

Crossley's book manages to illustrate both the development of Spanish imperialism in Asia, and the limits of its strategic interests and expansion. It includes descriptions of how territories were consolidated and defended, as well as culture clashes in the early colonial period.

In short, *The Dasmariñases* offers a very readable account of a turbulent period of the Philippines and East Asia, based on well-known archival sources. It also takes into account some additional texts, such as the Boxer Codex in the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana.

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The rise of the Octobrists in contemporary Thailand: Power and conflict among former left-wing student activists in Thai politics

By KANOKKRAT LERTCHOOSAKUL

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A student-led uprising in mid-October 1973 ousted a corrupt military regime that had been in place for 15 years. The resulting period of electoral politics was short-lived and divisive. Demonstrations, strikes, bombings and assassinations culminated in a hate-drenched attack on students and their supporters on 6 October 1976. The bloodshed unleashed at Thammasat University was led by royalists, the military and police who claimed to be driven by loyalty to the monarchy and a desire to protect the royal family from communists. Thousands of those targeted by the coup-installed rightist regime, headed by a palace favourite, fled to the jungle bases of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).

Originally a doctoral thesis, Chulalongkorn political scientist Kanokrat Lertchoosakul's book seeks to explain how many of those who fled to the CPT eventually returned to become major influences in business, civil society, entertainment, government and politics. Several have become influential public intellectuals who have defined debates on critical social, economic and political issues. In an account influenced by social movement approaches, Kanokrat explains that this transition from outlaw status with the CPT to public significance has not been easy and involved a significant reframing of their personal histories and especially their ideologies.

Drawing from interviews and the plethora of writings by these 'Octobrists', the author tells an intriguing story of how a brief period of relative calm and togetherness in the 1990s masked deep divisions in the 1970s and 1980s and in the period since 2000. Their 1990s togetherness emerged from proclaimed commitments to electoral democracy in a period where the Thai state's repression was reduced. Indeed, it was in this period that earlier divisions were papered over and an identity as

Octobrists was manufactured. In the spirit of the times, the Octobrist identity portrayed a diverse group as fighters for democracy and opponents of military authoritarianism.

In creating this new identity, Kanokrat writes of the Octobrists as having painfully jettisoning Maoism and other radical ideas in favour of reformism. Her account is chronological, discussing this transformation in chapters 2 to 5, showing that, from the beginning, there were important differences of ideology and politics that would return to haunt the Octobrists as some were drawn to Thaksin Shinawatra and then the Red Shirts, while others rejected Thaksin. The latter joined the Yellow Shirts, adopting a deeply conservative and regressive politics (chapters 6–7).

In considering the differences among Octobrists, one appears foundational. The author argues that those Octobrists who emerged from the 1973 uprising were motivated by broadly liberal ideas and influenced by global events and ideas. However, those who came from the 1976 events were hardened by the political struggles of the intervening years and were determinedly Maoist and narrowly focused on that ideology as interpreted by the CPT. Kanokrat suggests that many of the latter were already part of the CPT or related organisations before they fled to the jungle. This reviewer is not entirely convinced by this dichotomy. It is true that in the heady days of 1973 there was a plethora of ideas being debated, sometimes for the first time, including versions of Marxism. And, it is also true that as political conflict deepened, some were drawn or pushed to a more radical politics, with Maoism being an easily accessible ideology promising to sweep away military dictators and exploitative capitalists.

One reason for some scepticism about the 1973/1976 bifurcation is that the author doesn't spend much space detailing the ideologies that influenced the students or the ideas they developed. It also seems that there was considerable movement between the two groups as they experimented with new ideas while dealing with repression and conflict. It would be useful to know more about the Octobrists' personal and ideological pressures and responses. Was Maoism, for example, appealing not just as the ideology that enabled a successful peasant revolution, but because many of the students were from the Sino-Thai middle class and felt a connection to the Chineseness of Maoism? This kind of unpacking would also have been useful when Kanokrat describes the Octobrists as liberals, conservatives and royalists. What was the content of these political positions in Thailand in 1973, 1976 and in 2014? Has that content changed over time?

Given the intense political conflicts in Thailand since 2000, many readers will be interested in chapters 6 and 7, where the author focuses on the rise of Thaksin and colour-coded politics. It is this period that shatters the illusion of Octobrist solidarity. Not surprisingly, this splintering sees contending factions accusing each other of selling out the ideals that defined the 1970s. In doing so they often redefine what those ideals were. These chapters give more attention to the ideas that motivate the competing Octobrists, including debates among some of the leading public intellectuals. Overall, the reader is left with an impression that much that the author heard in interviews amounted to justifications for contemporary political positions rather than any careful consideration of the ideas and values.

Kanokrat's book provides an account of the political conversions and self-justifications of radicals turned conservatives, but this reader yearned for more details of the big debates and ideas that have divided the Octobrists and Thai society. After all, it remains difficult to comprehend how self-described Leftists can today give full-throated support to the royalists and military who once hunted them down and killed their comrades. Kanokrat's account is already long, so these debates and ideas await other studies that will tease them out. In the meantime, this book fills out some of the complex details regarding this important period in Thailand's political history. Kanokrat tells us a great deal about the leading lights of the student movement of the 1970s, their experiences, disillusionments and triumphs. That makes this a welcome contribution to our knowledge of Thailand's politics.

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Human rights in Thailand

By DON F. SELBY

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In this timely book, Don F. Selby analyses how a discourse on human rights emerged in Thailand between 2001 and 2005. Instead of viewing the emergence of human rights along the line of Western liberal tradition or the cultural relativism of the 'Asian values' argument, Selby treats human rights as an anthropological object by focusing on what social actors do to and with human rights. He argues that 'what gave emergent human rights in Thailand their shape, force, and trajectories' are the ways that activists engage, contest, or rework Buddhism, the struggle of democratic movements, and regimes of social stratification and face-saving practices (p. 4).

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 examines how Buddhism has become a resource for human rights. It focuses on the way that prominent commissioners in the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRC) articulate human rights with Buddhist ethics, claiming that Buddhism teaches people to live together with kindness, to sympathise, to help one another. Therefore, there is no need to search for a place for human rights in Buddhism; they are 'available in Buddhism, so that they are not an import, not grafted on to Buddhism, but arise, as it were, naturally and harmoniously with Buddhism' (p. 20).

Chapter 2 looks at the influence of the democratic struggles in 1973, 1976, and 1992 on the NHRC and human rights practices in Thailand. The NHRC envisions itself as an inheritor of these struggles. According to Selby, 'positioning human rights as emerging from ... leftist protests of authoritarianism gives human rights their shape and direction, imbuing them with this particular egalitarian ethic' (p. 12). In addition, Selby points out that democratic struggles in the past influenced the