



Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–88

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Millions of words have been written about politics in Myanmar since the collapse of General Ne Win's socialist revolution in 1988. However, works of genuine scholarship on the structure and underlying nature of Myanmar politics are as rare as snow in summer. *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution* is a welcome exception. Yoshihiro Nakanishi has made a significant addition to the meagre literature on the politics of modern Myanmar. My criticisms which follow, and there are several, in no one way detract from the fundamental contribution that this book makes in confirming how the political and administrative core structure of the post-1962 state in Myanmar, the army, was constructed and survived unto today. The stability, and continuity, of army rule in Myanmar since 1962 is, as Dr. Nakanishi makes clear, unusual and requires explanation. The central chapters of this volume provide an explanation of that stability and grounds it in detailed, empirical, and highly original research.

Chapters four through seven are the most important parts of the argument of *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution*, but the earlier and later chapters are also important contributions to our understanding of modern Burmese politics, although at places one can take issue with some of the points the author advances. Chapter one provides an overview of the volume and takes the reader through some of the relevant, and sometimes irrelevant, largely American, political science literature on comparative politics. If words mean anything, some of this is just jargon, such as "dictatorship democracies," which some seem to favor. However, this chapter is important in setting the scene, particularly as the author does not make the mistake of many commentators on Myanmar politics and dismiss General Ne Win's commitment to his socialist revolution. He was willing to deny his army resources for the sake of that revolution, and that sacrifice became part of its strength and the reason the army could continue to rule after the revolution had failed.

The second chapter provides the historical background to the Ne Win revolution. The author's

grasp of this material is rather weaker than of the more recent history, though perhaps some of the problems stem from the fact that the language he is using has been translated at least three times—from English into Japanese and back into English again. For example, colonial Burma never had a governor-general (p. 33). It was the British Government of Burma Act of 1935 which separated Burma from India in 1937, not 1936 (also p. 33), though later this author gives the dates accurately (p. 38). These are petty criticisms, though it is important to note that the so-called British “divide and rule policy” was an accusation made by Burmese nationalists, and perhaps a consequence of British rule. Whether it was intentional is highly debatable. Aung San did not go to London to negotiate independence with the colonial governor, Sir Hubert Rance, but with the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee (p. 50), the “Panrong agreement” is presumably the “Pang-long agreement,” though whether it is a document proposing federalism is debatable (also p. 50), and the Mujahids wanted to merge northern Arakan with East Pakistan, not form a separate Islamic state (p. 51). However, as no one will read this book for the sake of this background chapter, this criticism is by-the-by.

Chapter three on how the ideology of the Burma Socialist Programme Party came to be written is informative, though the author’s lack of reference to a third ideological tract, the *Specific Characteristics*, which was the last published as a corrective to earlier texts, is surprising, given how thorough is his research. The author’s attempt to draw a distinction between ideology and philosophy, at least in terms of political practice, I find unconvincing. That the author of the Party’s ideology, U Chit Hlaing, could use his theory to justify two different regimes should surprise no one who studies politics. Chit Hlaing was following the orders of his military employers. Whether Ne Win had a clear idea of what kind of ideology he required to justify his rule to himself and others is something that Dr. Nakanishi doubts, but that he gave Chit Hlaing instructions he confirms. In an age of ideology, had Chit Hlaing’s ideas not been available, they, or something like them, would have had to be invented because that was the *zeitgeist* of what was then called Third World politics, in this case in a Theravada Buddhist context.

Chapters four through seven provide the reason *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution* will be cited by other Myanmar scholars as well as comparative political scientists for years to come. Chapter four explains why the single party that Ne Win invented was never able to gain autonomy from its military founders. Finding jobs for the officer corps as they retired from the army was not only a personal kindness but a political strategy and prerequisite for remaining in power. Chapter five, entitled “Destroy the Bureaucracy! Transformation of the Civilian Bureaucracy in the Name of the Revolution,” provides a detailed account of how the bureaucracy became captured by retired military personnel. Whether Ne Win realized what he was doing when he created the first deputy ministers in 1969 is unclear, but now we know the consequences. However, I believe that the author underestimates the weaknesses in the bureaucracy that already existed when the army seized power in 1962. It was then just a shadow of what had existed in 1942, the last effective year

of British rule. When many of the remaining senior bureaucrats resigned on the cusp of independence, the then ruling civilian party was able to fill many posts with their own appointees, regardless of their qualifications. This, in part, explains why the army was able to so dramatically improve the administration of the country during the first, brief period of its rule, in 1958–60.

Chapter six, entitled “‘Winner-Take-All’: An Analysis of Burma’s Political Elite,” begins with a misleading and unhelpful allusion to something called “Burma’s political culture.” What that may be remains in doubt, other than that some analysts, when at a loss to explain political decisions, gloss what they do not know in terms of an unknowable “political culture.” Happily, Dr. Nakanishi quickly abandons that discussion and returns to the close empirical analysis of the members of the legislative and other bodies in the government of Burma during the 1970s and 1980s. He once more demonstrates, despite Ne Win’s apparent intentions, that army and ex-army personnel dominated the government just as they did the party. This leads logically into the final substantive chapter, seven. Here his command of his data is impressive, though his lack of knowledge of pre-1962 history lets him down. Amongst Myanmar’s ministers of defense, he omits Bo Let Ya and U Win (p. 243), but this minor error detracts not at all from the empirical validity of the author’s conclusions.

After a very cogent and helpful restatement of the key points in the thesis of the *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution*, Dr. Nakanishi does what everyone writing a book on Myanmar these days seems to feel impelled to do and speculates about what comes next. Much of this is quite helpful and informative, particularly suggesting how the legacy of the Ne Win-BSPP period allowed the post-1988 military regime not only to maintain itself in power, but to expand and develop the capacity to make the transition to a civilianized regime after 2011. Indeed, this could be expanded upon with advantage for one of the most misunderstood aspects of modern Myanmar politics is the nature and purposes of the military regime between 1988 and 2010.

Unfortunately, he falls into what I see as an error in being drawn into the discourse of political critics of the army, rather than remaining in the discourse of political analysis. He repeats the previously heard allegation made by critics of the post-1988 military regime that the army then perceived the general public as a threat and “also exhibited a sense of paternalism” (p. 294). That the army arrogated to itself a claim to be practicing “national” politics in a selfless manner is undoubtedly the case, but there is nothing new in that claim. That was a claim made from the 1940s onwards. Moreover, a reading of the documents of the 1990s indicates the army leadership knew exactly who their political opponents were, and they were not some generalized “citizenry.” Indeed, the army used the near same language as in the socialist period: the people’s army, together with the people, against the enemies of the state, whether leftists or rights. As in the introduction to the book, so also at the conclusion, Nakanishi perhaps becomes victim to the same philosophical fault as U Chit Hlaing. That democracy is the reigning ideology of today, rather than socialism, is obvious, but in terms of their approaches to the subject of comparative politics, there is little

difference. Democracy, like socialism, is not an analytical category, it is a vague ideological preference.

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Surabaya, 1945–2010: Neighbourhood, State and Economy in Indonesia’s City of Struggle

ROBBIE PETERS

Singapore: NUS Press, 2013, 272 p.

Before moving to Jakarta, I lived in Surabaya as a student from 1982 to 1990. The Surabaya of then was just beginning to represent itself as a world class city with the new landmarks of Tunjungan Plaza and later Delta Plaza, forming a belt of international hotels, offices, and shopping malls around kampung neighborhoods. Little did I realize that the city then was undergoing a major transformation marked by a shift from a city of work to a space of consumption. Robbie Peters came to Surabaya almost a decade later but at a most critical time in the history of the city during the fateful year of 1998. He thus understood especially well how the aftermath of 1998 (and what came before) had triggered a series of unprecedented crises in the forms of *ninja*, terrorism, and urban renewals all of which have profoundly shaped the neighborhood of Dinoyo—the subject of his study.

Surabaya, 1945–2010 focuses on a kampung where people live a life at the margins of center of the city across different socio-political fields of postcolonial Indonesia. This neighborhood is specific in its proximity to factories and later shopping malls which took advantage of their labor, but the people in the kampung are more informal workers than proletariats. This set the stage for Peters to show the uneven relations between the kampung and the city as a kind of tension-filled duality that represents the larger relation between people and the state. Sometimes it appears we are being offered a choice between seeing Dinoyo surrender to the bureaucratic rationality of the state or stay with their kampung ethos of solidarity. The choice seems clear when outside in the street lurks the world of state power and capitalist modernization.

Consistent with the interest of anthropologists, Peters shows how Dinoyo kampung is given substance of neighborliness through the practices of *slametan* (feast-giving) to observe important events that happen in one’s life such as death, marriage, and birth, which at once constitute a sense of solidarity and community. Peters however, does not regard kampung as inherently coherent or harmonious, indeed he believes its formation to be an outgrowth of control and crisis, territoriality and domination against which *slametan* continues to be enacted. This kind of formulation allows politics (rather than culture) to play a significant part in the book. *Surabaya, 1945–2010* is thus,

an anthropological book that goes beyond anthropology, or better yet, it is a book that represents the best side of the discipline. Against the depiction of culture as a timeless way of living, Peters takes seriously the historical dimension of the kampung cultures, making them part of the violence of the national time as he emphasizes social change while identifying key practices that continue to be reproduced for self-definition and self-defense.

The first two chapters already show the coordination of time and space. They introduce Dinoyo within the changing context of Indonesia and see it as a “third” space beyond the confrontation between the city and the village which constitutes the essence of an urban kampung. The story starts from chapter 3 which sets the tone of the book by offering a chilling account of the 1965 purge of the communists and its associated space of kampung. Peters narrates the story (in this and other chapters) through the memories of people he got to know such as Eko, Rukun, Neng, and Arifin to show how Dinoyo is never a coherent space. The politics that culminated in the purge of 1965 did radically change kampung lives. This chapter raises questions of how the terror of 1965 affects the subsequent development of the Dinoyo. What do the inhabitants think about their communities, old and new? In the context of 1965, what do we mean by the subsequent Kampung Improvement Project (KIP)? Is it indeed a “success” story of a pro-poor urban agenda?

Chapter 4 responds to these questions by suggesting that KIP was involved in the “pacification” of the kampung world of Dinoyo in the aftermath of 1965. However, this was not an easy enterprise. There are interesting discussions here about the challenges of collecting data for the project. It details the processes by which the kampung is approached by technologies of measurement, such as maps, statistics, and questionnaires. Peters pays attention to how this technology of abstraction was carried out by civil servants and university researchers who worked from the position of observers, standing outside the kampung. This reveals not only the limits of their methods, but also the sense of gap and otherness as well as a distrust of the kampung residents to government officers due to their memories of the terrifying 1965 purges by the New Order. The KIP was nevertheless accepted eventually when it offered rights to ownership to the occupants of the kampung. However, one would note, as Peters did, that landownership entails the production of a tax-paying “middle class.” It also constitutes a division within the communities of the kampung as landownership produces the discourses of legibility and citizenship. Peters devotes an insightful account of how to secure the neighborhood at the time when the “middle class” house owners in the kampung increasingly feel the threat from the floating mass (*massa*).

In the 1980s, I remember people in Surabaya seem to identify the urban space through the width of the streets. The wide street (where malls, hotels, and government buildings are located) is associated with the image of the city, whereas the alleyways, such as *gang* and *lorong* are seen as the world of kampung. The world of the city and that of the kampung were indeed clearly different but they were not so divided. *Becak* (rickshaw) could then bring people to plazas, and kampung was accessible by any two-wheel vehicle. The two worlds constituted each other beyond

the physical environment. There were social economic ties as well even though this was marked by uneven relations. In chapter 5, Peters makes it clear how the move from factories to malls to symbolize national urban progress was supported by *kampung* which provided inexpensive accommodations for sales girls working in the mall. The *kampung* not only contributed to the development of the city, but it also watched the rise and the fall of those who engaged with the city. Peters nicely describes this process by which the malls, the hotels, and the entertainment districts came to symbolize not so much the idea of progress, but the illegitimacy of the state and the crisis of society as the New Order began to crumble at the end of the 1990s.

Chapter 6 shows the impact of monetary crisis (*krismon*) in the 1990s and how it affected the material conditions of the Dinoyo neighborhood. The focus of this chapter however is on how people survived that difficult time; how different enterprises were created to cope with the time of crisis. The people of Dinoyo intensified and diversified their existing informal networks by doing what they could to generate income, from setting up coffee stalls to riverside service enterprises. The best part of this chapter is the discussion on how cultures were reinvented to live through tough times, from pigeon racing to betting on soccer games to prostitution, and how these different activities were received by the authorities which sought to control them.

The effects of crisis produced uncanny happenings. Chapter 7 deals with the infamous stories of Ninja terror that for a while, saw East Java become a spectacle for a global media. Peters argues that the hysteria over the attack and killing of ninja is best understood as a “metaphor for anonymous incursions,” a kind of defensive response to an uncertain condition of life that occurred when the source of power that used to inhabit the neighborhood suddenly became unclear and subjected to misappropriation by unlocatable forces during the economic and political crises. There is a shadow of Foucauldian analysis in this chapter. The self-defense of the community began with the perception of one’s own self that needed clarification by way of imagining the incursion of “outsiders” whose identities were hard to locate. These others (the insane, the ninja, the informant, and even the police officer) constituted profound anxieties in the community and yet they were perversely instrumental for the community to regain its self-hood. At the time of political transition, it wasn’t clear to members of the neighborhood, as to Peters, if they themselves were the living dead of the spectral New Order state.

Chapter 8 shows how social life in the *kampung* in the Post-Suharto era is virtually uncontainable by the state. The key component in the “art of not being governed” (to use James Scott’s term) is the ritual of *slametan*. The enactment of this inclusive tradition serves to recognize both residents and non-residents, and they thus counter the exclusionary practice of residential cards. The “being there” constitutes a community beyond the official recognition of IDs. The focus of this chapter thus is the formation of collective identity and the role of alleyway as an almost organic social space that helps bring people together. Peters examines in detail the use of the alleyway in the event of a death, and shows how people in Dinoyo master the alley. The focus on the alley

allows Peters to discuss how people in Dinoyo act on the street, the counter-space of alley, which is considered as a domain of the outside world marked by domination and conflict (with authorities and upper middle class).

Chapter 9 concerns the present challenge of Dinoyo. Peters discusses some of the most recent attempts by the municipality of Surabaya to rebuild itself after the “time of insanity,” but in this last chapter Peters shows how the New Order’s techniques of capitalist modernization continue well into the post-Suharto era, as if time had never changed or in fact gotten worse for the kampung folks of Dinoyo. In the present era of *reformasi*, when the notion of *rakyat* (people) has become the keyword for political legitimacy, the folks of Dinoyo continue to be marginalized. This however does not mean that people in Dinoyo are just victims of urban renewal. In the last section on “Sovereignty and Slametan” Peters nicely brings back the ritual of *Slametan* for a wedding that enacts social identity to reproduce the agency of Dinoyo’s residents. This *Slametan* defies submission to state registration.

In the end, after reading the conclusion, we realize that what made Dinoyo possible and held itself together is not merely the power of culture (such as that of *Slametan*), but also politics, or political bargaining. Peters approaches Dinoyo slowly and attentively to reveal the capacity of people in living their daily lives. *Surabaya 1945–2000* is an excellent book represented in an engaging narrative via life stories of the kampung people. It is also a book attentive to scholarship. Peters pays homage to earlier anthropological studies of Indonesian kampungs, following their paths and themes while engaging critically with their findings. Robbie continues this great tradition of studying kampung, making sense of the people’s lives and the changes they experienced, but he does it in a way that makes us aware of the politics of the city and the nation. We learn from his study that the new time of *reformasi* is nothing other than an extension of the past New Order. At least this is what is seen from the margin. From the kampung, Peters offers a fascinating study of a neighborhood undergoing a time of insanity when the future is uncertain and the past is carried over to blur the present.

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The Encyclopedia of Indonesia in the Pacific War: In Cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation

PETER POST, WILLIAM H. FREDERICK, IRIS HEIDEBRINK, and SHIGERU SATO, eds.
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The twentieth century has been characterized as the century of wars. It experienced two world

wars, many regional wars in the context of the Cold War, and various kinds of internal wars. These wars produced many casualties, both military and civilian. In return, the many nation-states that the two great wars brought into being have made it a habit to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives for their countries. By the end of the century, “remembering war” has become a common exercise for national governments and a civic duty for citizens. In this context, intensive efforts at recollection, collective reflection and redress in relation to these wars have materialized in academia as well as public sectors. In addition, international and intergovernmental cooperation has produced new memories, understandings, and interpretations of the wars. As such, the “memory boom” has taken place in many parts of the globe (Winter 2006, 1).

Two reasons deserve to be mentioned regarding this trend from a global perspective. First, as those who experienced war age, they are eager to archive their memories for future generations. In the Netherlands, many memorials and statues bearing the names of those who fell in a war have been established by local communities. Second, many developing countries that were also former European or American colonies have been democratized in the process of “the Third Wave” (Huntington 1991). For these countries, democratization has been a process of confronting colonial and authoritarian legacies through historical fact-finding efforts that are concerned with addressing human rights violations that occurred under authoritarian regimes (De Brito *et al.* 2001). Thus, the politics of memory sheds light on those who suffered as well as the oppressed. This process has made possible, for instance, international cooperation between a former colony (Indonesia) and its erstwhile suzerain power (The Netherlands) to present the truth about what happened during the war period.

Under these changing international and domestic socio-political circumstances, over the years, tremendous international collaborative efforts have borne fruit in the form of the *Encyclopedia of Indonesia in the Pacific War*. It is a timely publication and provides a broad understanding of the topic. It has 56 contributors from various parts of the globe with 684 and xxix pages, plus 24 pages of pictures at the end of the volume. It has eight major chapters—chapter one general introduction; chapter two historical overview; five middle chapters on matters directly related to the Japanese occupation (chapters three to seven), namely, administration and policies, coercion and control, economy, society and social change, and culture; and chapter eight on postwar burdens and memory. The 156-page long “Lexicon of People, Events and Institutions” addendum to the book is especially useful for readers and scholars in need of quick reference. To describe this *Encyclopedia* as “a strong encyclopedia” that “can help you to get an early, broad understanding of a topic” (Storey 2008, 5) is indeed accurate.

In his introduction Peter Post, one of the editors of the *Encyclopedia*, explains the purpose of the tome. It “aims to go beyond the myths and misconceptions and treats the varied aspects of the Japanese occupation period in a comparative way,” “gives factual details of how different groups of people initially reacted towards Japanese military rule and how these groups experienced the

changes in their living circumstances,” and “pays attention to the legacies of the war in the three main countries concerned, e.g. Japan, Indonesia, and The Netherlands” (p. 2). According to Post, four major advancements in the historiography of the Japanese period in Indonesia over the last two decades have made this *Encyclopedia* project possible. Two of the new developments relate to the availability of records and materials; these were made possible through a project of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records initiated by the National Archives of Japan, which has made public all Asia-related records, and the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation which has digitized relevant Malay-language newspapers and periodicals and made them publicly available. The other two advancements were the oral history projects—one was “The End of The Netherlands’ Colonial Presence in Asia” undertaken by the Foundation for the Oral History of Indonesia of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, while the other was the “South Sulawesi under the Japanese Occupation” by the Center for Regional and Multicultural Studies of Hasanuddin University in Makassar, Indonesia (p. 3). Nevertheless, Post acknowledges that due to the still-limited availability of the sources the *Encyclopedia* spends more pages on developments in Java and Sumatra than in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and the islands of the eastern archipelago (p. 4).

The main body of the book is devoted to the description and analysis of “occupation” by the Japanese. But since the chapters do not have footnotes or detailed references (only selected references), the readers will have some difficulties if they wish to pursue further information or even to crosscheck the accuracy of an introduced fact. There is no information on how the reader can access the sources or the materials on which contributors have relied. The *Encyclopedia* appears to have been built upon many untouched and scattered materials gathered and analyzed in the course of their research. It is, therefore, regrettable that such new and no doubt valuable sources are not available to the reader. This shortcoming also makes it difficult to measure the original contributions offered by this *Encyclopedia* compared to the existing literature on the subject.

Some of the new findings and developments in the scholarship are made implicit in the text. For example, William Bradley Horton’s piece on “Comfort women” would not have been written without the comprehensive research conducted and funded by the Asian Women’s Fund established in 1995 (active until 2007). The chapter on “Postwar Burdens and Memory” also points out some new aspects concerning Japanese, Dutch, and Indonesian individuals as well as governmental efforts in remembering World War II. The newness of these sections reflects the recent development of international norms concerning human rights that focus more on individual memory and the present actions of those who suffered for redress.

The *Encyclopedia*, however, does not address the current politics of war memory, such as redress. The issue of reparations entered a new phase at the end of the twentieth century (Bottiglieri 2004; Miller and Kumar 2007) and it was a major concern among states after World War II. Japan, as a defeated nation paid reparations to its Asian neighbors after the San Francisco

Peace Treaty was signed in 1951, as proposed by the United States. On the state-to-state level, by paying reparations, the Japanese government perceived it had fulfilled its duty and redeemed its past transgressions to its neighbors. But these reparations rarely reached local individual victims. In the meantime, a new idea regarding reparations has gained currency since the 1990s, an idea that is rooted in the concept of human rights and has created opportunities for individual victims to demand their rights for reparation independently from the state. Victims such as “comfort women” in the former Japanese imperial territories and atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki have raised their voices with the support of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. It should be noted, however, that the former case draws more attention in the international arena than the latter one, in part because it intersects with gender issues.

The voices of marginalized groups also remain to be heard in the *Encyclopedia*. One representative group was the ethnic Chinese. They constituted a major group within the local populations in the Indies, and yet their socio-political position and experience during the Japanese occupation is understudied. It is partially because the Japanese imagined them as their main enemy when they fought against China, while the Indonesians were their younger brothers, and therefore not many official sources on the Chinese are available. To be fair, the *Encyclopedia* pays careful attention to the Chinese population. Gin Keat Ooi’s essay recounts the series of Chinese massacres that took place in South and West Kalimantan, while Didi Kwantanada illustrates the radical socio-cultural and educational changes this ethnic group had to confront. But as these accounts are without noted (primary) sources, thus one hardly gets to hear a “Chinese” voice in them. It is a historical fact that the Japanese military authorities interned many Chinese in concentration camps, although few sources are available on the matter. Their experiences and afflictions during this time, however, are vividly featured in literary works published after Indonesia gained independence in August 1945 (Chandra 2012). Although documenting violence against prisoners of war is a challenging task (Jones 2011), it is regrettable that the *Encyclopedia* does not provide new evidence on prison life from the period in question.

The other invisible group is the so-called collaborators with Japanese authority. Such people were not always opportunists; some were realists. In the case of the Philippines, this group includes notable names such as Emilio Aguinaldo, José P. Laurel, and Manuel Roxas. In the case of Indonesia, one may recall Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta as collaborators, and yet many other names are “unknown” or forgotten. For instance, there were many prominent journalists, Indonesian as well as Chinese, who worked for the occupying regime and maintained their reputation even after independence. As I understand that writing about the collaborators is politically sensitive, the *Encyclopedia* appears to maintain a safe distance from this issue.

There is another kind of challenge in constructing historical reality. We still know little about those who died for the “imperial nations” (Winter 2006). In the case of the British Empire, various war memorials record the names of those who “sacrificed their lives” for it. However, in the case

of the Netherlands and its former colonies, the remembrance of war “heroes” seems to exclude those who had died, especially those in the colonies. It is natural to commemorate those who died for the Dutch fatherland, while those who fell defending the colony and sacrificing themselves for an imperial possession, it appears, remain a forgotten issue in Dutch and Indonesian historiography.

Ultimately, does this *Encyclopedia* contribute to construct a common understanding of history concerning Indonesia in the Pacific War? Overcoming “the myths and misconceptions” of occupied Indonesia may not be easy because some of them inevitably are linked with personal and collective experiences and memory. The essays in the *Encyclopedia* may not be accepted by all parties concerned, yet they provide basic elements of the historical facts and developments. This is the first step towards an ideally more complex, multi-faceted understanding of Indonesia during the Pacific War, and is therefore a valuable contribution to future projects of history writing on this topic.

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Japan's Relations with Southeast Asia: The Fukuda Doctrine and Beyond

LAM PENG ER, ed.

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The Fukuda Doctrine, enunciated in 1977, is one of the most important developments in Japanese relations with Southeast Asia after the Second World War. Marking the end of a low-profile policy that focused primarily on trade, the Doctrine suggests a Japanese willingness to assume the “responsibilities” that befit a big power in Southeast Asia, something many Americans and Southeast Asians had been urging Japan to do. But mindful of their war record in Asia and their domestic politics, Japan eschewed the approach of a “normal” big power, or what the editor of this book calls a neorealist approach. Thus, the use of military force was rejected and economic power, if used for political purposes, was only exercised indirectly. The emphasis of the Doctrine was on what was called a “heart-to-heart” relationship, an approach that attempted to cultivate the trust and goodwill needed to ensure some semblance of equality between a big power like Japan and a group of developing countries like ASEAN.

This book deems the Doctrine a Japanese foreign policy success. Largely an outcome of a conference organized on the 13th anniversary of the Doctrine in 2007,¹⁾ this book however, has chosen not only to treat the Doctrine purely in bilateral terms but also to go beyond to that of the relationship between the Fukuda Doctrine and the regional architecture i.e. East Asian community building. To consider these two themes, the editor has drawn on contributions from academics in Japan and ASEAN and from one Chinese scholar. In addition, someone who had a hand in drafting the Doctrine, an ex-Japanese ambassador, was included to provide the perspective of a policy maker.

The book begins with an introduction, after which, it is divided into three parts, of which the first examines the origins and norms of the Fukuda Doctrine since it was first announced, while the second considers the Doctrine, power, and order in Southeast Asia. The third section mainly expatiates on the wider aspect pertaining to the relationship of Japan and ASEAN with the East Asian community. Each section consists of three chapters. Lam Peng Er, the editor, in the introduction, sees significance in the Fukuda Doctrine not only in Japan-ASEAN and East Asian community terms, but also in terms of the establishment of new norms in the international relations of Asia. The major aspects of these norms are the renunciation of power politics based on military capabilities by Japan, a “heart-to-heart” and an equal relationship between Japan and ASEAN. Such norms are not consonant with neorealism, one of the major theories of international relations, and hence unlikely to last, if the neorealist theory applies here. Yet, according to Lam, the Doctrine

1) Another conference was held in Kuala Lumpur in 2007, organized by the Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies (MAJAS). A book also eventuated. See Lee and Md Nasrudin (2009).

has outlasted the Cold War and has undergirded Japan's relations with ASEAN into the twenty-first century. It could conceivably be valid for that of the East Asian community.

Lam also discusses, in the first chapter, the origins, ideas, and praxis of the Fukuda Doctrine, of which an interesting part is an account, albeit short, of how the diplomats drafted the Doctrine and how Fukuda put his stamp on it. Lam goes on to affirm how the Fukuda Doctrine and its spirit of tolerance should underpin an incipient East Asian community. In the second chapter, Edamura Sumio, a former ambassador and a key drafter of the Doctrine, gives the view of an insider. He believes the Doctrine represents diplomacy with vision and echoes Lam in regarding its applicability for a greater East Asia. Yamamoto Yoshinobu, in the third chapter, shows how great power relations have shaped the Doctrine. He argues nevertheless that there is some power element in the Doctrine—at least in practice and application—as it can be interpreted as a measure against, then as a soft counter to, the increasing influence of China. Despite that, he argues that the Doctrine should be considered in theoretical terms as a constructivist approach, a theoretical approach which has only recently come into vogue and something distinct from the neorealist approach.

Two ASEAN scholars, Rizal Sukma and Tang Siew Mun, and a Chinese scholar, Wang Jianwei contributed to the third section. Sukma, from Indonesia, explores how the bilateral relations can cope with the new strategic situation engendered by the power shift in Asia. He argues that an important first step towards this is for both Japan and ASEAN to identify the common challenges facing them in the political and security arenas and to find where their interests converge. He listed many challenges, one of which is to ensure the peaceful rise of China. Wang from China acknowledges that the conscious and purposeful cultivation of hard and soft power by Japan since the Doctrine has given Japan a reservoir of goodwill in the region. As a consequence, China cannot take a hard approach to Southeast Asia, and will likely compete with Japan as to who will be the better practitioner of the heart-to-heart approach. Tang, a Malaysian scholar, examines how Japan is perceived by the ASEAN states in the wake of the Doctrine. Agreeing that the Doctrine is one of Japan's most successful initiatives, he nevertheless thinks it ought to be examined in the light of the changing times and environment.

The third section deals with Japan, Southeast Asia and the East Asian community. In the seventh chapter, Kitti Prasirtsuk from Thailand gives one of the more detailed accounts of the roles Japan and ASEAN can play in an East Asian community. He concludes that through a combination of trade and investment plus cultural exchanges, Japan has advanced *de facto* regional integration in tandem with ASEAN. Yamakage Susumu, the doyen of Japanese scholars on Japanese relations with ASEAN, believes that as far as Japan and ASEAN are concerned, their relationship should remain the central hub of the complex multi-layered schemes of regional cooperation. Finally, Kikuchi Tsutomu argues that the Doctrine is still relevant despite the rise of regional institutions and a regime change in Japan (referring then to the replacement of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan [LDP] by the Democratic Party of Japan [DPJ]). He also states that it should be Japan's

priority to enhance unity and cooperation among Southeast Asian countries through ASEAN, just as the Doctrine had intended.

The book has done a good job of explaining the importance of the Fukuda Doctrine to those interested in bilateral Japanese-ASEAN relations as it is generally not much appreciated by specialists working on bilateral relations, concerned as they are with the economic penetration of Japan and its possible security posture in Southeast Asia: how much Japan's peace diplomacy or heart-to-heart approach has influenced Southeast Asian perceptions of Japan in a positive way. The book is also right in arguing for the centrality of Japan and ASEAN, and the validity of a heart-to-heart approach, in East Asian regionalism. But it has not made a fully convincing case. Present Sino-Japanese tensions suggest it will take time and very much effort before both nations can be reconciled by the norms of the Fukuda Doctrine to play positive roles in East Asian regional groupings. Furthermore, the book's treatment of theory is far too short. It may not be its main aim but it tantalizes with its rejection of neorealist theory. Could it not have expatiated a bit more on the constructivist theory suggested by Yamamoto Yoshinobu?

Finally, the book could have included the perspective of a scholar from the newer members of ASEAN, the so-called CLMV countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Even if the Doctrine began way before they joined ASEAN, the Doctrine was supposed to bridge Indochina and the old ASEAN. At any rate, an ASEAN 10 poses one of the great challenges facing ASEAN unity, something much desired by the Doctrine.

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The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History

JESSICA HARRIDEN

Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012, xiii + 370 p.

European visitors to Burma in the nineteenth century frequently remarked on what they perceived to be the startling freedom and equality enjoyed by Burmese women, and currently the "unofficial slogan" of the Union of Myanmar's government-approved women's organization states that "Myanmar women have enjoyed equal rights with Myanmar men since time immemorial" (p. 1). But

while it is true that historically Burmese women have had access to economic power and have been able to exercise influence in the domestic sphere, they have also been considered spiritually inferior, and thus unfit for positions of leadership. Largely excluded from direct political power, with a few prominent (and often demonized) exceptions, women in Burma could usually exercise political power only through indirect influence. The upheavals of the colonial and post-colonial eras have not resulted in any measurable increase in the status of Burmese women.

Jessica Harriden's monograph *The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History* analyzes women's access to power in Burma, and how this access has changed from the classical era to the present day. In doing so, Harriden enriches the existing understanding of gender and power relations in Burma. The book is divided into nine chapters, ordered chronologically, with the first chapter outlining the cultural context of gender relations in Burma. In this first chapter Harriden unpicks the meaning of power in the Burmese context, distinguishing between the Burmese conceptions of *awza*, an indirect influence, and *ana*, or direct political authority. Burmese women rarely possessed *ana*, although they could exercise *awza*. Expectations regarding power were shaped by religious influences, and also included the notion of *hpoun*, a spiritual power possessed only by men. Women's innate spiritual inferiority meant that while women could command influence in the domestic context, there was deep ambivalence about women exercising direct political power, as exemplified by Burmese attitudes towards those exceptional Burmese women who wielded political authority, discussed in the third chapter.

Chapter two discusses depictions of female power in classical and pre-modern Burma. Given the scope of the subject, Harriden is necessarily selective in the material that she chooses to include here. This chapter combines a much broader chronological scope with a relatively narrow focus on the religious and familial influence of selected elite Burmese women, resulting in an analysis that seems a bit speculative and incomplete in comparison to the following chapters. While many of the early sources concerning women in Burma are prescriptive, incomplete, and possibly fictional, Harriden argues that nonetheless these materials "influenced the cultural construction of gender roles which had important implications for women's ability to exercise social power in the more recent past" (p. 51). Since Harriden does not attempt to give a complete account of female power in the classical and pre-modern eras, but rather focuses on a few important themes, it might have been preferable to integrate this material into the first chapter. Harriden emphasizes that the exercise of female power in Burma, as far as can be judged from the available sources, tended to be indirect. Because of the importance of kinship networks in shaping Burmese power structures, women could exert influence while remaining in their prescribed domestic sphere. While women could be valued for exerting their influence in a subordinate role, women who were more overtly dominant were viewed with suspicion and distrust—the "evil, scheming queen" became a reviled archetype (p. 74). Chapter three focuses on three powerful queens of the Konbaung dynasty who exemplified this archetype: Me Nu, Setkya Dewi, and Supayalat, the last queen of Burma.

Each of these women was popularly depicted as an “evil queen,” and accused of exercising power in a manner that was both fundamentally illegitimate and destructive to Burma.

British colonial rule, described in chapter four, changed the status of women in Burma. The British had mixed feelings about Burmese women’s economic independence and freedom of movement in the public sphere, and while not a deliberate policy, the effect of British colonial rule was to diminish Burmese women’s economic power, as Chinese and Indian migrants competed for the positions that had traditionally been occupied by Burmese women. Whereas traditionally women had sometimes been able to exert political influence indirectly through marriage and family connections, this route to power was diminished as Burmese men were pushed out of positions of administrative authority. By the late nineteenth century, the colonial authorities discouraged marriages between Burmese women and European men, and Burmese nationalists would come to criticize women who engaged in relationships with “foreigners” for diluting Burmese culture and national identity. Women actively participated in the Burmese nationalist movement, but they tended to be confined to subsidiary roles, and subject to male authority.

Although the independent government of Burma was in theory committed to gender equality, in practice women’s opportunities for access to political power did not increase with independence. Chapter five’s title, “Social Workers, Beauty Queens and Insurgents,” sums up the limited options available to Burmese women after independence. Women were limited in the professions that they could access—and almost universally confined to subordinate roles in every context. While women participated in leftist and ethnic minority movements, and at times even assumed leadership roles, they were usually expected to remain subordinate to male authority.

The imposition of military rule, described in chapter six, was disastrous for women’s advancement in Burma. The various military dictatorships that ruled Burma from 1962 onwards not only decreased women’s access to economic and political power, but also targeted ethnic minority women in violent repressive campaigns. The military, of course, was an almost entirely male institution, and it came to control almost every aspect of life in Burma. As the economy, conditions of life, and public sphere in Burma suffered from military rule, so too did Burmese women, though a few elite women, personally connected to the military, were able to continue to exercise influence in the traditional manner.

In chapter seven, Harriden addresses the case of Aung San Suu Kyi, the exception to the rule of Burmese women’s general exclusion from political power. Harriden seeks to account for Aung San Suu Kyi’s tremendous influence, and finds some of the explanation in traditional Burmese models of family power: Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of the martyred hero of Burmese nationalism Aung San. But more than this, Aung San Suu Kyi’s moral authority and personal charisma—her *awza*—have given her a unique position in Burmese politics (p. 221). But this personal prominence has not translated into greater opportunities for Burmese women more generally, as Aung San Suu Kyi has commonly been treated as a singular and exceptional case, both

in terms of her lineage and her personal qualities. Harriden also notes that the military regime attempted to use Aung San Suu Kyi's marriage to Michael Aris to discredit her, drawing on nationalist discourses that censured Burmese women who married foreigners.

The final two chapters of the book analyze women's position in Burma post-1988, with chapter eight addressing women's "advancement" (the quotation marks belong to Harriden) under the military regime since then, and chapter nine discussing the various women's organizations formed by Burmese women in exile. While the women's organizations associated with the military regime were able, by their association with the dictatorship, to obtain a sizeable membership, these organizations have accomplished little in the way of substantial betterment of women's lives in Burma, serving rather to defend the regime against international criticism. The expatriate women's organizations dedicated to reform, many of which integrate non-traditional conceptions of gender equality in their platform, seem to be a more promising vehicle for change. Harriden concludes with an assessment of the possibilities for collaboration and connection between these expatriate organizations and groups within Burma.

This work is a significant contribution to the existing scholarship on Burma, and is innovative in its focus on the nuances of gendered power relations. As noted above, this work is strongest when discussing women's access to power in Burma from the Konbaung era onwards, but overall Harriden's research is notably thorough. This study will be of interest to scholars of Southeast Asian history and gender relations, and anyone who seeks a better understanding of contemporary Burmese society.

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The Perfect Business? Anti-trafficking and the Sex Trade along the Mekong

SVERRE MOLLAND

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012, viii+276 p.

Transnational Crime and Human Rights: Responses to Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion

SUSAN KNEEBONE and JULIE DEBELJAK

Oxon: Routledge, 2012, xiii+276 p.

Recently, as a response to the global crisis of human trafficking, more attention has been paid to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). However, the literature of human trafficking mainly focuses on prostitution and irregular migration, and always considers the "max-

imization of profit” as the central logic behind human trafficking. But this is only part of the story.

Explaining the social-cultural discourses of human trafficking in the GMS, Sverre Molland, Susan Kneebone, and Julie Debeljak present alternative perspectives on human trafficking in the GMS. In their opinions, there is a tension between the discourse of policy enforcement and human rights in the region.

Transnational Crime and Human Rights: Responses to Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion evaluates the legal policy frameworks for responding to human trafficking in the GMS. At international, national, and subnational levels, the authors point out two essential contexts in human trafficking, namely, prostitution and labor migration. Meanwhile, they apply Foucault and Habermas’ ideas about discourse to evaluate how competing discourses have shaped policies and how policy responses have respectively changed the discourses.

For instance, Kneebone and Debeljak adopt Foucault’s concepts of “bio-politics” and “governmentality”¹⁾ to illustrate the trafficking discourses at both a global and regional level not only explaining “the increased interests in ‘securitization’ by those who are in power,” but also analyzing “why some discourses that may unsettle the status quo are excluded” (Kneebone and Debeljak, p. 24).

In *The Perfect Business? Anti-Trafficking and the Sex Trade along the Mekong*, Sverre Molland comments on the three discourses of traffickers, victims, and anti-traffickers in human trafficking along the Thai-Lao border, with a specific focus on the border towns of Vientiane and Nong Kai. At the same time, Molland interprets human trafficking along the Thai-Lao border from three theoretical approaches. First, he utilizes the “discourse”²⁾ to explain that institutional practices do not only shape the external world, but also respond to it. Second, he adopts practice theory to explain “how individuals and groups employ a range of strategies and maneuvers to archive certain ends,” and “internalize these very same ends” (Molland, p. 14). And third, he introduces Jean-Paul Sartre’s analysis of “bad faith”³⁾ to explain “deliberate ignorance” in human trafficking.

Molland carefully analyzes the price and income hierarchies within the sex industries in Vientiane and Nong Kai, which are different from the idealized depiction of human trafficking. He

1) In the opinion of Kneebone and Debeljak, bio-politics and governmentality produce “knowledge and discourses that become norms for the behaviour and control of populations.” For example, “the discourse of human (in) security is inextricably linked within a broader framework of the bio-politics of the population” (Kneebone and Debeljak, p. 24). In brief, Kneebone and Debeljak use Foucault’s ideas to “illuminate the narratives which have led to trafficking discourses at the global level and then at the regional level” (p. 26).

2) In the view of Molland, “the human trafficking discourse is not a coherent body of theorized scholarship but a meta-language which consists of a range of loosely connected assumptions which allows for contradictions and discursive slips to co-exist” (Molland 2010, 837).

3) As Molland argues, “bad faith” means “deliberate ignorance” (Molland, p. 19). For example, “anti-traffickers actively attempt to camouflage to themselves what is by necessity a subjective and ambiguous decision they need to make, by giving it an aura of objectivity and due process” (p. 225).

concludes that human trafficking is not parasitic on migration flows from poorer to richer areas. In many cases advanced by Molland, “price for commercial sex in Laos is higher than that in Nong Kai” (Molland, p. 127). Furthermore, Lao sex workers cross border to work in Nong Kai, who break the logic of “maximization of utility.” Molland highlights the fact that the analytical models assumed by anti-traffickers do not explain the movement of Lao sex workers mentioned above.

In both books, the authors pose serious challenges both analytically and methodologically to the literature on human trafficking in the following three areas.

First of all, the two books criticize the effectiveness of the definition context of human trafficking in the GMS.

In *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (“the Trafficking Protocol”)*,⁴ one of the most essential international texts to any study on human trafficking, the definition context of human trafficking contains “a range of contradictions and ambiguities” (Molland, p. 8). For example, the overall objective of *the Trafficking Protocol* is to “protect states (through controlling migration), not individuals (protecting migrant laborers’ working rights) (p. 43). Moreover, *the Trafficking Protocol* implies that “there is a clear distinction between smuggled and trafficked persons” (Kneebone and Debeljak p. 127). From Molland’s point of view, “any recruitment, whether deceptive or not, into prostitution is deemed to be trafficking” (Molland, p. 70). The definition of human trafficking should not be simply accounted for trafficking by referring to ideal models of profitability.

Meanwhile, Molland contends that the literature on human trafficking, which regards human trafficking as a most profitable illegal crime, ignores the fact of low-profit margins along the Thai-Lao border. Molland utilizes the approach of “socialization process” within the venues (such as bar) to explain the reason why sex workers “would consider exploitative prior to recruitment but not after socialization” (Molland, p. 99). In contrast, Kneebone and Debeljak show that the discourse of human trafficking is dominated by traditional security discourse, which regards human trafficking as a transnational organized crime. As a result, “anti-trafficking programmes have focused on alleviating the lack of human security at source” (Kneebone and Debeljak, pp. 64–65).

Secondly, the authors draw lessons from the anti-trafficking sector in the GMS. For a long time, little consideration has been given to the social relationships between a trafficker and a trafficked victim. According to the fieldwork conducted by Molland, recruitment in human trafficking is primarily driven by informal networks of extend acquaintances. Molland suggests that “the greater the emphasis on the horrific situation to which trafficked victims are subjected, the less possible it becomes to imagine any forms of social relationships between a trafficker and a trafficked victim” (Molland, p. 202).

4) See United Nations (2000).

Kneebone and Debeljak show that the anti-trafficking policies in the GMS are shifting from “a female-gendered focus to include trafficking of men and boys,” meaning that the discourse is “shifting from prostitution to labour exploitation” (Kneebone and Debeljak, p. 160). However, at the national level, the discourse of anti-trafficking is not reflected in bilateral arrangements in the GMS. For instance, most arrangements responding to human trafficking are not linked with anti-trafficking policies.

In the opinion of Molland, human trafficking employs “both deceptive and non-deceptive recruitment practices” (Molland, p. 141). Concerning the social relationships between a trafficker and an anti-trafficker, Molland explains that traffickers and anti-traffickers have something in common: for example, they are “both actors of bad faith” (p. 234). Because “deliberate ignorance is instrumental for the reproduction of recruitment within the sex industry, anti-traffickers are dispositioned to act in bad faith, as willed avoidance of complexity is intrinsic to the perpetuation of program activities” (p. 235). For the sex workers, “client” and “health worker” have something common in the Thai-Lao context, since “they are both potential sources of material support” (p. 23).

Thirdly, the two books explore the implications for security governance in the near future. Based on the case studies at the Thai-Lao border, Molland describes the heterogeneity in human trafficking as three concentric circles, which provide a clear framework for security governance at three levels: dyadic power relationships between victims and perpetrators as the core circle, organized crime as the middle circle, and the cross-border markets as the outer circle. Furthermore, Molland considers that deceptive and voluntary recruitment are co-present along the Thai-Lao border areas. Recruiting acquaintances and friends into sex work does not necessarily entail negative moral sanctioning. Because the common practice among sex workers’ recruitment of others is based on patronage, it is a way of fulfilling reciprocal obligations through patron-client relationships.

Based on the assessments on the social context of sex workers along the Thai-Lao border, Molland concludes by remarking on cultural and social similarities in Thailand and Lao. First, “patron-client relationships remain central” to both countries (Molland, p. 85). For instance, the sex industries in the Vientiane and Nong Kai is “through informal networks of patronage” (p. 140). Second, pre-marital sex places many young women in highly marginalized positions. Third, there is no effective moral sanctioning of prostitution, though stigma regarding sex workers certainly exists. Without necessary governing mentalities⁵ on the ground, the trafficking discourse would “allow itself to circulate within its own sphere” (p. 234).

Kneebone and Debeljak compare “Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Projects” (ATRIP

5) Kneebone and Debeljak interpret “governmentality” of Foucault into “governing mentality,” which emphasizes mentality of the main actors in the governing mechanism.

Project)⁶⁾ with “Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking” (COMMIT),⁷⁾ and explain why the two mechanisms develop different anti-trafficking measures through “communicative action,”⁸⁾ a core concept developed by Habermas. For instance, NGOs are essential actors of “communicative action,” especially in the discourse of the trafficking of children. NGOs should work toward the reintegration and repatriation of victims into village communities. Though the “discursive formation” of human trafficking discourse mainly focuses on traditional security discourse, there are still a few exceptions. For example, COMMIT recognizes the importance of a “victim-centered” approach, and involves responses at multi-lateral levels. In contrast, the ATRIP Project mainly focused on law enforcement in human trafficking.

The two books do find answers to the challenges of human trafficking, and deal with human trafficking in a more “victim-centered discourse.” However, the two books should have discussed the phenomenon of child soldiers, one of the most highly prevalent forms of human trafficking in the GMS and a marginalized discourse in the field of anti-trafficking policies. On one hand, without consensus among stakeholders, it is impossible to put into place effective mechanisms against child soldiering in the GMS. On the other hand, the stakeholders in anti-trafficking sectors possess different understanding of what child soldiers are.

Though Kneebone and Debeljak discuss the discourse of trafficked children in *Transnational Crime and Human Rights* the length of discussion is comparatively limited, and does not include discussions of child soldiers. As the authors conclude, there is “little independent empirical work on the structured factors leading to trafficking in children” (Kneebone and Debeljak, p. 251). In the GMS, there is not only a lack of “consensus on the definition of trafficking in children,” but also a lack of “understanding about exploitation of children in the region” (p. 251), which causes “the lack of incorporation of principles of child protection into the major policy instruments” (p. 255).

Most child soldiers not only face stigma and resentment, but also suffer mental scars. Therefore, the cells composed of child soldiers will likely transform into terrorist cells or criminal cells, which can act in a more extreme and radical fashion than other ones. There was a historic precedent in the GMS. Along the Myanmar-Thailand border, there is a faction of the Karen National Union called “God’s Army,” which was mainly composed of child soldiers. “God’s Army” operated independently and was led by Johnny and Luther Htoo, who were both child soldiers. This faction launched many terrorist attacks on citizens and policemen in Thailand, pushing Thailand’s border security into a desperate situation.⁹⁾ As a critical security threat, child soldiering in the GMS should

6) See Australian Agency for International Development (2009).

7) The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking (2011).

8) “Communicative action” means “action oriented to arguing and mutual understanding” (Kneebone and Debeljak, p. 25).

9) For example, in January 2000, 10 members of God’s Army hijacked a bus near the Burmese-Thai border and forced the driver to take them to Ratchaburi, they seized a hospital in Ratchaburi, Thailand. They held 700 to 800 patients and staff members hostage for 22 hours.

be given more attention in the literature of human trafficking in the GMS.

Overall, *The Perfect Business* and *Transnational Crime and Human Rights* represent a breakthrough in the literature of human trafficking in the GMS. They are essential works which not only benefits specialists in the Greater Mekong Subregion, human trafficking and human rights studies, but can be very useful to future students as well.

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Questioning Modernity in Indonesia and Malaysia

WENDY MEE and JOEL S. KAHN, eds.

Singapore and Kyoto: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press, 2012, vi+257 p.

In Asia, there is a lot of emphasis on the progress. In this light, the term “modernity” is one that is very much bantered about by national leaders and the society in general, but perhaps little understood. The book *Questioning Modernity in Indonesia and Malaysia* engages readers less in a theoretical discussion of the concept of modernity as in its application to two significant countries in the region. The contributors problematize a simplistic East versus West discussion in the study of modernity, contending that the form found in Indonesia and Malaysia “cannot be viewed as merely derivative of a European/Western modernity” (p. 1). The work of Joel S. Kahn, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at La Trobe University, which argues for what historian John S. Smail called an “autonomous” understanding of modernity in Southeast Asia, is drawn upon in the book. Kahn’s work calls for an ethnographic understanding of modernity that is rooted in cultural and

historical context, an approach that has been well-executed by the volume's contributors in their examination of modernity (p. 3).

The editors rightly include the caveat that the volume "does not pretend to be comprehensive in its thematic and geographic scope" (p. 1). Rather than aiming for even distribution of case studies for both countries, the contributors saw value in a wide-ranging distribution of themes. The thematic scope in the examination of modernity is one of the book's strong points. Issues as diverse as capitalism in the border areas and technology in Indonesia and Malaysia are raised in the book.

The first section of the book examines transnational and border-zone identities. Kahn studies manifestations of modernity in marginal communities in his chapter on Islam and capitalism. He argues that modernizing processes are able to come about irrespective of state leadership and criticizes the assumption that modernity is linked to any particular civilization (p. 38). Kenneth Young and Yekti Maunati discussed ethnic identities in Malaysia and Indonesia respectively in separate chapters. Both acknowledge that cultural identity is a construction shaped by the push and pull of historical development (pp. 60, 91). Drawing on Kahn, both highlighted the intercultural foundation of the modern societies in both countries. Young also questions the adequacy of Western social theory in explaining the "modern" concept of social imaginary in Indonesia (p. 81).

The second section discusses the topic of nation-states and citizenships. While, as argued above, a multiplicity of civilizations form the foundations of contemporary life in general, the chapters by Goh Beng Lan and Thung Ju-lan reinforce Kahn's observation of the equally modern "dark aspect" of exclusion and oppression of fringe groups. As Thung pointed out, the modern nation-state is imbued with the "power to exclude" (p. 161). Goh tries to remedy this, looking not at a "modern" universal expression of entitlement to values such as human rights, but to examples from a country's own past for a different way "towards a *détente*" (p. 128) in resolving the political impasse that resulted from the exclusion. Both acknowledge, however, that the resolution for religious and ethnic minorities in Indonesia and Malaysia will be long in coming and there are no easy answers to the problems of modernity (p. 162).

The final part of the book studies cultural and moral orientations of modernity in Malaysia. Modernity, usually seen as a linear progress towards a certain utopia, ironically fears the inability to continue towards the ideal future. For example, in the case of Malaysia, Maila Stivens observed that the state's response towards its new generation is one of "moral panic" (p. 172), fearing the subsequent generation's inability to carry the successes of the present towards the future. Oh Myung-Seok's chapter critiques Western-centric observations of modern capitalism and emphasizes the importance of local cultural frames of societal analysis in studying aspects of Southeast Asia (p. 201). Meanwhile, Wendy Mee's study aims to shed light on new inventions that represent quintessential modernity and challenge state-led narratives that usually accompany such discussions. Her work posits that it is the ordinary users of technology that sustain modern inventions.

Given the comprehensive coverage in terms of thematic approaches, the discussions could have been better extended geographically. The majority of the case studies in the volume concentrate on Malaysia. Out of the nine chapters, six chapters are dedicated to examining Malaysia and only two look at Indonesia. As the discussion on Malaysia in the volume has been rich and detailed, additional chapters covering issues of modernity in Indonesia would have made for a more balanced perspective.

Other than issues of Indonesian ethnicity and citizenship that had been addressed by Kenneth Young and Thung Ju-Lan, there is definitely a case for a wealth of possible studies on modernity in Indonesia. For instance, the last section in the volume, "Cultural and Moral Orientations," would have benefited from a comparative study of Indonesia. The anti-corruption campaign targeting high-profile officials in the recent years, for example, would have made a fascinating case study of issues pertaining to modernity. Since Indonesia's independence in 1949, the bureaucratization of its economic, political, and military practices has been ongoing. Yet, corruption meant that contemporary Indonesian state institutions, while practicing Western-style bureaucracy, also bear the hallmark of patrimonial culture: patronage (Bunte and Ufen 2009). It would be interesting to have a contributor address the question of how the Indonesian nation-state adopts and adapts to "modern" Western forms of institutions for checks-and-balances. He/she could also ponder the manner in which modern monetization of values leads to conceptions of corruption.

Since Kahn's idea of modern forms of exclusion is not merely ethnic, but also religious, Indonesia would have made an excellent illustration. A study of the subjugation of the religious minorities would confirm Kahn's argument of the "dark side" of contemporary life. For example, post-New Order decentralization, which replicated the state at a local level, has given rise to the central government's inability to protect the Yasmin Bogor Church congregation's freedom to worship. The Indonesian state faces a dilemma in the modern form of exclusion. On the one hand, outside of the six official religions, indigenous religions such as the Sunda Wiwitan are not allowed to declare their faith on their identity cards. On the other hand, while the central government professes adherence to secularist principles in governing the nation, its inability to accept secularist views among its citizens is evident in the jailing of atheist civil servant Alexander Aan for posting "God does not exist" on his Facebook account in June 2012.

There is space for comparative study of both countries in the volume as well. For one, like Malaysia, Indonesia is also seeing the entrance of Islam into both its public and political sphere (Fealy and White 2008). Muhammad Syafii Antonio and Umar Juoro have written about Islamic banking and other economic initiatives in Indonesia (*ibid.*); their insights would make for a fascinating comparison with Kahn and Oh's chapters in the book. Looking at how Indonesia and Malaysia's modernity included looking towards the Middle Eastern-derived, global form of Islam would have enriched the discussion of modernity in the volume.

Finally, given the theoretical nature of the book, it will make useful reading material for

academics who teach theoretical analysis. Students of area studies will also find this volume a good read.

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Freedom from the Press: Journalism and State Power in Singapore

CHERIAN GEORGE

Singapore: NUS Press, 2012, xiii+272 p.

This multi-disciplinary study of the relationship between the Singapore government and the press comes from the author of one of the most widely cited books on Singapore politics in recent times. Cherian George's first book, *Singapore: The Air-Conditioned Nation: Essays on the Politics of Comfort and Control 1990–2000* (2000), was written for a more general audience, and tackled a range of particular ironies that come about in living in illiberal Singapore. In that earlier book, George already pointed out the fact that while "In liberal democracies, it is all about freedom of the press from the government; in Singapore, it is about the government's freedom from the press" (George 2000, 69). These initial instincts have now fully taken root and blossomed in *Freedom from the Press*, reflecting the author's move from a journalistic milieu to an academic one.

Based on extensive historical research, and balanced with insider anecdotes, *Freedom from the Press* is a nuanced, courageous, and perceptive analysis of the relationship between the Singaporean press and the government. Unlike other more quotidian critiques of the journalists, publications, and the government of the country, George provides a far more thorough critical history and theoretical basis for his observations. Crucially, he also acknowledges his own complicity in the matter, having spent most of his early career as a fairly successful journalist for *The Straits Times*—Singapore's main newspaper. This accounts for the book's greatest strength and weakness: although George is able to reveal the inner workings of the mainstream press in Singapore, he is never really able to completely step outside of the system that he is analyzing. What is apparent though is his unwavering (if somewhat old-fashioned) commitment to the primacy of the

mainstream press and his genuine belief that a more independent press would benefit everyone in Singapore, the authoritarian People's Action Party (PAP) government included. George also extrapolates with ease between the micro and macro implications of the PAP's focus on elite control, noting how the independence of the press is entwined with the country's prospects for growth, dynamism, and creativity. He argues that an independent and professional press is essential for the proper functioning of a democracy since it allows self-determination and collective decision-making by providing a credible source of information that benefits both the citizens and the government.

Singapore has a complex, unique political system and media scene, and by providing a succinct primer on the country at the beginning of the text, *Freedom from the Press* allows non-specialist readers to quickly grasp the key historical and social issues at stake. What follows is a comprehensive look at nearly all aspects of the press industry in Singapore and its inextricable ties to the government. A few elements make this book particularly useful for scholars—George's insider perspective, his careful parsing of the historical context for the arguably dysfunctional relations between the government and the press, his keen grasp of the main theoretical *and* practical elements involved in these relations, and his initial look at the impact of alternative media in Singapore. One criticism that might be leveled against the book is that it too quickly dismisses the broadcast media (television and radio) in the city-state, arguing that it merely provides propaganda for the government. A more balanced and in-depth history and analysis of Singaporean news television and radio remains to be written, but the reader will not find one here. In particular, the implications of running a regional news network (Singapore's Channel NewsAsia) based in Singapore really need to be considered in greater detail for a more complete understanding of Singapore's media landscape. Finally, while he does not explicitly say so, George's book also seems to suggest that only journalists and editors in the print media struggle with government directives and self-censorship on a daily basis, an implication which is clearly untrue.

Aside from these minor caveats, the book does justice to its goal of elucidating the complex and seemingly paradoxical relations between the Singapore government and the press. George's first chapter "Beyond the Singapore Paradox" proposes a more balanced and nuanced view of Singaporean society against more simplistic and polemical rationales for its success. George explains the distortions in the relationship between the media and the public by pointing out how much the government uses its legal and institutional power to selectively intimidate and coerce the news media. He also points out crucially that we must see the press as "an institution enmeshed with others and shaped by historical, cultural and economic forces" (p. 15). This too has been critical to the government's success in shaping a more compliant media landscape since historical actions against the press, cultural conformity in the country, and a vested interest in the country's stability (the press companies have shareholders to be accountable to) have reduced the impulse for confrontational or contentious journalism. George argues that "sustaining a pro-

foundly undemocratic media system does not require corrupt politicians and dishonest journalists. [...] The system's inadequacies are more structural" (p. 21).

In the next chapter: "Journalism Tamed: The Mechanics of Media Control," George provides keenly researched detail on exactly how the government has been able to coerce the media through a mix of ideology, cooptation and legal controls, and how the full weight of the law, its "coercive power underwrites its politest requests for cooperation" (p. 45). He also documents how journalism in Singapore has shifted to "cultivating the public as consumers and investors rather than citizens" (p. 45) by focusing on stories on "lifestyle," entertainment and personal finance. The book's third chapter "Inside the Press: Routines, Values and 'OB' (Out of Bounds) Markers," provides an insider's view on the day to day running of the national newspaper and cautiously critiques the lack of "objective journalism" in the country. George posits that it is not the journalists or editors who lack objectivity; rather, a combination of the exigencies of news production, governmental and popular expectations, and the absence of political pluralism mean that the finished product is often less than satisfactory.

George's book then moves to a wider critique of the Singapore government's policy of elite control. In the chapters "Government Unlimited: The Ideology of State Primacy," and "Calibrated Coercion: The State Strategy of Self-Restraint," George delineates the position of the press in Singapore as "subordinated to the overriding needs of the integrity of Singapore, and to the primacy of purpose of an elected government" (p. 74). Summing this up, he recalls the elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew quipping that "While democracy and human rights are worthwhile ideas, we should be clear that the real objective is good government" (p. 77). This belief, he argues, prevents any progress in press reform and the development of a thoroughly informed and committed populace, since the PAP paradoxically infantilizes the population through censorship and expects it to be "rational" and vote for the PAP out of self-interest. Even more interesting is George's concept of "calibrated coercion" which he believes is the PAP's key to continued dominance. Calibrated coercion, which George defines as the government's refusal to use excessive force and violence against its citizens, "minimizes the sense of moral outrage that could be used to mobilize the public against the state [...] reduces the salience of coercion, making consensus seem like the sole basis for stability, thus strengthening hegemony [...] and] preserves incentives for economic production and wealth creation, which rulers need as much as the ruled" (p. 108). Singapore's government is only able to accomplish this form of coercion through the "perfect storm" of a monopoly of power, a history of repression, a restricted political arena and its access through invisible forms of coercion in the form of market forces and technological constraints. The government also practices what George terms "meta-censorship"—the "censorship of information about the exercise of censorship" (p. 115)—making the unknowns completely unknown as it were.

The rest of George's book mostly functions as a more recent chronicle of developments in Singapore's media scene. While, chapter six, "The Harmony Myth: Asian Media's Radical Past,"

provides a historic background to the current media controls, the subsequent chapters “Freedom of the Press: A Cause Without Rebels,” “Alternative Online Media: Challenging the Gatekeepers,” and “Rise of the Unruly: Media Activism and Civil Disobedience” ostensibly go beyond the book’s initial brief of analyzing the print media in Singapore. George provides a fairly comprehensive roundup of the effects of the internet on the availability and reliability of news in the country and also documents a small but growing activist movement. One particularly salient point that he brings out is how the internet functions as a space that unveils the counter-hegemonic conversations that are actually taking place on the island, what he calls the “hidden transcript” of Singaporean life. The revelation of this blackly humorous and irreverent transcript, he argues, has had a powerful psychological effect since “Singaporeans showed one another a different way of relating to their government, not as obedient children, but as citizens who deserved to be treated with respect” (p. 181).

The book’s most ambitious theoretical and wide-ranging ambitions however are reserved for George’s last chapter “Networked Hegemony: Consolidating the Political System.” George posits that the PAP has “embedded itself in dense networks that keep it connected with its mass base, local elites, and global economic actors” (p. 202) to compensate for the limits of its authoritarian style of government. Yet, George argues that networked hegemony has its limitations too, particularly when combined with a weakened press. He ominously concludes his book with a poignant awareness of the unfulfilled potential of Singapore’s five million strong cosmopolitan city, stymied by the PAP’s authoritarian rule and its “single-minded focus on the risk of total failure” (p. 225). *Freedom from the Press* is indispensable for scholars of Singapore’s media landscape, politics and culture. Indeed, it has many interesting theoretical implications for those readers interested in other illiberal societies in the region and beyond.

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Ghosts of the Past in Southern Thailand: Essays on the History and Historiography of Patani

PATRICK JORY, ed.

Singapore: NUS press, 2013, xxix + 336 p.

“While the southern insurgency continues, the history of Patani will continue to be a battleground” (intro. xix).

Since the outbreak of the insurgency in southern Thailand in 2004, numerous studies about Patani have been published by Thai and international scholars. However, those dealing with the history of Patani from a Malay and Islamic viewpoint are rare. This volume, a product of the international seminar organized by Walailak University, Chulalongkorn University, and other institutes in 2009, is one of them. It can be said that this volume is a sequel to the previous book co-edited by Michael Montesano and Patrick Jory, *Thai South and Malay North* (2008), but it is unique in the way that it highlights the history and historiography of Patani from different perspectives, especially from Malay and Islamic studies. In effect, it offers a new framework that challenges conventional ways of studying Patani within the context of Thai studies.

The book consists of four parts. The first explores Patani as a plural community and its identity in the early-modern era. Anthony Reid begins chapter one by pointing out the fact that Patani in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a multi-racial community and not just a Malay society, as stressed by Patani nationalists. Reid’s argument on Patani’s pluralism has been stressed previously in *Thai South and Malay North*. In this essay, however, Reid draws on contemporary Dutch sources to illuminate the people and society of Patani. Another highlight of this essay is a full English translation of an account of Patani by Jacob van Neck, a Dutch merchant who visited Patani in 1602, an account that sheds a light on the social history of the polity. Barbara Watson Andaya’s chapter discusses Patani identity through the symbology of *Hikayat Patani*, the most well-known indigenous source originally written in Jawi. The most potent symbols include the elephant gate, elephants, Patani canons, and the *nobat* orchestra. Geoff Wade provides a summary of various Chinese accounts referring to Patani, dating from the sixth to the nineteenth centuries. His translation and summary of these accounts emphasizes how Chinese sources are important in unraveling the early-modern history of Patani.

Three articles in the second part draw attention to Patani’s Islamic scholars, or *ulama*, and their connections with the Middle East. Azyumardi Azra examines the life and work of Shaykh Dawud b. Abd Allah al-Fatani, one of the most famous Patani scholars who produced numerous scholarly works on Islam in the nineteenth century. Numan Hayimasae also describes the role of Patani *ulama* from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries in shaping the networks that linked Muslims in Patani to Mecca. Christopher M. Joll, on the other hand, argues that some of the

prominent *ulama*, especially in the early period, were not pure “Malay,” but “creole ambassadors,” using terminology drawn from the work of Michael Laffan. He points out that they came from well-to-do elite families and had pluralistic ethnic backgrounds that enabled them to play significant roles as religious ambassadors between Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

The third part explores Patani in the periods of political transition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Francis R. Bradley focuses on the wars between Siam and Patani during 1786–1838 that not only devastated Patani and its people, but also ended the traditional *Mandala* relation between Thai and Patani. Bradley points out a number of tactics Siam employed to subdue Patani and argues that these wars were no small-scale raids but were systematically carried out, a fact that counters the prevailing paradigms concerning early-modern Southeast Asian warfare. Philip King uses Raman, a tin-rich interior region of Patani sharing a border with Perak, as a vantage point for the analysis of Anglo-Siamese activity/rivalry in the interior zone of the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth century. King describes the British struggle to claim the land in Raman as a part of Perak, at the time a British protectorate, and Siam’s counterclaim. Interestingly, he shows that both the British and Siam tried to write new histories of this area based on their own assumptions about natural boundaries and ethnic identity to back their claims.

The last part deals with the contested historiographies of Patani, the most debated theme on the subject. Dennis Walker analyzes some of the works of Patanian nationalist historiography from the classic period to post-1945 (including recent cyber writers on the internet), their attitude toward the Buddhist Thais and the West, and the consolidation of Islam in shaping Patani identity. Walker points out that the secular nationalism of Patani’s nationalists in the post-1945 has been transformed today into “Islamist-nationalist” visions that engage closely with the Middle East and Islam. The article of Iik Arifin Mansurnoor provides a similar overview of the influential works composed in Jawi-Malay and describes the decline and defeat of Patani from the perspective of Malay scholars such as Ahmad Fathi and A. Bangnara. Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian provides a narrative description of Patani history in relation to Thailand and its socio-political change from 1782 to 1980s. By exploring historical works written between 1940s and 1980s by Thai, Malay, and international scholars, Kobkua notes that these works, despite their contradicting versions, have managed to coexist with, while challenging, the history written by the victors. Duncan McCargo’s chapter focuses on the anonymous leaflets widely distributed after the outbreak of violence in 2004 in southern Thailand. By analyzing the content in the leaflets, he points out that they were issued by various groups including militants, Thai security forces, and Muslim and Buddhist groups. At the same time, they all seek to use alternative readings of history for propaganda purposes, and the multiple narratives of Patani’s history reflect the ambiguities underpinning the violence in the south and the lack of clear leadership among the militants.

As stated above, the highlight of this book is that it brings together scholars from various disciplines to shed light on Patani’s history and its historiography. There is, however, considerable

overlap in the content in many chapters. For example, in Part Two, the life and work of Patani's *ulama*, Shaykh Dawd Al-Fatani, is discussed in both Azra and Numan's chapters. Even though both chapters have a slightly different framework, they reach similar conclusions about the role of *ulama* and their network. In Part Four, Walker and Mansurnoor both focus on the historiographies of Patani by Patani nationalists and offer similar remarks on Patani's changing national identity from secular to Islamic and Middle East-oriented. Yet, only their terminology differs: Walker uses the term "Islam-Malay Patanian nation" (p. 185), while Mansurnoor uses "Patani *Jawi* nation" (p. 276). The unevenness of topics is also noticeable. Stories about the rise and fall of Patani and its female rulers written in *Hikayat Patani* are repeatedly discussed in many chapters, while the history of Patani in the crucial period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are discussed in only two chapters in Part Two.

Overall, this book is a valuable collection that deepens and broadens the existing knowledge and public consciousness of the history of southern Thailand. Ethno-religious conflict between Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims still continues, as does historical writing. However, as Jory notes, history does not necessarily have to determine Patani's destiny. At the same time, history should not be hijacked by any one group to serve its political or religious objectives.

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The Lahu Minority in Southwest China: A Response to Ethnic Marginalization on the Frontier

JIANXIONG MA

Oxon: Routledge, 2013, xvii+254 p.

Ever since economic liberalization in the 1980s, modernization and policies that deal with ethnic minorities have become important issues in the study of present day China. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, ethnic diversity in Southwest China has been a major component in ethnic policy, and therefore ethnic issues in this area have drawn much academic interest. Most of the existing studies about minority groups in Southwest China focus on state

construction of ethnic categories, representations of identity, and the politics of cultural discourses on ethnicity (e.g. Schein 2000; Harrell 1995), while only a few works have provided detailed anthropological data about what happens in the everyday lives of the people. This book focuses on the daily experiences of ethnic minorities to highlight the pressures they face as they deal with the challenges brought about by modernization and marketization. In doing so, it aims to explain the social and cultural mechanisms of ethnic marginalization in China, a result of the long-term pressure brought to bear on minorities by mainstream Han societies. With ample data from long-term fieldwork among the Lahu people, Ma Jianxiong vividly describes and analyzes Lahu lives on the frontier that have hitherto been inaccessible.

The book consists of eight chapters, including an introduction and concluding remarks. Covering a wide range of topics and contents, it discusses the relationships between ethnic minorities and the Han majority and their identity formation.

In the introduction, Ma briefly explains the identity-building process of the Lahu. He argues that Lahu identity is constantly generated through their relationship with the state or the Han majority. Along with contact with Han migrants in the eighteenth century, Mahayana Buddhism was introduced to the Lahu area and combined with the worldview of the Lahu and subsequently became the “E sha Buddha religious movement.” This movement was seen as a form of resistance to the state and was destroyed by the Qing army. Chapter two follows the history of changing ethnic relationships between the Han and the Lahu since the 1920s when Han migrants first came to his field site. Through policies such as the creation of People’s Communes and the Cultural Revolution itself, the Lahu belief system was repeatedly undermined. Subsequently, after the revival of the market economy in the 1980s, Han cadres and businessmen “hijacked” representatives of the Lahu.

Chapter three discusses the supernatural world and belief system of the Lahu. With ample citation from mythological tales and case studies, the author shows the cyclical nature of the cosmic view of the Lahu, and the traffic between the world of the dead and world of the living. There are various actors that mediate between the two worlds, such as dead parents, numerous spirits and carnivorous spirits. Everyday life is full of tension because of these actors, and the author claims that their rituals are “self-negation rituals” (p. 96) because issues that arise with such actors are considered a result of their own personal wrongdoings. As such, these rituals are a cultural response to long-term external pressure.

Chapter four deals with the Lahu kinship system. From detailed case studies of division of land upon marriage, Ma meticulously illustrates the bilateral and non-hierarchical kinship system. He states that because the kinship system lacks an internal mechanism of collective cohesion, the Lahu needed political and religious authority from outside their community such as that provided by E sha Buddha to forge unity against historical Qing state power. This authority has now disappeared and is exacerbated by an absence of representatives among the Lahu, becoming more

problematic since 1958 when all religious activities were banned.

Chapter six merits being dealt with before five and seven which are both closely related. It deals with poverty reduction and education and concerns itself with a government project for frontier people and its effects on their daily lives. Since local government revenue in Lan County can only cover a small portion of the county expenses, various kinds of funding from higher-level governments have become a fundamental resource for maintaining the administrative system. Villagers are forced to cooperate with cadres or teachers and to prepare for endless inspections. These projects and education become, as Ma puts it, a demonstration of a kind of ethnic dichotomy between “the advanced Han” and “the backward Lahu.”

Chapters five and seven deal with the Lahu people’s responses to pressure and marginalization by the Han. Chapter five, “To Become Wives of the Han,” is about women’s escape from their homeland or even at times Lahu identity. Since the 1980s, the ratio imbalance between the sexes at birth has continued in rural China and therefore many Lahu women have married Han men outside Yunnan through brokering networks. This is because these brokers, and even local Han cadres, repeatedly emphasized the discourse of “leaving is better,” thereby reinforcing the dichotomy between the “advanced Han” and “backward Lahu.” Chapter seven focuses on the responses to this situation among young Lahu men. Alongside women’s departures, young Lahu men face difficulties in finding spouses and hence they “escape” to the world of the dead. This is the reason for the high rate of suicide among Lahu people in Lan County. Ma points out that the suicides and departures resulted from pressure in their daily lives and “the pain of being Lahu.” Ma concludes with a discussion of how the dual discourse of the Han and the Lahu is strengthened through daily tensions.

This book is based on fieldwork of more than 15 years. It is indeed rare for researchers to conduct such long-term research in Yunnan’s borderlands, so the data and insights are valuable in themselves. Because of his bottom-up perspective, we can learn about the experiences of the Lahu and observe the changes that the Lahu value system has undergone over the years. Monographs on the Lahu in China are far fewer compared to those on the Lahu in Thailand, so this book is an important scholarly resource. The detailed descriptions are very engaging and Ma’s conscious efforts to incorporate historical considerations render his contribution even more valuable. Much of the current discussions about ethnic minorities in China have concentrated on ethnic formation after the communist party. This book persuasively shows how Lahu ethnic identity took shape through their encounters with the Han. This is in sharp contrast to another ethnographic work on the Chinese Lahu, Du Shanshan’s *Chopsticks Only Work in Pairs*, which is about Lahu gender unity and egalitarianism (2003). She vividly discusses the notion of gender but pays little attention to historical aspects of identity formation. Ma’s book supplements Du Shanshan’s work by citing many valuable sources.

Although the book is a valuable contribution, some points should be raised for further discus-

sion. First of all, I would like to draw attention to literature on the Lahu in Thailand, most of which is not currently available in English. Ma emphasizes the contrasting conditions in China and Thailand: E sha belief is well practiced in Thailand and social problems are seldom found. However, Nishimoto Yoichi (2000) has shown that a narrative of inferiority exists as well among Christian Lahu in Thailand who have been marginalized through complex border politics. Furthermore, Kataoka Tatsuki's (2007) discussion of Christianity among the Lahu highlights the characteristics of Lahu religion, centering on the coexistence of monotheism and animism, and the history of several charismatic religious movements. These were not always one-way processes, but rather a religious vacillation between monotheism and animism. By taking these studies into consideration, Ma's research can be placed in the continuum of such dynamic religious movements. As an aspiring researcher of Lahu people, I hope that there will be more communication across language barriers among Lahu scholars in the near future.

The second point concerns the description of the marginalization process. In spite of a wide variety of data, all the chapter conclusions culminate in "marginalization by the Han," as if it were a pre-established fact. In fact, some of the practices described may not necessarily be interpreted as marginalization. For example, Ma interprets the practices related to the *ne* spirits as a "self-negation ritual" resulting from marginalization. His reasoning is that the ritual appeared in Ban village only after the loss of their charismatic "E sha Buddha" and since then they believed their sickness or misfortune was due to their own wrongdoings, as a result of which their dead parents let *ne* spirits bite their children as punishment. Are "self-negation" and "marginalization" the only interpretations possible? One can argue, for example, that the phenomenon can be understood as a way of thinking about reasons for misfortune. Even if E sha Buddha were not destroyed by the state, personal misfortune can be explained as a result of one's own wrongdoings such as impiety towards E sha Buddha. While this is a way of explaining misfortune by personal "wrongdoings," it does not have to be seen as "self-negation." Certainly the Lahu are a marginalized ethnic group in China, but the author seems to be too hasty in overemphasizing their marginalization as an explanatory factor.

Finally, I would like to question the way the author repeatedly emphasizes the difference between "native Lahu" and "Lahu-minded Han." It is not clear what is Lahu-ness or Han-ness. The relationship between culture and ethnicity has been much discussed in mainland Southeast Asia (Moerman 1965; Keyes 1992), and scholarship has repeatedly questioned the assumptions of ethnic essentialism. Since the arrival of the Han, there have been many inter-ethnic marriages between the Lahu and the Han in Lan County over 200 years, and the differences between the Lahu and the Han are, in many situations, blurred. In my own field site, many Lahu farmers said that in ancient times they had been Han and migrated from the North, but now they have become Lahu through inter-marriage, changing customs and practices. Would such villagers be categorized as "Lahu-minded Han" or "Lahu of Han origin"? Ma emphasizes the contrast between two ethnic-

ities so as to illustrate the marginalization by one over another, but at the cost of neglecting the dynamic relationships that obtain between the two. Of course there is oppression and marginalization. But in everyday life the Lahu and the Han are inevitably related and have to interact with each other. In some situations the narrative of differences would have to be seen as strategies in themselves. Had Ma been able to illustrate the ties and interaction between them alongside the differences, without reducing these ties to the issue of “marginalization,” the wealth of field data could have been used even more persuasively.

Although I have pointed out some issues in the author’s interpretation of his data, I certainly agree that there are many tensions and problems in the local politics of many minority areas in modern day China. This book employs a bottom-up perspective to issue an important warning against serious future ethnic destruction. At the same time, it shows how ethnic identity is constituted through historical processes. *The Lahu Minority in Southwest China* is an important contribution towards the understanding of the complex politics of ethnic formation in southwest China.

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