

## Book Reviews

### Asia

*Nanshin: Japanese Settlers in Papua and New Guinea 1890-1949.*

By HIROMITSU IWAMOTO.

Canberra: The Journal of Pacific History, 1999. Pp.viii, 179, Tables, Maps, Illustrations, Bibliography, Index.

There has been a growing volume of literature on Japan's relations with the South Seas, since the appearance in 1975 of Toru Yano's book, *Nanshin no Keifu* (The Genealogy of the Southward Advance) (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha), in which Yano put forward an analytical framework for *nanshin* (Japan's southward advance). However, studies on *nanshin* to Papua and New Guinea have been much neglected, and, as far as I am aware, Hiromitsu Iwamoto's book is the first major work on this topic.

In this book, *nan'yō* (the South Seas) is defined as the regions comprising Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia and Southeast Asia. The author examines the Japanese interest in Papua and New Guinea from 1890 to 1949 in the context of *nanshin*, and sheds light on how the Australian government and the advocates of *nanshin-ron* (southward advance theory) perceived the Japanese settlers in these territories.

The author traces the Japanese settlers in Papua and New Guinea as an offshoot of Japanese immigrants to Thursday Island. In the early 1880s, Japanese began to migrate to the island for shell-fishing, and their number continued to increase sharply. As they came to dominate the shell-fishing industry at the expense of European rivals, Australian officials imposed restrictions on Japanese immigration and their activities, with the result that some of the Japanese moved to Papua and New Guinea.

As far as Papua is concerned, according to the author, there is not much information about the Japanese activities there before Australia formally took over the territory from Britain in 1906. In 1913 there were nine Japanese settlers, and they were mainly pearl divers and traders. The Australian administration hardly took any notice of them, largely because they did not pose any threat to the whites.

Regarding New Guinea, which was under German control, the author describes clearly how the Japanese society evolved around Isokichi Komine, a skipper. Komine initially migrated to Thursday Island in 1890, and was in search of a shell-fishing ground in 1901 when he met Governor Hahl in Rabaul. As Hahl needed a vessel, and Komine land to settle, they had mutual interests. Komine was then able to acquire leases of land on Manus Island and in Rabaul. Subsequently, he began to engage in copra-planting, shell-fishing, and boat-building. As the governor permitted him to bring in Japanese artisans and labourers, the Japanese population began to rise, reaching about 100 just before World War I. The author points out that the Germans did not restrict Japanese immigration, as long as the Japanese did not compete with them.

After the outbreak of World War I, New Guinea and German Micronesia were occupied by

Australians and Japanese respectively, and were mandated to them at the Paris Peace Conference in 1921. Consequently, the *nan'yō* fever in Japan, which had subsided after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, revived, and *nanshin-ron* became an expansionist ideology. Nevertheless, as Iwamoto argues, government officials and the navy were more concerned with Southeast Asia and Micronesia, not with Papua and New Guinea, which were not important to Japan in terms of trade, emigration or capital investment. However, in 1936 *nanshin-ron* was integrated in national policy as it became more militaristic in the late 1930s. The *nanshin-ron* advocates wanted to create the image that Japanese immigrants in Papua and New Guinea were part of Japanese expansionism. However, according to the author, the immigrants hardly held any *nanshin* ideology, for almost all of them came from impoverished villages in Kumamoto, Nagasaki and other Japanese prefectures, and were anxious to make money abroad. Isokichi Komine, who employed most of the Japanese immigrants in New Guinea, was largely concerned with his own business operations, even though he had some contact with *nanshin-ron* advocates.

As for the Australians, they came to recognise the strategic value of the territory, and began to restrict Japanese immigration into New Guinea in the late 1920s, for they perceived that Japanese immigrants in Papua and New Guinea constituted part of government-organised Japanese expansionism into the South Seas. Therefore, as soon as the Pacific War broke out, all of the Japanese immigrants were arrested and sent to Australia for internment. After the war, the majority of the Japanese internees were repatriated to Japan, and only those who were married to local women were taken back to Papua and New Guinea where most of them were kept in custody and were eventually sent back to Japan. Iwamoto asserts that the settlers became the victims of the distorted perceptions of the Australians and *nanshin-ron* advocates.

The author follows the traditional *nanshin* approach, which examines how Japan's southward advance was made by 'Japan proper', that is Japanese immigrants, Japanese firms and the Japanese government, and which takes virtually no account of the role of non-Japanese. He also takes up a commonly held view that 'in Southeast Asia, *karayuki-san* spearheaded Japanese business expansion, and they were followed by [Japanese] traders who mainly sold sundries to them' (p. 58). However, in recent years, there has been a growing number of scholars who attach importance to the role of overseas Chinese merchants in Japan, especially those of Kobe, in Japan's southward advance. They cultivated the South Seas markets for Japanese goods through their intra-Asian commercial networks before World War I, and most Japanese trading firms simply followed in their footsteps during and after World War I. Although the author does not describe much about the economic activities of overseas Chinese in Papua and New Guinea, it could be possible that some of them were engaged in trade with Japan through overseas Chinese merchants in Japan.

As for *karayuki-san* (Japanese prostitutes abroad), they were certainly the earliest Japanese immigrants in Java, Sumatra and British Malaya, but not in the Philippines. The author points out that in the case of Papua and New Guinea the first Japanese immigrants were pearl divers and artisans, not *karayuki-san*, and concludes that 'the presence of *karayuki-san* in New Guinea does not conform to the Southeast Asian pattern' (p. 58), since Japanese economic activities developed independent of the *karayuki-san*. Is there then 'the Southeast Asian pattern' (meaning Japan's economic advance led by *karayuki-san*)? Although one should not deny completely *karayuki-san*'s role in Japan's early economic advance into the South Seas, the overseas Chinese merchants in Japan played a far more important role than *karayuki-san* did.

There are certain parts of this book that may need more detailed description. For example, the reader would like to know how Komine employed Japanese and local workers in his plantations,

boat-building, and other ventures, and how much he paid them. The author refers to 'Burns, Philip' several times, but does not give details. Also, he asserts that Japanese pearl divers 'were professional divers paid high wages by white employers and they remitted their money to their homes' (p. 147), but provides no figures. Prior to World War I, several hundred Japanese divers were employed by the Celebes Trading Company for pearl fishing around the Aru Islands, but they hardly made any remittances for they spent most of their earnings lavishly on prostitutes, gambling and drinking during the off-season. One would wonder if the fishermen on Thursday Island did the same.

Finally, I must say that this pioneering work is informative, and recommended particularly to those who are interested in Japan's southward advance into the South Seas in general, and Papua and New Guinea in particular. The author took great pains in conducting interviews in Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea, and makes use of a variety of primary and secondary sources. The maps, photographs and statistical tables are useful.

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*The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography.*

By MARTIN W. LEWIS and KAREN E. WIGAN.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. xv, 344. Bibliography, Illustrations, Index.

Labels denoting global regions are commonplace in both academic and popular usage. Some, such as the binary constructions of Occident and Orient or East and West, are clearly pernicious but nevertheless provide a shorthand that is widely adopted. Others, including the scheme of continents, world regions, 'civilisations', and so on, are less controversial but often no less problematic in their aggregation and essentialisation of diverse lands and peoples. In *The Myth of Continents*, Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigan take these categorisations to task, seeking to highlight both their empirical inaccuracies and their ideological uses.

The first substantive chapter tackles the received five-, six- or seven-fold continental scheme conventionally used to carve up the world. While entitled 'The Architecture of Continents' the chapter is perhaps more accurately a detailed 'archaeology' of the idea from Greek geographers to the present. The arbitrariness of the continental scheme is noted, together with its ideological baggage – granting, for example, Europe an equal status to an Asia which in reality comprises several 'continents' of equal magnitude and diversity to the Europe of the mapmakers.

The second and third chapters take the East-West dichotomy as their object of analysis. This is, of course, a mental construct that has been exposed to sustained critique since Said's *Orientalism* laid bare the discursive construction of the Orient as the Euro-American Occident's other. The first of the two chapters traces the changing spatial extent of these two groupings as they have been popularly understood over time; the second explores the cultural constructions that have been embedded in each global meta-region over time. While this covers some of the same ground as Said, Lewis and Wigan add to the debate by attempting to deconstruct not just the Eurocentric construction of the East or the Orient, but also the construction of the West that is also implicit in such a dualism – a construction based on empirically unconvincing stereotypes of rationality, personal freedom, technological restlessness and so on.

The fourth chapter moves on to examine how these metageographical concepts inform attitudes of Eurocentricism, but equally its converse in, for example, Afrocentrism. While Eurocentrism assumes an unwarranted priority for Europe culturally, and gives it a continental parity with Asia or

Africa, Afrocentric (and, one might also argue, Asiatic) views simply reproduce this chauvinism in an inverted form. Chapter five examines two further metageographical schemes that have informed historical studies at the global scale – the analysis of ‘civilisations’, and the identification of categories within ‘world systems’. The former derives primarily from Toynbee’s work but has been given contemporary currency through Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis. The latter has been popularised through the work of Braudel and Wallerstein in particular.

The final substantive chapter examines what the authors describe as the world regions approach – a metageography that provides the most promising alternative to the inadequate schemes reviewed in the preceding chapters. These world regions in conventional usage include East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Latin America and so on and inform the ‘Area Studies Complex’ as it is constructed in the US and elsewhere. Along with Latin America and Central Asia, the authors pay particular attention to Southeast Asia and provide an excellent six-page summary of the debate over the nature of Southeast Asia as a world region. Lewis and Wigen are not, however, satisfied with the existing regional scheme and provide a modified alternative, that reflects, they claim, historical processes rather than specific diagnostic traits; that ignores political or ecological boundaries and gives primacy instead to assemblages of ideas, practices and social institutions; and, that defines world regions not just with respect to their internal characteristics but also with regard to their relation to one another. Despite being a notoriously slippery region to justify as a coherent unit, Southeast Asia comes out of this exercise relatively unscathed, losing only Irian Jaya/West Papua to a Melanesian region in the process.

While the authors’ approach has much in common with the deconstructivist urge that is now so prevalent in geography and other social sciences, they are careful to back away from denying the possibility of defining world regions, seeing them instead as an essential pedagogical and heuristic tool – hence their presentation of an alternative world regional scheme of their own. Their conceptual position is not therefore that all taxonomies must be deconstructed, and the urge to taxonomise undermined, but rather that a more sensitive set of categories is needed and that such labels should be used cautiously.

The style in which the authors reach these conclusions is impressively erudite. Their command of literature covering all corners of the globe is remarkable and it is marshalled in a dense but accessible manner. Most of the sources are consigned to over 70 pages of endnotes, which, while making the text itself easier going, is cumbersome if one actually wants to read the notes themselves.

It is clear at several points in the text that the intended audience is American and that the impetus for writing the book is a belief that college students are in desperate need of a grounding in the complexity of global human geography. A prerequisite for such a pedagogical goal is a heuristic scheme that gives some structure to the world through regional classification. In one sense, then, the book is explicitly targeted at American readers, but a poor geographical awareness is certainly not limited to the US and the authors’ arguments could surely be made for students and the general public the world over. The famous New Yorker map of the world, with distant places in the US and overseas only vaguely visible on the horizon, is surely repeated in mental maps everywhere. What the authors have failed to do, however, is to examine in any depth the ways in which non-Western peoples have constructed global metageographies and worldviews. Whether Southeast Asia, for example, is as meaningful a concept to Southeast Asians as it is to the US State Department is questionable. This is a failing that the authors acknowledge and suggest future research should address.

A second criticism, also recognised by the authors, is that their own reconstructed world regional scheme is vulnerable to the same pitfalls as those it is intended to replace. While it is undoubtedly more sensitive and sophisticated, it would fail in its purpose if this greater ‘accuracy’ simply lent generalities and essentialisations based on its regional categories further legitimacy. Thus while students undoubtedly

need these global categories within which to organise their mental maps, they must serve only as a starting point to explore the very diverse national experiences within them, and the internal complexities of different societies at a still smaller scale. Furthermore, such meta-regions must not blind us to social processes that occur across the boundaries of contiguous regions in the networked or diasporic spaces of a globalising world.

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*Patriots and Tyrants: Ten Asian Leaders.*

By ROSS MARLAY and CLARK NEHER.

Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999. Pp. xii, 353. Photographs, Maps, Notes, Bibliographies, Index.

This book is aimed at the university textbook market. The authors make clear at the outset that as 'university teachers' they have often 'wished for a book that presents the lives of the famous (and infamous) leaders of modern Asia in the light of their national cultures and histories' and this volume is meant 'to be that book' (p. xi). Following an introduction, which very briefly canvases issues such as leadership, nationalism and the role of the 'Great Man' in history, a series of ten chapters provide short biographies of well-known twentieth century leaders along with brief sketches of the wider history of the relevant countries. The leaders examined are Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, Norodom Sihanouk, Pol Pot, Sukarno, Suharto, Mohandas Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.

This is a simplistic book. I have taught both survey-style and specialised university courses on Asian history, political economy and social change at the undergraduate level for over ten years and this is the kind of book I would avoid using at all cost. Even, or especially, first-year university students deserve far more challenging material than this. For example, we are told that Deng Xiaoping was a 'complex and contradictory man' (p. 47), Ngo Dinh Diem 'was a puzzling, contradictory man' (p. 115), while 'Indira Gandhi's life was filled with contradictions' (p. 321) and Ho Chi Minh 'was a man of mystery' (p. 89).

The book fails to convey any of the historiographical depth and complexity which attends twentieth-century Asian history generally and the lives of some of the most important (and often long-serving) political leaders more specifically. A sense of the breadth of opinion on the leaders and the politics of differing interpretations is consistently lacking. Instead, the authors rely on propositions such as 'if we consider only China's economic progress, Deng was a hero', but 'if we consider only human rights, he was a tyrant' (p. 69), or, did Mao 'liberate the Chinese people, enslave them, or both?' (p. 25). Even when they do attempt to clarify and adjudicate a range of competing explanations, such as when they provide a 'summary of eight different' attempts to explain the 'radical evil' of Pol Pot's Cambodia, instead of contextualising and weighing up the often politically charged accounts they simply conclude that 'perhaps there is some truth in each of these explanations' (pp. 196-8).

Meanwhile, in the case of Suharto's New Order for example, they fall back on the now standard argument that although Suharto was a dictator, he 'made economic progress the centerpiece of his administration, no small achievement in a country that was overpoliticised and under-developed'. In their view 'the economic growth Indonesia enjoyed in the Suharto years was overwhelmingly positive for most citizens'; however, 'Indonesia has probably reached the point at which further

progress demands democratization'. They conclude that 'a modern free-enterprise system depends upon a free flow of information and a decentralized decision making process' and 'Suharto could not concede this' (p. 257). No alternative interpretations are mentioned and their analysis of the rise and fall of Suharto assumes that Indonesia can be expected to conform to, or at least ought to be evaluated in relation to a conception of political change grounded in a romanticised reading of the history of the United States. This analysis meshes with the triumphant view that the end of the Cold War has ushered in an inexorable and beneficent march towards global capitalist democracy under the leadership of the United States.

Ultimately, this book, with its unwillingness to talk about historiographical issues in anything but the most anodyne fashion, contains little to recommend it. Anyone looking for a textbook on twentieth century Asian history and politics (with or without a focus on major leaders of the era) that challenges students and conveys some of the richness and complexity of the historiography and political analysis will need to look elsewhere.

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*Megacities, Labour, & Communications.*

By TOH THIAN SER.

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998. Pp. xxi, 169. Bibliography, Illustrations, Index, Tables.

This edited volume of eight articles focuses on three different aspects of globalisation: the rise of megacities, the increase in international migration, and the increase in the flow of information. The case studies are generally drawn from the United States, South Asia and Southeast Asia. These articles are derived from papers presented at a conference held by ISEAS (The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) in Singapore in February 1997.

The book is organised into three parts. In the first part, entitled 'Sustainable Megacities', Liu Thai-Ker, Akhtar Badshah and Om Prakash Mathur look at megacities in Southeast Asia, the United States, and India respectively. Liu Thai-Ker draws upon extensive examples from across Asia (especially from Singapore and Hong Kong) to suggest how 'constellation cities' are an effective alternative to megacities in the search for sustainability in Asia. Looking at the United States, Badshah also seeks models of urban survival by looking at how Los Angeles and New York, and several community projects within them, have adapted to problems such as urban sprawl and urban blight. Tackling problems overall, Badshah explains, requires cooperation not just between local government and communities, but also a structure communicating effective solutions between urban centres. Mathur, who focuses upon India, looks at sustainable cities in what will soon be the world's most populous country. According to Mathur, India faces both accelerating urbanisation and the complex impact upon its megacities due to globalisation, thus requiring new economic policies.

In the second section, 'Global Flows of Labour and Employment', Azizah Kassim and Gary P. Freeman contribute articles examining international labour migration. Freeman focuses upon the problems involved in US migration policy and the ways in which it will have to adapt to make continued immigration acceptable to the American public (such as switching from a family- to a skill-oriented immigration policy). Azizah examines the impact of trans-national migration in Malaysia, where the biggest problem involves chronic illegal immigration from Indonesia. Although the government has taken steps to legalise and thereby regulate otherwise illegal labour

immigration, Azizah explains that these efforts have been foiled due to a lack of enforcement, on the one hand, and the continued interest of employers in using illegal labour, on the other. She outlines some of the negative impacts upon Malaysian society and government as a result of the illegal immigration and suggests that trans-national migration should not be seen as a temporary, but rather as a long-term, phenomenon as long as uneven economic development characterises the region.

In the third section, 'Global Communications Flows', Bernardo M. Villegas and Albert S. Velasco, Sanford J. Ungar and N. Vittal offer three articles that discuss media under the influence of globalisation. Villegas and Velasco draw upon examples from Malaysia and the Philippines to discuss the ethical side of the Internet. There is a tension between those who seek to censor and those who seek to free-up computer communication. Government censorship is seen as a counter to the 'dark side' of the Internet, the authors explain, which includes online fraud that is delaying the fruition of the application of the Internet to conduct global commerce, the use of the Internet by crime syndicates to organise 'global crime' and by First World countries to further the cultural aspects of neo-colonialism in the Third World, and the abuse of various targets via the Internet by hate groups and cyber-terrorists. The authors then explain, following Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir, that there is a difference between Western and 'Asian' values, suggesting that Asians prefer stable social relationships over freedom of expression, while Americans favour the reverse. Both the Western and Asian perceptions and value systems may be altered by interaction through global media such as the Internet. A balance between the two approaches is thus the best way to approach Internet censorship, and this balance, the authors suggest, is the best way to avoid Western cultural imperialism through the Internet. Ungar's chapter which follows examines the effects of removing censorship from the Internet and concludes that the lack of agreement regarding Internet ethics 'cripples the Internet as a means of communication' (p. 144), but that this problem cannot be solved through government censorship. Instead, Ungar suggests, voluntary guidelines and self-policing will be the more likely solution. Vittal offers a detailed discussion of the legal, technological, and economic basis of global communications and examines issues involved its social and cultural impact. Vittal concludes that although India and Southeast Asia may be receivers now to Western-directed global pop culture, cultural interaction made possible through global communications will soon become bilateral.

Although this book is directed at scholars of globalisation generally, much of the material and discussion is directly tied to Southeast Asia, a region so marked by the growing impact of globalisation. It is a book that scholars of globalisation and contemporary Southeast Asia should not miss.

MICHAEL WALTER CHARNEY

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*China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975.*

By QIANG ZHAI. Forward by JOHN LEWIS GADDIS.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. xiv, 304. Maps, Illustrations, Index.

Of all aspects of the French and American wars in Vietnam, the Chinese role is undoubtedly the least understood. This is due in large part to the lack of available Chinese-language archival materials. Zhai Qiang attempts to fill this important gap in the historiography of the Vietnam wars, utilising newly available sources from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Relying on provincial archives,

published documentary collections and memoirs and diaries of Chinese officials, Zhai explores the nature of China's participation in the wars and its relationship to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) from 1950 to 1975. Zhai examines the rise and fall of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance with greater depth and stronger documentation than earlier works on the subject.

The book is organised chronologically, describing China's assistance to the DRV and analysing the dynamics of PRC-DRV relations. Zhai identifies four factors that shaped Mao's Vietnam policy: national security concerns, a sense of ideological obligation to assist a fraternal communist party in a war of national liberation, personal ties to and a strong sympathy for the Vietnamese revolutionary cause, and a Chinese domestic political agenda. The author argues that Chinese aid to Vietnam was essential to its victories over the French and the Americans, but that Chinese 'ethnocentrism and paternalism' (p. 220) created considerable tension between the two states and led to the eventual break in Sino-Vietnamese relations.

Beginning with the war with France, Zhai describes the importance of Chinese advice and material support. In addition to supplying weapons and tactical advice, Chinese advisors helped reorganise, politicise and professionalise the DRV armed forces, which was crucial to the DRV victory over the French. The Chinese shared experiences acquired against the Japanese and the Guomindang in China and United Nations forces in Korea, showing their Vietnamese colleagues how to select proper role models, the proper way to deal with prisoners of war and how to celebrate victories in order to promote unity and bring the DRV armed forces together as a fighting force. The results were evident in 1954 with the victory at Dien Bien Phu. It is clear that Chinese advice was not always successful, such as when the Chinese encouraged Viet Minh forces to attack French strongholds in the Red River Delta in early 1951. Nonetheless, Zhai concludes that Chinese advice and support were indispensable to the DRV victory over the French.

Chinese advice also helped sow the seeds of PRC-DRV discontent. Zhai describes the better-known sources of this tension, such as Chinese pressure on the DRV to compromise at Geneva in 1954, but he also discusses Vietnamese dissatisfaction with the Chinese model of revolutionary development. For example, the Chinese advised the Vietnamese to conduct a Chinese-style land reform campaign that involved the confiscation of property of landlords and rich peasants. This proved inappropriate for the Vietnamese, as many members of these two groups had supported the Viet Minh for nationalist reasons. As Zhai puts it, 'the excessive class struggle and repression [of the Chinese model] during the land reform contradicted the party's united front policy' and 'alienated an important segment of the population' (p. 42), leading DRV officials to question the validity of the Chinese model for Vietnam.

China continued to support the DRV in its war against the United States, but Mao eventually found that his strategic goals differed from those of his Vietnamese counterparts. Disagreements over strategy and tactics and the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet split made it increasingly difficult for the DRV to work closely with China. The Chinese decision to seek rapprochement with the United States while the war continued in Vietnam spelled the end of the wartime alliance.

Among the most interesting aspects of the book is the connection between Mao's domestic agenda and his Vietnam policy. By 1962, Mao's displeasure with China's domestic situation resulted in a renewed emphasis on class struggle and 'continuing the revolution', and consequently a more militant policy of supporting Vietnam's war for national liberation. Zhai concludes that the American escalation of the war in Vietnam made Mao 'more eager to put his own house in order' (p. 151), contributing to his sense of urgency in launching the Cultural Revolution. Zhai also illustrates the importance of Laos and Cambodia in relations between China and Vietnam. Chinese



attempts to improve relations with these other Indochinese communist parties provoked suspicion from the DRV leadership and further exacerbated PRC–DRV relations.

This book is an important contribution to our understanding of China's relationship with Vietnam. Its impressive research, strong documentation and insightful analysis make it essential reading for those interested in the international aspects of the Vietnam Wars.

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### **Southeast Asia**

*Terms of Refuge. The Indochinese Exodus and the International Response.*

By W. COURTLAND ROBINSON.

London and New York: ZED Books, 1998. Pp. xiii, 322. Bibliography, Index.

This volume by Courtland Robinson deals with the large-scale refugee problems emanating from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam since 1975. The focus is on the international response to the refugee flows. To a more limited extent the book addresses the background factors contributing to the large-scale refugee movements from the three countries. The choice of focus on the international dimension, i.e. the reaction of the international community, is most probably in response to the demands of the copyright holder of the book, namely the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The choice of focus has considerable bearing on the volume and results in a comprehensive analysis of how international agencies and organisations responded to the refugee flows. The policies of the countries of first asylum in Southeast Asia are well researched, whereas China's response is given more limited attention. The responses of the countries of resettlement are given particular attention and they include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. Finally, the repatriation schemes carried out under the auspices of the United Nations agencies are analysed. Overall the study is solid and well researched. However, there are some weaknesses of both general and more specific character.

One of the general weaknesses is that the analysis of the background causes of the large-scale refugee flows could have been more comprehensive. After all, the refugee movements occurred in a complex domestic, regional and international context with major political and economic changes taking place as compared to the pre-1975 period. Furthermore, the second half of the 1970s was characterised by new sources of intra- and inter-state tension in and around the three countries. A second weakness is that the approach applied, with the highlighting of selected cases of individual refugees and their experiences, gives the reader the impression that these cases do represent broadly applicable experience but this is not substantiated by the data and information provided in the volume.

A third weakness is that the degree of politicising of the international response to the refugee crisis is not analysed to the extent it ought to have been. A case in point is the international response to the refugee flows from Cambodia into Thailand in the period following Vietnam's military intervention in Cambodia in 1979. A majority of the Cambodians arriving in Thailand were never protected by the UNHCR and remained under the control of Cambodian political organisations opposing the new Cambodian government and the Vietnamese presence in that country. In contrast, Laotian and Vietnamese refugees were all under UNHCR protection, except for those who

left Vietnam for China (95 per cent of whom were ethnic Chinese). (Note: For a more detailed analysis see Ramses Amer, 'The United Nations and the Cambodian Famine and Refugee Crisis', in *The Cambodian Conflict 1979-1991: From Intervention to Resolution*, by Ramses Amer et al. (Penang: Research and Education for Peace, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 1996), pp. 118-39).

It can also be noted that although the analysis of the repatriation schemes to the three countries in the 1990s is carried out in a satisfactory manner, it is not given adequate attention in the volume as compared to the analysis of the international responses to the refugee flows. In other words, there is an imbalance between various parts of the book to the detriment of the analysis of the repatriation schemes.

To conclude, it can be said that the volume is a valuable contribution to the literature on the refugee problems in and around the three Indochinese countries. It is particularly important for its analysis of the international response to the refugee situations. Given the less comprehensive approach to the causes of the exodus and to the political dimension of the response to the Cambodian refugee problem in Thailand, potential readers ought to consult other studies on these issues as well, in order to get a broader understanding of the complex situation within which the exodus took place and the regional and global responses were generated.

RAMSES AMER

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*The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures: Literatures of Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.*

Edited by DAVID SMYTH.

Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000. Pp. x, 273.

This collection of essays, based on a 1995 conference held in London, is intriguing. This is most apparent when the editor, David Smyth, writes in his own essay that to this very day the novel is at best a marginal phenomenon in Thai society and culture. According to Smyth, the Thai novel 'lacks the cultural prestige of its Western counterpart', and he adds: 'Quite simply, Thai novels have no value as cultural, intellectual, or social symbols' (p. 173). This low status is reflected by the fact that one of the potentially most important canonising agents in the country – Thai academia – has hardly cared to deal with this literary genre. It is telling that among the most important 'canon-founding' works identified by Smyth is an English-language anthology, published as recently as 1994 and compiled by the Frenchman Marcel Barang, in which just twenty Thai novels are discussed.

Smyth suggests that one of the main reasons for this may be a conceptual problem. The term in Thai that can be translated as 'Thai literature' is *wannakhadi thai*, which appears to denote poetry rather than prose. Moreover, this term's most important connotation is one of high artistic creativity, whereas the lesser-valued *wannakam*, which is used to refer to the novel, can denote anything in prose, 'from thirteenth century stone inscriptions to radio broadcast scripts' (p. 174). Thus, as Barang (quoted by Smyth) remarks, in Thailand it is 'easier to buy Château-Lacompe '57 than Bunlu'a's *Thutiyawiset*, published in 1966' (p. 179).

This is food for thought, of course, if only because similar conceptual incongruences are a prominent feature of other essays in this collection. Southeast Asian literatures, as well as the study of these literatures, suffer from notions such as 'novel', 'canon', and even 'literature' that have been

imported from the West. In Southeast Asian contexts these concepts are alien. Time and again in these essays one comes across discussions of the way in which Westerners thrust such notions (together with the corresponding world views and value judgements) down Asians' throats. In at least three cases, the essays as a whole are detailed examinations of how Western literary 'specialists' began to meddle with Southeast Asian literary affairs, eventually bequeathing to us 'literatures' that, as the Thai case suggests, may not exist.

In his essay, typically entitled 'The Regulation of Beauty', Bernhard Arps shows how in the early twentieth century the Dutch scholar J. Katz wanted 'to change conceptions of literature' among the Javanese (p.115). He did so by forcing upon them ideas 'from a different realm of literary thinking' (p. 123), such as 'art', 'beauty', 'literature', and even 'poetry' and 'poet'. Arps does not put it that way, but what Katz in fact did was introduce Romanticism in which, among other things, standardisation is greatly valued and in which, therefore, the idea of the canon is pre-eminent. By producing an influential corpus of 'Javanese' poetics (originally in Dutch!) and a host of textbooks of all kinds, Katz became instrumental in creating a situation in which the literary practice in Java was alienated from poetical theory and certain Javanese ways of doing things with texts were transformed, displaced, or marginalised. Significantly, it was also Katz who commissioned and, Arps suggests, even outlined what is considered to be the first Javanese novel (R.B. Soelardi's *Serat Riyanta*) – and the novel is, of course, the romanticist's prime literary genre. Thus, what today passes as 'modern Javanese literature' is the creation of a Dutchman.

This latter fact makes one think immediately of Maimunah Mohd. Tahir's essay about the construction and institutionalisation of Abdullah Munshi as the 'Father of Modern Malay Literature'. After all, both the autobiographic texts that Abdullah produced and for which he is famous were outlined to him by Western missionaries (B.P. Keasberry and/or A. North). Subsequently a whole series of Western (or Western-educated) scholars hailed and canonised Abdullah's writings, mainly because of their 'realism' and 'individualism' – qualities associated with modernity that were 'alien in Malay tradition' (p. 111). The author of this revealing essay painstakingly shows the various stages of canonisation through which Abdullah's works went – to end up, eventually, as the unquestioned, almost tabooed beginning of modern Malay literature. But again, being 'modern' more often than not just means being 'Western' or being valuable according to Western romanticist norms. It is therefore not surprising that Maimunah Mohd. Tahir ends her essay by stating: 'It would appear that from the circumstances of their production to their evaluation and subsequent perpetuation, Abdullah's works demonstrated an unflinching mark of the West' (p. 112).

One is somewhat surprised that the author ends here and does not make an attempt, however tentative, to deconstruct Abdullah's status or even the whole concept of 'modern Malay literature', especially because she provides enough starting points to do so. Although in this particular case such a deconstruction might have been something beyond the scope of the essay, this reluctance to explicitly resist alien concepts and value systems seems to be emblematic for the attitude of Southeast Asian men and women of letters. In any case, this collection of essays contains only a few examples of local resistance against the by and large rather violent romanticist creation of 'modern literatures' and subsequent canon-building.

In his interesting discussion of the bilingual periodical *Kambujasuriya* as a literary institution in twentieth-century Cambodia, George Chigas mentions at least some ways in which its Cambodian editors opposed their French colleagues' notions of literature that 'were based on Western expectations not met by Khmer writing' (p. 140). This was done somewhat stealthily, by

means of rather 'loose' translations into Khmer of contributions in French. Typically, when a certain Khmer text is celebrated as the '*premier roman moderne du Cambodge*' in the French section of a 1939 periodical, this qualification is omitted in the Khmer translation which 'has nothing to identify the text as the first Khmer novel' (p. 142).

Much more pronounced in this respect is the essay entitled 'Shot by Foreign Can(n)ons: Retrieving Native Poetics' by Muhammad Haji Salleh. As this title suggests, the essay as a whole is an endeavour to go against a set of concepts and values that are felt to have been violently imposed – the fire arms metaphor speaks volumes. However, as an act of resistance this essay fails, largely because it is itself replete with the notions it claims to be attacking: it could almost be said that if one wants a brief introduction into romanticist thinking, one might read this essay. Unwittingly, the academic and poet Muhammad Haji Salleh makes us aware of how difficult it is to get rid of a mind set, dominant now for at least two centuries, that produced and canonised 'literatures' within discursive formations that were, and are, profoundly different from those on which this mind set is based.

Such awareness seems to be increasingly important in relation to a recent trend in international scholarship in which the focus is on 'world literature'. The work of Itamar Even-Zohar, for instance, is a clear exponent of this trend, as is the recently published, important essay 'Conjectures on World Literature' by Franco Moretti (*New Left Review*, January–February 2000). Reviving and implementing the old ideal of *Weltliteratur* (Goethe, of course, as well as Marx and Engels), these critics conceive of literature as a planetary system of variations that they endeavour to capture through a synthesis of analyses such as those in the collection under discussion – thereby even formulating 'laws' of literature and turning the study of literature into a 'hard science'. However exciting this development seems to be – Romanticism can be exciting! – books such as *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures* not only constitute a prime source within this kind of approach, they also show that the utmost caution should be exercised. For what are we talking about when we speak of 'literature' or 'poetry' or 'novel' or 'canon', et cetera, when certain notions and values connected to such categories are absent, alien or marginal in a particular corpus of texts and the people who produced it?

It is precisely in this potential to raise such elementary questions that the importance of this book may lie. Therefore, it is a shame that the editing is somewhat annoying. Words and phrases are regularly underlined or printed in bold face where clearly italics were meant to appear. Sometimes the names of authors to which contributors refer are misspelled. Also references in essays are sometimes not listed at the back of the book, where one also comes across exclamations such as 'PUBLISHER??'. This suggests that drafts were not meticulously checked or that the final draft was sent to the publisher in great haste – an assumption that gains ground in view of the many times the reader is confronted with awkward sentences and anacolutha. The editing of a book is a thankless task, of course, and it is clear that the editor has worked hard. We should be grateful for this. However, especially because of the possible significance of this book outside the field – where in the past the results of the study of Southeast Asian discursive formations have simply been ignored – a flawless text would have helped to prevent the possibility of this topic being passed over in silence once again, thereby impoverishing the international and interdisciplinary debate. With its often knowledgeable and revealing contributions by specialists that could become important constitutive parts of a synthesis of the kind mentioned above, this book is simply too important to experience such a fate.

WILL DERKS

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## Indonesia

*Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur.*

By MICHAEL H. BAKAN.

Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999. Pp. xxiii, 384. Compact Disc, Plates, Figures, Musical Examples, Notes, Glossary, Bibliography, Index.

This is the first book-length study of the Balinese *beleganjur* percussion ensemble ('gamelan of walking warriors') and its music. One of the many distinct types of gamelan ensemble found in Bali, *beleganjur* was traditionally associated with warfare and ritual events such as cremation and temple ceremony processions. Since 1986, however, a new virtuoso and highly energetic form of competitive *beleganjur* ensemble has become popular, attracting in particular young men whose exuberance would probably otherwise be channelled into less wholesome pursuits. Although the *beleganjur* ensemble is still an indispensable part of cremation rituals, the popularity of the new contest style is such that its repertoire has all but supplanted traditional forms.

The influence of the flashy modern compositional style, known as *kreasi beleganjur*, literally permeates the book: Bakan divides his study into four sections corresponding to the four parts of the opening section of a *kreasi beleganjur* contest piece. He conceives his introduction as a verbal parallel to the *awit-awit*, a cadenza-like display of unaccompanied drumming; chapters 1-4 (each dealing with a different aspect of the history or development of the genre) as the *kawitan*, a series of fast-paced mini-compositions constituting the heart of a piece; chapters 5-6 (contemplating dysfunctional contests and the emergence of women's *beleganjur*, respectively) as the *pengawak*, a slower, more melodically conceived movement; and chapters 7-9 (dealing specifically with drumming) as the *pengecet*, the final movement, which returns to the original fast tempo but is more playful in nature.

The ethnographic portions of the book are especially rich and informative. Bakan gives the reader a vivid picture of the contemporary *beleganjur* scene, ranging from rehearsals to the political shenanigans that lie beneath the surface of competitions. He also introduces us to two central figures, I Ketut Sukarata and I Ketut Gede Asnawa. Although both are leading drummers, they present two quite different faces of *beleganjur*: Sukarata, from a musical lineage, considers himself a natural artist ('*seniman alam*'), while Asnawa is a major figure in the academy. Bakan led a somewhat schizophrenic life in the field, studying practical drumming with Sukarata each morning and '*beleganjur* history and theory' with Asnawa each afternoon (p. 193).

Drumming is unquestionably the focal point of the study: Bakan was a professional percussionist at the outset and it was drumming that he focused on during his fieldwork. It is a pity, therefore, that the analytical portions of the study are not as accessible as the ethnographic material. Although accompanied by a compact disc, the speed of the music makes reading Bakan's staff-note transcriptions a challenge. The drum notation, in particular, would have been more accessible if he had added the Balinese mnemonic stroke names. It is much easier for readers who are not specialists in Western music to follow the rhythms by speaking the syllables than it is to figure out the staff notation, particularly since the genre's strict conventions make it hard for the novice listener to hear much difference between the recordings.

In traditional Balinese pedagogy there is no place for breaking a piece up into sections or 'providing students with specific directions on how to solve musical problems' (p. 288); the students learn to imitate broad physical gestures first and, by refining their own version, gradually come to an understanding of both the piece and the style. Bakan rejected this 'essence before content' approach,

so hard for Western-trained musicians to emulate, as inefficient. Instead, he 'asked Sukarata for permission to instruct him on how to teach me' (p. 301). There is something vaguely unsettling about the image of Bakan sitting, with notebook in hand and pencil poised, holding up his hand to stop Sukarata every few measures in order that he (Bakan) could capture the next section of music. Indonesian musicians often criticise Western students for learning the finished product but not developing the intuitive understanding that enables them to transform and surpass the original. Based on his admittedly unusual learning process, one wonders exactly what lay beneath the (unabashedly orgasmic) transformative moment that Bakan finally experienced in performance (pp. 323-8).

In short, this is a book that ethnomusicologists who know little about Bali will hold up as a model of the new, more reflexive style of ethnomusicology. While it is certainly reflexive and even informative on its primary subject, it exudes none of the depth of knowledge about Balinese music and culture displayed in the work of such scholars as Michael Tenzer (whose latest book has just been published by the same press). By placing himself squarely at the centre of the book, Bakan explains more about himself than I, for one, wanted to know, particularly with regard to incidents that have no real bearing on the subject of *beleganjur* music (e.g., his surfing accident, his love life, about being bitten by a dog, etc.). Further, the decision to use his own performances with Sukarata on the compact disc as the model of *beleganjur* drumming style, reflects a palpable musical hubris. Bakan is aware that there is a thin line between reflexivity and self-indulgence. He realises that what he has presented 'might certainly be described as an example of the oft-maligned autobiographical narrative ethnography, and might also be described as highly self-absorbed' (p. 330). It is. His justification – that no apology is necessary because personal experience lies at the root of understanding – leaves me with one problem: I want to understand more about *beleganjur* and less about Michael Bakan.

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*Biographies of Florenese Musical Instruments and Their Collectors.*

By PAULA R. BOS.

Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1999. Pp. 96. Map, Illustrations, Bibliograph

This is an interesting little piece, published as a 'bulletin' by the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. This bulletin is based on a considerable amount of research that Paula Bos did, first as an undergraduate student at the University of Leiden, where she fulfilled part of her requirements in Cultural Anthropology Studies by doing fieldwork on Flores, and later as an M.A. student where she compared the musical instruments that she had collected on Flores with those already in the Royal Tropical Institute's collection. As Elisabeth den Otter, the curator of Ethnomusicology at the Royal Tropical Institute says in the preface, 'rarely has so much knowledge been put into such a small space' (p. 11).

With all of the data that she collected the author has attempted to do a number of things in this bulletin. The largest section in the book, chapter 4, is where she has assembled an organised account of the types of musical instruments that she and previous collectors had found on Flores. An excellent appendix of drawings done by Bos, with a useful guide for those less knowledgeable with the categories of musical instruments, as Western ethnomusicologists classify them, accompanies this account. The author also examines the motivations and intentions of the three instrument

collectors: Jaap Kunst, a famous ethnomusicologist who had worked as a civil servant during for the Dutch East Indies government in the 1930s, published quite a lot of material on the music of various Indonesian islands; one of Kunst's students, Father Pe Rozing, a Catholic missionary priest who worked on Flores from 1946 to 1984 and had a great love for music, especially as a means of enculturation; and Paula Bos herself, who was inspired to visit Flores after having met Father Rozing in 1992. Bos stayed in Flores from December 1993 to April 1994 and attempted, unlike the other collectors, to pay a great deal of attention to the cultural meanings of the instruments. By looking at the methods and interests of the three collectors, she manages to give us a summary of the history of the development of the field of ethnomusicology. Hence as the title promises, she examines both the 'biographies' of the musical instruments, as well as their collectors.

The final chapter, in which she relates her own experiences learning about and learning to play one particular instrument, the *foi meze*, – large flute' (also called 'the king flute'), in one particular village, Rowa in Nage, central Flores, is where her analysis comes together. This particular instrument is only played at one ritual occasion, the filing of a girl's teeth, the mark of her adulthood, as a way of appeasing the pain of this operation. The filing nowadays is done in a very minor, often symbolic way, so the purpose of the playing of the *foi meze* has in fact disappeared, and this flute had not been played for a long time in this village. Therefore we see how the biography of Paula Bos, in her quest to recollect Florenese musical instruments, contributed to the birth of a new *foi meze*, and a resurrection of the knowledge of this flute and its songs in this village.

It is unfair to criticise the incompleteness of this bulletin. Since Bos has attempted to do so many things, giving both an ethnomusicological and an anthropological account of Florenese musical instruments, as well as an understanding of the history of ethnomusicology, it is impossible for her to give the amount of detailed attention that these separate things would deserve in longer specialised works. There is only one thing that I do think should have been addressed more clearly and critically in this bulletin. In footnote 99 of chapter 4 (p. 64) Bos admits that many objects that she lists as musical instruments in her bulletin are not regarded as such by the Florenese people themselves. This point should have been stated in the beginning of her bulletin, and given some critical attention, in conjunction with reflexively thinking about the collection of these objects for a museum, which categorises them in ways that would be foreign to their creators. However, as a brief overview of Florenese musical instruments and the way they were collected in different ways by different people, this is a very useful little book for ethnomusicologists and all those interested in music in Indonesia, or the ethnography of Flores.

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*Khazanah Naskah: Panduan Koleksi Naskah-Naskah Indonesia Sedunia – World Guide to Indonesian Manuscript Collections.*

By HENRI CHAMBERT-LOIR and OMAN FATHURATHMAN.

Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1999. Pp. 315. Indexes, Bibliography.

A manuscript can serve many different purposes. It can be a primary source for a researcher, a sacred relic in some cultures or a tool to learn more about one's ancestors. To a librarian, a person coming to the Reference Desk with questions regarding the whereabouts of a certain manuscript can often mean a long complicated search, which may involve days or even weeks of trying to help the

patron locate the material. Often librarians fail to help at all due to the lack of reference tools. Their frustration increases when the patron knows that the manuscript exists, but does not know where to locate it. Additional problems, such as limitations in reading the language in which they were written and access to collections, have hindered the popularity of manuscripts among students and researchers. Despite these difficulties, many libraries spend a great amount of money in acquiring materials related to manuscripts, particularly reference guides, which are often very costly. While it is one of the many goals of libraries to maximise the use of their collections in supporting the research of their clientele, the difficulties in locating manuscripts and supporting their patrons can often lead to frustration. Although some 'Western' manuscripts have recently become more accessible due to the presence of guides, printed and/or electronic, difficulties remain in accessing Asian manuscripts. In the case of Indonesian manuscripts, which are scattered around the world, and usually written in many different vernacular languages (often using non-Romanised characters), the presence of a bibliographic tool such as *Khazanah Naskah* is enlightening.

*Khazanah Naskah* is a comprehensive guide to Indonesian manuscript collections around the world. It opens a window for librarians and researchers to a wealth of information. The introduction, in Indonesian and English, provides very useful background information about the nature of Indonesian manuscript collections. It has an index of all the institutions, arranged alphabetically by country, which hold the listed manuscript collections, and an index of the cited journal titles. Its extensive bibliography also can serve as a retrospective research tool, shedding new light on material for researchers. As is true with most reference books, this one uses many abbreviations, and the list of abbreviations provided at the beginning of the book is very helpful.

The core of the guide is divided into 18 sections, which are arranged alphabetically by language; thus, Acehnese manuscript collections make up the first section. Each section begins with a brief introduction in Indonesian, followed by an alphabetical list of countries and/or states that have institutions holding the manuscript. Though some languages and areas are lumped together – such as Bugis-Makassar-Mandar, eastern Indonesia, Kalimantan and south Sumatra – at least the authors justify this approach due to tradition, particularly in the case of Bugis-Makassar-Mandar, and limitations in numbers of manuscripts available (pp. 11-12, 22-3).

*Khazanah Naskah* is a very good bibliographic tool and it is strongly recommended for research libraries focusing on Southeast Asia, and would even be useful in larger public libraries. Libraries that do not have an extensive Indonesian collection would benefit in having this book since it provides a good general overview of Indonesian manuscript collections around the world. It should be the first tool consulted by anyone wishing to know what is available. Although it is written in Indonesian, the English introduction is a sufficient guide for those not familiar with the language.

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*Kesastraan Melayu Tionghoa dan Kebangsaan Indonesia, Vol. I (Chinese–Malay Literature and the Indonesian Nation, Vol. I).*

Edited by MARCUS A.S. and PAX BENEDANTO.

Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia (in collaboration with Yayasan Adikarya and The Ford Foundation), 2000. Pp. xix, 519. In Indonesian

This title wittily brings together two seemingly unrelated concepts. The literature written in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia over one century (c. 1860–c. 1960), beginning with the appearance of the printing press and the waning of the manuscript tradition, represents a very important category in the history of Malay/Indonesian literature. Few literary historians, with the notable exception of the French scholar Claudine Salmon in a remarkable number of very thorough and detailed studies, have examined this literature. This considerable category of works (estimated at around 3,000 titles) has thus been systematically ignored by most students of modern Indonesian literature, mainly because of the ambivalent status of the Chinese as part of the ‘Indonesian nation’.

The publication of the present volume by one of the most prominent publishers in Jakarta is therefore an important breakthrough. Even more so if we consider that this volume contains no fewer than seven titles and that the publisher plans to print a full series of 25 volumes, amounting to a total of 15,000 pages.

Published almost two years after the fall of Soeharto and the profound changes that occurred in Indonesia since then, this book accompanies a new attitude towards Chinese culture in Indonesia: Chinese written language and religious celebrations are no longer forbidden, and it is now even fashionable to stage a lion dance for a non-Chinese event. However, the publication of this book was actually planned long before the *Reformasi* era, giving a concrete example that the transformations at work in Indonesia over the last two years are not just consequences of the recent political upheavals: they are deep rooted in a more far-reaching transformation of the mentalities.

A short (too short) introductory note precedes each of the seven texts in this volume. Nothing is said about their selection, though, and it is unclear why so varied texts have been chosen. They belong to completely different genres and they cover a long time period, from 1871 to 1928. The first two texts are *syairs* (narrative poems), one about the visit of King Chulalongkorn of Siam to Java in 1871 (it is the oldest known ‘Sino-Malay’ book) and the other about the opening of a railway line in the vicinity of Batavia in 1890. The third text is a school handbook for learning how to read compiled in 1894 by the famous writer Lie Kim Hok (who has been dubbed ‘the father of the Sino-Malay language’). Then follow three short novels by three renowned authors: *Lo Fen Koei* by Gouw Peng Liang (1903; the first original Sino-Malay novel after many translations from the Chinese), *Oey Se* by Thio Tjin Boen (1903), and *Sie Po Giok* by Tio Ie Soei (1912). These titles show that the main characters are Chinese. The bulk of Sino-Malay literature was indeed written by Chinese authors about the Chinese community in Java for a Chinese audience – apart from countless translations obviously intended for the same audience as well. There were not many bridges with the ‘modern Indonesian literature’ that was being produced by indigenous authors beginning in the 1910s. These novels reveal much about the condition and the views of the Chinese community in Java, including their values and their relations with indigenous communities.

The three short novels in this anthology, all set in towns along the northern coast of Java, are based on true stories. Their style is reminiscent of European serials of the last century: quickly written in everyday language by professional journalists who felt close to their readers: they insist on contemporaneity and actuality; Tio Ie Soei even addresses his readers and tells in footnotes what actually happened to his characters. Like their European counterparts, these stories are preoccupied

with morals. Tio Ie Soei's novel tells of an 11-year-old boy who has to prove his honesty and generosity, and is ultimately rewarded by becoming wealthy; half of the story is about 'who has stolen the *sawo* fruit?' The last text in this book is a monograph, also by Tio Ie Soei, about a famous Chinese boxer of the 1920s, complete with contemporary documents and photographs.

The first two poems are, except for their language, still close to traditional Malay literature with its 'classical' historical *syairs* such as the *Syair Sultan Mahmud di Lingga* or the *Syair Perang Johor*. But the three novels are similar to those written at the same period by Indonesian and mestizo authors. They all belong to a popular literature written in daily spoken language that would soon be denied the label of 'literature' as a consequence of colonial policy. For that reason it is interesting to note that their language is still close to modern Indonesian daily parlance. It is replete with idioms now considered as vulgar, but it also has some rather sophisticated constructions. This language, which Salmon has shown to be the 'Malay of urban Java' rather than any specific 'Sino-Malay', had its own characteristic spelling. The editors of this volume unfortunately have been inconsistent in their approach to this fact, at times respecting the Sino-Malay spelling, but also following a few modern rules introduced in Indonesia since the 1972 reform. The result is an anachronistic mixture, neither old nor new, that never existed. Moreover, these 'improvements' have been applied in a non-systematic way.

This publication is an important contribution to the history of Indonesian literature and the publisher certainly deserves our praise for such a valuable endeavour. This collection of old texts is best considered in their historical context. However, there is another way to approach it, namely to read the book as one reads any other literature and enjoy it. It is a nice surprise to discover that these so-called 'Sino-Malay' novels are still highly enjoyable.

HENRI CHAMBERT-LOIR

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### **The Philippines**

*Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art.*

By PATRICK D. FLORES.

Quezon City and Manila: UP Office of Research Coordination and National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 1998. Pp. xix, 393. Plates, Bibliography, Appendices.

Contemporary Southeast Asian art history has received increased attention in recent years in museums, galleries and classrooms. This study of both a lesser known area, and a lesser studied period, of Philippine art history is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly literature on Southeast Asian art historical responses to Western style painting. Moreover, whereas other studies have focused on the imports of oil painting traditions from Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, this study goes back much further. Patrick D. Flores illustrates, through records of commissions for paintings in Philippine churches, how oil painting emerged in the Philippines through the Spanish Catholic Church's missions to the islands as early as the sixteenth century. In studying a much earlier instance of artistic contact between Europe and Southeast Asia, Flores' study not only challenges just the ways in which Southeast Asian art historians have viewed 'colonial' art in the region as a 'modern' phenomenon, but also questions the ways in which art historians in the West have classified Christian art of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a homogenous European category.

While I found Flores' writing style to be a bit difficult to follow with sentences as long as paragraphs at times and paragraphs that read like lists at others; a table of contents that obscures the actual content of the main ideas outlining the book; a vocabulary that blends post-modern jargon with references to post-colonial theory and the use of such words as 'artificiality', 'artness' and 'arthood'; and quotes in Spanish with no translation, his book is a fascinating study of the art historical biases and prejudices that are taken for granted in Western and Asian art history. In fact, Flores' study is packed with insightful comments on the ways in which art history is written. What starts out as a history of colonial period painting in the Philippines ends up as a critique of the very thing it initially embodies, a 'history'. While the author's style is confusing to the reader at first, by the end of the book I began to understand better why he chose a disjointed prose to explain some of his theories. In critiquing art history, the author chose not to write an art history. In fact, the book is a series of negations on conventional art historical practices. This is why readers expecting to find an 'art history' will have a difficult time following its arguments.

In tracing the origins of oil painting in the Philippines, Flores argues that the term 'colonial' has been employed by art historians to describe the Spanish influence on Philippine art in a way that ignores indigenous artistic expressions that contradict 'foreign' definitions of art. He claims that art history has favoured the colonisers and privileged European definitions of art over local expressions. As evidence for his argument, Flores illustrates how Europeans in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lacked definitions of art themselves and therefore were in no position to critique the Filipinos for being mere 'artisans'. This is an astute observation that applies to other areas of 'colonial' art history. The assumption in studies of Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese painting at the turn of the twentieth century is that the colonial period provided local artists with something 'new': Western-style oil painting. Although indigenous artistic expressions remained in practice, they were seen as having merged with foreign practices to create a 'modern' type of painting. Here, Flores argues that art historians have in fact mistaken religious painting in the Philippines for 'imported' or Spanish period painting. Rather, he argues, indigenous painting existed before the arrival of the Spanish only art history has failed to recognise it as such.

In pointing to the ways in which art history has failed to account for local innovations in art, Flores joins current critiques of colonial historiography. Where Flores' view stands out is that he sees art not as a colonial method of educating the native but rather as an indigenous weapon against colonial authority. His study therefore sheds a more positive light on the artistic encounters between Spain and the Philippines. In fact, his most salient argument concerns the question of Spanish influence on Filipino art. He asks what is 'Spanish' art in the sixteenth century? Spain was divided, artists of the court were Dutch, and Spanish artists themselves trained in France. It makes no art historical sense, therefore, to talk about Spanish influence on Filipino art when there was no such thing as Spanish art at the time. The term 'influence' is also questioned in this regard. To what extent were Filipino artists really subjected to Spanish influence in the arts?

Flores' conclusion is the most interesting part of the book. Although there is no indication of this in the introduction of the book, Flores comes to redefine what art was during the colonial period. By examining several artists and their works more closely, especially Esteban Villanueva's 'Basi Revolt' of 1821, Flores illustrates how art became history. Art was a means of reportage. This is where Flores' in-depth knowledge of post-modern theory becomes effective because he recognises that all art is naturally a form of 'document' to the art historian. But, as he points out, the art that Filipinos were making during Spanish rule acted mainly as historical documents for the indigenous population. In his view, art *is* history and not just evidence of a particular historical time subject to art historical interpretation. In this way, Flores makes an important contribution to the ways in

which art historians view art from Southeast Asia and more importantly he sheds new light on how Southeast Asians view art from Southeast Asia. Awkward presentation of ideas and confusing vocabulary aside, Flores offers an original and insightful alternative view of the history of Christianity in the Philippines as well as an innovative exploration into the history of oil painting in Southeast Asia.

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*The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction.*

Edited by IKEHATA SETSUHO and RICARDO TROTA JOSE.

Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1999. Pp. xiv, 394. Photographs, Index.

In recent years teams of Japanese scholars have assiduously collected materials related to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaya, scouring archives for neglected documents and interviewing surviving participants. The fruits of their labours have been published in monographs and document collections in Japanese, but thanks to this volume Southeast Asianists who do not read Japanese can benefit from the research of the Philippine group.

As in most edited volumes, the contributors to this book focus on particular aspects of the Japanese occupation. Eight of the nine contributors are Japanese, although two of them earned Ph.D. degrees in the Philippines and a third in Australia. The lone Filipino contributor, coeditor Ricardo T. Jose, completed his Ph.D. in Japan.

Coeditor Ikehata Setsuho provides an excellent introductory essay, which is followed by the broadest focused chapter, Nakano Satoshi's analysis of the contradictory aspects of appeasement and coercion in Japanese policy. Both authors make clear that the Japanese realised from the beginning that their occupation of the Philippines – which already enjoyed commonwealth status and had been promised independence by the Americans – would pose special problems and that a blatant anti-Western propaganda line would not resonate well. Although the Japanese accordingly sought to appease the Filipino elites, the army's ever-increasing need to exploit occupied areas undermined this effort and produced confused policies.

Three chapters focus on specific economic topics. Jose's chapter describes the failure of the Japanese and Filipino authorities to cope with a rice shortage that worsened as the war progressed. Ikehata focuses on the limited success, but ultimate failure, of Japanese efforts to exploit mineral resources in the Philippines. Nagano Yoshiko examines the completely disastrous Japanese attempt to develop large-scale cotton production in the islands.

Another three chapters zero in on Japanese policies towards minority groups and factions. Kawashima Midori argues that in the Islamic area of the Southern Philippines the degree of cooperation that local politicians provided reflected local rivalries and personal ambitions more than any 'pro-Japanese' sentiment. She also points out that the Japanese scrapped a proposal to separate the Islamic region from the Philippines because of their campaign to win over the politicians in Manila. Fascinating chapters by Terami-Wada Motoe and Hayase Shinzo assert that the Japanese authorities failed effectively to utilise the most genuinely supportive groups in the Philippines – the Filipino followers of two exiled nationalist political figures (Gen. Artemio Ricarte and Benigno Ramos) and the Japanese immigrant residents of Davao. Terami-Wada points out that the pro-Japanese Filipino dissidents were shunted aside as part of the effort to appease the

establishment politicians, while Hayase argues that the Japanese authorities considered the Davao colonists second-class Japanese because many were Okinawans and a considerable number had married local women. Later, the Imperial Army did mobilise the pro-Japanese Filipinos and the immigrant Japanese for the fight against the invading Americans, only to abandon them in the end.

Terada Takefumi's chapter analyses the Japanese approach to the Philippines' religious leaders, particularly the Roman Catholic establishment that was inconveniently headed by an Irish archbishop. The Japanese viewed him as pro-American, so they came to support the longstanding Filipino desire for 'indigenisation' of the Catholic hierarchy. Japanese plans to seek the Vatican's cooperation to this end never materialised, however, as the war situation deteriorated.

An important and compelling argument sustained throughout the volume is that the Japanese devastated the Philippines' economy through ill-advised and 'flagrantly self-indulgent' (p. 9) policies. At the same time the army's often-brutal actions thoroughly alienated the majority of Filipinos. Accordingly, while Japanese occupation may have hastened national liberation in other areas of colonial Southeast Asia, the authors believe that the war left the Filipinos more dependent – economically, politically and psychologically – on the Americans than had been the case previously.

The book also contains a superb 31-page appendix surveying archival sources in the Philippines, Japan, the United States and Australia. This essential guide to primary resources on Philippines during World War II also has much to offer scholars interested in researching the history of other areas of Southeast Asia during that period.

Characterised by painstaking scholarship exemplary by any standard, this volume sheds much new light on Japanese occupation policies in the Philippines. This well-edited and excellently produced paperback is recommended to all readers interested in wartime Southeast Asia.

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*The War Against the Americans: Resistance and Collaboration in Cebu, 1899-1906.*

By RESIL B. MOJARES.

Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999. Pp. 250. Maps, Tables, Notes, Index.

With the coming of the centennial of the Philippine Revolution, numerous studies have appeared that seek to expand upon the meaning of this seminal event for the history of Philippine nationalism. Many of these studies focus on the revolution in a non-Tagalog – speaking provincial or regional context, and they reveal that the response to the revolution varied considerably from one locality to the next. The timetable of events changed from area to area, and the degree of participation in the fighting differed, as did the allegiance to the Aguinaldo government; still, the studies collectively reveal that a widespread commitment to the idea of independence existed throughout the archipelago. Only, the meaning of independence differed between and within the various provinces and groups.

One of the best of the new crop of studies is Resil Mojares' *The War Against the Americans*, about the revolution in Cebu. The book is comprehensive in its coverage and based on a thick body of sources. Because he has written a single case study, the author does not seek to generalise beyond a limited degree in his assessment of the meaning of the revolution. He freely admits that this is a history of the events in Cebu written for a Cebuano audience, and he leaves it for others to draw some of the insular-wide implications for the revolution.

Because the Cebuanos did not actively participate in the struggle against Spain before April

1898, Mojares concentrates on the war against the Americans, although he acknowledges that aspirations for independence flourished earlier in the province. Social change and anti-colonial sentiment proliferated as a result of the widespread economic transformation of the nineteenth century and because of the occurrence of so many disasters, natural and financial, in the last decades of the century. In the end, Cebu became a hotspot of dissent more because of prevailing conditions there than because of what was going on in Luzon at the time.

Mojares adopts a narrative style, basically chronological in approach, with attention paid to describing the involvement of as many of the locals as possible. He includes numerous lists: lists of revolutionary government officials, lists of units and their officers, and lists of those who surrendered and their weapons. More names, events and battles are revealed here than seem necessary to make the author's main points, but the intended audience will probably appreciate finding their ancestors included among the patriots and heroes of this formative era.

The author corrects the notion that the activists in the revolution can be identified according to class. There were too many exceptions to make this possible, and class lines altered and became more blurred as the new attachments to the world economy kicked in. And for want of direct information, he found it impossible to more than generalise about the reasons for the participation in or, in some cases disinterest, members of the poor classes in the struggles.

Mojares found difficulty characterising those millenarian dissenters known as *pulahanes*, other than to describe the incidents in which they opposed the Americans. In part the problem lies with the sources, which consisted of some local newspapers and the rich trove of captured republican documents, the so-called Philippine Insurgent Records. This latter collection, while extensive, deals with military and administrative matters and does not provide the kind of social and cultural information that could have filled out the portrayal of these fringe groups. One is thus dependent on what those among the elite who served in the Philippine government thought was germane, or, in the case of the American records, what the US Army and government officials could glean, despite the cultural barriers.

Mojares offers an insightful description of the civilian side of the war. He is especially adept at showing how the civilian leadership became embroiled in the struggle over allegiance between the two contending parties, with each side vying for control of supplies, taxes and intelligence. US forces eventually won the contest, although the victory for 'hearts and minds' was never complete. And the portrait of the Americans remains, overall, unflattering, not only because of their intrusion into Philippine life, but also because of the atrocities they committed in the name of establishing law and order. If any victor emerged in the civilian war, it was Sergio Osmeña who threaded his way through the minefield of conflicting loyalties to rise as a leader, first on the provincial level and, later, on an island-wide stage.

All in all, this book represents a significant addition to the literature on the Philippine Revolution. The writing is lively and the interpretation of Cebu's contribution to the movement for independence should stand for some time, based as it is on the best, grandest collection of historical sources. An excellent set of informative photos accompanies the text.

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## Thailand

*Building Social Capital in Thailand: Fibers, Finance, and Infrastructure.*

By DANNY UNGER.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. xv, 227. Bibliography, Index.

Danny Unger's scholarship on Thailand and Southeast Asia, in contrast to his work on Japan, falls squarely into the field of non-Marxian, institutionalist 'political economy'. In *Building Social Capital in Thailand*, he seeks to bring the idea of social capital into the service of that field as it approaches the region. This innovation reflects the considerable academic interest in social capital stimulated above all by Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Unger's approach to the political economy of Thailand holds much intuitive appeal. The 'dearth of social capital' that marked 'Thai social organization' (p. 3) has long resulted, he argues, in 'something approximating a de facto *laissez-faire* regime' (p. 57) in the political-economic sphere. With their access to 'networks' (p. 51), Chinese business concerns found in this regime the conditions for business success and for the fostering of rapid economic growth. In general terms this description surely rings very true for post-1932 and especially post-1957 Thailand. It accounts for the apparent irrelevance of Thai state developmentalism in areas other than monetary policy and for the place of Chinese entrepreneurship in the economic life of the country. But this description of the components of Thailand's long-term success also rests on a delineation of differential stocks of social capital among Thai and Chinese that lacks the richness and robustness of Putnam's contrast between northern and southern Italy. Rather than carefully considered attempts at measuring relative endowments of social capital, that is, we meet a series of observations culled from rather dated anthropological scholarship. Also, we never meet an actual network. The 'looseness' of the Thai social order has been addressed through approaches that flirt far less with essentialism than Unger's. (One such approach stresses Thailand's history as a frontier society on the capitalist periphery.)

Unger attempts to build on his observation about the importance of endowments of social capital to an understanding of Thailand's political economy with three sector-specific chapters. These treat the financial sector through 1997, the textile sector through the early 1990s, and heavy industrial and large infrastructural projects through 1995 or 1996. He seeks to use these cases to argue that such factors as limited numbers of actors, divisible costs and benefits, and recurring benefits do make cooperation among and between state and private-sector actors in the formation and execution of sector-specific initiatives more likely, even in the absence of significant endowments of social capital. Explicitly considered or explained variation in those endowments does not, however, drive either intra- or inter-case outcomes in Unger's analysis. Instead, the chapters represent by now rather conventional forays into institutionalist political economy with its overarching concern with 'collective action problems'. They owe little more to social capital than does other scholarship in that field.

Individual readers will have to decide for themselves whether to regard the sources on which these substantive chapters draw more as a hodgepodge or as a *tour de force*. They do not include Thai-language scholarship. Unger has not consulted such documentary materials as those on file at the Department of Commercial Registration in Bangkok. Often, journalistic accounts are cited as the only sources for significant shifts in policy. Interviews with unnamed individuals from the state and private sectors, conducted mainly in 1987, seem to add little particular value to narrative or

analysis. On the other hand, Unger's grasp of the relevant English-language literature on the Thai political economy and on these three sectors is firm and impressive. He cites, too, a number of secondary sources in Japanese.

In the end, the very design of *Building Social Capital in Thailand* means that it fails to make a persuasive case for the value of social capital to the study of Southeast Asia: the substantive case studies are linked only very generally to the theoretical and descriptive chapters on Thailand's stock of social capital. Unger is, to be sure, a very thoughtful observer of Thai and Southeast Asian political economy. A number of his observations and the analytical use made of them prove both original and stimulating. He notes, for example, that the implementation phase is 'the actual locus of Thai policy-making' (p. 24) and that 'distributional coalitions' may in their information-supplying roles actually contribute to effective state policy-making rather than serving merely to 'distort market signals' (p. 17). Such observations may well spur fresh contributions to the study of the region's politics and political economy or to scholarship on modern Thailand among readers of *Building Social Capital in Thailand*. For now, however, both Unger's concluding comment that 'Thailand's institutional stock, its social capital, lent itself better to the achievement of some economic and social tasks than others' (p. 183) and his speculation that the country's stock of social capital may in fact be on the rise await further – more focused and perhaps more rigorous – scholarship.

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### **Vietnam**

*Women's Bodies, Women's Worries. Health and Family Planning in a Vietnamese Rural Community.*

By TINE GAMMELTOFT.

Richmond: Curzon, 1999. Pp. x, 227. Bibliography, Index.

This book offers a comprehensive analysis of women's contraceptive use in the Vietnamese rural community of Vài So'n, throughby way of a detailed description of their views and attitudes with regards to IUD (intrauterine devices). The author justifies this particular focus by highlighting the fact that IUD remain the most popular contraceptive method in Vietnam, although more and more women who use them are encountering serious problems, including health side effects, expulsions and unwanted pregnancies. To explain this apparent inconsistency in family planning behaviour, Tine Gammeltoft explores Vietnamese women's psychosocial experience of pain and physical distress. In line with a new current of anthropological studies that questions the suitability of clinical models and categories to address women's reproductive health complaints, the author chooses to prioritise women's personal and subjective accounts of their experiences with IUD within the context of their daily social lives. In this theoretical framework, the body is conceptualised as 'the living centre of all our being and acting in the world', while pain and diseases are seen as 'experiences that are deeply integrated with our social and existential being' (p. 7). Hence, any use of a certain kind of technology 'mediates and transforms social relationships, bodies and subjectivities' (p. 5).

To analyse the implications of IUD use for women's lives and social relations in rural Vietnam, the author first describes the wider sociopolitical context of the Vài So'n commune, before zeroing in on women's problems with IUD, as articulated through local concepts of health and disease. More particularly, in Chapters 2 and 3, Gammeltoft introduces the commune of Vài So'n,



examining the impact of national policies on social structures and people's lives at the local level. Special attention is provided to recent economic reforms that have led to the dismantling of the co-operative system, thus increasing women's reproductive and productive burdens, and to the intensive implementation of the national family planning programme to curtail rapid population growth. Among the new values adopted in the commune, the notion of the 'small and happy family', as propagated by the government and international agencies, has become of immense social, economic and existential relevance to women in Vài So'n, making 'having a large number of children.... neither economically viable nor morally acceptable' (p. 81). In this first introductory part, Gammeltoft's portrayal of her 'fieldwork under supervision and control' (p. 38) is of particular methodological interest to anthropologists since it adds new dimensions to the question whether a constraining environment compromises the reliability of the results.

The following chapters (Chapters 4 to 7), which constitute the core of Gammeltoft's argument, focus on the side effects of IUD use as an expression of women's physiological and social ill-health. The life histories of five commune women provide insights into their experiences with fertility control and IUD, the problems they encounter, and their multifaceted explanations of these problems. By combining this information with other relevant data collected through surveys and more structured interviews, the author shows that IUD symptoms are not separated from more general feelings of physical weakness and exhaustion, and closely relate to two core categories of common women's diseases, i.e. 'nerves' and 'lack of blood'. What is more, such health problems do not exist in a vacuum, but convey tensions and ambiguities surrounding sexuality and reproduction, and more generally, everyday stresses of family life. In a sociocultural context wherein health is associated with social balance and harmony, ill-health is associated with social tensions. It follows that IUD symptoms – and the two core categories to which they relate – 'represent more than pure physiological malfunctioning'. These symptoms are 'not just biological signs, but also the metaphors for stressful and exhausting living conditions' (p. 157). By expressing pain and discomfort, women communicate structural tensions inherent in their roles of mother, wife, or daughter-in-law, in a culturally appropriate manner. It is by employing the 'accepted model of female behaviour', that they are able to manifest their incapacity to fully realise the 'happy family' ideal and 'resist' gender inequity as shaped both by Confucianism and the dominant socialist ideology. Gammeltoft concludes that for women in Vài So'n, in the absence of more direct forms of power, 'the expression of distress through somatic idioms [is a] socially safer and less costly' way to influence their social surrounding (pp 235-6).

The strengths of this book lie in its detailed analysis of women's perceptions of IUD use, its innovative efforts to link bodily symptoms to social surroundings by focusing on a certain technological medium, and its intention to avoid structural determinism by stressing the importance of human agency. Still, one cannot avoid wondering whether these strengths are not at the same time the book's main weaknesses. Due to the narrow focus and the preoccupation to fit all the diverse elements in a coherent, ideological framework, the text becomes repetitive and the reader can easily foresee what comes next. Furthermore, not all the arguments sound equally convincing as if possible alternative interpretations have not been taken into full account. At times, one would wish that the author had delved more deeply into the many aspects she briefly touches upon, such as in the case of the history of family planning, the quality of reproductive health services, the costs and accessibility of contraceptive methods, and the ethical discussion on abortion. It would also have been instructive to further probe the notion of the 'small and happy family' as proper to the socialist system of Vietnam in view of its being commonly upheld by family planning programmes in

neighbouring Asian countries, e.g. Indonesia. My main remarks however, are related to the very centrality given to IUD in the study. Although the author exposes a number of conceptual difficulties in viewing suffering as embodied resistance (pp. 245-6), she still fails to raise the following questions: If women express their 'resistance' through IUD complaints, does this imply that those women who do not experience them have accepted their gender role and are satisfied with the status quo? And, what about women who do not use IUD? How do they express their discontent, if any? In other words, how indispensable is IUD in the communication of women's physiological and thus social distress?

By stimulating these provocative thoughts, the study contributes significantly to the advancement of the medical anthropological discourse on the body as a reflection of the social order, and enhances the current debate on how to link micro and macro realities. I therefore recommend it not only to readers interested in Vietnam, but also to medical and social scientists in search of new approaches for transcending the gap between biology and culture.

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