Altishahr suffered the most. Nayancheng was dismissed because of his failures, but the court had no better alternatives.

Debates over the embargo continued, as Altishahr fell into turmoil and decay, until the court agreed to a trade treaty with Khoqand in 1832. This treaty restored tax-free trade for Khoqandis in Altishahr, allowed merchants to govern themselves with their own headman, restored their property, while allowing Khoqand to tax merchant trade with Altishahr. Joseph Fletcher argued that this treaty was a radically new trade policy that anticipated the provisions of extraterritoriality negotiated by the Qing with the British after the Opium War.[1] Newby claims, by contrast, that all these provisions simply restored tried and true Qing strategies, and that "there is little to suggest that the Qing court had wittingly conceded anything that might be termed extraterritoriality, in the modern sense" (p. 199). Yet even if the Qing did not consciously concede new rights, the Khoqandis interpreted the treaty as a justification of new powers over the inhabitants of Altishahr, just as the British did for Canton. The wide divergence in points of interpretation between Qing and Khoqandi officials laid the ground for future conflict, just as in Canton. Although Fletcher may have been mistaken on a point of detail about Qing policy, he still correctly pointed out the intimate links between policies on northwestern and southern frontiers.

Newby also makes the more interesting argument that Qing consciousness of borders grew harder in the nineteenth century, as the empire no longer tried to assert military or political authority beyond the *karun* border posts. A fluid frontier zone had turned into a line on the ground, allowing Khoqand to increase its span of control over neighboring Qirghiz and Qazaq tribes. But the Khoqandi state lost power in the 1830s, even though Khoqandi merchants conducted flourishing trade in Kashgar with the Chinese interior. One of their profitable new items of trade was opium, another link between the far west and the new southern barbarians. But into the 1840s, the Qing court, dominated by Han literati concerns more than Manchu frontier knowledge, lost interest in this frontier, and its military weakness could not hold off Russian encroachment. More rebellions flared up without much response by the Qing until Yakub Bek, the great Khoqandi adventurer, invaded the region in the 1860s. After Zuo Zongtang savagely suppressed him, Khoqand fell inexorably under Russian control.

The detailed political narrative adds much to our understanding of the complex vicissitudes of frontier diplomacy and military activity in the region. Except for a brief discussion of the British, however, the author does not engage in comparative study of other frontiers of the empire. The interesting information on Khoqandi trade is rather isolated from the broader Central Eurasian networks. Jade, for example, an important product of Khotan, is not mentioned here. This is mainly a court-centered history, but through the Manchu and Chinese documents we learn a great deal about a Central Eurasian state which for over a half century helped to shape the border consciousness and identity of the Qing empire.

The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia.
By Barbara Watson Andaya. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. Pp. 335. ISBN 9780824829551.

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While the *relatively* high status of women in Southeast Asia has often been used to signify the cultural cohesion of the region, to date, relatively little historical research has seriously examined

1 Fletcher, Joseph. "The Heyday of the Ch'ing Order in Mongolia, Sinkiang, and Tibet." In John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part I.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 351–408.

the applicability of these claims. Barbara Watson Andaya's recent monograph, titled after the Ken Deddes, the famous "princess of the flaming womb," thus tests such claims against the backdrop of the immense economic, political, social and religious changes of the early modern period. This study gives voice to the growing consensus among scholars of gender in Southeast Asia that the "female autonomy thesis" has been used too broadly to describe women's status in the region. Building on these concerns, Andaya adeptly integrates original research with the newly published and unpublished scholarship from the diverse fields of East, South, and Southeast Asian Studies, to defend – albeit cautiously – that the region has been historically kind to women. The study spans the period typically called the "early modern era" in Southeast Asian history, the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, and tackles questions of regional coherence, localization, economic and religious change, and female agency, adeptly bringing the concerns of area studies and gender history into Andaya's "laboratory" of Southeast Asia.

Three key issues frame the study: the continuing debate about the cultural coherence of the region and the validity of claims of female autonomy; the methodological and empirical difficulties of writing a women's history of Southeast Asia, and the effects of "early modernity" on the lives of Southeast Asian women. In responding to area studies critics, Andaya asserts that Southeast Asia is more than a simple academic convenience created by post-war scholars and the dictates of Cold War politics. Rather, the Southeast Asian cultural zone, which stretches from the mountain ranges and highland areas of mainland Southeast Asia to the reaches of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, impeded the transmission of outsider morality systems that would have been more detrimental to women's status (p. 40). Within the zone itself, Andaya guardedly suggests that a multiplicity of reasons, including the prevalence of bilateral kinship patterns, matrilocal residence, low population density, and the importance of female agricultural labor created socio-cultural systems that afforded women more autonomy than their counterparts in the rest of Asia (p. 41). While acknowledging that the documentary evidence for the early modern period is sparse, Andaya nonetheless believes that careful use of interdisciplinary methods, a more flexible interpretation of the historical archive, and the use of indigenous and European sources to illuminate one another can reveal fruitful analysis of the women's lives in the region (p. 68). By venturing to write such a study of a relatively undocumented part of the past, Andaya knowingly places her conclusions in the face of the critiques of feminist and post-colonial studies.

The bulk of Andaya's study investigates how "early modernity," in Southeast Asia – generally understood as the transmission of the world religions, rise in commercialization, and the centralization of states – affected women's status within the region. Although Andaya ultimately argues that the combined effects of these processes led to the devolution (though not complete) of women's status in Southeast Asia, within each of the chapters, she offers richly documented examples and qualifications to this generalization. The advance of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism and Islam fundamentally changed cultural constructions of femaleness by privileging male elites in their canonical texts. Although these new religions justified new forms of authority for men, women continued to hold important spiritual roles in local society (p. 103). Just as high female participation in spirit propitiation carved out important spaces for female leadership before the advance of the world religions, the persistence of these practices and the ability of older women to represent themselves as exemplars of the new morality systems mediated the effects of these outsider morality systems on female status more generally (p. 83). Likewise, with respect to the rise of international trade and commercialization, Andaya traces a downward spiral in women's control over resources, but nonetheless gives rich examples of moments when some women could use changing socio-economic circumstances to strengthen traditionally strong economic positions (p. 118). In general, however, Andaya argues that the rise of cash crop agriculture and commercialization and the urbanization that accompanied these transitions ultimately led to the

devaluation of women's contributions to the household economy (p. 121). Moreover, the increased number of foreign men in Southeast Asia's urban centers led to the redefinition of traditionally acceptable temporary sexual unions as prostitution, ultimately commoditizing women's bodies (p. 127). In examining how the increased centralization of states affected female status in Southeast Asia, Andaya deftly weaves together her arguments in the previous chapters, demonstrating how revenue from commercialization and the political alliances with the Buddhist, Catholic, Confucian, and Islamic orders multiplied states' mechanisms for population control (p. 141). This increased infrastructural power of the state, combined with long-standing political theories linking the household to the social and political order, led to a more efficient application of official morality, which was stricter on women's economic, sexual, and social roles. Here, Andaya is quick to point out that local communities ultimately served as the most effective enforcers of official morality, perhaps partly because of the mutually reinforcing relationship between spiritual and political authorities.

Andaya ends the study with two chapters that deal explicitly with the potential problems of representation and offers a significant challenge to prevailing feminist studies scholarship, and invites other scholars to join her in an exploration of the history of gender in Southeast Asia. In the penultimate chapter, Andaya admits that while the available historical sources privilege the elite, they nonetheless offer insightful evidence on how such values were transmitted to the masses, particularly through the influence of the world religions. The final chapter provides a general template for understanding the life course of women in Southeast Asia (pp. 197–225). In discussing moments of female subversion of official power, Andaya rightly highlights the prestige that older women and widows achieve and the power they maintain by virtue of their life experience (p. 220). Arguably, Andaya's most controversial position is her claim that the universality of a biologically female body tied to the reproductive process creates a convincing argument for comparative study – both within and outside of Southeast Asia. Although Andaya certainly does not take for granted the category of "women," using this "body" and the socio-cultural attitudes toward the biological functions associated with this "body" as a template for understanding gender history in Southeast Asia potentially mutes the effects of socio-cultural discourses on the construction of genders and endows scholars who occupy this biologically female body cultural capital in the writing of women's history (p. 225).

While Andaya rejects the proposition that immutable cultural features can account for the relative autonomy of "female" status in the region, the study nevertheless affirms that the region's cultures were historically more favorable to women than those of East or South Asia. Her cautious conclusion that the early modern period brought about a devolution of female power in Southeast Asia risks implying that indigenous cultural systems simply responded to external influences, whether they were economic, political or spiritual. Such a conclusion precludes internal negotiations of power within the diverse polities themselves. To a certain extent, Andaya, as all scholars of Southeast Asia, is limited by the availability of sources and must generalize on the state of gender relations before the advent of these changes. That the study raises these questions attests to its success in generating discussion on the topic. Although the study does not introduce new theoretical modes to the study of gender in comparative perspective, it certainly raises important qualifications to the (still) dominant assumption about the cultural cohesion of the region. Because the study immerses itself in issues that relate to both women and men and invites new conversations, it succeeds in its goals. The attention Andaya gives to historiographical concerns as well as alternative narratives make this an essential tool for those studying Southeast Asia as well as the comparative history of gender.