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Book Reviews

Asia

Forgotten armies: The fall of British Asia 1941–1945
By CHRISTOPHER BAYLY and TIM HARPER
London: Allen Lane. 2004. Pp. xxxiii, 535. Maps, Photos, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463405470472

It is no longer common to include colonial India in any discussion of Southeast Asia. But to Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, noted Cambridge historians of the British Empire, that is the only way to come to grips with the Second World War experience of Southeast Asians who went to war under British rule, endured Japanese occupation, then saw British rule restored – if only for a while. Bayly and Harper argue that the area from Calcutta in eastern India to Singapore, at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, formed a distinct 'crescent' within the larger British Empire in Asia. British military, political and economic paramountcy united this region. Before 1941, despite the bewildering variety of demographic, cultural, social and economic influences at play, the 'crescent' was a relatively closed world, protected from change from without by British power, from within by rigidities of race, religion, social and cultural relations. The Japanese occupation of the area transformed it forever. The rapid destruction of British power and subsequent experience of Japanese imperialism shattered British prestige, galvanised the ambitions, fears, frictions and agendas of numerous Asian communities, and most of all politicised the entire area. All of this was cemented by the almost equally rapid and even more catastrophic destruction of Japanese power. This produced a lasting change in attitudes towards politics and power 'on the ground'. The most important change was in attitudes towards the state, as an entity. Before the war 'less was best'. From 1945, the state became the prime vehicle to express the aspirations of aroused nationalisms. That change was the deepest impact of the fall of 'British Asia'.

Forgotten armies may suggest another Eurocentric book, but their case is well made. The many armies of this struggle were vehicles of political change. They were the key instrument of state power – or else the main expression of those who wanted state power – or even the focal point for minorities hoping to resist state power. The British Army, the Indian (British) Army, the Imperial Japanese Army and the Indian National Army were joined by the Chinese Nationalist Army, the Burma Defence Army, the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army, the Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army and a good number of local defence militias, levies and forces, in this sprawling battle for control. Sooner or later the ebb and flow of world war made them all 'forgotten' – the major Allied armies by the decision to concentrate on defeating Germany first, the Japanese forces in the area by the heavy defeat of their navy in the main theatre in the Pacific, and the rest by the course of military operations in the area. But these forgotten armies acted as lightning rods for people struggling to cope with an upheaval that seemed at the time to have no end. The British collapse in 1942 was profound and so was the damage. But

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the ultimate legacy was political, not military. The Allies won the war and the British returned. But they returned to a new 'crescent', with new attitudes and expectations. Japanese behaviour, especially in the last desperate year of the war, added much to that change. It was that change which ruled out any return to empire as usual and pointed towards the struggles of the future.

Students of Southeast Asia will be familiar with these and other themes of the narrative: the intriguing relationship between the British and minority groups within larger polities, such as the hill peoples of Burma or the Straits Chinese of Malaya; the arrogance and detachment of many British officials, civil and military, underpinned by a rigid colour bar; the terrible impact of the mass famine in Bengal in 1943; and the ambivalent impact of 'Pan-Asianism', which the authors rightly note really mattered not for the Japanese but 'in what it allowed other to achieve for themselves' (p. 316). But what this book offers such students is something too many skip over too often: a solid analysis of how the war itself, the military struggle for the 'crescent', generated such a lasting impact on society and politics in 'British Asia'. For once this account does not dwell almost entirely on the experience of Allied and Japanese high command and soldiery. While figures such as Churchill, Mountbatten, and Stillwell are discussed, so too, in greater detail, are Lai Teck, Chin Peng, Ba Maw, Aung San, Tan Kah Kee, Lim Bo Seng, Subhas Chandra Bose and many others not nearly so eminent. In this first round of the 'great Asian war', Asians living in the 'crescent' did not support these local leaders. The relationship between military operations and political consequences is always central, especially in total war. The contribution of this solid narrative is that it explains clearly how that relationship transformed politics from Calcutta to Singapore in the single greatest upheaval the region has ever known. Two among many examples include a sober comparison of the experience of mass prostitution in British as well as Japanese controlled areas and a good discussion of the arousal of Malay political nationalism, from '*sisat*' to '*politik*'.

No book is entirely free of minor errors. The British did intend to defend Kota Bharu and its important airbases in December 1941; Japanese troop numbers are consistently overstated, in Burma and in the region as a whole – the authors themselves concede them to be 'highly approximate' (p. 273) – apart from understating the force that invaded Singapore island; the Sook Ching massacres in Singapore and Malaya were planned in outline before the Japanese invaded Malaya, not ordered by Yamashita in retaliation for Malayan Chinese resistance; and, arguably, the Japanese conquest united Southeast Asia under one political authority before Allied Southeast Asia Command did so by taking it back. But the narrative as a whole, drawn from a wide and discriminating range of archival, personal and published sources in the United Kingdom and the region, is a sound reassessment. The book is always readable without being merely anecdotal, and strikes the difficult balance between being useful to the specialist and engaging to the general reader. It is a book by Britons about Asia, not just another book about Britons in Asia. For Southeast Asian scholars it is a timely reminder they should not pass over the military dimension as a given and head for the 'real questions'. The politics of war and their consequences stem from the conflict itself, a message worth repeating and done very well here.

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Chinese Overseas: Comparative cultural issues
By TAN CHEE-BENG
Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 260. Notes, Bibliography, Index.

Chinese and Indian diasporas: Comparative perspectives
Edited by WONG SIU-LUN
Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2004. Pp. x, 167.
doi:10.1017/S0022463405480479

In the field of Chinese overseas studies, a terrain well trodden by political and economic historians, *Chinese overseas: Comparative cultural issues* takes us on an anthropological excursion. With the privilege of having conducted field research widely among Chinese communities in Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Indonesia, veteran anthropologist Tan Chee-Beng calls into view the 'Chinese ethnological field', introducing a perspective for studying Chinese communities worldwide based on ethnological points of comparison. While the book is not comprehensive, in terms of either coverage of the literature or the elucidation of the bases of comparison among these communities (neither of which can be expected from a collection of papers targeted at wide-ranging audiences), Tan is judicious in his expansive selection of examples, nudging the reader towards considering the vectors of cultural comparison.

Chapter One examines the issue of cultural continuity and change through the practices of ancestral and *pudu* worship (Hungry Ghost Festival) in Malaysia and China. Chapter Two looks at what Tan calls the 'acculturation experiences' of localized and mestizo Chinese in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. In discussing the acculturation experiences of ethnic Chinese in different parts of the world, Tan defends the outcome of such experiences as different ways of being Chinese.

Chapter Three renders a more detailed portrayal of the localization process through the case of the Baba Chinese of the former Straits Settlements. Here, Tan places emphasis on the role of ethnic Chinese as active agents in negotiating the process of cultural change and persistence, such as through the reproduction and reinvention of religious rituals and hybrid cuisines. In chapter Four, the author elaborates on the heterogeneity of the Chinese of Malaysia as a result of their different socialization experiences based on ancestral speech groups, depth of localization, regional variations or educational affiliations. In addition, the experience of being Chinese is also shaped by bounded national and local contexts and an unbounded global ethnic identification.

In chapter Five, Tan focuses on linguistic practice as a distinctive cultural marker between Chinese embedded in different national contexts. By distinguishing conceptually between cultural, ethnic and national identification, Tan argues for the heterogeneity of the Chinese overseas and that 'there is no single united transnational Chinese identity' (p. 126). Chapter Six discusses the role of socio-economic competition as a catalyst for ethnic tensions involving Chinese overseas. Tan employs rational choice theory to explain the strategies of Chinese in managing the different ethnic scenarios in which they find themselves. The final chapter is an attempt to explain the phenomenal economic success of the Chinese in terms of social institutions, culture and the structure of the political economy. In revisiting the Weberian thesis, Tan reconsiders the nexus between values and structure in fomenting economic achievement among the Chinese.

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Throughout the book, Tan is sensitive to culture as practice. This leads him to advocate an approach to cultural analysis that combines both the agency of individuals in interpreting cultural rules and cultural production as an adaptation to the social environment (pp. 73–4). In toeing this theoretical tightrope between agency and structure, Tan often develops a logic of practice among Chinese overseas that is reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's approach in his theory of practice.

This book, in suggesting a 'Chinese ethnological field', should be alluring for anyone interested in comparative studies of Chinese societies or even diasporic communities. It is most enjoyable when dwelling at length on cultural points of comparison, such as religious rituals and the practice of credit systems among different Chinese societies. However, although this collection of essays demonstrates the potential of the 'Chinese ethnological field' as a locus of research and analysis, it stops short of delivering a systematic definition of the field that gives the reader a methodology of engagement. For example, what are the key cultural elements to be considered for comparison among communities that have become vastly different from each other? Moreover, in view of such differences, what are the basis and limits of comparison? And where certain Chinese communities have more of a basis of comparison with non-Chinese communities, how should we consider these intersections with other 'ethnological fields'? This book has served as an excellent appetizer. I look forward to the entrée(s).

Chinese and Indian diasporas: Comparative perspectives grew out of a forum in the year 2000 organized by the Centre of Asian Studies, Hong Kong University, in collaboration with the Consulate-General of India in Hong Kong. In focusing on comparing the diverse experiences of the Indian and Chinese Diasporas, this volume opens a much overdue dialog between two distinct but highly comparable academic traditions.

There are definitely strong parallels in both Indian and Chinese migration histories, from early patterns involving migrant traders to later labour migration in the nineteenth century meeting the demands of Western colonial economies. Brij Lal takes up this comparison in his chapter on the Indian indentured diaspora. In considering the experiences of both diasporas, I am often struck by the points of symmetry, and on the other hand, forced to reflect on the processes underlying the differences. For example, it is intriguing to realize that Indian labour migration to Southeast Asia under the *kangani* system employs a recruitment process similar to the Chinese brokerage system, whereby trusted employees of plantations or mines were used as intermediaries to recruit fresh labour from their villages and hometowns. In contrast, the indenture system that governed Indian labour migration to the West Indies was conducted under the auspices of the British colonial government, regulating terms of employment that were never guaranteed under the Chinese coolie system. Here, British colonialism played a definitive role in the difference.

But colonialism has also inflected discourses pertaining to the Indian diaspora. One key concern of Indian scholars when writing about the Indian diaspora is the decolonization of history. Sucheta Mazumdar, in her chapter suggesting a prospectus for comparative research of Chinese and Indian migration, argues for a break with the Orientalist tendencies of European and American scholarship that defines distinct Chinese and Indian civilisational models. It is only in transcending the confines of a nationalist civilisational frame that the intersections between Chinese and Indian migration histories will emerge in sharper focus. Ravindra Jain, in his chapter, is similarly sensitive

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to colonialism in its variant forms, from the exploitation of migrant labour to the cultural marginalization of Indians in diaspora. This sensitivity is born out of an acknowledgement of the 'dominant historical impact of colonialism during much of the duration of modern South Asian Diaspora' (p. 20), which steers a trajectory somewhat different from other diasporas.

Without having to contend with such a history of colonialism, we seldom find scholars of Chinese overseas studies articulating what approximates postcolonial discourse and subaltern histories. In lieu of a politics of contention targeted at American and European hegemony, we find more commonly a politics of accommodation within the nation-states that Chinese have settled in. This involves the disengagement of culture and ethnicity from national identification that we have already observed in Tan Chee-Beng's work. That is, adherence to Chinese culture and ethnicity does not necessarily imply political identification with China, a distinction often ignored by suspicious host societies with sizeable Chinese populations. Wang Gungwu's chapter, in observing the decentralization of Chinese culture via secondary and tertiary centres outside of Mainland China, furthers the agenda of disengaging culture from national identification. Indeed, as Chan Kwok Bun argues in his chapter, being Chinese overseas implies multiple rootedness, hybridity and positionality – a middle way of ethnicity between ethnic persistence and assimilation that supplicates for accommodation within host societies.

Chinese and Indian diasporas is instructive, in terms of both the issues it addresses and the way two different traditions deal with similar processes like acculturation. However, the book would be more exciting if it engaged in a closer comparison of materials from both diasporas. For example, while Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown's chapter gives an excellent outline of the exponential transnational growth of a large Chinese corporation (the Hong Leong Group from Malaysia), the reader will benefit even more if an Indian transnational corporation is also placed within a comparative focus. Comparative studies of such scope and rigor call for further collaboration between scholars of both traditions. Perhaps with such cross-fertilization, a comparison of both traditions will also come into view. Why, for example, does the Chinese diaspora not have its own V.S. Naipaul or Salman Rushdie? Why is there not a similar concern with economic history among scholars of the Indian diaspora? The comparative vision prefaced in this book should lead to a very productive engagement.

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Southeast Asia

Civilizing the margins: Southeast Asian government policies for the development of minorities
Edited by CHRISTOPHER R. DUNCAN
Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004. Pp. vii, 278. Maps, Illustrations, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405490475

Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities throughout the world have experienced colonialism, assimilation, paternalism, benign (and sometimes, deliberate) neglect and

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worse. While state policy towards such peoples varies greatly by country, and even within countries, policies can fluctuate widely such that those developed in one period can quickly morph into the very opposite of their original intent. In this volume, nine anthropologists and one political scientist examine state policies in eight Southeast Asian countries towards their indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in the modern period. A central theme of the volume is the attempt to understand the thinking behind the developmental programmes through which modern central state administrative machineries have continued their 'civilizing' projects towards their respective indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.

As is true elsewhere, indigenous populations and ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia have had to deal with the forces of 'modernization' in the nation-states in which they find themselves. More often than not, state-building and the construction of citizenship has included policies that have unabashedly sought to homogenise, through assimilation and integration, all 'peripheral' or 'marginal' ethnic minorities into the 'centre' of the state. Because ethnic minorities have usually been seen as backward, primitive and even uncivilised, modern states have developed policies aimed at radically changing their lifestyles. All too often, the results – usually built around 'resettlement' schemes of various kinds – have been either tragic-comedic or, worse, just outright disastrous as the modernisation processes have sought to integrate remote communities into their midst. Even in instances where states have sought to treat ethnic minorities with respect and protection normally accorded to their more 'mainstream' citizens, corrupt local officials have often ignored this, so that such 'respect' and 'protection' from the central administration has done little to prevent the disastrous effects of continued contact. Regular trading connections, new diseases and alcoholism have been thrust upon indigenous people; traditional economies have been disrupted and destroyed; and forest flora and fauna are increasingly depleted even as the fishing and hunting grounds of the indigenous people are rapidly encroached upon by non-indigenous peoples. This has led to even greater economic dependence upon the outsiders, with ever-increasing numbers of indigenous people and ethnic minorities becoming little more than indentured servants and labourers for the more 'mainstream', non-indigenous populations. Even worse, the ineffective protection of native customs and traditions by the homogenising central-state machineries has often done little to stem the additional economic pressures. Today, many of the policies towards indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are based on either the intentions or mistakes of the past, and seek to ameliorate the many years of cultural tampering, developmental policies, general mismanagement and neglect.

Civilizing the margins is a compelling and sometimes gripping study in contrasts and comparisons in state policies towards indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. In the case of Burma for example, Curtis Lambrecht examines the *Tatmadaw* (armed forces)-led government policy package composed of forced resettlement, ethnic cleansing, cultural 'Myanmarisation' and even rape to bring 'development' to the 135 so-called 'national races' who mostly reside along the country's frontier regions. Jan Ovesen and Ing-Britt Trankell look at the contemporary fate of Cambodia's main categories of ethnic minorities (the indigenous upland minority groups, the Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Cham) and who collectively make up about ten per cent of Cambodia's population. Although government policies have sought to either 'Khmerise' or externalise Cambodia's various ethnic minorities, they have never quite succeeded at either – a

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'failure' that has at times been 'interpreted as a confirmation of Khmer political and cultural decline, helped along by the perceived conspiracies of those minorities whom the Khmer have themselves externalized' (p. 265). In his chapter on Indonesia, Christopher Duncan examines what could be the most telling example of central-state policies that have explicitly or implicitly sought to downplay religious and cultural differences in the march towards 'development' (*pembangunan*). Any indigenous or ethnic minority group that has stood in the way of that project has paid a high price for their stance. And even for groups that have not resisted Jakarta's developmentalist policies, a heavy, sometimes, violent hand has often been exacted on them. Jan Ovesen explores the government of Laos' ideologically driven assimilationist policies at the heart of which is a sometimes hollow rhetoric of ethnic equality. Kirk Endicott and Robert Dentan examine the fate of Malaysia's Orang Asli – the collective Malay term for the country's various aboriginal groups. Policies to 'integrate' the Orang Asli into the 'mainstream' Malay community have been relentlessly pursued by Malaysian governments for at least four decades, with all ending in dismal failure, perhaps because the policies have all been based on the erroneous assumption that because the Orang Asli were 'backward' and isolated from the rest of the national society; they necessarily had to 'modernise' in order to be regarded as being on par with the other communities.

Even James Eder and Thomas McKenna's chapter on the Philippines' more progressive policies towards its ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples points to several lingering problems, particularly concerning land rights. Kathleen Gillogly investigates state policies towards Thailand's 'Hill Tribes' – tribes whose modern fate was sealed in 1898 when King Chulalongkorn's government allocated to his Royal Forestry Department all 'unoccupied' territory in what was then Siam. The 'unoccupied' territory in the north was in fact inhabited by various hill ethnic groups, who in some cases had been there for generations. Subsequent governments have not been any kinder. Finally, Pamela Mcelwee examines Vietnam's policies towards its myriad ethnic minorities. Unlike Thailand, modern Vietnam has always recognised the citizenship rights of its minorities. Yet, a socialist-tinged proclivity towards homogenisation has left gaps between official pronouncements and practice, particularly for ethnic minorities that have been deemed to be threats to central authority.

In all, *Civilizing the margins* is a good collection that should be of interest to anyone in or outside the anthropology community that is interested in the interface of modern nation states with questions of race, language, territory and much more.

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Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of knowledge and politics of space
Edited by PAUL H. KRATOSKA, REMCO RABEN and HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT
Singapore and Athens, OH: Singapore University Press and Ohio University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 326. Index. doi:10.1017/S002246340550047X

The articles in this volume discuss two of the most pressing themes facing Southeast Asian studies today. First, how do changes in world historical forces (such as the rise of

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transnationalism and globalisation) and the accompanying shift in categories of analysis (for example, from nationalism, colonialism, and bounded political territories to flowing and transient, hybrid identities) affect the meanings of Southeast Asia? Second, how do current trends in academia, such as plurality, polyvalence and alternative conceptions of time and space challenge the historically Eurocentric construction of Southeast Asia? In various ways, the contributors respond to these themes by questioning the use of Western concepts in providing for more satisfactory research outcomes, examining where the region is located and imagined in different national perspectives, and critiquing the ways the region comes to be understood and known in Southeast Asian studies.

Arguably, Heather Sutherland's chapter is of great importance since it provides a contextual frame for these themes. It acknowledges that the use of Eurocentric constructions like 'Southeast Asia', 'nation' and 'city' may not apply to existing regional socio-cultural phenomena. Yet such limitations should not present the region as culturally unknowable from within the current modes of intellectual inquiry, and it is only by accepting them as 'contingent devices' that one stands to productively advance the research task at hand. Four subsequent chapters vaguely demonstrate this contingency by challenging Eurocentric notions of Southeast Asia without obscuring the presence of ambiguities in various national perspectives of the region. Wang Gungwu and Shimizu Hajime's chapters assert that, although Southeast Asia's coherence as a region is largely a European construction that emerged during the Second World War, China and Japan had already identified the region in earlier eras and had substantial influence on how Southeast Asians saw themselves. Other national perspectives from within the region are more ambiguous; for instance, the exigencies of the nation stood in the way of Southeast Asian studies in Thailand and the Philippines, consequently regional studies that did not involve each respective state were scant.

This work also features articles that disrupt traditional perceptions of the region, offering in some cases different ways of thinking about it. A number of chapters examine how different policies, actions and instruments have collaborated to make the region appear integrated and cohesive. For instance, they look at how the military, police and law strengthened political boundaries in the nineteenth century; how currency circulation across colonial boundaries facilitated early forms of economic integration; and how cartography based on different national agendas inscribed different meanings to maritime relationships around the South China Sea. From a reverse perspective, Cynthia Chou's study on sea nomadism interestingly highlights the possible resistances to these instruments, suggesting that indigenous peoples had different notions of space and boundaries that fall outside Western terms of reference. The final chapters critique the way Southeast Asia has become an object of knowledge but more importantly suggest directions Southeast Asian studies could take. Howard W. Dick's chapter stresses that there is a tendency to perceive the region as a closed set, understood through supposedly universal and ahistorical categories. Willem van Schendel situates Southeast Asia in the context of area studies and posits that this has led to the fixity of boundaries and meanings of the region. By examining 'area borderlands' that have traditionally been excluded because of their location outside the political boundaries of the region, he shows how these marginal areas can also be hybrid extensions of Southeast Asia. Therefore, in order to reconstitute the knowledge of Southeast Asia, Dick argues that the region needs to be

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interpreted as an 'open system' in which its constituents belong to overlapping and non-exclusive sets; for example, perceiving the region as urban centres dominated by 'middle class elite hegemonies' (p. 251) having their own dynamics of resistance by marginal classes. Similarly, Willem van Schendel's approach calls for different notions of scale and spatial forms in order to locate the more slippery notions of borders and flows in Southeast Asia.

Locating Southeast Asia is undoubtedly an important and timely contribution to the growing debate over the nature of Southeast Asian studies, and the articles not only critique existing epistemologies but also suggest alternative and newer ways of knowing the region. However, in assessing how Southeast Asia becomes an object of knowledge, most contributors review existing academic and disciplinary modes. This omits the other domains – cultural, fictional, imaginative and aesthetic – that also provide important and meaningful insights into how the region is perceived. Furthermore, while a number of articles argue for changes in the way the academe approaches Southeast Asia, the suggestions have tended to be patchy and specific, rather than methodologically instructive. This may be excusable, however, since such omissions demonstrate that this reassessment of the region is still at a very early stage.

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Indonesia

Women of the Kakawin World: Marriage and Sexuality in the Indic Courts of Java and Bali
By HELEN CREESE
Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004. Pp. xii, 357. Appendix, Glossary, Notes, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405510476

This study is the first successful book-length introduction of Old Javanese literature to the wider public. Helen Creese addresses the *kakawin* poetic epics that were inspired by India's *kavya* classical Sanskrit texts, but localised in Java's geographical and societal settings, consistent with Javanese cultural values. Java's court elite sustained their authors from the tenth through the fifteenth centuries, and, following Java's sixteenth-century conversion to Islam, monarchs of Bali and Lombok patronised the *kakawin* literary tradition into the nineteenth century. Colonial-era historians discounted the value of these texts, which they characterised as outlandish fictional compositions, especially as these failed to provide substantive evidence of political and dynastic history. Instead, Creese demonstrates that, when carefully cross-referenced with more objective written and archaeological sources, the *kakawin* texts are not only revered products of Indonesia's literary past, but are also valuable sources for the study of Java and Bali's cultural and gender history. Creese has much to say about marriage practices in the Indic-influenced areas of the Indonesian archipelago over the long term, but mostly about pre-1500 Java; she also addresses material culture; life at the court; women's activities and experiences; social, political, and religious institutions; and the private rather than political aspects of gender and sexuality, and male and female roles and relationships.

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Creese skilfully interweaves 'texts in words' and 'texts in stone' samples with her narrative commentary on gender, literature and history. On one level, this book is a solid, sensitive and very accessible portrayal of Javanese literary tradition. It is also a well-conceived introduction to the different layers of human existence in Indonesia's Hindu-Buddhist courts.

Chapter Three on courtship and betrothal introduces Java's alternatives to Indic patriarchal expectations of filial obedience. In Javanese literature, women frequently have a say in the selection of their husband; marriage was frequently consequent to the elopement of two lovers, or by the abduction of a warrior, as proof of the woman's worth to him, and as an expression of his love for his bride-to-be. This chapter includes a detailed comparison of Indic marital law and the Old Javanese legal codes, and argues that patri-parallel cross-cousin marriages were preferable among the court elite. Chapter Four is an extensive study of aristocratic marriage rituals; Chapter Five addresses the consummation of marriage, the ensuing husband–wife relationship, and the conceptual tantric union between the husband (spiritual/heavenly) and wife (social/earthbound). Court elite avoided uncontrolled sexuality and defused their inner emotions; male sexuality was tempered by asceticism; women's inherent sensual desire stood in the way of spiritual perfection, and only a strong, heroic male could channel their inner emotions and sexual energies in other directions and purposes. Chapter Six is an extended study of death rituals, in which the wife was frequently expected to join her deceased husband on the funeral pyre, as an expression of her 'ultimate loyalty'.

While this book has much to offer in its contribution to our better understanding of pre-colonial Indonesian history, it needs to be used with caution. Creese is generally consistent in identifying her sources according to their era of composition, but there is an overall inclusive approach that may mislead the reader to perceive the ninth through nineteenth centuries as a continuum, and to see Balinese culture in the nineteenth century as the same as earlier Hindu-Java practice. Creese makes limited effort, beyond notation of their date of composition, to distinguish one era's collective literary sources from that of another. For example, Chapter Five begins with an extended reference to an eighteenth-century Bali *kakawin* as the standard for her comments on the 'consummation of the union' between the newly married couple, and discussion in Chapter Six of widow suicide among the elite depends on references to a twelfth-century *kakawin* and selective citations from other works that do not sustain her conclusion that '*kakawin* not only bear witness to the practice of widow suicide through the centuries, but were also complicit in inculcating and perpetuating these values at all levels of society' (p. 244). I found her referential summaries of differing aspects of material culture extremely problematic, as her overview of local productivity (p. 66) depends first on an eighteenth-century Bali *kakawin* reference, then a series of twelfth- through thirteenth-century sources, and finally on documentation from a fourteenth-century text.

There are also instances in which Creese breaks from her otherwise cautious analysis to make sweeping unsupported generalisations that are out of character with the remainder of the text. For example, following her treatment of the visit of a royal procession to a village, she makes the undocumented judgmental conclusion that 'the royal party then moves on, leaving the rural communities and villages to face a period of straitened circumstances, their surplus and their meager resources eaten up by the visitors from court' (p. 67). Despite the general tone of her book, which provides an uplifting view of women

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in Javanese society, she chooses to end her book by making a sudden leap to the summary notion of the abused female that calls into question the principle concept of her work: 'Although the control of female sexuality within the social institutions of courtship and marriage provides the main narrative interest in *kakawin*, control of women more generally is a sub-theme that runs through *kakawin* literature . . . *kakawin* depict the cultural construction and justification of this brutal resolution of the problems presented to society by the presence of sexually experienced single women' (p. 247).

In sum, this book has much to offer and I highly recommend it as an accessible introduction to Old Javanese literature and pre-colonial Indonesian culture. It will be foundational to continuing study of early Southeast Asian history, and will be of value to other scholars who study the literary and oral traditions and gender relationships in the pre-modern world.

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Islam and the State in Indonesia
By BAHTIAR EFFENDY
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003. Pp. xii, 265. Notes, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405520472

This book elucidates the uneasy and shifting political relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia from the pre-independence period up until the years following the fall of Suharto. The author, Bahtiar Effendy, documents the reasons for the rift between Islam and the state, examines the attempts by both Muslim intellectuals and successive Indonesian administrations to resolve the long and hostile impasse, and probes the implications of their mutual suspicion. Although Effendy conducted his field research in 1991, this book was not published until 2003. Due to the rapid changes that have occurred in Indonesia in the past decade, Effendy has usefully added a chapter to discuss recent developments. Geared towards an academic audience, the book is useful for students and of interest to non-Indonesians who seek a deeper understanding of the political role of Islam in Indonesia.

In the first two chapters, Effendy introduces the problematic relationship between Islam and the state, contrasting the experiences of other post-colonial Muslim countries (Turkey, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Pakistan, Malaysia and Algeria) with those of Indonesia to demonstrate a pattern of tension. He observes two main theoretical streams in contemporary Islamic political thinking, both of which recognise Islam as a primary force that permeates all spheres of life. The first group views the formation of a Muslim state with *shari'a* as the state constitution and the ultimate embodiment of their ideology, thus believing the concept of a modern democratic nation-state inherently contradicts the fundamental principles of Islam. The second group maintains that Islam does not run counter to the concept of a modern democratic nation-state, arguing that the Qur'an is flexible, ambiguous and does not specify a particular system of government. This group argues that the fundamental ethical values found in the Qur'an are 'justice, equality, brotherhood, and freedom' (p. 7), all of which can exist within a system of democracy.

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After a careful analysis of religious texts, Effendy sides with the latter group, concluding that Islam is polyinterpretable and emphasising that there 'is no legitimate basis to put Islam in a contradictory position to the modern political system' (p. 7).

In Chapters Three, Four and Five, Effendy examines how the rise of Islamic intellectualism ushered in a profound shift in the way Islamic groups saw their role and the impact it had on Islamic political ideas and practices. Realising that not all Indonesians were Muslims and that not all Muslims desired an Islamic state, many Islamic groups forged a new identity, a new theological underpinning and a more pragmatic social agenda setting the stage for Islam to operate outside of the political system. The author skilfully chronicles the transformation from the confrontational position of the earlier formalistic interpretation of Islam to the conciliatory position of the more liberal, inclusive interpretation. He highlights the renewed will of promoters of Islamic ideology to enter mainstream politics, with the aim of working within the system to heal the rift with the state.

Chapter Six examines the New Order regime's attempts in the 1990s to reduce hostilities with Islamic groups and the steps it took towards accommodating political Islam, which the author attributes mainly to the transformation of Islamic political ideas and practices. Effendy identifies structural, legislative, infrastructural and cultural changes made which are evidence of the state's growing accommodative stance towards Islam. Ultimately, he contends that if Islamic groups had still been pursuing a Muslim state and had not shifted towards more societal, non-political goals, Suharto would likely never have been so accommodating.

In Chapter Seven, Effendy summarises the development and ultimate rejection of the ideological-political style of Pan-Islamism that spread throughout the Middle East after independence from colonial rule. He reviews the conditions that made Indonesia uniquely able to resist the post-independence temptation of taking refuge in the 'holistic' and totalistic nature of Islam. He credits Indonesia's vibrant and dynamic Muslim intellectual scene in the 1970s, which transformed Islam's theological, bureaucratic and social goals to ensure that they would not be in conflict with the state, assuming the state did not contradict Islamic teachings. Due to these transformations, the late New Order regime viewed political Islam no longer as a threat to its power, but rather as a complementary force in national development.

The final chapter provides a critical update of the relationship between Islam and the state after the fall of President Suharto in 1998, an event which opened the door for mass participation in political activities and the birth of 181 political parties, of which 42 were Islamic. Despite the recent increase in Islamic political parties that support *shari'a* as their ideological basis, Effendy argues that this is an expected part of the shift from authoritarian to democratic rule. He expresses discomfort over the current unresolved state of the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia. While the current ambiguous state of being neither theocratic nor secular acknowledges the heterogeneity of the Indonesian population and reflects the historically complex relationship between the state and Islam, Effendy calls for a period of dialogue to come to an 'appropriate settlement' (p. 224) that was impossible during the Old and New Orders.

Conspicuously absent from *Islam and the State in Indonesia* is an analysis of the violent events of 1965 (in which an estimated 500,000–1 million Indonesians were murdered) and the impact this had on political Islam. He refers to the events only once

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as the 'PKI's abortive coup in 1965' (p. 44) and makes no attempt to further elaborate upon one of the most dramatic and tragic events in Indonesia's short history as a nation. The complete and violent eradication of the Communist Party in Indonesia surely had a strong impact on Muslim politics. In this regard he missed an opportunity to explain the implications of the massacre and communist witch-hunt: whether a power vacuum was created, or whether it strengthened or diminished the power of Islamic political parties in some way.

Another more troubling omission in this book is the role of women in the story. Effendy's first and only mention of female participation in political Islam is in Chapter Five when he uses both gender pronouns to explain that one's Islam-ness during the Old Order was determined not simply by religion but was 'defined and measured by his or her association with Islamic socio-political organizations and commitment to certain political ideals perceived as Islamic' (p. 125). By this he implies, but fails to explicitly state, that women were permitted to join Islamic socio-political organisations. From the lack of females mentioned in this book it is safe to assume that women played virtually no formal role and had little or no representation in politics. However, the book would have been far richer had the author probed more deeply to discover the informal ways in which women made their voices heard and contributed to the development of political Islam. If women were, for example, barred from participating in political parties or from discussions about Islam, this needs to be acknowledged and discussed as a part of the development of political Islam in Indonesia.

Although lacking discussion in some key areas stated above, Bahtiar Effendy has produced a richly detailed account of the changing relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia. As one of the few Indonesians writing in English on this subject, he has made a valuable contribution to the existing literature on political Islam in Indonesia.

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Menggugat historiografi Indonesia
By BAMBANG PURWANTO and ASVI WARMAN ADAM
Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2005. Pp. ix, 148. Notes, Bibliography, Index. [In Indonesian]
doi:10.1017/S0022463405530479

Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 scholars have intensely debated a number of historical issues concerning his New Order government. It is striking that the participation of professionally trained historians has been absent from much of this debate. This bodes ill for a profession that should be at the forefront or at the centre of the brewing historical storm. Aware of this sad state of affairs, two young, but increasingly prominent, Indonesian historians have written a booklet that criticises historical scholarship in Indonesia. It may prove to be path-breaking.

The less than prominent place of historians with regard to the debate over issues seems puzzling at first glance. However, their silent voices came under stinging criticism recently in Kuntowijoyo's allegations on the collective failure of Indonesian historians to perform their social function ('Indonesian historiography in search of identity',

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Humaniora, 1 [2000]: 79–85). Kuntowijoyo hoped that Indonesian historians would descend from their ivory towers and take on the role of social critics. By aiming to open the door towards that end and by calling openly for a thorough overhaul of the enterprise of history, this booklet demonstrates a path-breaking character.

Menggugat historiografi Indonesia (Criticising Indonesian Historiography) is composed of two articles. The first is written by Bambang Purwanto and the other by Asvi Warman Adam, which is partly in response to Purwanto's hard-hitting allegations. Purwanto is brutal, if honest, in assessing the state of the art in teaching and writing of Indonesian history (by Indonesians). For example, he bewails that it has been almost 50 years since pioneering scholars laid the ground-work for developing the historical profession in Indonesia, yet it still has not been developed into a respectable image as a scientific enterprise. He notes that Indonesian historians have rarely been innovative, tending to traverse paths that have long been explored. Moreover, he minces no words in alleging that many or most Indonesian historians do not seem to have a strong grasp of historical methodology. And this, he claims, could help explain the vulnerability of Indonesian-produced history to political manipulation, an argument which reverses the common perception that a repressive political atmosphere is responsible for the weakness of historical study in Indonesia. Purwanto is worried that without an adequate grasp of historical methodology, history will always be at the mercy of the calculus of power in the society at large. This is the basis for his wariness towards the project *pelurusan sejarah* (straightening of history), which began in 1998.

One primary complaint of Purwanto against the project is the danger that it may just replace old historical orthodoxies with new ones. He is afraid that the contemporary political atmosphere is giving rise to yet another version of history that satisfies hunger for revenge and power, rather than one which satisfies scientific norms for truth verification. He bases his fear on the tendency of the proponents of *pelurusan sejarah* to focus on few key issues – such as the 1965 coup, the Communist Party and the military – in their effort at historical reconstruction. Rather than concentrate on these few issues, Purwanto calls for a comprehensive approach of historical re-evaluation and re-construction.

As an active scholar in the *pelurusan sejarah* project, Asvi Warman Adam offers a response to many of Purwanto's charges. The term 'project' gives a misleading impression that it is a well-coordinated effort on the part of certain group/s. While there has been an organised official effort reflected in the formulation of curricular guidelines to cope with confusing versions of history, free-flowing contributions come from, say, marginalised individuals or groups who used to be denied the chance to air their side of the story. It is thus only the common desire to 'correct' older versions of history that ties the otherwise heterogeneous undertakings to the current initiative. This point is important considering Purwanto's critique of the whole 'project'.

Adam's response to Purwanto is at best cautious and calculated. While he explicitly states that their exchange constitutes an early effort towards developing a culture of learned debate among Indonesian historians, one can readily feel the burden of the culture of silence and politeness that weighs heavily in his responses. For instance, Adam does not engage Purwanto in the latter's most serious allegations – that the sad state of Indonesian historiography and the profession's lack of proficiency in methodological training make it vulnerable to manipulation. Much of Adam's contribution focuses on the defence and clarification of *pelurusan sejarah*. He reiterates that the effort to 'straighten history' is not merely to reinterpret a few key events or people. It is meant to

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be inclusive of all other spheres of historical understanding. He also emphasises that the project does not aim to install another monolithic interpretation of history. Rather, it wants to democratise history by allowing space for competing interpretations. Adam proudly reports on some successes, such as the stipulation in the 2004 Curriculum to present the students various versions of the 1965 coup.

Adam's calculated response to Purwanto is understandable. The academic culture that took decades to build cannot be undone in few months or few years. What these two scholars have done is nevertheless important as it represents the possibility of a new era of open exchange among historians.

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Singapore

Life is not complete without shopping: Consumption culture in Singapore
By CHUA BENG HUAT
Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003. Pp. 209. Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463405540475

Singapore has long been at the crossroads of different cultural flows, and since its acquisition by the British in 1819 it has, as Chua Beng Huat notes, been 'a modern city' or at least a city of the mercantile age. Goods and services are in a real sense the reason for the city's being and drive its economic and emotional life. This book draws its title from a 1996 National Day Rally speech by the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong, who noted that 'Life for Singaporeans is not complete without shopping'; it brings together a series of Chua's essays on Singapore's consumerist society. He delineates the complexities of such a society, develops a critique of reductionist notions of Westernisation/Americanisation, and shows some of the meaning that getting and showing possessions brings to Singaporean lives. He focuses his gaze on people consuming food and displaying clothing; discusses the Singapore presence of the globally ubiquitous McDonalds; deals with uses of language (Singlish, Hokkien) and class; and looks at local cinematic representations of Singaporean culture and society.

From the preface it is clear that Chua hopes for a broader audience than academics and sees the book as an engagement with his fellow Singaporeans. At the same time, any one of the essays could act as a primer on Singapore for the uninitiated. For instance, in the chapter entitled 'On the power *Cheongsam* and other ethnic clothes' he breezes through an account of economic development, re-racialisation and the intricacies of understanding the *cheongsam* – a form of dress originating in China – as deployed in advertisements for alcohol and foodstuffs and as worn by powerful Singaporean women and addresses the issue of change in the costume of Malay women with the resurgence of Islam in the 1970s; and examines the Singapore presence of youth clad in all black attire – or death bunnies as one wit has called them in the American context – and the Japan–Hong Kong–Taiwan axis of fashion available to the less educated 'Ah Bengs' and 'Ah Lians' of Singapore who speak a local patois that mixes Hokkien, Singlish and Mandarin. There is a lot of material here and Chua makes his points well. Each one of the essays conveys its points with clarity and precision. Such is the force of Chua's arguments and

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his eloquence that I was left wanting a little more, but that is not the scope of the work. That situation may be due to a difference in methodology and perspective since Chua works the sociological vein of inquiry and I am a historian. The work in hand is a rich contribution to the study of consumerist societies and to understanding multiple layers and registers of cultural exchange.

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Thailand

Making democracy: Leadership, class, gender, and political participation in Thailand
By JAMES OCKEY
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 233. Notes, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463405590477

This book is the product of a decade-long project exploring different aspects of Thai politics. Readers will find it clearly written, well researched and ambitious in the claims it seeks to advance. While readers familiar with writings on Thai politics will recognise many of the chapters, as five of the total seven are variations of articles previously published, James Ockey has made an effort to provide an overarching discussion. He writes 'I have been struggling to fit the pieces together – an interesting challenge.' The result is some bold generalisations on the nature of Thai democracy and participation.

Making democracy is more than an anthology. The different chapters unite the attempt to offer general observations on the nature of democracy in Thailand based on concepts relevant to the Thai political system. Ockey keenly avoids working within the contending paradigms of democratisation studies, which are given cursory treatment, and instead offers an analysis based on local reference points (*phuudi, nakleng* and *jao phoh*, for example). Thus, despite the title, Ockey is still more an area-studies person than a political scientist (which frankly, given the state of politics as *science*, is a good thing).

The author is to be congratulated for his research-wandering promiscuity. Many academics are content to remain comfortably footed in familiar terrain. In a decade of scholarship, Ockey probably has very muddy boots. The good news is that his journeys have been rewarding and productive. He offers readers useful biographies of godfathers, male and female; stories of slum resistance; a suggestive outline of Thai leadership styles; an insightful analysis of political parties; and a critical overview of approaches to the Thai middle class and its dubious commitment to democracy. Taking these elements together, a colourful picture of Thai politics emerges, one that the abstract typologies of democratisation studies would smugly ignore. On that basis, this book is recommended.

Especially enjoyable is the chapter 'God Mothers, Good Mothers, Good Lovers, Godmothers'. The subheadings of the chapter (Gendered Criminals; The Cocktail Lounge Godmother; The Godmother of the Oil Share Fund; The Radio Station Godmother) give a taste of what is in store. Using interviews and Thai-language primary and secondary sources, Ockey fascinatingly details the unexpected intersections of criminality, class, gender and political change. This chapter is the highlight of *Making*

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democracy, although the other chapters offer similarly well-researched, closely detailed observations of their particular topic.

What about the general arguments? Ockey's basic quest is twofold. First, it is to show that there are modes of participation in Thai politics, across many domains, which suggest a desire for indigenous democratic forms of rule. The first argument is set against notions of authoritarian Asian political culture advanced by, among others, Lucien Pye. In this critique, Ockey appears to be creating a straw man both here and in his general attempt to refute modernisation approaches to democratisation. Nonetheless, he seeks to undo simplistic readings of political culture by demonstrating how Thai patterns of leadership and decision making reflect both authoritarian and democratic strands. The former are located in the modernising processes of an absolutist and bureaucratic state while the latter are located in the villages. This is a nice reversal; the authoritarian aspects of culture are induced by the processes of imperialist-influenced state building. Where others would see patronage patterns in Thailand as evidence of a subject political culture in Thailand, Ockey usefully sees them as mediating authoritarian and democratic impulses. Thus, it calls for a close reading.

Secondly, Ockey wants to show how, as the democratic impulse has grown, Thai political culture has evolved, shaping forms of patronage, styles of leadership and modes of political participation. This is a complicated argument that readers may find more engaging. Ockey argues that there has been a transition of leadership style in Thailand: as the system has opened up, liberalised, and democratised, *phudii* (gentlemanly, good) styles of leadership begin to supplant *nakleng* (tough-guy) styles of leadership. Through the book, Ockey, when relevant and the material suggests it, draws attention to this broad claim. Often the linkage is strained; this is especially the case in Chapter Three on women and leadership.

To be fair, Ockey makes it clear from the outset that this is an idealised leadership typology – but the persistence with which he advances it suggests that he believes it has something fundamental to tell us about Thai politics. I am not so sure. Generating leadership typologies and using these as a measure of changing political culture is a highly limited exercise. The person who rises to the top of the Thai political system seems more related to internal politicking, backroom deals and establishment connections than to a style of leadership that supposedly strikes a chord with the popular mood. I am not sure, either, that the eminent political personalities that have strutted the Thai political catwalk can be so easily branded.

I can agree with Ockey that the various research projects he has undertaken over the last decade offer some clues that might advance more generalised observations about the nature of Thai politics. However, at times the argument seems strained and suggestive rather than systematic. This is because the author has attempted to rework former articles to serve the new purpose of advancing general claims about Thai democracy, transition and political culture. Despite this, *Making democracy* brings together chapters that, taken on their own, offer important insights into often-neglected aspects (in English language scholarship) of Thai politics and democracy. Having achieved this, there is no doubt that this book will become a staple on reading lists.

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Vietnam

Imagined ancestries of Vietnamese communism: Ton Duc Thang and the politics of history and memory
By CHRISTOPH GIEBEL
Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004. Pp. xxii, 256. Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405550471

After the death of Hồ Chí Minh in 1969, Tôn Đức Thắng became president of the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam (DRVN), and later the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam, until his own death in 1980. In this book, Christoph Giebel critically examines representations in communist Việt Nam of Tôn Đức Thắng's life. It successfully shows that 'the process in which Vietnamese communism defined itself, imagined where it had come from, and envisioned where it was going was a complex one' (p. 195).

The book is divided into three parts and seven chapters. Each chapter examines representations of Tôn's life within particular 'moments' which 'highlight the temporal and local specificities that determined the ways in which ideas were received and discussed and people made their choices' (p. xxi). Part One, with three chapters on 'constructions', examines representations of Tôn's alleged participation in the Russian Black Sea Mutiny of 1919. Chapter One discusses the mutiny in the late colonial moment, before and during Tôn's early Party career, and before the August Revolution of 1945. On the basis of naval records and other documents, the author argues that Tôn probably did not take part in the mutiny, speculating that Tôn manufactured his involvement in the mutiny in order to establish his credentials among radical youths in Sài Gòn in the late 1920s. Chapters Two and Three consider subsequent DRVN representations of Tôn's involvement in the mutiny in the revolutionary and post-recognition moments respectively. For the DRVN, Tôn's participation in the mutiny linked the Vietnamese Revolution to the Russian October Revolution and was a symbol of revolutionary internationalism at a time when the DRVN was seeking international recognition and support. That achieved, the later additional claim that Tôn hoisted a red flag during the mutiny became a symbol of DRVN proletarian internationalism and its membership of the community of socialist countries.

Part Two, with two chapters on 'contestations', describes the ways in which representations of Tôn's life were appropriated and challenged by different regional factions in the DRVN. Chapter Four discusses Tôn's participation in a strike at the Sài Gòn navy shipyard in 1925 in the context of the post-partition moment, after the division of Việt Nam following the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the exile of a number of Southern revolutionaries to the North. In a 1957 account of the strike by Trần Văn Giàu, a DRVN historian of Southern origin, its purpose was to stall the French ship *Jules Michelet* on its way to Canton at the time of the anti-imperialist protests there that came to be known as the May Thirtieth Movement. The strike was a symbol of proletarian internationalism and indicated, despite the elisions of Northern historians, the important role of the Southern working class in Vietnamese anti-colonialism in the 1920s. Chapter Four demonstrates, however, on the basis of contemporary French and Vietnamese periodicals, that the strike was instead a response to a decline in working conditions at the shipyard, that it was defeated by a lockout without achieving any improvement in those conditions, and that it had no effect on the passage of the *Jules Michelet*. Chapter Five describes the

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historiographical debate in the 1970s and 1980s over the 'secret labour union' founded and led by Tôn that was allegedly behind the strike, within the context of the post-unification moment when, after 1975, Việt Nam became a single political entity. While Northern historians conceded that Tôn's 'secret labour union' was the first such union in Việt Nam, they asserted that since it had not been lead by the Party, it was not worthy of national commemoration on Labour Union Day. This position was vigorously contested by Southern historians, who sought recognition of the important role of the South in Việt Nam's revolutionary history.

Part Three, with two chapters on 'commemorations', explores two different approaches to the commemoration of Tôn Đức Thắng. Chapter Six examines his official biography, commissioned in the early 1980s after his death, in the immediate posthumous moment. That biography, *Đồng chí Tôn Đức Thắng, người chiến sĩ công sản kiên cường mẫu mực* (Comrade Tôn Đức Thắng, an exemplary, staunch Communist fighter), created a unifying national image of Tôn. It emphasised his participation in the Black Sea Mutiny and his raising of the red flag, his long imprisonment under colonial rule and his career in the DRVN after 1945, while it downplayed his role in the strike at Ba Son and his leadership of the 'secret labour union', more contentious issues. Chapter Seven views Southern commemorative efforts during the post-socialist moment in the mid- to late 1980s, at a museum and shrine at Tôn's birthplace near Long Xuyên. It suggests that at his birthplace the virtuous Tôn is enshrined as a guardian spirit of the Vietnamese revolution while the museum serves as 'a modern temple inscription, announcing the spirit's merit, achievements, and outstanding character' (p. 185). Tôn is held up as a model to follow and as an implicit critique of the widespread deviance in modern Việt Nam from the ideals of the revolution.

Though often speculative, this book uses the life of Tôn Đức Thắng as a lens to reveal the ways in which representations of both his and the Communist past were jointly conceived, understood, accepted or contested in Việt Nam. It is a further addition to the growing literature on perceptions of the past in Southeast Asia. Organised around a number of 'moments', the presentation is inevitably dislocated, as is the image produced of Tôn the man. While this book does not intend to be 'a biography in the narrow sense' (p. xviii), its subordination of Tôn's life to an analysis of representations of the past means that little is said about Tôn the man and the father, about his hopes and dreams, his wants and desires, his fears and motivations. In this book, Tôn is merely a tool, as he was for others seeking to represent the past in Việt Nam.

HAYDON CHERRY
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Beyond the bronze pillars: Envoy poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese relationship
By LIAM C. KELLEY
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press and Association for Asian Studies, 2005. Pp. xiii, 267. Notes, Glossary, Works Cited, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405560478

Liam Kelley has opened a new topic with his study of poetry written in classical Chinese by Vietnamese envoys to the Ming and Qing courts during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. His book is a good corrective to the nationalist historiography that

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elides the profound and creative sense of connection that many educated Vietnamese at that time felt to the civilised world we now call East Asia, centred at the imperial court in China. The poems that Kelley has studied were written by the most erudite of Vietnamese literati who were selected to travel to the Northern court and to represent the Vietnamese rulers in the ritualised formalities of acknowledging suzerainty, the diplomacy of vassalage that maintained the political architecture of what was believed to be the civilised world. Kelley takes us through the various phases of an envoy's experience, from being selected, to embarking on the journey, to the various stages of the itinerary and the famous sights along the way, to arrival at the imperial court, and to being in the presence of the emperor. He offers a very interesting discussion of an aspect of historical Sino-Vietnamese relations that has until now, for the most part, been ignored. Kelley reminds us of how mastery of a rich treasury of classical references and prosodic forms, and of the literary skills necessary to display them, could give these men a sense of membership and participation in what he calls 'the domain of manifest civility'. He expands upon the genuine pleasure that most of these men apparently felt upon being selected for such a prestigious assignment and that they continued to feel during the course of their travels as they visited places, sometimes even the natal villages of their ancestors, which they had been trained to venerate but had theretofore known only from books. At the same time, he does not neglect the poems that show the loneliness, weariness and sometimes illness that were experienced on the road far from home.

Kelley emphasises that those selected as envoys were not ordinary men. Citing a late eighteenth-century preface to a collection of envoy poems (pp. 59–60) he shows that among all educated Vietnamese, who themselves were but a tiny percentage of all Vietnamese, only an extremely small number of men most accomplished in administration, literature and personal rectitude were ever so honoured; they were 'exceptional' and the 'select few' (p. 64), 'the *crème de la crème* of the Southern [Vietnamese] elite' (p. 70), and the experience of serving as envoy 'forever set these men apart from their colleagues' (p. 71). He shows how some of these men identified themselves sufficiently with the Northern (Chinese) court that they sought to have their poems published and appreciated there (pp. 43–51). It is consequently odd that one of the fundamentals of the author's argument is that the sentiments expressed in these poems can be taken to represent 'the Vietnamese' as a people, culture, society and polity.

Kelley seeks to frame his material from the envoy anthologies against what he sees as 'a strong tendency' in 'English-language scholarship on Vietnamese history . . . to argue for some kind of significant divide between Vietnamese and Chinese cultures' (p. 16). Kelley's position is that Vietnamese and Chinese cultures 'partook in a common cultural tradition' (p. 36). Perhaps because this observation is unremarkable and not controversial, he wants to stress that there is no significant difference between Chinese and Vietnamese culture, and he accordingly strives to distance himself from scholars of an older generation, whom he faults for drawing excessive distinctions between the two. Kelley is articulating an 'East Asian' reaction against the idea that Vietnam 'belongs' in 'Southeast Asia', an idea that has run its course with the heroic age of modern Vietnamese nationalism. I can endorse the general intent of Kelley's argument, but he unfortunately simplifies and homogenises the writings of others to make his point.

Kelley treats the envoy anthologies as unproblematic documents of what he takes as the true inner thoughts of the authors. He does not address Sino-Vietnamese envoy poetry as a literary genre with a set of conventions driven by the context of diplomatic

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ritual. Although he mentions that the poems have been rewritten and edited by both authors and anthologists, 'to embellish' them and 'to improve their quality' (p. 181), he takes little account of this in his analysis. He observes that anthologies were prepared with particular audiences in mind, either other literati or even Chinese officials, but he continues to treat the poems as expressing the deepest sensibilities of 'the Vietnamese'. He dismisses any contradiction between the realm of ritualised envoy poetry and the realm in which most Vietnamese lived. Appealing to the imagination of the most erudite of scholar-administrators and reducing Vietnamese culture to this imagination, his argument is disembodied from any social or political context.

Nevertheless, in drawing attention to a category of poetry that has been previously ignored, Kelley has made a welcome contribution to our knowledge of Vietnamese history and culture. At the same time, Kelley's sharp insistence on the primacy of a Sinitic category tends to limit rather than to expand our perception of Vietnam.

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Ho Chi Minh: The missing years
By SOPHIE QUINN-JUDGE
London: Hurst, 2003. Pp. xii, 356. Illustrations, Maps, Notes Bibliography, Biographical Appendix, Index. doi:10.1017/S0022463405570474

This book leaves the reader stunned by Sophie Quinn-Judge's mastery over intricate historical details, geographically disparate archives and sources in multiple languages. It examines Ho Chi Minh's relationship with the Comintern from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 to 1941, when he returned to northern Vietnam to begin the revolution. Arranged chronologically, the chapters begin with Ho's first political appearance at the Paris Peace Conference (where he sent the delegates letters denouncing French colonial rule), continue with his missions around Europe and Asia, and finally attend to his return to northern Vietnam in 1941, when there was a temporary end to his ties with the Comintern and the beginning of the Viet-Minh-led revolution.

As the author observes, the myth of the modern Vietnamese nation is based on Ho Chi Minh. In analysing the political debates within the historiography of Ho, Quinn-Judge seeks to dispel two basic myths. The 'Nationalist Saint' myth – which situates the sacrificing Ho as the link between the Comintern and the Vietnamese communists – dominates Vietnamese historiography, while the Machiavellian apparatchik myth, which dominated scholarship in the US during the Vietnam War era, portrays Ho as a political opportunist (p. 2). Quinn-Judge argues that neither myth explains Ho Chi Minh's seemingly inconsistent actions. While Ho appeared to vacillate, the author argues that he actually developed a complex and nuanced ideology. She proposes that Ho was influenced by three factors: his early years in colonial Vietnam, the Paris Peace Conference, and Lenin's *Thesis on imperialism and the colonial question* (p. 256). In dispelling the 'Nationalist Saint' myth, Quinn-Judge argues that Ho was not an obsequious follower of Comintern; his relationship to it was complex and tenuous, often acting according to his own beliefs. Ho's survival of the political shakeup following Lenin's death is attributed to his focus on his own goal – Vietnamese independence – and his ability to resist the Comintern's internal politics. In fact, it was his relaxed attitude toward class conflict that

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enabled him to unite various factions of the largely poor Vietnam to fight against colonialism. Ho was not, however, able to escape Stalin's political paranoia of 1935–7 before the Seventh Conference: he was stripped of all political decision-making and placed in the Lenin and Stalin Schools.

Just as Ho was not a Nationalist Saint, neither was he the undisputed leader of the Vietnamese Communist movement. In the 1920s Ho founded and led the Thanh Nien, the first Vietnamese communist party; but by the end of 1930, he had lost considerable power due to internal rivalry. By this point, the Vietnamese Communist movement was divided between the Thanh Nien and the Annam Communist Party. The division played out in the tumultuous founding of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). The power struggles within the ICP resulted in Ha Huy Tap's denunciation of Ho and in Ho's subsequent loss of power within the Comintern and ICP leadership. In fact, the party virtually ignored Ho from 1937 through 1941. Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, to whom he had once been married, contacted Ho on her own initiative in 1939, and began to advocate his return, which eventually took place in 1941.

Sophie Quinn-Judge has undertaken the daunting task of piecing together the biography of a man who deliberately made his life appear mysterious to ensure his personal safety. She makes it clear that her work is neither a political assassination nor an attempt at mythmaking. Indeed, in dispelling the aforementioned myths, she succeeds in creating a rich and balanced intellectual biography of Ho. It is an impressively researched book as she has utilised newly opened Russian and French archives, and walks her readers through her arguments by comparing and cross-referencing multiple sources. Her approach, facilitated by clear writing, creates a near-intimate relationship with the reader. Furthermore, based on the book's conflicting sources, the reader gains a greater appreciation for the sense of secrecy and danger surrounding Ho. I strongly recommend this book to all who are interested in Vietnamese history, the US–Vietnam War, and Cold War history.

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The Kim Vân Kieu of Nguyen Du (1765–1820)
Translated by VLADISLAV ZHUKOV
Canberra: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2004. Pp. xii, 170. doi:10.1017/S0022463405580470

Vladislav Zhukov's new translation of what is commonly considered to be 'the masterpiece of Vietnamese literature' is an extraordinary achievement. The challenge of translating the formal features of Vietnamese six-eight verse into English has been met by Zhukov with a stunning literary skill and erudition that is comparable to what Nguyen Du displays in the original. Since English is not a tonal language, it is impossible to translate the tonal patterns of the Vietnamese verse, but Zhukov perfectly conveys the rhyme pattern and metric scheme of Vietnamese six-eight prosody with what in English becomes iambic six-eight. Furthermore, he does so with a vocabulary that reminds us of the lexical richness of the English language.

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This is a translation that can be recited with pleasure in the same way that Vietnamese love to recite aloud the original. It reflects a poet's love for words and draws upon a deep appreciation of the English language. The Vietnamese vocabulary has been enriched by the classically inspired lexicon of Nguyen Du; Zhukov's translation shows that English as well has a history of beautiful words. It is important to remember that Nguyen Du's work was a translation; he rendered a Chinese prose novel into Vietnamese verse, creating in his own language a work valued as an original literary creation. With his translation, Zhukov has created something new that demonstrates and expands the prosodic resources of English.

In his Preface, Zhukov suggests that readers may consider his translation 'as rather more of a paraphrase' than as a translation. In my view, however, this is definitely a translation. Zhukov brings the metric and rhythmic patterns of the original into English with delicious discipline, and he stirs to the surface of the English language words no longer in common usage but that remain a delight to the tongue and ear. His stated intent is to engage the reader at a literary level rather than to render the original text as a cultural document. He accordingly dispenses with notes or glossaries and relies instead upon what he calls an 'environment' that, in his words, 'was – I hesitate to use the word – "poetic": that is to say, one naturally stimulating imaginative cooperation'. He has succeeded admirably. If one wants to read Nguyen Du's work as a source text for Vietnamese literary culture, one can consult the annotated translation of Huynh Sanh Thong (*The Tale of Kieu: A bilingual edition of Truyen Kieu* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983]). But if one wants to read it as it was written and was intended to be savoured, as a poem that is a pleasure to recite and to hear with a poetic as well as an intellectual effect, then Zhukov's translation will stand to the occasion.

As an example, consider Zhukov's translation of the well-known opening lines of the work, and note the careful attention to the six-eight iambic meter and to the rhyme scheme (man/span; (for)lorn/bourn/mourn(ful); heart/part/dart):

> Were full five-score the years allotted to born man,
> How oft his qualities might yield within that span
>   to fate forlorn!
> In time the mulberry reclaims the sunk sea-bourn,
> And what the gliding eye may first find fair weighs mournful
>   on the heart.
> Uncanny? Nay – lack ever proved glut's counterpart,
> And minded are the gods on rosy cheeks to dart
>   celestial spite . . .

This is a translation that will be enjoyed by anyone who loves poetry, not only readers with a prior interest in Vietnam. We can appreciate this translation with the pleasure of reading something coming from another culture and also with the pleasure of becoming reacquainted with the power of the English language to surprise and inspire.

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