sense if the country is going to charter a qualitative new road toward social change' ('The rise of civil society', *Intersect*, April–May 1994: 6) Otherwise, Atienza adds, 'Philippine society will be condemned to relive its past by oscillating between elite democracy and dictatorship – or perhaps fall by default into the failed experiment of statist socialism.'

Another provocative paper by Resil Mojares presented at a 2002 conference, also not cited by the author of the book under review, finds some problem with the 'urban middle-classness and English-ness' of 'civil society', which diminishes its power as a term. 'By its ''Englishness'' and abstractness, civil society/*lipunang sibil* will likely remain in the language of those with the power to speak for ''others''.' This 'power' group includes politicians, social activists, academics, journalists, specialists and so on ('Words that are not moving: Civil society in the Philippines', *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 34, 1 (2006): 47). Mojares adds that this is not just a linguistic issue, but a political one as well. 'The political environment in the Philippines is such that *civil society* will continue to be used in public discussions', but 'for the moment, it is a word that has neither moved far nor moved deeply'.

And with regard to NAMFREL itself, while it has become an examplar for free and honest elections, it has not always acted 'in the name of civil society'. Misgivings about its somewhat shady relationship with the CIA and its emergence as the handiwork of covert operative Gabe Kaplan and other counterinsurgency experts in the Cold War era abound in the literature. NAMFREL was really part of a larger project, a 'long-range investment' in Philippine democratic institution-building. In 1956, the Office of the Presidential Assistant on Community Development (PACD) was established to train 7,000 workers to be deployed all over the Philippines to teach villagers self-government, self-help and other values that would eventually alter the power base of Philippine society away from landlords and local bosses. The PACD experiment in the fifties and sixties should be included in Hedman's analysis as it involved full-scale psychological warfare mobilisation designed to democratise the barrio.

Finally, there are the usual misspellings of Filipino names and terms. The words in parentheses are the correct spellings: Eduardo Angara, p. 107 (Edgardo); Theresa Nieva, p. 120 (Teresa); *Pilinas*, p. 146 (*Pilipinas*); del Mundo, Cloualdo Jr., p. 237 (Clodualdo); Joceno, F. Lacanda, p. 242 (Jocano, F. Landa); *Magpagpalaya*, p. 262 and other pages (*Mapagpalaya*).

BELINDA A. AQUINO
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Thailand

Mien relations: Mountain people and state control in Thailand
By HJORLEIFUR JONSSON
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005. Pp.198. References, Notes, Index.
doi:10.1017/S002246340700015X

This book deals incisively with the history of inter-ethnic relations, more especially relations between lowland states and upland 'tribal' peoples in the general region of

northern mainland Southeast Asia, and specifically with the Yao/Mien people. The main focus of the book is northern Thailand and the history of the way the Yao/Mien have been part of the various old northern Thai kingdoms, Nan in particular. It is worthwhile to note the reason for the use of the ethnonym Mien instead of the more widely known Yao will say a lot about the message of the book.

'Yao' is a Chinese name for a series of ethno-linguistic communities of the Yao-Miao (Hmong-Mien) family, to be found mainly in southwestern China and adjacent regions of northern Southeast Asia. Outside of China, and in the context of current global ideologies about the right of minority communities (indigenous peoples, in United Nations terminology) to claim and preserve their respective cultural identities in the system of nation-states, these people reject the name Yao on the grounds that it is an artifact and symbol of Chinese hegemony and hence demeaning if not indeed pejorative. Yet inside China, and in the context of PRC's system of *minzu xibie*, which defines minority nationalities and grants them various degrees of recognition and even local autonomy, and in the historical context of the traditions about special recognition anciently negotiated between imperial China and the Yao (see Ralph Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the politics of national belonging*, Duke University Press, 2000: 85) — the two books might well be studied in tandem), these communities accept the name Yao as a symbol of their place in the Chinese state, a place in which they take traditional pride. Outside of China it is no such thing, and is rejected in favour of 'Mien', despite the fact that this is not the actual ethnonym of all such dialect communities.

The thesis of the book is this: that throughout relevant history relations between 'upland' minority peoples and the states of the region have not, contra currently popular theories of these relations (e.g., those of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*), been simply the outcome of state hegemony, nor is it the case that ethnic identity is just an artifact of the power of the state. On the contrary, as this book documents in detail, these relations have 'always' been matters of negotiation, with a fair amount of 'agency' in the hands of the upland communities, both because the latter can in some circumstances constitute a threat to state–lowland security and because many upland peoples have played a key role in controlling long-distance trade routes of interest to states. Jonssón elsewhere (unpublished MS) has documented nicely how Yao were a force throughout much of the twentieth century in northern Laos during recurring periods of political and inter-ethnic disorder, with warlord-leaders. Alas, Jonssón pays little attention to the fact that ethnicity has also to do with relations amongst upland communities themselves, although the present reviewer (with special regard to Burma, Chit Hlaing: 1967a, b, cited in Jonssón) and others have pointed this out over the years. However, he is particularly good at connecting the political patterns internal to highland groups with the way in which local leaders and/or war leaders functioned to negotiate relations with lowland principalities.

In this regard, Jonssón makes a particularly important contribution to a major theme in the literature on statecraft in pre-modern Southeast Asia. In fact, this is essentially his major thesis in the book but unfortunately, it is somewhat hidden between pages 78 and 85. That is, he is able to argue successfully against the currently popular 'centrist' idea that is often attributed to Thongchai Winichakul (1994, cited in

the text) but actually derived from E R Leach! (See 'The frontiers of "Burma"', *Comparative studies in society and history*, 3, 1 (Oct. 1960): 49-68). The centrist idea is that traditional states were not concerned with boundaries or with upland tribal peoples that were simply not within the orbit of the centres. In reality, the *de facto* fluidity and uncertainty of borders can be explained by competing claims of neighbouring states over lands inhabited by such client tribal populations. It is true that the structure of these 'tributary' relations between states and 'uplanders', and among principalities themselves, were configured in the cultural terms of Indic cosmologies of hierarchy (pp. 11ff.). Yet, Jonssón never directly aligned this claim with his major thesis in the book. The claim itself defies the centrist thesis. That is, there is a hidden inconsistency in the (post)modernist revision of theories of Southeast Asian history and statecraft since it is now clear that the centrist thesis sits uneasily with the *mandala* thesis about pre-modern statecraft that the organisation of the state mirrored a well-structured cosmological hierarchy (Tambiah 1976, cited in Jonssón). Furthermore, Jonssón's revisionist view hints it is constantly forgotten that pre-modern states in this and many other parts of the world were not 'nation-states', but mercantilist states. Typically, the king did not rule over just a generalised population of subjects that were principally defined by the ethnicity of the majority. Rather, he ruled over a collection of ethnic communities. He ruled over Burmese subjects, Chinese subjects, Portuguese subjects, Armenian subjects and so forth. These comprised the throne's different links to different commercial trading partners, and the king was the principal trader.

Chapter 2 of the book under review is, in its way at least, a nice documentation of the essentially modern, colonial and post-colonial nature of the state's treatment and representation of the uplanders as merely wild 'savages' being brought within the orbit of a majority Buddhist ideology – although (for instance p. 63), under the heading of 'Museum imagery', the author may go overboard in that reading.

I need not continue with annotating the book section by section, though. It remains to say that, although it is an anthropological work based on years of intensive and meticulous field ethnography in Thailand and Laos, one will find relatively little in it about Mien/Yao culture or customs or internal social organisation. Rather, the book is largely a lengthy essay of advocacy in favour of the Mien, an argument against the state's recent and current treatment of them, and documentation in historical detail of the intricate politics of ethnic categorisation. One may or may not regret this, but one has to admit that it is well argued and documented. It is an important book for all scholars of mainland Southeast Asian ethnology and history. It is part of a growing literature of its kind and should be read together with, for example, Ralph Litzinger's book referenced above, on the Yao in China, Andrew Walker, *The Legend of the Golden Boat* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), on Northern Laos and cross-border trade and ethnic relations, and maybe above all Anthony R. Walker's monumental, *Merit and the Millennium*, on the Lahu of China and Thailand etc. (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Company, 2003).

U CHIT HLAING
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign