

with the Americans in bringing about his downfall in the aftermath of the Untong coup in 1965. Did he find a 'smoking gun' linking them with General Soeharto? No. Whether one existed is unknown. One may speculate, but the evidence remains tantalisingly missing.

In his following chapter on the return of colonialism, Lowe is on far safer ground in discussing some of the individuals who helped shape British policy in the region for better or worse. He is clearly not enamoured with Governor Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith (a huge liability in Burmese politics immediately after the war) and Malcolm MacDonald who cropped up in a number of key posts within the region in the late 1940s and 1950s and yet never seemed to tire of Bao Di regardless of what the feckless Vietnamese Emperor did or did not do. Lowe's reservations about Bob Thompson's personal advocacy of the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam (BRIAM) and Esler Dening's haughty attitude to the Thais are eminently fair. Fortunately, as he reveals, Whitehall also received far shrewder analyses of the situation on the ground from other members of the diplomatic corps, such as John Addis, Leslie Holliday, Herbert Rance and Geoffrey Thompson, and was equally well served by experts such as Professor Pearn and James Cable in London.

Lowe's broad canvas stretches beyond the conventional coverage of the Malayan emergency and the abject refusal of right-wing American leaders to entertain Ho Chi Minh's nationalist aspirations, to embrace two initiatives for containing the scourge of communism: the astute Colombo plan and the lacklustre Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) defence organisation. Thereafter, chapters on the rest of Southeast Asia provide interesting glimpses of British thought processes. While revealing nothing new – there is, after all, but so much one can say in defence of British foreign policy east of Suez – Professor Lowe has evidently trawled through the archival deposits in a bid to disturb the ghosts of the past. His study has not exorcised them: Anglo-American relations in the region are deemed to be no better than before; the faulty reasoning that lay behind so many of the missteps remains painfully obvious; and money, or the lack thereof, still bedevilled British plans in this region. Few British premiers knew much about Southeast Asia and, sadly, they showed it in the post-war years.

One final and unconnected irony about this volume — it literally came apart at the seams! From the outset, pp. 99–100 were missing in action and the rest came away from the spine of the book as if modern glue just does not cut it any longer. Is there a lurking metaphor here for British policy in Southeast Asia after the war?

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*Paul Mus (1902–1969): L'espace d'un regard*

Edited by DAVID CHANDLER and CHRISTOPHER E. GOSCHA

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Irrespective of the context, Paul Mus has left an impact wherever and with whom-ever he has worked. An erudite man of action, he is among the few to have left a

significant and positive footprint on Asian, French and Anglo-Saxon research. These contributions are reflected by the diversity of contributions and contributors found in David Chandler and Christopher E. Goscha's *Paul Mus (1902–1969): L'espace d'un regard*. The book emerges from a workshop held in May 2004 and is dedicated to the work (and life) of Paul Mus, a social scientist, an officer, a diplomat and a genuine humanist. Participants of the workshop and in the publication of this book bore testimony to the diversity of Mus's intellectual trajectory, from his position at the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Indochina to his teaching at Yale University in the 1950s and 1960s, and through his years of military and political activities during the Second World War and the first Indochina war. A number of the contributors knew Mus personally, such as Georges Condominas, Jean Lacouture, David Chandler and Hiram Woodward, and rank among his former students.

The book is organised around five parts including a long biographical introduction written by David Chandler. The other four parts plot the various stages of his career. The first part, *Autour de l'homme*, provides snapshots of Mus at different stages of his life. It includes contributions from Georges Condominas (interviewed by Yves Goudineau), Jean Lacouture, Frances Fitzgerald, David Chandler and Hiram Woodward. The second part, *L'Asie vue par Mus*, delves into the EFEO years, when he wrote one of his masterpieces *Barabudur* – first published in parts in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* in 1933 and 1934. J. Dumarçay, A. Thompson, P.-Y. Manguin, I. Mabbett, Y. Goudineau and R. Madinier all examine various aspects of his vision of Asia from within (Mus lived in Vietnam during his youth and again after his marriage) — from sacred architecture to the genealogy of forms in the monsoon Asia region, through Indian and indigenous cults in Southeast Asia. Interestingly, Madinier presents a few notes about the 'Mussian vision of Southeast Asia', based on an unfinished book project that Mus undertook in the last part of his career (pp. 143–8).

The third and fourth parts examine Mus's journey through the turbulence and vagaries of war, decolonisation, as well as the birth of an independent Vietnam. First, Nguyen Phuong Ngoc, Trinh Van Thao, S. Bayly and A. Larcher-Goscha discuss how Mus understood colonialism and orientalism, through his dialogue with the Vietnamese researchers from the EFEO as well as through his actions as an officer and diplomat during the Second World War and the beginning of the Vietnamese revolution. Then, D. Hémerly, D. Varga, S. Rousseau and C. Goscha develop the final years of Mus's life during the period of decolonisation. Some photographs, a bibliography and detailed chronology complete the journey through the life and work of Paul Mus. The end of the book includes five appendices with examples of Mus's work and thought that illustrate just how advanced he was as compared with his compatriots — many of whom failed to understand how fundamentally the Second World War had changed circumstances in Vietnam. His 10-page memorandum on the Franco-Indochinese moral crisis (1 August 1945) shows his precocious grasp of the roots and the very nature of Vietnamese nationalism. How unfortunate it is that those in power at the time and who also 'received' these notes did not have wisdom to act on them when hostilities could have still been avoided.

Taken as a whole, this book reveals far more than what is known of Paul Mus's erudition and political commitment across his career. In all aspects of his life, both in

his academic as well as politically active careers, he was always placing things, events and processes into larger perspectives. More challenging intellectually, this approach allowed him to give rigorous and far more nuanced portraits of what he studied or witnessed, be they Cham temples, Buddhist iconography, or events such as the Japanese takeover of Indochina in March 1945. Also, in the second part of his academic career, in both his academic and public interventions (for example in newspapers), Paul Mus retained unabatedly a multidisciplinary approach, at a time when discipline-focused work was the norm. Finally, authors in this book also recount many examples of how he tried to ‘humanise the war’ such as in his book *Guerre sans visage*, 1961, written after the death of his son in the Algerian war. In Paul Mus’s mind, considering the enemy as *humans*, not as wild ducks to shoot at, was a prerequisite for peace talks.

Reading this collection of texts featuring uneven lengths and styles, one could be annoyed by some of the repetitive statements found. These can be deemed necessary, however, given that the ostensible objective of this collection is to cast a wide net so as to give as broad an insight as possible into the work and life of this true humanist who was Paul Mus.

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*China and Vietnam: The politics of asymmetry*

By BRANTLY WOMACK

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Brantly Womack has written a *tour de force* with the publication of *China and Vietnam: The politics of asymmetry*. Womack’s purpose is to address a lacuna in the field of international relations by developing a theory of asymmetry to explain interactions between large powerful states and smaller weaker ones. Womack has constructed his theory from the bottom up by a detailed investigation of China–Vietnam relations from the pre-imperial period until 2006. Womack focuses his analysis on the structural aspects of the relationship and does not claim to present a full-blown historical account

*China and Vietnam* is divided into two parts preceded by a general overview. Part one considers the basic structure of the relationship. Womack devotes two chapters, one each to China and Vietnam, presenting what he terms the basic parameters available to each state. In China’s case these include: size, centrality and localism, resource sufficiency, the challenge of sustenance and history. In Vietnam’s case its basic parameters include: geography, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, resource imbalance, integration and diversity, and history. These two chapters provide the basis for chapter 4 that presents Womack’s theory of asymmetry.