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Book Reviews

Asia

Chinese medicine men: Consumer culture in China and Southeast Asia
By SHERMAN COCHRAN
Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006. Pp. 242. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406210993

This is a captivating book. *Chinese medicine men* moves beautifully from one story to another and it is a must read for students and scholars of modern China and Southeast Asia, particularly those who operate in the socio-economic arena. It is most valuable to business students as it familiarises them with not only Chinese business history but also its strategies. Opening with the current debate of globalization versus localization, Sherman Cochran brilliantly reminds us of the importance of history and does this through the lens of the pharmaceutical industry from the late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries. Cochran's focus is not limited to the industry alone; the bigger issues involved are not merely consumer culture and their agents. They concern the transformation/modernisation of traditional Chinese medicine, history of women and advertisement, and of the battle between Chinese traditional medicines versus Western medicine that has intensified in the age of post-modernity and alternative medicine. Best of all, the book highlights the importance of family history and business history, new sub-disciplines that are growing.

Chapter Two tells how the Yue family built and re-built, through three centuries of trials and tribulations, the enduring drugstore empire *Tongren Tang* (同仁堂) or the Hall of Shared Humaneness. Through political alliances, with the Qing court as well as the Communist regime, they maintained the name, enterprise, brand, originality, and therefore longevity, of a traditional Chinese medicine business. Chapter Three tells the story of Huang Chujiu, *Guanggao da wang* (廣告大王) or the King of Advertising. Huang successfully created a brand by projecting a Western image of his product through a multitude of advertisements made possible by modern science and mass media. His greed and ambition led Huang to daring innovations such as female nudes in advertisements. Chapter Four focuses on the Xiang family that built and maintained a national network of wholesale and retail *Wuzhou da yaofang* (五洲大葯房) or the Great Five Continents Drugstores. Like the King of Advertising, it projected a Western image; however, the Xiang family used their same native-place managers to control the far-flung network, allowing localization as long as local vendors sold their products. Chapter Five details how Xu Guanqun grew his *Xinya zhiyao chang* (新亞制葯廠) or New Asia Pharmaceutical Company spectacularly during the Sino-Japanese war. Xu, the fixer, not only forged alliances with different political parties in the chaos of war but also promoted his company through science and modernity. Chapter Six traces the history of the world famous *Wan jin you* (万金油) or Tiger Balm products. Aw Boon Haw, its founder, built a drug empire that operated smoothly under complicated political weathers until the

Communists took over in the 1950s. He forged alliances with gangsters, Westerners, Nationalists and the Japanese.

I have identified two important constants, among other things, in most of Cochran's case studies: Chinese entrepreneurs were extremely flexible, and there was a societal march towards modernity in medicine. Chinese businessmen survived and thrived in the turbulence of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries by allying with anyone who helped them make profits; they stayed loyal to their God – Money. Modernisation is another note that sounds throughout the book. These businesses, with the exception of *Tongren Tang*, projected themselves and their products as 'modern' versus 'traditional'. They appealed to a population who increasingly identified with science and modernity. This has a lot to do with the long/larger debate over Chinese civilisation whose values/validity was challenged by its Western counterpart ever since the Opium War. It in many ways continues today; it will intensify as China rises again and this rise renews confidence in Chinese culture and tradition.

Cochran does not drag the book into the larger debate on Chinese capitalism and to stretch a little for a Chinese historian, the debate on Chinese capitalism in Southeast Asian Studies, which is thriving. The question of consumer culture/revolution, the contrast between corporations acting from top down or consumers participating from bottom up, is crucial but in my humble opinion they are and should not be mutually exclusive.

ZHENG YANGWEN
University of Manchester

Song and silence: Ethnic revival on China's southwest borders
By SARA L. M. DAVIS
New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Pp. x, 200. Notes, Suggested Readings, Index. doi:10.1017/S002246340622099X

In 1997 Sara Davis arrived in the Sipsongpanna region of Yunnan Province to study the Tai Lüe oral poets known as *changkhap*. However, the implications of work on cultural production in contemporary China led to a wider focus. The result, *Song and silence*, is a highly engaging account of Tai Lüe struggles for cultural autonomy in the late1990s set largely in China, but with implications for the larger Thai-Lao-Burma-Yunnan border region.

Davis opens her introduction with an account of a trip in search of an old Tai Lüe temple. She finds the temple, but its wall murals had been mostly scraped off by Red Guards and replaced by Maoist slogans, themselves later removed by the locals. Yet, the temple's lay caretaker recounts how he saved the building itself by telling the Red Guards that the villagers stored tools and grain there. The anecdote sets up a larger theme in the book, that of the back and forth between nervous state authorities and persistent locals, a see-saw battle mostly of wits in which Tai Lüe cultural victories are seldom total, and seem to hinge on quick thinking, adaptability and an openness to change within certain limits. The rest of the introduction concerns the challenges faced by China's Communist rulers after 1949 and some of their responses, including efforts to promote a new national popular culture and the creation of official ethnic categories.

In Chapters One and Two, Davis develops a contrast between what she calls the 'front stage' and 'back stage' of cultural production in Sipsongpanna. 'Front stage' refers to 'ethnic' display produced for Han officialdom and foreign and domestic tourists. Davis sees ethnic theme parks and dance shows as largely state-inspired attempts to render potentially dangerous ethnic differences harmless. While she notes that various Tai Lüe people participate in the front stage for different reasons, she emphasises its protective nature: it hides the 'back stage' where Tai Lüe people pursue ethnic revival, including cultural performances exclusively for each other. Chapter Two focuses on the back stage, particularly the role of Buddhist temples as bases for language preservation and the creation of Tai Lüe pop music. Davis notes that back stage action takes place off the 'tourist map,' and hinges on the alternative (non-state-defined) geography of the Thai-Lao-Burma-Yunnan border region. Thus, she explores regional cross-border travel and trade and the influence of Burmese Tai rock music and the Thai–Lao *molam* tradition on the emergence of Tai Lüe pop. In Sipsongpanna itself, monks use computers donated by Thai Buddhists to turn out musical scores and other materials in old Tai Lüe, in spite of the state's promotion of a simplified script. But the monks and lay pop pioneers are careful to couch their desire for Tai Lüe cultural confidence in the language of 'economic development', and they avoid provoking a disastrous state response.

The third chapter deals directly with the *changkhap*, and Davis uses her interview and song-recording session with veteran oral poet Khanan Zhuai as the jumping off point. She eventually covers the changing political, social and cultural context of *changkhap* performance over five decades, particularly the effects of state cultural policy. She hangs her probing analysis of these topics on the unfolding story of her struggle, with Tai Lüe friends, to translate the song Khanan Zhuai sung for her on the porch of his house. The chapter is both a testament to the relational, collaborative nature of fieldwork and a history of recent *changkhap* happenings as told through the life history of an expert poet.

Chapter Four brings temple and ethnic revival together again, detailing the revival of Tai Lüe Buddhism and the symbiotic relationship between temples and back stage cultural production. The chapter includes a beautiful description of an all-night *changkhap* temple performance on the eve of the promotion of some Tai Lüe monks to the newly revived rank of *khuba*. With the visit of the local Party Secretary, a Han, the singers shift quickly to front stage mode, flattering their guest with a brief 'tributary performance' praising state and party. Once he is gone, the back stage re-emerges and the Buddhist-themed songs go on.

Davis ends by describing the ways local states are using construction of new Buddhist temples and Buddha images to stamp border areas with signs of their authority. But these state projects are highly contested. Border-crossing monks and their lay supporters are building their own 'Buddhas on the borders,' perpetuating the long-standing symbolic and cultural geography of the Thai-Lao-Burma-Yunnan borderlands in a way that challenges state claims.

Trained in East Asian studies, Davis does not systematically cover Tai Lüe ethnography. However, as an ethnography, *Song and silence* is able to draw the reader into the world of an ethnic minority struggling to define itself in the face of majority impositions. For example, Davis clearly lays out the structural factors that constrain Tai Lüe ethnic

revival, including Chinese state cultural policy, the imperatives of capitalist development, and large-scale Han in-migration. However, she balances the structural factors with vividly drawn portraits of Tai Lüe people from a variety of subject positions: Khanan Zhuai (mentioned above), a renowned but elusive female *changkhap*, a pop song-writing Buddhist monk, a young woman employed in the tourist sector, and others. Each brings their own perspective on the meaning of 'Tai Lüe culture' and its fate in late-1990s China. Davis' portrayal of cultural production as a process of debate amidst constraint and uncertainty more than serves to convey to the reader the sense of flux, and thus opportunity, that confronted her Tai Lüe friends in the late-1990s.

Davis' analytical touch is light. Thus, on one hand, she does not let her analytical agenda (primarily, nationalism, cultural production and ethnicity) overwhelm her rich descriptions of contemporary Tai Lüe life. On the other hand, some readers may want for more theoretical depth on some issues. For example, in her treatment of ethnicity, Davis does not systematically lay out the main positions (primordialist, constructivist and so on). Still, her stance is clear. She nicely describes the oddities that result when a state tries to whittle a welter of often unselfconscious cultural groupings down to a handful of (supposedly) objectively defined ethnic categories. Davis herself consistently resists the language of authenticity. Thus, *changkhap* oral poetry, Tai Lüe pop music, and even by implication front stage cultural production, are all part of 'real Tai culture': 'Real Tai identity had nothing to do with age or revival – it had to do with the presence and active participation of the Tai community' (p. 171). Davis has thus succeeded in painting a dynamic picture of a minority culture that is always right at the point of active creation.

With its combination of clean, beautiful writing and entrée to a range of important theoretical issues, *Song and silence* is tailormade for classroom use, though perhaps at an introductory level and framed by the proper theoretical and ethnographic context. But area experts will also find a thoughtful portrait of contemporary Tai Lüe cultural struggles that carries lessons for the larger field of minority studies in China and Southeast Asia.

HENRY D. DELCORE
California State University, Fresno

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian warfare, 1300–1900
By MICHAEL W. CHARNEY
Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2004. Pp. 319. Appendices, Illustration, Notes, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406230996

This book is a much needed and welcome contribution to the field, as no attempt has been made to update pre-colonial Southeast Asian warfare comprehensively from a regional approach since H. G. Quaritch Wales's *Ancient South-East Asian warfare* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1952). It argues for the significance of indigenous and innovative Southeast Asian style warfare and the limited effectiveness of foreign technology (particularly gunpowder) before the nineteenth century.

Southeast Asian warfare fills a recognisable gap in the literature on pre-colonial Southeast warfare. Its main contribution lies in gleaning and synthesising a large amount of information by classifying it into different categories, many of which were not broached by Wales. The integrative and regional approach adopted is also commendable. The discussion throughout the book is mostly careful, detailed, and even meticulous. The bibliography includes a large number of sources in several languages, English, Burmese, French, Portuguese, Italian and so on. Many of the illustrations are useful but the two maps, which divide the region into 'western' and 'eastern Southeast Asia' are somewhat awkward (pp. 282–3).

This work also attempts to engage recent scholarship by challenging some accepted wisdom. For example, it redresses the overemphasis on the non-bloodiness, tendency of flight in battle, and the underestimated strength and effectiveness of Southeast Asian fortifications (pp. 18–21, 38, 73–76). Some observations, such as the disappearance of stone fortifications after the classical period, the introduction of firearms (causing changes in the superstructure of Southeast Asian river craft), and the declining role of the elephant corps (pp. 79–80, 127–8, 132, 159–62, 182–3, 251), are very interesting and insightful

This work, however, is not without problems. One is its failure to conceptualise and define the 'early modern-ness' of Southeast Asian warfare. Though not stated in the title, the temporal scope of the book (1300–1900) is actually meant to fit the chronology of the early modern era. Though the term 'early modern' is used ubiquitously throughout the discussion, the book is completely silent on what constituted Southeast Asia's 'early modern' warfare, the ways in which it differed qualitatively from classical warfare, and its political and socio-economic significance. Another shortcoming is with the quality and quantity of some sources. To give just a few examples, Joseph Needham's authoritative *Science and civilisation in China, volume five, part seven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), should have been considered rather than other outdated works in order to avoid inaccurate discussions on the question of gunpowder technology. Important primary sources in Burmese on gunpowder and firearms, and secondary sources on Burmese military history, are not used, while others, such as U Tin's three-volume *Kon-baung-zet Maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, are considerably underused (cited only three times), which is surprising for an author who focuses his research on Burma. In addition, the author could have used Geoff Wade's translation of the *Ming shilu*, which yields rich information on the wars fought in the Tai/Shan/Lao/Viet region.

Moreover, some assertions simply do not hold water. To warn against technology determinism is necessary, but to underestimate the role of gunpowder technology (pp. 42, 53, 63, 72, 277–8) is unsound. The assertion 'Southeast Asian had been firing cannon from fixed mounts or from earthen mounts from the sixteenth century' (p. 49) flies in the face of the accounts in the *The Chiang Mai chronicle* (tr. David K. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo [Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1995], pp. 80–1) and *The Nan chronicle* (tr. David K. Wyatt [Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1994], p. 53), which show clearly this was done already in the fifteenth century. As one can see, sources used in *Southeast Asian warfare* tend to be more European than otherwise. One expects that more use of indigenous and other language sources will correct, modify, supplement, and enrich the discussion on Southeast Asian warfare in the early modern era.

Despite these minor distractions, *Southeast Asian warfare* is an important book and should be read by anyone who is interested in Southeast Asian history.

SUN LAICHEN
California State University, Fullerton

The emergence of modern Southeast Asia: A new history
Edited by NORMAN G. OWEN
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005. Pp. 541. Maps, Tables, Notes, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463406240992

This is a text that is difficult to characterise. While its subtitle claims that the work is a 'new history', much remains more or less unchanged from its earlier incarnation (David Joel Steinberg, ed., *In search of Southeast Asia: A modern history* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985]), including many of the contributing authors. At the same time, it is also clear that this new version has undergone enough revisions and reinterpretations, even by some of those same original authors, to not deserve to be simply labelled a 'revised edition'. It is thus 'more than revised, but not entirely new'.

Given its relationship to *In search of Southeast Asia*, and the familiarity of that earlier work to scholars, this review will be comparative in nature. Like its predecessor, *The emergence of modern Southeast Asia* combines 'thematic chapters' on social, cultural and economic issues with 'country chapters' that present historical information in a chronological fashion about a given country or area within the region. The thematic chapters in both books focus largely on two periods. Some thematic chapters early in the text describe Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century, when many areas of the region were still independent. Then in the middle of each section there are a series of chapters on the economic, social and cultural changes that colonial rule brought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There are several ways in which *The emergence of modern Southeast Asia* is clearly an improvement over its predecessor. First, the authors of this text have updated that earlier work by adding to its final chapters, bringing its coverage up to the present. They have also expanded their coverage in the thematic chapters on the period of high imperialism to include topics such as race and gender.

At the same time that the authors have added to the work, they have also significantly rearranged the information about the twentieth century. *In search of Southeast Asia* covered the twentieth century in two sections. The chronological break between these two sections was around World War Two, and perhaps not surprising given the ethos at the time, to promote the histories of the indigenous peoples of Southeast Asia, the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia literally fell right through this editorial crack. *The emergence of modern Southeast Asia* still covers the twentieth century in two sections, but the first section now deals with historical events from the late nineteenth century up to the 1970s. Consequently, the Japanese occupation, and its impact, does gain its deserved attention in this new volume.

This book is also a smoother read than its predecessor, and much more careful in its use of words. It is a work that reflects the scholarly maturity of its authors, as they look

back at this same material with many more years of experience now under their belts. In fact, it is fascinating to read the two texts side by side to see some of the more subtle ways in which our thinking about Southeast Asia has changed over time.

Alongside such improvements, however, are changes that this reviewer notes with some regret. Two of the great strengths of *In search of Southeast Asia* were its attention to pre-colonial Southeast Asia, or what it labelled 'the eighteenth-century world', and its extensive bibliography. Unfortunately, both of these sections of the book have been truncated. Perhaps to make room for the material that was added to the text, some of the detailed information from the 'country chapters' about Southeast Asia prior to the nineteenth century has been deleted. Meanwhile, the 69–page, and extremely detailed, bibliography that one found at the end of *In search of Southeast Asia* has been replaced by lists of 8–10 relevant works at the end of each chapter. While the works listed are more up-to-date, they are still no match for the extensive bibliography with which readers were previously graced.

These reservations aside, I would still argue that this work is by far the best survey of modern Southeast Asian history available. It is a work that should be on the shelf of every scholar and educated layperson interested in Southeast Asia, as its detail and readability make it an ideal reference work. Nonetheless, scholars should still hold on to their old copies of *In search of Southeast Asia*, dog-eared though they may be, as the bibliography in that work and its detailed treatment of eighteenth-century Southeast Asia remain extremely valuable.

LIAM C. KELLEY
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Spirited politics: Religion and public life in contemporary Southeast Asia
Edited by ANDREW C. WILLFORD and KENNETH M. GEORGE
Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2005. Pp. 210. doi:10.1017/S0022463406250999

This collection of articles on politics and public life in Southeast Asia has much to offer in terms of breadth and depth of coverage. The editors note the centrality of the nation-state 'for placing collectivities and individuals "in the world" – for making them legible to each other, and for drawing them into the currents of modernity' (p. 10). But, they also caution against granting the state an illusory wholeness or too much power as a subject-making institution. Instead, they call for scholars to attend to the 'limits, contradictions, and failures of state institutions and ideologies', and how actors and groups respond creatively to the 'nation-state's complex and often fragmentary nature' (p. 11). With this in mind, they ask how religion provides people with 'room for maneuver amid the shadows and light of the nation-state' and promises insight into the ways individuals, groups and institutions negotiate 'the transcendent discourses of religion and state in public life' (pp. 11–12).

The articles indeed go quite far in addressing the issues posed by the editors. Andrew Abalahin and Andrew Willford both explore ways various actors cope with situations in

which nation-states rely on 'fictions of religious-ideological unanimity and of threatening "Others-within"' (p. 14). Abalahin provides a valuable history of the entanglements among Confucianism as 'religion', the Chinese as 'ethnic group', and Indonesian nationalism. The changing fortunes of Confucianism register the sentiments of colonial and postcolonial elites toward religion and ethnicity, ending in the current openings presented by post-crisis Indonesia and renewed efforts by some Chinese Indonesians to regain 'religious' recognition for Confucianism. Willford explores the individual identity of a Tamil spirit medium named Valli, whose ambiguous engagement with orthodox Hinduism registers some of the tensions surrounding Indian Hindu identities in Malaysia. In his ethnographically rich account of Valli, Willford finds evidence for the inevitable emergence of uncanny, hybrid identities under a political and cultural regime that stresses reified ethnic and religious boundaries. In one of the more important theoretical contributions in the volume, Willford questions approaches that emphasise 'structural models of domination' on one hand and the 'rational subject' on the other (p. 48). Instead, he seeks a third way towards a dialogic and dialectical model of individual subjectivity that stresses 'inner and contradictory compulsions' (p. 48).

In the same vein, I would add the contribution by Kenneth George, who provides a political and artistic biography of Acehnese artist Abdul Djalil Pirous. He charts Pirous' history as young artist in the service of Indonesian nationalism, committed modernist, and finally, 'Acehnese artist'. This last designation meant that Pirous had to work out a notion of 'Islamic art, as the legitimating framework for recuperating his Acehnese-ness' (p. 195). George links these moves to the artist's changing approaches to representing text and human figuration, and his struggle to 'picture' the Acehnese tragedy in a politically responsible way. All the while, Pirous remains committed to the 'transcendent discourses of nationalism, Islam, and abstraction' (p. 207). George's conclusions are something similar to Willford, arguing that 'an individual does not have a singular and univocal political self, but a hybrid one constituted through conflicting narratives and images of affiliation, allegiance, and betrayal' (p. 204).

Smita Lahiri and Fenella Cannell tackle connections between religious discourse and political rule. Lahiri tracks the way metropolitan elite attention to Mount Banahaw has driven its recent emergence as a symbol of Filipino cultural nationalist unity. She recounts elite constructions of the Filipino native, ending with the recent rise to prominence of Isabel Suarez, Suprema of the main Catholic folk cult at Mount Banahaw and a favourite of elite observers and visitors. A person of 'modest rural origins,' and in some ways 'subaltern', Lahiri finds her celebrity nonetheless dependent on the cultural nationalist discourse purveyed by the elite. Cannell, on the other hand, finds a 'naturalized Protestantism' at the heart of the American colonial project in the Philippines. She notes parallels between colonial perceptions that lowland Filipinos were ruled by idolatry and the contention that they lacked 'authentic' culture. She then carefully documents the pervasive nervousness of American colonial observers and officials, constantly troubled by perceived lowland Filipino 'cultural vacuity,' skill at imitation, and the implied lack of internal transformation sought by American cultural Protestants.

Suzanne Brenner and Erick White deal primarily with the way the nation-state and the public sphere serve as arenas for debating religious and social reform. Brenner goes a long way towards unravelling the complex political and social factors that have led to

contending Muslim approaches to gender politics in Indonesia. She finds the contradictions inherent in New Order cultural policy, rising educational attainment, exposure to international discourses of feminism and human rights, and the global Muslim movement converging on young female (and male) university students to produce, among other things, Indonesian-style Islamic feminism. White delivers an update on long-standing tensions between reform Buddhism and popular religion in Thailand, recounting several recent attacks by Buddhist monks, public intellectuals and journalists on spirit medium practices. Attuned to long-term continuities in elite efforts to repress 'irrational' popular religiosity, White nonetheless reveals that the state's withdrawal from explicit religious regulation has left elite critics largely to their own devices. He finds media discourse, and particularly the format of the television exposé, powerful yet limited platforms for elite criticism. The critics misunderstand key social and cultural dynamics among spirit mediums and their clients, whose practices prove resilient to attacks from afar.

The editors frame Thamora Fishel's contribution as the one that goes most explicitly to the 'operations of class, electoral politics, and exchange in religious practice' (p. 19). Fishel weaves together a story of Thai political decentralisation, ritual change and provincial middle-class aspiration to account for the prominent place of wakes and funerals in local political campaigns. Beyond the opportunity to see and be seen, Fishel finds politicians attracted to the consistency between the logic of exchange and reciprocity in both funerals and politics. Even more crucial, perhaps, she notes the shift of wakes and funerals away from homes and forest cemeteries to temple grounds, a product of both economic investment in crematoriums and in provincial middle-class notions of propriety and status. This rationalisation of funerals makes them at once more accessible to busy campaigners, and more attractive as chances to 'tap into circuits of patronage and reciprocity without leaving 'public' space', a key concern given increasingly calls for open, 'clean' and 'democratic' politics (p. 157).

The editors find several consistent themes in the contributions to the volume. They note the prominence of elite and middle-class discourses in public debates about religion, politics and culture. Specifically, it appears that national and subnational communities and their respective elites have consistently 'seized upon ethno-religious identities as a way of finding a place in the world and for exacting rule over others' (p. 21). Yet, they also argue that the drive for homogenous collective identities produces a 'political and unconscious heterogeneity marked by the uncanny, the hybrid, or the ghostly' (p. 21). Finally, they see the volume united by concern with 'the way religion has entered into the operation of state power and the nation-state's anxious articulation with identity, culture and ideas about community' (p. 21). Yet, there is a possible alternate reading of some of the articles. Despite offering qualifications, the editors seem to offer a relatively state-centric interpretation of the volume. Fishel, on the other hand, calls for a break with the long-standing tendency of scholars to reduce religion and politics in Thailand to the study of Buddhist legitimation of state power. She notes that the state has little interest in regulating Buddhist rituals of death, and that it is instead 'local politicians who use the polyvalent meanings of contemporary funerals to negotiate a path to political success' (p. 158). While the editors and contributors to the volume are duly aware of the complex and fragmentary nature of both nations and their states, Fishel implies that we may find

fertile grounds for investigating spirited politics entirely outside both the light and the shadows of the state, if such a space exists.

HENRY D. DELCORE
California State University, Fresno

Indonesia

Dutch colonial education: The Chinese experience in Indonesia, 1900–1942
By M. T. N. GOVAARS-TJIA. Translated by LOREE LYNN TRYTTEN, with a foreword by WANG GUNGWU.
Singapore: Chinese Heritage Center, 2005. Pp. ix, 271. Plates, Notes, Bibliography, Appendices, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406260995

This seminal study elucidates the quest for modern education among the *Peranakan* (local-oriented) Chinese in Indonesia from 1900 to 1942. The author made an extensive use of the rich Dutch archival sources and the recently exposed Batavia's Chinese Council (*Kong Koan*) archives. In contrast to Singapore and Malaya, the history of education for Chinese children in Indonesia is rarely touched upon as a subject matter. M. T. N. Govaars-Tjia convincingly shows that educational problems for the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has complicated roots, stretching back to the earliest European presence in the Archipelago (p. 33). Despite consistent Dutch refusal to accept Chinese children into Western schools and their insistence that education was an internal Chinese matter, the author successfully argues that education remains one of the main concerns among Chinese through the ages. Therefore they would provide their children with the best available (and possible) education.

External influences such as the Reform movement in China and Singapore, internal factors such as the discriminative 'Ethical Policy' and the decision to make Japanese legally equal to Europeans, led to the establishment of the remarkable *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* (THHK or The Chinese Association) in Batavia in 1900, as described in Chapter Three. This association differed from its predecessors because of its modern character and its stress on the importance of education. THHK schools' close connection with China and its use of English as medium of instruction, undoubtedly worried the Dutch and influenced policy revision.

Although considered 'too little, too late' (p. 202), the Dutch–Chinese schools (HCS) soon attracted well-to-do *Peranakan* parents after their founding in 1908. Ironically, the founders of THHK in various places (such as Batavia and Yogyakarta) pragmatically moved their children to HCS. In 1937 it was reported that 90 per cent of THHK Yogyakarta's alumni sent their children to HCS, instead of to their alma mater. Among its many weaknesses, the THHK curriculum, which was China-oriented, was not suitable for the colonial Indies. Therefore, its alumni faced limited job opportunities. However, the Chinese-medium education kept attracting *totok* (China-oriented) and *Peranakan* children of poor families, and it was estimated in 1940 that they numbered 60,000 students. A former Dutch colonial civil servant remarked that there was 'a tug of war between the first imperial and later republican China and the government of the Dutch East Indies for the souls of the Chinese living and working there' (p. 173). The remark correctly concludes the central issue during the period between 1900–42. Then, who was

the victor in this war? Undoubtedly, THHK won the first round (1901–08). However, slowly but surely, Dutch education rose as a favourite choice among well-to-do *Peranakan* parents for the rest of the period.

More than anyone else, Govaars-Tjia sheds light on education in the less well-known nineteenth century (Chapter Two). However, she does not mention an effort by the *Peranakan* in Batavia in 1892 to establish a modern school with teachers and curriculum similar to the well-known Raffles Institution in Singapore. The foundation of this (short-lived) school was, interestingly, encouraged by the Penang-born Qing emissary Brigadier General Wang Ronghe (Ong Ing Ho), who was sent by the Viceroy of Guangdong and Quangxi Zhang Zhidong (Chang Chih-tung). During his visit to Batavia in 1887 as a well-respected *huaqiao* in China, General Wang gave advice about the importance of learning four Chinese dialects (Mandarin was still relatively unknown in Southeast Asia at that time) and English. This advice was carried out by the *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan* when it was established as the first modern school in 1901, and it was also repeated by Qing reformer Kang Yu-wei 16 years later when he visited Java.

There are nine appendices in *Dutch colonial education*, eight of which contain detailed figures on various schools and their Chinese pupils; the ninth appendix is a lesson roster. Researchers will find this data useful, since the primary sources the author uses are not easily available. Appendix B (p. 256) amazingly shows that in 1939/40 the number of girls attending Dutch-Chinese schools to be about 10,000, which was 45 per cent of the total student population. It seems that by the end of Dutch colonialism a rapid social change occurred amongst the *peranakan* parents and their daughters, directed toward 'Dutchification'. In 1911, the sympathetic Dutch lawyer P. H. Fromberg still complained that many schools were lacking female students, because the parents were afraid, when the educated daughter married, they would demonstrate overconfidence towards their spouses.

No book will escape typos. The year 1927 (p. 16) should be 1627. The use of the term 'Eastern Foreigners' (p. 44 and elsewhere) is not familiar, and instead, the more common 'Foreign Orientals' should be used. However, the translator should be credited for her smooth work. To conclude, *Dutch colonial education* should be welcomed as another milestone in the study of Chinese overseas in Southeast Asia and diaspora studies.

DIDI KWARTANADA
National University of Singapore

Laos

Living with transition in Laos: Market integration in Southeast Asia
By JONATHAN RIGG
New York: Routledge, 2005. Pp. 235. Illustrations, Notes, Appendices, Bibliography, and Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406270991

Laos ranks statistically among the least developed countries in the world. Jonathan Rigg, a geographer and specialist in Southeast Asia from Durham University, thankfully leaves aside gross data for the most part in his book, and instead focuses more on the details. His concerns are with the local level and the ordinary people living through

extraordinary times. Although Laos began its economic reforms some 20 years ago, transition still very much defines the stage through which its economy and society are currently evolving. However, it is no longer a transition from a command to a market economy: the government, along with aid and development agencies, are now pushing households in rural areas, where two-thirds of the population live, to move from subsistence to market-based livelihoods. Rigg's objective is to study Lao people's experiences and attitudes in the face of change, uncertainty and new opportunities which come with any modernisation project.

In the first section of the book (Chapters Two, Three and Four), Rigg offers a refreshing look at concepts and assumptions that have been often uncritically applied in studies on Laos. He challenges the all-too common introduction of the country as 'poor and landlocked'. To be sure, poverty is a salient reality in Laos. However, the population is neither perpetually caught in 'old', 'traditional' poverty (i.e., people will remain 'poor' as long as their livelihoods do not reach the standards of a modern developing economy), nor does destitution necessarily emerge out of modern conditions (i.e., new 'poor' are created as a result of the economic transition). 'It is not a case of poverty becoming entrenched or perpetuated . . . but of the very nature of poverty changing as development proceeds and livelihoods adapt', Rigg contends (p. 39). Likewise, scarcity or isolation as static characterisations of rural livelihood are neither useful nor accurate, especially when paired with the 'general picture'. For instance, the existence of transport and trade networks in the cross-frontier area between Yunnan, Burma, Thailand and northern Laos from the first millennium of the Christian era shows the strategic importance of this region long before the arrival of the Europeans.

The second part of the book narrows the analytical focus. Chapter Five focuses on two of the Lao government's most emblematic rural development policies, namely, the Focal Site strategy and the Land-Forest Allocation programme. The former aims to build up lowland sites that are fitted with every basic modern facility – roads, schools, health centres, markets, electricity, clean water – and based on commercially oriented farming, while the latter aims to promote sustainable forms of sedentary agriculture. The actual implementation of these policies has often resulted in the relocation – either forced or voluntary – of thousands of shifting cultivator households, mostly of ethnic minority origins, from uplands areas to lowland spaces. Although Rigg agrees with much of the existing literature, his opinion tends to diverge on the outcomes. He does not argue with the conclusion that the two rural development policies have caused much harm, in particular among the resettled population. Rigg is, however, also keen on pointing out individual stories of households and villages that have successfully exploited the opportunities that have opened up in their new living environment. A similar view underlies the following chapter. Here again, he gives an illuminating analysis of market-induced policies (such as road construction) sometimes predicated on unquestioned gross assumptions ('Remoteness is a cause of rural poverty'), and as a consequence, responsible for unforeseen damaging effects on people's livelihood. Very importantly, however, Rigg does not question the modernising rationale of those policies: it is rather their handling of which he is very critical.

Rigg suggests that 'Things aren't that bad' (p. 148). For hidden in blurred generalisations and rigid categorisations, there are individual, mixed stories of failure and, more often than not, positive adjustment to changing conditions. His optimism is partly

induced by the partial evidence he collected during his fieldwork in Laos between 2001 and 2002 (in nine villages located in three districts in Vientiane and Luang Prabang provinces), and more particularly, from previous work conducted in other Southeast Asian countries, including his own on Thailand. According to these studies, households' capacity for adaptation and innovation in the light of changing environment is best reflected in a two-fold ongoing phenomenon: the dual processes of deagrarianisation and depeasantisation. In other words, farming in some parts of Southeast Asia (as well as in Africa) has become one activity among others, and in some cases is even no longer the household's main activity. Rigg observes that the same trend is occurring in contemporary Laos, albeit at a slower and more uncertain pace. Still, the opportunities that rural families can take advantage of lie in a 'non-local context' and 'non-farm work', such as those found in urban areas and across the border in Thailand. Riggs claims, thus: 'How peasants can become post-peasants and then non-peasants will be just as important a task as delineating policies for turning peasants into agrarian entrepreneurs. And the first step . . . is to think out of the box: out of the rural box, and out of the farming box' (p. 189).

Such statements make the book a very engaging read. Rigg furthermore makes excellent use of the dozens (45 in total) of reports, studies and surveys on Laos by multilateral aid agencies and NGOs that have been piling up over the years and left underused, if not downright forgotten. Some of these studies may, of course, be outdated (such as those published in the mid-1990s) and not always statistically reliable. Another issue is that the comprehensive use of secondary sources gets in the way of ethnographic details. It is not quite the 'thick description' announced in the introduction's discussion of methodology. Despite the small amount of primary data (in comparison with that from secondary sources), it is difficult not to agree with Rigg's main argument as far as mobility issues in Laos are concerned: the migration of young Lao into Thailand is a vital outlet for a national economy that is too little developed to absorb the increasing numbers of people of working age in Laos. Given the economic and demographic changes in Laos, it is reasonable to think that the phenomenon of migration, in particular from frontier regions, will continue to grow. Still, non-farming activities can also be developed in rural areas of Laos through, for example, the promotion of small-scale enterprise backed by appropriate technical support and financial services. In any case, it is clear that more empirical data is needed to assess the Lao context with regard to the possibilities of developing sustainable rural, yet non-farm, livelihoods. Lastly, Rigg's call for a wider and more dynamic view of rural livelihood and, in particular, an emphasis on individual agency is hard to resist; yet, it is also clear that structural reorientations and social policy reform are equally necessary for human agency to flourish and for the 'losers' – those unable to seize the new opportunities – to be able to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

Living with transition in Laos is essential reading for students on Laos and in development studies, aid workers, policy-makers and anyone who aims to achieve positive changes in this lesser-known country of Southeast Asia. To this end, it is hoped that the book will find a co-publisher in the region so as to be more widely accessible and affordable.

VATTHANA PHOLSENA
National University of Singapore

Malaysia

The way that lives in the heart: Chinese popular religion and spirit mediums in Penang, Malaysia
By JEAN DEBERNARDI
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. Pp. 372. Chinese Glossary, Maps, Figures, Table, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, and Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463406280998

Following close upon the publication of her *Rites of belonging: Memory, modernity, and identity in a Malaysian Chinese community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), Jean DeBernardi returns to Penang to revisit the habitus and practice of spirit mediumship. This book – *The way that lives in the heart* – begins with a lengthy first chapter, which introduces the practice of spirit mediumship in Penang and more generally in China and Southeast Asia. The essence of mediumship is of course the trance itself, which allows gods and humans to interact at a very intimate level. Trance is also a type of performance, 'a vehicle for the transmission and construction of tradition, historical myth, social memory, and the embodiment of a traditional habitus in movement, gesture, and expression' (p. 7). Although the religious culture on which Penang spirit mediumship is founded is pan-Asian and ancient, and thus hardly unique to the Chinese, it also links Penang Chinese to their immigrant roots, employing a very specific set of Southern Min practices evocative of a literary tradition, best evinced by the tendency of practitioners to employ formal literary forms, spoken with 'deep' Min dialect pronunciation.

Following this, the content of the book consists of two main parts: a discussion of the habitus of Chinese religion in Penang, and four case studies of individual spirit mediums. The first part extends beyond the specific discussion of spirit mediumship, to include the theodical, moral and poetic foundation upon which regimes of practices are built. The first of three chapters in this section examines the concept of the 'good life,' specifically good luck, how one attains it, and how this is expressed materially. Here the inspiration comes from classic texts such as the *Taishang ganying bian*, which painstakingly outlines the karmic rewards and punishments for various types of moral and immoral behaviour, and is frequently echoed by mediums in trance. The second chapter explores the rules that govern the interaction between humans and gods, particularly as they are expressed in practice. The third visits many of the same themes, from the viewpoint of the gods who possess the mediums. While in medium, the gods reveal distinct personalities, as well as characteristic patterns of speech, dress and action, that are well known to, indeed anticipated by, viewers.

The second section closely examines four spirit mediums, revealing the degree of diversity and individuality contained within this broad tradition. While the idea of a prehistorical shamanistic 'substrate' of Chinese religion has of late provoked a strong response from within the field, DeBernardi argues persuasively that such a preexisting common tradition is precisely what allows the practice of spirit mediumship to adapt to different communities, Malay as well as Chinese. This is seen in the first chapter of the section, which explores the teachings of Datuk Aunt, a medium who is possessed by a variety of local spirits known as Datuk Gong. Students of Chinese religion will recognise these as very similar to the Chinese Tutelary Dieties (*tudi shen*), with the exception that

they are Malay, and thus Muslim; Datuk Gong shrines are often painted the bright yellow of *keramat* and the spirits are only given *halal* offerings. Reflecting this syncretism, the Datuk Aunt relates stories culled from a variety of sources, favoring especially the ghost stories seen in pulp literature. The following two chapters present a more familiar form of syncretism, that of the Chinese 'three religions' (*san jiao*): Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Mediums of this tradition emphasise methods of Daoist cultivation and Confucian filial piety, respectively. The two presented draw heavily on a mix of classical literature, divinatory techniques and moral tales, the type that would be well known to listeners. The final chapter examines a medium who was frequently possessed by deities of mischievous or questionable character, particularly the Living Buddha Jigong. Like the 'antilanguage' of underground societies, the messages of this medium are often encoded with a double meaning, one that inverts traditional morality.

The greatest successes of the book are its wealth of material, and its ability to treat the god-in-medium seriously as an anthropological subject. Although the medium is not disregarded, it is the god, as channelled and recreated through the medium and as experienced by the onlookers, that is given the most attention. This provides a fresh and much more sympathetic perspective than topics such as spirit mediumship often receive. Nevertheless, the book is not without problems. The book draws heavily from a 1986 dissertation, and most of the fieldwork appears to have been conducted in the early and mid-1980s. Although DeBernardi has been active in the area since then, she neglects any sustained discussion of what has happened since that time – a real disappointment, given that she would have been able to offer a truly unique perspective on how these traditions have adapted to a variety of forces. Similarly, much of the first half consists of material that has already been covered elsewhere, particularly by scholars of Chinese religion. Even in the more interesting second half, much of the anthropological literature feels thin and somewhat dated – references to Clifford Geertz, Max Weber or colonial scholars are generally not matched by more recent literature either in anthropology or in the study of Chinese religions. These criticisms aside, DeBernardi has provided an interesting and richly detailed sequel (or perhaps prequel) to her 2004 volume and demonstrated yet again that some of the most fascinating developments in Chinese religion occur outside of China.

THOMAS DUBOIS
National University of Singapore

The rise and fall of communism in Sarawak, 1940–1990
By VERNON L. PORRITT
Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 2004. Pp. xiv, 354. Illustrations, Appendices, Geographical coordinates, Glossary, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463406290994

Sarawak, with its long coastline and sprawling equatorial jungle, had a population of 776,990 in 1962. This population was about 31 per cent Iban (many still living in longhouses along its rivers), 17.5 per cent Malay who featured heavily along the coast and in the towns, 18 per cent other indigenous tribes, and 31.5 per cent Chinese. *The rise and*

fall of communism in Sarawak tells the story of how communism penetrated mainly the Chinese sector of this population, from its expansion through Chinese-language education and youth movements in the 1950s, to a final peace settlement with a rump guerrilla movement in 1990. It is a tale punctuated by dramatic events: the Brooke dynasty ceding Sarawak to Britain as a Crown Colony in 1946; the December 1962 rebellion of the Partai Rakyat in Brunei; resulting arrests in Sarawak; entry into Malaysia alongside Malaya, Singapore and Sabah on 16 September 1963; the Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia across the Borneo jungle border and consequent Indonesian backed insurgency in Sarawak; the October 1965 'coup' in Indonesia, which turned that country anti-communist and forced the Sarawak communists to stand by themselves; a major surrender in 1973; and, the final peace agreement by the North Kalimantan Communist Party in 1990.

The author, Vernon Porritt, an expert and one-time resident of Sarawak, takes us through the empirical detail of these events, complete with map grid references and 12 useful appendices, ranging from British legislation to a list of major Sarawak communist members. His chapters also follow a thematic as well as a chronological order, for instance on political penetration, and on insurgency, thus helping the reader map their way through the tangle of events and institutions. This is a solid empirical account, and the author does a good job of summarising British colonial estimates of links with Indonesia and the Indonesian military (pp. 71–4, 81–98).

Readers familiar with Malaysia and Singapore will note parallels. In Malaya and Singapore the communists adopted similar 'united front' tactics, uniting with the nationalist bourgeoisie in open political parties such as the Peoples Action Party (PAP) of Singapore. The various communist leaderships hoped to ride these united front parties and unions to victory through direct action and elections, before discarding their non-proletarian anti-colonial allies. Like the mainly Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the mainly-Chinese Sarawak communists could not make significant inroads into other communities, and so could not turn class and communist ideology into a strong nationalist cause. As in Malaya, a revolutionary intent was precipitated by government actions and, in the case of Sarawak, by Brunei and Indonesian developments. Hence neither the Malayan Emergency in 1948 nor the Sarawak communists' move to rebellion in the mid-1960s came at propitious moments. As in Malaya, arrests and deportations (notably mid-1962 arrests denuding SUPP of many of its communist sympathisers [p. 67]) periodically crippled united front action. There was even a mini-resettlement programme involving over 5,000 Chinese in just one day in the most affected areas in July 1965 (p. 126). Finally, both peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak suffered an increasingly pointless continuation of insurgency after the late 1960s, when it was increasingly obvious this served little purpose.

As in Singapore, the Sarawak movement also started with a stronger urban base, penetrating Chinese schools where youths were inspired by Mao's new China, setting up *hsueh hsish*, or study groups, and using picnics and even touring basketball groups to propagate the faith. And as in Malaya and Singapore, the premature revolution saw significant numbers, in this case up to 1,200 people, turn to a jungle dominated by other racial groups, where they were fish out of sea. As in Singapore, jungle revolt was accompanied by the hope of riding to power on a new, mixed race party, to be used as a 'united front' Trojan horse. In Singapore that party was the PAP, in Sarawak the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP).

There are differences in this comparison, however. Most businesses in Borneo were self-sufficient, or family owned, making union action much less significant. An even bigger difference is that the Malayan Communist Party, which had a Singapore Town Committee, received no physical support from outside, though before 1968 China provided medical refuge, and afterwards a Yunnan based radio station. In Borneo, the Partai Brunei Rakyat and its *Tentara Nasional Kalimantan Utura* (North Kalimantan Army), and the Sarawak communists, had links with, and some aid from, Indonesian Borneo. So how far does this book help us to answer the big, difficult questions about Sarawak's communists; about their links to Brunei and Indonesia; and about the degree of their control of local parties, such as the Sarawak United People's Party or SUPP?

The answer is that it is useful mainly for dredging relevant estimates from the British archives. It thus adds detail to the overviews of people such as A. J. Stockwell, *Malaysia* (London: TSO, 2005) with its collection of British documents, and the works of Matthew Jones, David Easter and others on Confrontation. The downside is that, bar the memoirs of some key non-communists, such as SUPP leader Ong Hui Kee, and information from one or two ex-communists, it does not give us much of a view from the inside. For Malaya we have the words of Chin Peng (Secretary-General of the MCP) in Chin Peng, Ian and Miraflor Ward, *Alias Chin Peng: My side of the story* (Singapore: Media Masters, 2004), and in C. C. Chin and Karl Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004). What does Sarawak have to parallel the increasing flow of leftwing memoirs in Malaysia and Singapore? Government branding of people as SCO (Sarawak Communist Organisation) and similar – which inevitably morphs onto the pages through Porritt's sources – also demands some circumspection, especially given recent debates on how far the broad Singapore left had more subtle distinctions, for instance in Tan Jing Quee and Jomo K. S., *Comet in our sky: Lim Chin Siong in history* (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001).

In summary, this is a very useful summary of the Sarawak case-study of communism drawn mainly but not solely from government archives and moderates' memoirs. It will be valued both in itself and as a case-study of the wider Southeast Asian phenomenon of communist parties which attempted united front tactics in multiracial societies. If it provokes a further flow of 'SCO' and Sarawak left memoirs and biographies (of people such as Wen Min Chyuan and Bong Kee Chok, the latter is briefly cited in the book), then that will be a welcome bonus.

KARL HACK
Open University, Milton Keynes

Philippines

The promise of the foreign: Nationalism and the technics of translation in the Spanish Philippines
By VICENTE L. RAFAEL
Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. Pp. 256. Photographs, Bibliography, Notes, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406300999

A promise is an assurance of particular outcome, one that encourages feelings of anticipation and expectation. Yet, while a promise may endorse a particular result, it is

nevertheless a statement that is made against the prospect of frustration and disappointment. In this respect, a promise is not simply a guarantee. For making a promise, even in good faith, implies and even emphasises the possibility of its own failure.

In *The promise of the foreign* Vicente L. Rafael has written a book about this kind of promise. He argues that just as Filipinos in the late nineteenth century were becoming cognizant of the possibility of the nation – an outcome 'promised' by the use of Castilian as an effective lingua franca – they were also forced to confront the perils of its realisation. Castilian offered access to a modern, telecommunicative power which would facilitate a new kind of discourse between people across vast spatial distance and up and down along the social hierarchies of the colony. Yet it also brought to bear the various linguistic, social and regional impediments that threatened to deny a truly national community, or at least defer its fruition. Rafael argues that it was the very foreignness of Castilian that enhanced Filipinos' telecommunicative horizons, in effect pledging to dissolve ethnic, regional and social differences. In this respect, the promise of the foreign is one premised upon an irony: that the local and the national could be forged through the 'technics' of the foreign, the colonial, and the alien.

There are three main contexts in which the promise of the foreign is manifested. Rafael begins by describing the educated *ilustrado* class who marshalled their material resources in engaging the colony, transcending its borders, participating in its discourse, and using Castilian as their idiom of expression. Castilian was a powerful tool of *ilustrado* nationalism, a 'foreign' language they idealised as the medium of negotiating their own ethnicity, 'a second language with which to articulate one's first' (p. 14). In this sense, the foreign was a 'technic' which enabled them to communicate not only with each other but also with their colonisers, deploying Castilian as 'infrastructures with which to extend one's reach while simultaneously bringing distant others up close' (p. 5). Through novels like Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere* and *Filibusterimo*, through pamphlets like *La Solidaridad*, and through everyday rhetorical practices which involved communicating with Spaniards on a level which defied the latter's expectations, translation became more than just substituting words and meanings. It also involved 'the letting loose and putting forth of the foreign, tasks made possible only by way of repeatable acts of promising and believing in the possibility of communicating with others into the future' (pp. 14–15). In doing so, *ilustrados* became able to contemplate and imagine the idea of the future national community which, in spite of their efforts, remained painfully elusive even up to the final moments of Spanish rule.

But what of the majority of Filipinos who could not deploy Castilian with as much proficiency as *ilustrados*? Were they relevant to the promise of the foreign, when the foreign to them remained largely inaccessible? Rafael finds answers to these questions in the popularity of vernacular theatre, the *comedia*, which were productions that depicted foreign, and often fanciful, tales far removed from the daily lives of local inhabitants. Through a textual analysis of scripts, actors and the contexts of performance, Rafael argues that the persistence of 'untranslatable' Castilian terms embedded in the prose of the *comedia* produced a vernacular that was not specifically religious or even local. This is described by Rafael as the 'colonial uncanny', a condition in which translation fostered a local tongue that conjured the foreign, in effect producing a mode of address that belonged to no one in particular. Like the *ilustrados*, 'ordinary' Filipinos also confronted the promise of the foreign. This was particularly evident in the *comedia* of Balagtas,

whose *Florante at Laura* was articulated in a Tagalog that exceeded itself – an uncanny language that was 'freed from a linguistic hierarchy and achieves a new kind of expressive power thanks to its untranslatable singularity' (p. 131). In this respect, vernacular theatre was a proto-nationalist media that preceded even the *ilustrados*' engagement with the promise of the foreign. As Rafael puts it, 'Castilian played a key role [in nationalism], keeping a sense of the foreign – that is, that which escaped assimilation either into the colonial or the national – in circulation, available for all kind of use and misuse' (p. 65).

The final context in which the promise of the foreign is manifested is discussed in Rafael's analysis of the 'crisis of address' during the eve of the revolution. In this relatively short section, he analyses captured documents of secret societies that, while remaining clandestine, circulated audacious threats to the colony. Just as the *comedia* set fourth a translated language that belonged to no one in particular, secret societies and nationalist conspiracies conjured a vocabulary which had no discernable provenance. The main example of this is the *pacto de sangre* (blood compact) which was a ritual in which one's membership in anti-colonial secret societies became consummated. Although it is a Castilian phrase, '*pacto de sangre*' became invested with meanings that equated Filipino freedom with Spanish death, far outstripping the expectations of the colonial administration. In this sense, *pacto de sangre* was also a manifestation of the 'colonial uncanny', in which rumours of revolt and the spectre of subversion were widely circulated without any linguistic referents. It was a situation which, according to Rafael, 'made the revolution revolutionary' because it brought to bear the possibility (indeed, the promise) of the nation by hinting at hidden sources of subversive power.

One of the hallmarks of this book lies in the heuristic methodology. While some may see in this work a degree of continuity from Rafael's *Contracting colonialism: Translation and Christian conversion in Tagalog society under early Spanish rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), in which he discusses the often unintended effects of translation in early colonial society, the methodology of this book bears traces of his later work, *White love and other events in Filipino history* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), where, in crafting an 'episodic history' of colonial society, Rafael proposed novel and often insightful ways of making sense of the Philippine past. Certainly, one of the hallmarks of *The promise of the foreign* lies in its 'zigging and zagging across temporal and textual realms' (p. 13). As opposed to a linear emplotment of historiography, Rafael's work moves back and fourth in time, juxtaposing critical aspects of Philippine history in order to emphasise the often ironic and, as this book demonstrates, uncanny characteristics they manifest. It is a methodology that is itself reminiscent of the 'new historicism' spearheaded by such scholars from widely divergent fields, such as Stephen Greenblatt and Clifford Geertz.

This latest work is one of erudition and unique insight. What is characteristic of Rafael's prose is not only its eloquence but the meticulous unpacking of every snippet of source material, which is mined for its heuristic value, propelling the argument towards often unique lateral understandings. This is a work that would be of great value to Philippinists in particular and to those who are interested in the development of nationalist thought in Southeast Asia more broadly.

JULIUS J. BAUTISTA
National University of Singapore

The changing village environment in Southeast Asia: Applied anthropology and environment reclamation in the Northern Philippines
By BEN J. WALLACE
London: Routledge, 2006. Pp. 130, Plates, Figures, Tables, Maps, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463406310995

This book should never have been published. Not because the author has nothing to say but because the substance of the argument would more appropriately have been expressed in article-length form. This is a pity because at the core of Ben Wallace's research is some very valuable data on the impact of village level activities (agriculture, industry, construction and firewood) on progressive forest loss. All this, however, is contained in two chapters comprising some 14 pages of text (excluding some three pages of tables listing common tree species). The rest, unfortunately, is mainly just 'padding'.

Wallace recognises that it is an oversimplification to see deforestation simply in terms of 'misuse' of resources as many of its perpetrators often have no other recourse but to degrade local timber stands given the precarious state of their livelihoods. This book is an account of one such attempt to find a practical solution to the dilemma caused by shrinking woods and growing population, the *Ugat ng Buhay* or Good Roots Project in the northern Luzon province of Ilocos Norte that combines research into the multi-purpose use of various tree species with reforestation. This is what the author refers to as 'applied anthropology'.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the Good Roots Project, the locale and the methodology. Amidst descriptions of the four villages and why they were chosen as the site of the study, there is a discussion on the importance of promoting a more integrated, truly inter-disciplinary approach to land-use strategy that both improves family farms and reclaims surrounding woodlands. This forms the principal conceptual statement of the work. The project is also notable for being a joint venture between business, Caltex (Philippines), an acronym for Chevron Texaco, who supplied the money, government as represented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who lent their expertise, and academe in the shape of the Southern Methodist University of Texas that provided the direction (the author) and who ran the whole show. The following two chapters provide some basic 'anthropological' background to the three lowland Ilocano communities and the one upland or 'tribal' Yapayao settlement before Wallace moves on to the only two substantive chapters. The final chapter offers an overall assessment of the project, the problems faced, how they were overcome and gives a final reckoning in terms of seedlings produced. There is also a brief conclusion that brings the reader up to speed with the subsequent history of the project and its successful introduction to other locations throughout the archipelago.

There is some really important and useful material presented in this study on both the species composition and consumption rates of local forests. Wallace and his team of colleagues have carried out a remarkable study on estimating the average number of tree species to be found per hectare in primary and secondary forests, their size distribution, and the volume of timber they yield. This data has been matched by equally impressive ones on local consumption derived from a whole range of activities including *kaingin* (swidden) agriculture, charcoal-making, construction purposes and use as a fuel. Of particular interest are the candid interviews with illegal loggers that detail the extent and frequency of their operations. This is a very sensitive issue and the researchers deserve to

be congratulated on their ability to compile it. It also speaks highly of the degree of 'trust' that the project must have engendered among local participants for them to be willing to divulge such meaningful figures. Based on these statistics, then, Wallace is able to calculate the annual rate of forest loss, showing how unsustainable it is in the long run given projected population increases, and to support his argument on the pressing need for alternative forest uses.

All of the valuable material and data presented in *The changing village environment in Southeast Asia* will provide 'ammunition' for a whole range of arguments about various consumption and regeneration rates, the impact of illegal logging and its integration into wider community activities, various forest timber yields and much else. It does, however, comprise only a very small part of what is already a very small book of only about a 100 pages. Much of the rest of the material is only peripherally relevant to the study and could easily have been sketched in a couple of brief summaries appended to the introduction and the conclusion.

The other five chapters add very little of substance, and at times becomes rather clichéd and on other occasions a trifle vacuous. Thus, the study begins with the remarks of an 'uneducated' old woman, undoubtedly the keeper of tribal lore, who mouths suitable platitudes about the balance of nature, how it has been upset by the rapacious greed of modern society, and how: 'Humankind has taken too much' (p. ix). While this is true, one may also wonder just how many Ilocano husbands still solicit good fortune for their unborn children by jumping three times over their wives during labour as claimed by the author.

The interspersed historical interludes also are debateable at best, such as crediting Ilocanos with pioneering the colonisation of the Southern Philippines (p. 17), and, at other times, downright inexact, such as extending Spain's dominion over the archipelago to a period of 'four hundred years' (p. 23). Entire sections of the text, moreover, are without references of even the most general nature, including a discussion of upland swidden agriculture that overlooks Harold Conklin's seminal work on this topic (*Hanunoo agriculture: A report on an integral system of shifting cultivation in the Philippines* [Rome: FAO, 1967]). Even the book's title is somewhat misleading (though, of course this may be a fault of the publisher and not the author). If the study is about Southeast Asia as claimed, then surely there should be at least some attempt at making comparisons with other parts of the region?

Basically, this book is a useful study that deserves serious consideration for all those interested in forest matters. It is just that the author did not need all that space (or wood for that matter) to tell his story.

GREG BANKOFF
University of Auckland

Singapore

Singapore: Wealth, power and the culture of control
By CARL A. TROCKI
New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. xii, 201. Notes, References, Index, Figures, and Tables. doi:10.1017/S0022463406320991

'There was more to the foundation of the British colony of Singapore in 1819 than a stroke of brilliance by Thomas Stamford Raffles, who is usually credited with the creation

of the city' (p. 8), begins Carl Trocki in his most recent work, which offers, in essence, a very general history of Singapore. This book will be useful for teaching undergraduate classes on Singapore history or as an introductory text for those unfamiliar with Singapore. It offers a broad historical sweep from the colonial period up to contemporary times, discussing this long historical period very neatly in terms of three key analytical themes – 'economics', 'society' and 'politics'. In fact, the book is arranged chronologically into six symmetrical chapters. Chapters One to Three deal with economics, society and politics (in that order) between 1819 to circa 1945, whereas the last three chapters covers the post-war period addressing the same three themes in reverse order. Those who know Singapore may find it apt that this history book on Singapore therefore, begins with 'economics' and ends with 'economics'. As Trocki, explaining the rationale for the symmetrical architecture of his book remarks, 'the economy needed to have the last word . . . . Singapore's future will depend on the economy' (p. 7).

Trocki is an economic historian and has published extensively on the political economy of the region surrounding Singapore, with a particular focus on the pre-1945 period. Drawing on his previous work, he showcases where Singapore stood in the intricate workings of a changing Asian maritime economy *vis-à-vis* European economic expansion in the island world of Southeast Asia. It is not fortuitous that he begins by challenging the official narrative in Singapore history; for Trocki, 1819 was not 'ground zero'. He emphasises instead, that Singapore partook of an even older heritage of Malay entrepots and a raiding economy as well as the classical fortified European port-town that developed in the region since the sixteenth century. The first three chapters in the book focus on discussing the encounters, interaction, exchanges, competition and collaboration of both new and old players on the Singaporean scene after 1819 and the impact of these intricate relationships on the forging of a distinct colonial society on the island.

Trocki's contest of official and mainstream Singapore history challenges origin myths to postulate that mainstream history has over-played the agency of the British elite. His research points to 'a kind of class conflict between rich and poor, between the haves and have-nots' (p. 4), which is a consequence of inequalities created by the colonial economic and political structure. Trocki argues further that this has tremendous implications for political contests in Singapore during the post-1945 period and ultimately for the kind of society that finally emerged in contemporary times. Briefly, the inequalities created on multiple axes within the different Chinese communities between the coolies and the tycoons, between the colonisers and colonised as well as inter-ethnically, set the post-war scene for a multi-faceted political struggle between an English-educated elite led by the People's Action Party (which has governed Singapore since 1959) and the Chinese-educated/left-inclined masses. The elimination of the latter as a significant political foe by the ruling party in the 1960s paved the way for the emergence of a 'managed, middle-class, multiracial society' (p. 137), which is also the title of the fifth chapter.

In a book meant for a general reader who is unfamiliar with Singapore history, it is a challenge to put together a cogent and meaningful historical account. Although the analytical logic appears tight and tidy, Trocki's central argument of the ramifying effects of 'class struggle' through a long historical period in Singapore is also very convenient

since it absolves him from identifying the exact causal links that may (or may not) be traced back to the nature of colonial society in Singapore. This also absolves Trocki from greater analytical rigour when he transits to a contemporary period.

Trocki's expertise lies clearly in the colonial period. The first three chapters taken together offer a succinct account of his key findings on regional political economy with a focused discussion on Singapore. The narrative also provides an informative historical background to contemporary Singapore. However, the chapters on post-war Singapore are much duller. While Trocki openly contests an elite-centred approach to colonial history, in the last three chapters he makes the same oversight of over-playing elite agency. Chapter Five in particular highlights the influence of Lee Kuan Yew, currently the oldest serving member of the ruling party. Here, the author attributes the island's drastic social engineering to Lee's particular ideological system: 'like Mao Zedong in China, Lee Kuan Yew sought to create a cultural revolution' (p. 138). Without denying the penetration of the state in almost all aspects of life in contemporary Singapore society, one still expects a non-elite-centred account to either offer a nuanced narrative that contextualises the extent of the state's reach in Singaporean lives or at least narrate from the point of view of the disenfranchised and disenchanted. The last three chapters in the book tell a tale that should hardly be alien to Western readers: contemporary Singapore is an over-managed society under the constant surveillance of an omnipotent and ever-watchful state.

The symmetrical architecture of the book shows some thought has gone into structuring the text. It certainly makes for easy reading and reinforces Trocki's message that Singapore was founded for economic reasons and that its future depends on the economy. Symbolically represented in the layout of the book itself, this argument runs the risk of economic determinism. Certainly, what makes Singapore interesting is not that its history offers a stereotypical example of a persistently unfolding instrumental/economic logic. Rather, Singapore represents such an extreme example of this logic. It is already so reflexively imbibed by governing and governed groups that instrumentalism/economism is socially reproduced in various ways as national self-image. This has profound implications for the mediation of social and political relationships, and hence, for the formation of distinct types of sociality in Singapore.

In privileging 'economics', this book does not deviate from the official mindset or even from conventional wisdom in mainstream Singapore society, even though Trocki is critical of the state's over-management of the country. By not treating economism as a significant social fact quite alive amongst both governing and governed groups, much room for greater critical analysis is sacrificed. The carefully constructed symmetrical architecture also compromises a more sophisticated treatment of Singapore history. By sticking strictly to a safe formula of 'economics', 'society' and 'politics', *Singapore: Wealth, power and the culture of control* immediately raises questions on principles of categorisation and possible reification of the three categories to the neglect of how events and phenomena boxed separately under the three categories may in fact, be intertwined. This book provides a 'nuts-and-bolts' understanding of Singapore history and society. Those looking for a straightforward narrative will find it a good read.

SAI SIEW MIN
National University of Singapore

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Thailand

Subject Siam: Family, law, and colonial modernity in Thailand
By TAMARA LOOS
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006. Pp. 240. Tables, Graphs, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography and Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406330998

Subject Siam begins brilliantly. It presents two parallel 'snapshots' from Thailand's past: the 'Paknam incident'of 1893, when France sent gunboats up the Chaophraya River leading to Bangkok, forcibly gaining substantial indemnities and territories; and the lesser-known case of the Siamese navy warship placed at the mouth of the Patani River in 1902 to force its ruler to relinquish his authority and to institute reforms that would incorporate Patani as a province of Siam. In both instances, the besieged parties looked to the British to bail them out, in vain. The startling juxtaposition of Paknam and Patani brings home Tamara Loos' argument that Siam's sovereignty was qualified by imperial nations at the same time that it itself became a colonial power – both statements being contrary to the national myth that the country escaped colonialism.

While the picture at the beginning of the book features two predatory powers in the past, its ends with two present-day victims of the resultant modern Thai nation-state – the Malay Muslim majority in the southern states, and wronged first wives who have to contend with the widespread and unofficially sanctioned practice of polygyny as the personal right of Thai men. Entwining the two is family law – 'the pivotal arena in which the leaders of Siam negotiated modernity, proved its "civilized" status to foreign powers, and legislated the meanings of modernity to its subjects' (p. 3). The Siamese state carved out family law as a privileged domain of religion, setting up Muslim courts in the South for such cases as a showcase of its competence as a comparable colonial power to Britain, and arguing that polygyny was in no way inferior to monogamy, associated with Christianity and Western claims to superiority.

In between, the study traverses the transnational nature of Siam's legal reforms; Buddhist dominance in the predominantly Muslim South; the translation of the law codes from English to Thai; and the discourses of gender, sexuality, the family and political loyalties as expounded in particular by King Vajiravudh. The engendering of the Thai nationalist discourse from above as an alternative modernity, yet one simultaneously informed by the colonial is one of the best-documented sections in the book. Yet perhaps it is the presence of the least-well-documented section (materials relating to Patani, even those on the nineteenth century, being embargoed) that is exemplary, for it is rare, if ever, that a history monograph on Thailand incorporates the Malay Muslim South. Loos has demonstrated that as much as its gendered 'other', Thailand's racial and religious 'other' continues to be constitutive of the national self-imagination, and is much more than simply a policy problem.

However, this insightful pairing of (Buddhist) women and southern Malay/Muslim (men) does raise the question of moral equivalence: are the violence and killings in the South, including the 85 Muslim men and boys who died mostly of suffocation in October 2004 while piled up in army trucks for transport from Takbai district police station, where a mass demonstration was held, to a military base, commensurate with the indignities suffered by women whose husbands hold visiting massage parlours or having more than one wife as their right?

Subject Siam is plainly and proudly revisionist, offering an analysis of Siam's history that disrupts the self-legitimising narrative of the monarchy as the sole agent of history, breaking the isolation imposed by the scholarship invoking Siamese exceptionalism, and elucidating the conscious approach of Siam's leaders to European modernity (p. 21). At times, the author may appear to be pedantic, as when she sees it necessary to stress that Siam's kings were one among many powerful voices advocating an agenda of modernity in Siam. Thus she credits judicial reformers, both Siamese officials and foreign advisors, who negotiated Siam's modernity through the discourse of law (p. 184).

While King Chulalongkorn was thus sidelined, as if his assent to the larger parameters governing the reforms was totally absent, King Vajiravudh's voice dominates the discourse on state, family and sexuality in the bulk of three chapters. Nevertheless, Loos argues that the latter had to muster adequate support among the high-ranking ministers if he wanted to abolish polygyny, for example, which he was unable to do. However, her exploration of the deliberations indicates that while Vajiravudh may have seemed to favour the passing of a law on monogamy rather than polygyny when pressed for a decision, he was not an ardent champion, appreciating the complexities of the issue. Only a law on marital registration for state officials was promulgated. (pp. 122–3).

Another instance of the awkward handling of the monarchy involves Loos' discussion of a 1911 law suit where an army prosecutor brought charges against an officer for violating the liberty of a woman by committing assault and other crimes against her. The case went from the appeal court to the king. Vajiravudh imprisoned the officer, but for damaging the honour of the royal army and failing to respect the martial *esprit de corp* when he appropriated the woman from a fellow officer. Loos' comment on the case is that it exposed the limits of the 1908 law protecting individuals against the deprivation of their liberty, despite lawyers' attempts to use the new laws on behalf of servants against their proprietors, commoner women abducted by men, and constituents against officers (pp. 69–70). It may be more apposite to read the monarch's decision to overthrow those of the courts simply as the exercise of the prerogative of an absolute monarch.

Every self-respecting historical study in the English language, particularly those on the fifth reign, has since the late 1970s framed itself as a critique of the dominant royalist narrative. *Subject Siam* has done a sterling job in this respect by engendering royalist nationalism and revealing its colonial aspects.

HONG LYSA
National University of Singapore

Vietnam

The ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: A historical contextualization, 1859–1900.
By OSCAR SALEMINK
London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. Pp. xix, 383. Charts, Maps, Photos, Abbreviations, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463406340994

In *The ethnography of Vietnam's central highlanders* Oscar Salemink provides both a useful analysis of the development and impact on Central Highlanders of ethnographic

practice and an integrated critical history of the policy of several regimes towards ethnic minorities.

The first chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of the book in considerable detail – there is more detail, perhaps, than some readers will find useful, but for readers primarily interested in Salemink's intervention in the historiography of ethnographic practice, this section provides both a meticulous contextualisation and a very clear articulation of the author's theoretical approach. For those who resist the idea that 'theory' can be separated from 'content', the following seven chapters provide more than enough quality, thoroughly contextualised history and analysis of scholarship and state policy towards Central Highlands groups from the early colonial period to the turn of the present century. The second, third and fourth chapters are primarily concerned with French colonial policy and practice, particularly those aspects influenced by missionaries, the scholar-official Léopold Sabatier and the *dieu Python* millenarian movement. The fifth chapter explores the French or First Indochina War 'as an ethnographic occasion' that strongly impacted both the political valorisation of highland groups and ethnographic practice as articulated by such scholars as Georges Condominas. Chapters Six and Seven bring the study into the period of US intervention in the Central Highlands, discussing both the mutual influence of American ethnography and the 'counterinsurgency paradigm' and the ways in which anthropological discourse was deployed by various concerned parties, including missionaries, the armed forces of the United States, and professional anthropologists, Gerald Hickey chief among them. Chapter Eight uses the problematic succession of the *p'tau apui*, or King of Fire, as an opening into discussion of post-1975 state practice towards upland minorities and of ethnographic discourse in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Chapter Nine concludes (almost) the volume with a comparison of French, US, and Vietnamese ethnographic practice. Finally, a brief epilogue discusses some important changes affecting the position of Central Highland groups that have taken place since the bulk of the research for the book was completed.

The primary theoretical arguments made by this volume, as very helpfully articulated in its second sentence, are two: 'The first argument holds that economic, political and military interests within a specific historical context condition ethnographic practice. The second holds that the ensuing ethnographic discourses in turn influence the historical context by suggesting and facilitating ethnic policies, and by contributing to the formation or change of ethnic identities through processes of classification' (p. 1). Salemink more than amply supports his twin hypotheses, which most historians and anthropologists would accept without resistance anyway; this, however, is by no means the limit of the book's contribution to the literature on Vietnam's ethnic minorities, state designs on marginal populations, and the role of scholar-officials in supporting and extending the consolidation of specific racial, cultural and political agendas. Chapters Two ('Missionaries, explorers, and savages: The construction of an evolutionist discourse') and Three ('Léopold Sabatier: Colonial administration and cultural relativism') in particular are models of effective use of archival and secondary sources in the writing of a critical and sensitive history of rules and disciplines. Salemink consistently resists the temptation to present either administrations or ethnic groups as transparent or unitary identities; neither does he portray Central Highland groups as passively subaltern clay awaiting the forming hand of colonial or subsequent agendas. For those with any interest

in how subject, scholar and state come together to shape historical or ethnographic 'truth', in Vietnam or elsewhere, these two chapters are both challenge and exemplar, as well as rich and well-presented history of an extremely complex subject.

All those with any interest in the history and future of Central Highland groups should find this volume required reading; additionally, students of colonial history and policy, wartime Vietnam, post-war statebuilding, and the development of ethnographic practice in context will find large portions of *The ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders* both useful and illuminating.

SARAH WHITNEY WOMACK
Albion College

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