Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998. Pp. xxi, 276. Bibliography, Index.

*Essai d'anthropologie politique sur le Laos contemporain: Marché, socialisme, et genies*

By BERNARD HOURS and MONIQUE SELIM

Paris and Montreal: L'Harmattan, 1997. Pp. 398. Photographs, Bibliography.

The past few years have seen the appearance of several important works of scholarship on Laos. As the books reviewed here are working primarily from the perspectives of political science and anthropology, their work nicely complements the recent publications on Lao

history by Martin Stuart-Fox, reviewed in a previous issue of this journal. And as much of the research and fieldwork for these books was done during the 1990s, they provide a very current and timely perspective on developments in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR).

*Theravadins, Colonialists and Commissars in Laos* is a collection of Geoffrey Gunn's articles spanning the period 1982 to 1996; the one completely new piece, a study of the *Việt Kiều* (Vietnamese *émigré*) community in Siam during the colonial period, builds on his 1988 study *Political Struggles in Laos 1930-54: Vietnamese Communist Power and the Lao Struggle for National Independence* (Bangkok: Duang Kamol, 1988). The articles cover a wide variety of topics relating to modern Lao political history, as shown by the six headings under which they are grouped: Facts and Theory; Anti-Colonial Stirrings; Civil War; Men Who Make History; State, Nation and Army; and Problems of Development.

Gunn's strongest and most original pieces are those that make best use of his scholarly strengths: careful archival research and the ability to articulate important issues relating to how we view Laos from the outside. The first strength is reflected in the new article on the *Việt Kiều* ('Rear Base of the Revolution') and the reprinted 1987 piece on 'Minority Manipulation in Colonial Indochina'. This latter article will whet the reader's appetite for Gunn's monograph, *Rebellion in Laos: Peasant and Politics in a Colonial Backwater* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), which is unfortunately out of print. Although the reader must wade through a great deal of rather dreary Marxist rhetoric, it is worth the effort, as Gunn chronicles in detail the aspects of French policy towards upland minorities which serve as a backdrop to the multi-ethnic character of the Lao revolution. These two articles, along with the monographs, contain a wealth of important information from the French archives.

Gunn's thoughtful perspectives on studying Laos are the basis for the first and last articles in the collection. Chapter 1, 'Approaches to Tai-Lao Studies: From Orientalism to Marxism', is a wide-ranging piece that provides a historical overview of scholarship on Laos while also summarising various theoretical issues and debates concerning the study of Thailand, many of which are equally relevant to the other side of the Mekong. While the first chapter looks largely at the past, the concluding essay, 'Research Agenda for the Lao People's Democratic Republic', is very much forward-looking, giving a short but insightful discussion of issues facing Laos in the 1990s (and beyond) as well as the general state of Lao studies. Fortunately, some of the gaps in scholarship that Gunn mentions in this 1996 piece are gradually being filled by recent works such as those reviewed below.

Most of the remaining articles cover political, military and economic topics relating to both sides of the pre-1975 civil war and to the post-1975 regime as well. Although there is considerable overlap in terms of content with previous work by other scholars, Gunn positions himself rather further to the left on the political spectrum and makes greater use of theoretical models than, say, Stuart-Fox or Joseph Zasloff. As a result, his contributions on these issues complement rather than duplicate existing scholarship. He includes brief but interesting biographical studies on Prince Souphanouvong and Wilfred Burchett. In both cases one might prefer a rather more critical perspective: the piece on Souphanouvong tends to be more hagiographical than analytical, and the discussion of Burchett's involvement with Laos glosses over the 'fellow-traveller' *naïveté* and unquestioning acceptance of revolutionary propaganda which characterised his work. Even so, Gunn's observations undeniably help us to better understand these two important figures.

The wide-ranging scope of Gunn's interests is matched by the diversity of topics covered

in Grant Evans' edited volume on *Laos: Culture and Society*. The book is anchored by three solid chapters by Evans: an introduction discussing the question 'What is Lao Culture and Society?', one on the ways in which Vietnamese ethnology has influenced the study of minorities in Laos, and a case study of ethnic identity and change in Houa Phan province. Other anthropologically oriented pieces include studies of women border traders in north-western Laos (Andrew Walker), the Lue minority (Khampheng Thipmuntali), rituals in post-1975 Luang Phabang (Ing-Britt Trankell), and the role of women in their sons' ordinations (H. Leedom Lefferts, Jr). Si-ambhaivan Sisombat Souvannavong offers an interesting study of two prominent families split between lives in France and in Laos. Søren Ivarsson's chapter on the famous *Lao Nay* newspaper – the mouthpiece for the 1941-45 nationalist 'awakening', often cited but never actually studied until now – includes a discussion of language reform, which is also the focus of N. J. Enfield's piece on 'Lao as a National Language'. Both of these chapters straddle the Mekong in their discussion, as does Peter Koret's piece on Lao literature. Finally, Randi Jerndal and Jonathan Rigg offer a contribution on the LPDR's transition from 'buffer state' to 'crossroads state'.

As will perhaps be clear from the list of topics just given, this volume is to some extent a collection of chapters in search of a theme. The effect is rather like working one's way through the proceedings of IAHA or an International Thai Studies Conference: each of the papers is interesting, and a couple of them can be linked to others (Ivarsson and Enfield, for example), but the overall impression is one of fragmentation rather than cohesiveness. Evans' introduction is a fascinating piece that does make reference to the other chapters in the book, but without really linking them together. He raises interesting issues, but those issues are generally peripheral to the topics of the other pieces. Armed with this caveat, however, the reader will enjoy the diversity of subjects and perspectives found in the book.

In terms of linguistic and cultural understanding, Grant Evans is arguably the Western scholar with the best grasp of contemporary Laos, and this fact is clearly demonstrated in his monographic work, *Politics of Ritual and Remembrance*, a rich and highly readable study of Lao society and culture after a quarter-century of socialist rule. As the book's title suggests, his main emphasis is on symbols, memories and traditions and the ways in which they have been preserved, manipulated or distorted – but almost never completely abandoned – under the revolution. He has deftly combined anthropological theory with years of observations and insight to produce a wide-ranging chronicle of Laos in the 1980s and 1990s.

The book is divided into 15 short chapters, many of which could stand alone as journal articles, but which all fit together and refer back to each other. One of the most important themes is the memory of royalty and the extent to which the revolutionary regime has failed to supplant the traditional socio-political and cultural roles of the Lao monarchy. This is, Evans suggests, due partly to the lack of 'closure' attributable to the government's silence on the fate of the imprisoned royal family, partly to 'an awareness that [state-sponsored] rituals do not have the same grandeur as before' (p. 172), and partly to the simple fact that the leader of the Lao revolution, Kaysone Phomvihane, could not hope to fill the 'structural space' once occupied by the king. Ironically, he notes, the Chakri Dynasty is increasingly filling this space 'from a distance, at least in the [Lao people's] imagination', through the influence of Thai media and the high-profile visits of Thai royals, particularly Crown Princess Sirindhorn. Meanwhile, the Party's attempts to redefine national symbols such as the That Luang shrine by eliminating psychological and cultural links to royalty, and to promote a small-scale 'Kaysone Cult' as a

substitute for memories of the old rulers have been generally unsuccessful.

A second main theme of Evans' study is the extent to which certain elements of Lao culture and society are returning, as much as possible, to a pre-1975 *status quo ante*. This is true to a large extent for Buddhism and spirit mediums; the chapter on the latter topic gives a broader overview that nicely balances the more 'micro' perspective of Bernard Hours and Monique Selim (see below). After a period of repression during the early years of the regime, both of these fundamental components of the Lao religious tradition have been able to thrive with few or no constraints, despite the possibility of subversive or 'reactionary' spirits making their voices heard through mediums. In a short but fascinating chapter on 'Bodies and Language', Evans describes how gestures and words associated with 'feudal' society are now re-asserting themselves as the norm. The *nop* (the Lao term for the gesture known as *wai* in Thai) has once again become virtually universal, replacing the 'more egalitarian handshake' and the even more awkward Soviet-style hugging and kissing once favoured by revolutionaries (p. 84). Even more significantly, the response particles *doi* and *doi khanoi* (roughly equivalent to Thai *khrap* and *kha*), which explicitly evoke the hierarchy of pre-1975 Lao society, are coming back into vogue at the expense of the term *chao*, promoted under the revolution to express courtesy without 'feudal' deference.

The only real defect of this book is mechanical. The Lao-language entries in the bibliography are not arranged in any discernible order, so that it takes a bit of searching to find the specific source cited in the text. Moreover, the text contains several references for sources which do not appear in the bibliography. In most cases, there are other works by the same author, but it is not clear whether the year given in the citation is incorrect or whether there is in fact another source by that author which has been omitted from the bibliography.

*Essai d'anthropologie politique sur le Laos contemporain* is written by a pair of French anthropologists, one of whom (Hours) has previously worked on Laos. It is a bit heavy on anthropological and sociological jargon, which somehow sounds even more ponderous in French than in English, and the book gets off to a rather slow start as it establishes the political and social context for the particular topics it focuses on. Moreover, in attempting to describe the psychological climate for their study, the authors make socialist Laos sound like something halfway between North Korea and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, which strikes a discordant note for anyone who spent time in the country during the early 1990s, when the authors were doing their fieldwork. As one goes deeper into the book, however, it is clear that the frequent references to 'fear' and 'terror' reflect memories of the early years after the final victory of the Revolution in 1975, memories which were obviously very real to the authors' informants.

The particular focus of the book is reflected in its sub-title – 'Market, socialism, and spirits'. There are three specific case studies: rural hospitals and clinics, a pair of pharmaceutical factories near Vientiane, and a group of spirit mediums. Again, the chapter titles for the case studies are a bit murky: 'Public health as a metaphor for political order', 'Figures of domination at the factory' and 'Spirits – political therapists in the service of the market'. If one can weave one's way around the jargon, however, there is a tremendous amount of valuable information, accompanied by some very acute observations. Despite the frequent presence of local officials and what appears to be a relatively limited command of the Lao language (based on the authors' own admissions and the errors in spelling and translation of Lao terms in the text), the writers have interviewed a surprising number of people and acquired a considerable store of revealing



responses in the process. Clinic and factory employees of various ranks, as well as the rather more colourful figures of mediums, appear as thoroughly three-dimensional characters with articulate voices and detailed personal histories.

These voices constitute the book's greatest strength. We are exposed to a considerable number of individual biographies which clearly reflect the shared trajectories of many Lao lives before and after 1975. The fundamental dichotomy is between *pativat* and *patikan*, those linked to the revolution and the 'reactionaries' tied to the old regime. Ironically, the 'upward mobility' enjoyed by the first group and the 'downward mobility' suffered by the second have ultimately mixed them together in a sort of uneasy coexistence at various levels of the bureaucracy. Through anecdotes and interviews, Hours and Selim illustrate the coping strategies on which both groups have increasingly relied during the transition toward a more market-oriented system. The ultimate coping strategy, they suggest, is the use of mediums, a practice which has returned in full force after being discouraged and partially suppressed during the early years of the LPDR.

The book is hardly a paean to Lao socialism, to say the least, and the evolution of Laos over the past quarter-century is painted in colours ranging from grey to black. Even as the trauma of the regime's early years has somewhat faded, the authors suggest, the sense of failure and helplessness has only grown stronger. The overall conclusion of the book is that this combination – failure on the part of the government and helplessness on the part of those under its authority – is directly responsible for the resurgence of spiritism. It is not just a matter of falling back on traditional practices in a time of socio-economic disruption; rather, the writers argue, 'the power of the animistic spirits becomes more of a presence and more concrete than the power of the State, which it neutralises and, in some ways, subverts'. In a broader context, they conclude, the return to mediums and the rituals that surround them 'probably constitutes the main weapon and symbolic dynamic available to Lao society to confront the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Asian dragons which surround [Laos]; this future raises so much fear and trembling that resorting to the mediation of the spirits becomes a must' (p. 385).

While Hours and Salim are perhaps more directly critical of the LPDR regime and pessimistic regarding its prospects, much of the other scholarship cited in this review implicitly or explicitly supports their conclusions. Evans' work shows very clearly the extent to which the revolutionary 'transformations' of Lao society have been quietly shelved and even reversed. (This is possible partly because of a somewhat higher degree of continuity between the old and new regimes than is the case in, say, southern Vietnam, especially in terms of the powerful and well-entrenched families who have been the backbone of successive Lao regimes.) Several of the pieces in his edited volume demonstrate how traditional economic and cultural activities (such as cross-border trading and Buddhist ordinations) have regained their pre-1975 importance under a putatively socialist regime. Gunn's articles on 'Socialist Dependence and Underdevelopment', 'Prospects for Reform', and 'Winds of Change' provide balanced and realistic assessments of the lack of political and economic dynamism in the LPDR. After working through the 1,000-odd pages of scholarship in these four books, one cannot help concluding that the Lao revolution is in fact a 'revolution in retreat'. Just how far-reaching and how dramatic this retreat will be remains to be seen.

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## The Philippines

*Father Jose Burgos: A Documentary History with Spanish Documents and Their Translation*

By JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 297.

Was Fr Jose Burgos a martyr or a victim? This question is at the centre of John N. Schumacher's latest book on the popular but not thoroughly studied historical character that played a role in the rapid development of Filipino nationalism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Burgos and two other priests, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora, better known as the *Gomburza* trio, were executed in the aftermath of the failed 1872 Cavite Revolt. The priests' execution, a turning point in Philippine history, was the first time Catholic leaders had been executed in public. This wanton contempt for the status priests possess over Filipino religious consciousness would eventually culminate in the Spaniards' exit two decades later.

This book is an expanded version of the author's earlier book on the same topic (*Father Burgos: Priest and Nationalist*. [Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1972]) with seven additional documents. A lengthy introduction precedes the presentation of the documents, with their English translation, relating to Fr Burgos' crusade to reform the Catholic Church. Save for the additional documents, the book remains basically unchanged, with the same analysis as the earlier version.

Schumacher begins with a background to the issues and controversies that led to the execution of the three priests. For him, it can be traced to a royal decree in the early part of the Spanish colonial period known as *Patronato Real*, the visitation rights of secular bishops over the friar orders, and the late and erratic development of a native clergy. The *Patronato Real* was a papal grant in the sixteenth century used to finance missionary endeavours in the Philippines for the Spanish crown, which as Schumacher notes, made friars more like employees of the state and their existence dependent on their political usefulness.

The friars resented the visitation of bishops who showed contempt for the local clergy as they viewed their orders as more corporate in nature and hence beyond territorial control. This was aggravated by the fact that the friars always had the upper hand due to the shortage of trained local clergy. Whenever a bishop imposed visitation rights, they would resort to blackmail by threatening to pull out. Friars likewise delayed training local priests not only because they saw them as competitors but also looked on them condescendingly, with one friar remarking that the Filipinos were 'not fit for this moral state of life' (p. 5). Thus, the issue of secularisation, which really was an internal Church matter in the first place, developed into one that had racial overtones.

The political changes in the Iberian Peninsula during the early nineteenth century also contributed to the confusion and controversy over the secularisation issue. The advancement or reversal of this issue depended on who was in power, the liberals or the monarchists. In addition, events outside of Spain and the Philippines also influenced the secularisation issue. The leadership role of the local priests in the Mexican revolution and other uprisings in the colonies did not escape the notice of the Spanish royalty. As the sun began to set on their empire, formation houses of friar orders were closed for they could no longer be supported by royal largesse. As Spain kept losing its colonies, the new friars could only be sent to the remaining colonies, the biggest recipient being the Philippines.

It was at this juncture that the Jesuits began to return to the Philippines after being

banished for about a century. They were given control of parishes in Mindanao, which were previously under the supervision of the Agustinian Recollects. To compensate for this 'loss', the Recollect friars were given leeway to choose parishes under the control of the local clergy. One such parish was in Antipolo, where the statue of the Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, a popular pilgrimage site among locals, is located and reputedly one of the most profitable in the country. From this point on, relations between the friars and the local clergy on the secularisation issue reached an irreversible decline.

And so, is Fr Burgos a martyr or a victim? While affirming that Fr Burgos is indeed a martyr, Schumacher nonetheless cites at length the spurious trial, the severe punishment meted out to the plotters and the Church's refusal to sanction him, which makes the reader wonder if he was more a victim than a martyr. The effects of Fr Burgos' ideas on latter-day nationalists and the 1896 revolution, or that which would point to his martyrdom, are sadly missing from the book. It is a topic that has been covered by a number of works that came out in between the publication of his first and second book on the same topic. Overall, the book is commendable for its rich documentation of Church history and politics in that period.

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### Singapore

*Till the Break of Day; A History of Mental Health Services in Singapore (1841-1993)*

By NG BENG YONG

Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2001. Pp. 339. Tables, Photographs, Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

From the humble beginnings of the Lunatic Asylum established in 1841, the provision of mental health care services and infrastructure in Singapore has expanded tremendously to cater to the mental health of the society at large. This progress reached a historic milestone in 1993 when the Woodbridge Hospital (formerly called the Lunatic Asylum) was renamed the Institute of Mental Health and shifted its operations from its dilapidated colonial premises to a completely new hospital equipped with the most advanced facilities.

However, in *Till the Break of Day* Ng Beng Yong regards 1993 more as a crossroads rather than a historic achievement in the mental health services in Singapore. In spite of the apparent progress made, several disturbing questions on the persistence of traditional stigmas attached to mental diseases and the extent in which psychiatry had moved its focus from confinement to community care remain. To Ng, the understanding of such issues would involve some 'historical grasp of what community care and asylum were like in the past' (p. 4). Besides mapping out its institutional milestones, Ng attempts to examine a wide range of issues from a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from sociology and linguistics to geography, law and medical science as part of his search for a more holistic narrative. He seeks to show how these disciplines can collectively be used to gauge society's level of love or fear for the mentally distressed.

For Ng, the development of the mental health services in Singapore has been overall positive. Originally established to cater exclusively to mentally ill European sailors, they expanded to be more universally accessible to those living not just in Singapore, but in the

region as well. Racialist explanations and categorisations of mental diseases were no longer favoured as Singapore moved from a colonial outpost to an independent republic. In the meantime, Singapore's only mental hospital has itself constantly been shifted and renamed by different administrations. Originally sited in the heart of the city, the Mental Asylum was relocated to a more pleasant suburban environment and renamed Woodbridge Hospital in the 1950s. In Chang Yang How's *Ode to Woodbridge Hospital*, the 'bridge' is to 'help the patients cross when they are at a loss to salve their pain, their health to regain' (p. 181). Justice and protection for the mentally disabled were also gradually improved and defined with laws legislated and amended to separate them from common criminals. Although society has yet to treat mental diseases with the same empathy as other afflictions, it has nevertheless generally learnt to understand their conditions more rationally. Such achievements would not be possible without the unflinching dedication of the practitioners and staff in the mental services who constantly struggled to prevent the 'unattainable ideals of moral treatment from degenerating into a more routine custodian regime' (p. 91).

Ng also reveals several interesting insights in his quest to document the legacies of the mental services in Singapore. Among them are the floor plans of the lunatic asylum, correspondence pertaining to the renaming of the hospital, photographic illustrations of mental patients as well as crucial statistics on the type and extent of mental diseases in the country. In particular, the clock tower at the Woodbridge hospital was given special mention as a significant heritage site though it has ceased to toll during mealtimes. Ng is also quick to relate the fluid boundaries of sanity to certain interesting events and trends. This includes the regard for vaguely defined behaviours of 'self-abuse' (pp. 51-2) like masturbation as symptoms of mental diseases by colonial doctors, high suicide rates by even hospital attendants in the Lunatic Asylum, and lepers (once considered mad by society), who provided food to those who sought sanctuary from the Japanese Occupation. After the war, Ng highlights an interesting suggestion by a senior official to rename the Lunatic Asylum after King George III (who went insane) as well as instances of mass hysteria in factories and schools, often considered to be institutions of normality.

Ng's work however seems visibly deficient in two areas, namely, his overtly biased ethnocultural explanations of mental illness as well as his failure to put the developments of the mental health services in a larger context in post-independence Singapore. Although he is quick to point out the blatantly racist observations by colonial doctors concerning Asian mental health, Ng himself is also prone to employ simple ethnic generalisations to account the for mental health of the local population. Lower rates of suicide by Malays are for example simply attributed to the Islamic prohibition against suicide while the perceptions of the Chinese on mental health are simply the products of their beliefs in either mythical folk legends or highly structured Confucian cosmologies. But, while Ng claims to recognise the psychological importance of such practices and beliefs, he is nevertheless insistent that they should ultimately not 'seriously interfere with the patient's treatment' (p. 161).

Ng might have been keen to list the progress made in the provision of health services since Singapore achieved self-government in 1959. But, his enthusiasm seems to have swayed him considerably from critically evaluating the side-effects of the value systems and politics imposed by the post-colonial state on the mental health institutions in the Republic. It is regrettable that Ng only touches the tip of the iceberg in his passing mention of the psychological strains created by an increasingly competitive and congested environment in a rapidly industrializing

Singapore. There is little discussion of how the mental health services cope with such strains stemming from increasing numbers of teenagers, working adults and retirees overwhelmed by the pressures of society.

Nonetheless, Ng's work has not only contributed to the scarce historiography on the medical history of Singapore since Lee Yong Kiat's accounts of the *The Medical History of Early Singapore* (Tokyo: Southeast Asian Medical Information Center, 1978). More importantly, it represents part of a broader and more enthusiastic and multi-disciplinary approach in making the history and development of medical science in Singapore more accessible to a wider audience.

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### Thailand

*Night Market: Sexual Cultures and the Thai Economic Miracle*

By RYAN BISHOP and LILLIAN S. ROBINSON

New York: Routledge, 1998. Pp. x, 278. Notes, Bibliography, Index.

For several decades the tourism industry has been Thailand's major source of foreign exchange and international sex tourism has been the cornerstone of that industry. This path-breaking book offers a penetrating and insightful analysis of this politically and morally charged topic. While there are a few previous studies that adeptly address dimensions of the international sex tourism industry in Bangkok (for example, Erik Cohen, *The Pacific Islands from Utopian Myth to Consumer Product: The Disenchantment of Paradise* [Aix-en-Provence: Université de Droit, 1982] or Cleo Odzer, *Patpong Sisters: An American Woman's View of the Bangkok Sex World* [New York: Arcade, 1994]), these works tend to be limited in scope. Ryan Bishop and Lillian Robinson's unique academic and personal backgrounds (Bishop is a cultural anthropologist with literary training and years of fieldwork experience in Thailand and Robinson is trained in the humanities with expertise in feminist studies and Marxism) have enabled them to transcend the limitations of prior studies and produce a rigorous, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary collaborative analysis of Bangkok sex tourism. Drawing on close critical readings of sex worker and sex tourist narratives, analyses of Thai tourism imagery, government documents and classic ethnographic fieldwork, Bishop and Robinson offer a compelling portrait of international sex tourism in Bangkok as constructed and informed by First World corporate, financial, ideological and sexual interests. Moreover, the authors underscore the local and personal dimensions of this global sex trade, illustrating how the Thai economic 'miracle' was erected on the backs of young Thai women pushed by poverty to Bangkok bars and brothels. Bishop and Robinson's volume is not only articulate and sensitively written, but also theoretically sophisticated. While many of the book's observations will doubtlessly cause discomfort for Thai officials and international tourism development promoters, the volume promises to be lauded by scholars in cultural studies, feminism, tourism/globalisation and Southeast Asian studies.

*Night Market* is organised into eight thematic chapters. The introductory chapter orients the reader to the authors' personal and professional interest in the topic, lays out the architecture of the book and outlines Bishop and Robinson's research methodology. The second chapter surveys

the varied ways in which Thai tourism is represented in assorted arenas, ranging from Western academic journals to the popular press. In portraying the ways in which the discourse about tourism is shaped and framed, the authors illustrate how, with a few exceptions, sex tourism was rarely addressed in academic literature and frequently romanticised in the mass media prior to the 1980s. It was only in the late 1980s and 1990s, with the explosion of AIDS and child prostitution, that sex tourism began to be framed as a 'problem', a practice threatening children or clients. Generally overlooked, however, are other potentially controversial dimensions of the sex industry, such as the fact that it entails creating an unskilled labour force for international use, or that possibly four per cent of Thailand's female population is employed as sex workers (p. 59). Chapter 3 continues this exploration, turning to examine the discursive practices of tourism at the national and international level, as embodied in government brochures and tourism campaigns. Through close readings of guide books and other forms of travel journalism, Bishop and Robinson illustrate dimensions of the commoditisation of Thai culture, showing how the 'language of tourism naturalizes a particular interpretation of another culture's sexuality, just as it naturalizes the market economy in which the sex industry operates' (p. 90).

Chapter 4, 'A Very Political Economy', shifts in focus, drawing on the book's metaphoric title to address the 'night market' from the economic perspective. This chapter examines the economics of the sex industry as a development strategy (bolstered both by the national government and international agencies), and the ties between tourism/sex tourism to the consumer economy. The next chapter, 'Imagining Sexual Others', which could be subtitled 'From the Harem of *The King and I* to *Miss Saigon*' traces the trope of Thais' exotic sexuality in the writings of explorers, travellers, playwrights and novelists, illustrating the genealogies of and pretext for contemporary sex tourists' interactions with Thai women. As the authors sagely observe, these discourses about Others frequently convey more about the representers than they do about the represented. This chapter lays the foundation for the subsequent ethnographically based chapter on the bar scene in Bangkok. Here, the authors draw on field research, interviews with sex workers, foreign clients, and local sex scene commentators, as well as Internet narratives from returning sex tourists to offer a compelling portrayal of the fantasies and realities underlying the bar and brothel scene in Thailand. The next chapter addresses the paradox that despite its ubiquity in the Thai terrain, the topic of sex tourism is the unspeakable in public Thai arenas. Here the authors grapple convincingly with the functions of this unspeakability or 'cultural aphasia', as they term it. The final chapter, 'Sexual Theory and its Discontents', is a *tour de force*, offering a critique of contemporary sexual theory and drawing on the Thai case to offer a political economy of sexuality.

In sum, Bishop and Robinson have produced a compelling and convincing analysis of a complex and controversial industry. This book is a must-read for Southeast Asianists, as well as for gender studies and globalisation researchers. Although rather demanding for most undergraduates, when I used portions of this volume in an undergraduate introductory seminar on Southeast Asia, it met with tremendous student interest and prompted several students to read the remainder of the book over their breaks. Clearly, this volume is destined to become an essential text for graduate seminars in feminist theory, globalisation, tourism and contemporary Southeast Asia.

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*Politics and the Press in Thailand: Media Machinations*

By DUNCAN McCARGO

London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Pp. vii, 205. Appendix, Notes, Bibliography, Index.

The freedom and vigour of the Thai press have long been a commonplace among both casual observers and serious students of Southeast Asian politics. In fact, however, few descriptive and even fewer analytical works have examined with any thoroughness or rigour the operation and influence of print media in Thailand. This singularly well-informed and unabashedly critical monograph goes a very long way towards making up for that lack of attention. It builds on clear explanations of many of the apparent quirks of Bangkok's political dailies to offer sobering comment on what the author views as their serious shortcomings.

Duncan McCargo has combined careful and extensive reading of Thai periodicals with extraordinary access to the inner workings of five of them during 1995 and early 1996. He enjoyed, for example, month-long attachments to the political desk of *Thai Rath* and to the office of the executive editor of *Matichon* daily and an even longer stay on the front-page desk of the now defunct *Siam Post*. He spent a month in the press room of the Thai parliament. *Politics and the Press in Thailand* is no work of sector-level 'political economy'. Its main chapters integrate the author's essentially unrestricted exposure to meetings, new-gathering activities, and editorial deliberations into an examination of the way that journalistic practice in Thailand relates to the Thai political order.

Those main chapters address the activities of political reporters, editorial politics within a paper, the state of investigative reporting, and the place of columnists in the Thai politico-journalistic world. The book does not treat, except in passing, Bangkok's English-language dailies. An introductory chapter briefly surveys the Thai media and its history, and a concluding chapter and single-page appendix summarise the study and offer proposals for 'reforming' press coverage of politics in Thailand.

McCargo demonstrates the ways in which a series of established usages work together to shape Thai political journalism. Among these usages, a strong belief in the distinction between 'news' and 'comment' and an equation of politics with the activities of officials of the state are the most important. The first precludes the publication of interpretive or analytical stories in the Thai press. It results in news items that rarely offer any explanation of the material – above all long quotations from politicians, bureaucrats, or soldiers – that they present. And it frees columnists from any obligation to ground their opinions in analysis of the news of the day. The drawbacks of the sharp distinction drawn between news and comment among Thai journalists are only compounded by the conviction that political news is nothing but news of government. This conviction leads to the assignment of political reporters to fixed locations (Parliament, Government House, the Interior Ministry) rather than to stories. Similarly, it reduces those reporters' duties to scrambling about in search of quotations to be relayed to their news desks. Untrained, demoralised and unguided young front-line political reporters from competing publications cooperate in pooling their material, such is their fear of missing a story. No incentive to specialise or to develop substantive expertise exists.

The book identifies and explores a number of other consequences of these journalistic practices: neglect of provincial developments, a lack of investigative journalism, and a great difficulty in presenting and analysing news bearing on the economy. Not unfairly, McCargo labels the Thailand's 1997 financial crisis 'an indictment of the press' (p. 175), which had



singularly failed to develop any sort of perspective on the nature and abuses of the preceding boom years. (He points out, in fact, that the appreciation of shares in publicly listed media concerns and the swollen advertising budgets of real estate and other firms made Thai newspapers full participants in that boom, while it lasted.)

Through their news stories and opinion columns, Thailand's newspapers can be active players in the political process. McCargo credits them with a leading role in bringing down at least two prime ministers in recent years. But he identifies no simple relationship between press ownership and political partisanship. It is at the level of columnists and editors rather than owners that relationships – both proper and improper – between the politicians and the press seem strongest. Various members of the senior staff of a single Thai newspaper may, then, enjoy ties with different elements of Thailand's multi-party, multi-faction political system. And they may 'sublet' (p. 170) the sections of their publications whose content they control to those parties or factions. Unlike many domestic critics of such ties, McCargo understands them more as a structural feature of Thai political journalism than as a case of ethical lapses on the part of individual journalists.

Indeed, for all its criticism of the Thai newspaper business and its practices, *Politics and the Press in Thailand* shows considerable sympathy with its subject. McCargo's direct experience with news gathering and editorial meetings and his sure grasp of the language and culture of Thai journalism enable him to distinguish the professionals from their profession. His interest is directed, insistently, to the systemic role of the press in Thai political life, a role owing much to the set of journalistic practices of which he is so critical. McCargo skewers quite deftly the university lecturers whose aspirations to be 'public intellectuals' *Phujatkan Daily* fed so extravagantly between 1992 and 1996. But his discussion (pp. 150-6) of the 'serious' or *nakkhian* [writer] columnists Roj Ngamman (formerly of *Siam Post*), Sathian Janthimathon (of *Matichon*), and Chatcharin Chaiyawat (of *Arthit Weekly*) proves disappointingly brief. Here are committed professional journalists who appear to have transcended the systemic and social contexts that *Politics and the Press in Thailand* criticises so sharply. More sustained treatment of their intellectual foundations and social orientations would have served McCargo's project well.

*Politics and the Press in Thailand* appears as the first book in Routledge's new 'Rethinking Southeast Asia' series under McCargo's general editorship. The series will include both titles intended for non-specialist readers and research monographs, among them this one, aimed at specialists. And this book *is* aimed at specialists. Consistent clarity of explication notwithstanding, it assumes an interest and even a familiarity with Thai politics over the course of the last dozen years. It takes for granted a level of patience with Thai names characteristic of all too few readers whose intellectual interests do not centre on the country. And, more significantly, it builds on a particular, very pessimistic understanding of Thai political life. McCargo sees certain weaknesses of the Thai press as illustrations of 'deep-rooted problems in Thai society' (p. 165). He refers to the role of that press in reinforcing 'a deeply dysfunctional political system' (p. 167). And he writes of 'inept interactions between a defective media [*sic*] and a deficient political order' (p. 81). These broad condemnations of contemporary Thai politics and society may grow out of McCargo's own wide-ranging studies of the country's political life and reflect his well-developed understanding of that life. But little in *Politics and the Press in Thailand*, given its brevity and the narrowness of its focus, offers either explanation of Thailand's socio-political malaise for the unfamiliar reader or argument in support of the diagnosis for the sceptical one.



Valuably, McCargo notes in his concluding chapter that a free and dynamic press need not, as in the Thai case, be a trustworthy press. At the same time, however, throughout the volume he runs the risk of measuring the performance of Bangkok's political dailies with some implicit, never quite identified standard of what good or effective or reliable or trustworthy newspapers ought to be like.

If *Politics and the Press in Thailand* would benefit from more background discussion of the social and political context as they affect the functioning of newspapers and from rather less comparison with some undefined ideal-type, these failings are minor. Too, McCargo may be expected to address such matters more directly in his forthcoming companion volume *Media and Politics in Pacific Asia* (Routledge, 2001).

In both stylistic and technical aspects Routledge's editorial standards are often, as in the case of this book, not what they might be. Nevertheless, the fixation of many university-affiliated publishers with works of 'political science' and 'cultural studies' and a resulting neglect of more illuminating, durable studies of politics makes the appearance of McCargo's study both refreshing and encouraging. We can only look forward to future additions to the series that *Politics and the Press in Thailand* launches. They have a tough act to follow.

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#### Vietnam

*The Vietnamese Family in Change. The Case of the Red River Delta*

By PHAM VAN BICH

Richmond, Surrey: Curzon in cooperation with The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Vietnam in Transition series, 1999. Pp. 270. Bibliography, Index.

This work is about the family and its changes over fifty years (1945-95) in a northern part of Vietnam (Red River Delta). The author should be complimented on this respectful and impressive work. The book is the result of the reworking of his doctoral dissertation at the Department of Sociology, University of Goteborg, Sweden. The material in the book is based not on anthropological fieldwork but on a wealth of literature. It is amazing that so many studies on the Vietnamese family, covering a time span of roughly the last half-century, have been conducted and published. What is of specific value is that the author uses numerous sources in Vietnamese and opens up the findings to the wider world. His quotations from Vietnamese novels are particularly vivid and provide interesting illustrations of the topics under discussion.

The book is a comprehensive and rich scholarly work, a milestone, which reminds me of almost forgotten classics on family life in China, such as Olga Lang's *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946) or Elisabeth Croll's *The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). It contributes to a deeper understanding of the changes of the Vietnamese family. An important quality of the book is also the comparative perspective in terms of contrasts between Western individualism and Vietnamese collective family values.

Moreover, it contributes significantly to gender studies. What struck me the most is that

the book is conceptualised from a real, deeply rooted feminist perspective. Not a liberal, harsh or dogmatic feminism, but rather a kind of sensitive feminism which is present at all levels and dimensions of the analysis. If I had not known that the author is a man, I would certainly have thought that a woman had written the book.

In Chapter 1 the traditional family is described and the French influence analysed. In particular, attention is focused on the emergence of two new social categories in urban areas, the middle and the working classes, which formed new styles of family life. The author correctly presents fundamental characteristics of the traditional family, which still can be applied to the 'modern' family as well. These characteristics include the collective community, hierarchy of sexes and ages, patrilineal family, patrilocal post-marriage residence pattern and its variant gender separation, and women's status (division of labour, spatial segregation). The background of the patrilocal residence pattern is explained by focusing on the meaning and role of ancestor-worship. In the French period commerce was considered unworthy of men's respect. Women were in charge of the marketplace and brought their families a significant amount of cash income (p. 33), but this did not bestow on women prestige and power.

In the second chapter the social changes affecting the family in the period 1945-95 are shown. First, a number of crucial state-planned policies and interferences are analysed: ideological campaigns, laws on marriage and the family, women's liberation movement, class struggle approach during land reform from eq 1953-56 and its disastrous effect when it came to children's denunciation of parents (p. 72). The study shows that women generally benefited greatly from collectivisation in this period. The neglect of buffaloes shows the disadvantage of cooperatives. (It is remarkable that several people in Laos told me the same story about the fate of buffaloes). Policies of industrialisation, household registration and housing policies had a strong impact on living and working conditions of family members. The Delta was a battlefield in the wars against the French and the American air forces. Families suffered also from heavy losses of life among the soldiers born in the Red River Delta area in Cambodia (1978-91) and during the Chinese border war (1979). Population imbalance between men and women resulted in wide-ranging consequences and created families of single mothers, which is unacceptable in the traditional family structure (p. 87). However, recent official policy towards single mothers has changed dramatically. Unmarried women are allowed to have a child after a brief affair with a married man. Children bear the mother's family name and these families follow a matrilineal system. In 1986 the government launched its economic reform programme, known as *doi moi* (renovation), towards a market-led economy. Agricultural, industrial and cultural reforms followed and had deep implications for marital and family relations.

The husband-wife relationship is central to Chapter 3. Crucial themes are discussed, such as spouse selection, expectations of brides, and reasons for divorce in the traditional family. In a section on the conjugal bonds in contemporary families the focus is on marital partner selection and interaction at work, in free time, in family decision-making, sexuality and divorce. Political and family background criteria are less important than previously in the choice of a partner. The changes in the classic problematic relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law also are indicated, while the parent-child ties still remain dominant. The 'empty nest' concept is quite alien to many Vietnamese families as grandparents, in particular grandmothers, care for young grandchildren (p. 174). It is pointed out that there is a special Vietnamese family type in which spouses live separately for a long time for occupational reasons. One of the conclusions of this chapter is that marriage still mainly serves the interests of groups, not individuals (p. 177).

Reproduction and its socio-cultural meaning in the traditional and present family are central issues in Chapter 4. There is a strong desire among almost all couples to have children. A woman without a child feels like 'a failure as a woman' (p. 186). Preference for sons is very strong and many women still feel ashamed and guilty for not giving birth to a boy, since traditionally women were blamed for not having a son. The economic value of sons, care for old parents, and the son's crucial role in ancestor worship still motivate the desire for a son. The author states that ancestor worship does not undergo secularisation. On the contrary, improved living standards and social status imply more means to remember ancestors. In late 1988 the Vietnamese government specified financial and work penalties for couples that had more than two children. The implementation of these compulsory measures varies from place to place, but it is quite common. The negative effects of birth control for women are discussed and confirm the findings of Tine Gammeltoft (*Women's Bodies, Women's Worries* [Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999]). It is very alarming that recent abortion rates have increased dramatically. A survey predicts that if this trend continues, there will be twice as many abortions as births in the near future (p. 193). For substantial groups of women having an abortion was an alternative method of birth control. The burden of having smaller families is borne mainly by women and is not merely a technical, medical or economic problem, but also a socio-cultural one.

The conclusion discusses the role of the state in changing family patterns, hierarchy, the limits of family change and the Confucian legacy, plus Marxist bias on gender issues. The first conclusion of the author is that 'it is undeniable that the state has played an enormous role in changing the family patterns' (p. 236). The direction of change within the family is remarkable. Today freedom in marital partner selection has become a reality for a wide range of young people. Women's status has improved significantly both inside and outside the family. In urban areas there is more freedom to choose a marriage partner. This has strengthened the conjugal ties and has placed the partners on a more equal footing. Nevertheless, the second conclusion of the author is that 'although the idea of social equality is put forward in some respects, the traditions of hierarchy still continue unabated' (p. 239). In his third conclusion he points to the narrow understanding of the concept of gender equality in Vietnamese society. He states that 'to achieve it in a Confucian society that has adopted Marxism, as Vietnam has done, requires a redoubled effort' (p. 245). The birth control programme has reduced the number of children. In Vietnam family changes can hardly be attributed to industrialisation as has been stated in Western sociological studies. The fourth and last conclusion is that 'the more the families improve their standards of living due to the present renovation policy, the more independently they can build up their family life: restoring traditions, absorbing some Western influence, or adopting some combination of both' (p. 252).

A small remark is that I miss any reference to the book edited by Rita Liljestrom and Tuong Lai (*Sociological Studies on the Vietnamese Family* [Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1991]). And it is a pity that the author was not aware of the study conducted by Le Thi Nham Tuyet and L. Schenk-Sandbergen on women in the Red River Delta (*Rural Women in the Red River Delta: Gender, Water Management and Economic Transformation* [Hanoi: Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development, 1996]), in which the link between the environmental context of the Red River Delta – floods, droughts, irrigation water management – and feminisation of agriculture and male migration is emphasised, which is missing in Pham Van Bich's book. However, this is a minor criticism. The book deserves to be read all over the

world by people interested in changing family relations and gender studies. The book is a laudable example of a study to be followed in many other countries.

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