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<Book Review>

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Douglas Kammen and Jonathan Chen. *Cina Timor: Baba, Hakka, and Cantonese in the Making of Timor-Leste*. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2019.

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anxieties and hopes. Most peasants kept on yielding resources due to a mix of coercion and consent. Meanwhile, the growing militarization and discourses of class struggle toward the final stage of the campaign intensified the rural predicament. Violence and terror became everyday experiences for many, belying the narrative of the struggle against foreign oppression.

Territorial struggles did not cease after the victory of Điện Biên Phủ. As Chapter 6 vividly illustrates, the new state continued to be shaped by contestations about territory and its diverse population. The forceful agrarian transition provoked anxieties and unrest in the newly established albeit short-lived Thái-Mèo Autonomous Zone. Taking the example of millenarian movements, Lentz discusses the ambiguous effects of DRV territorialization on populations that had experienced severe transformation of their lifeworlds.

Toward the end of the book, Lentz pays more attention to non-Tai ethnic minorities and how territorial politics increasingly concerned with security affected their lifeworlds. Any alternative ideas of political or economic sovereignty provoked severe responses from the state. DRV rule now shaped lives in the remotest villages in the postcolony. Finally, the Black River region had become “Northwest Vietnam.” As Lentz summarizes in the epilogue: “Place, region, and people became Vietnamese through mass mobilization of residents, incorporation of Tai muang political structures, and military conquest of space” (p. 244).

The state’s power to mobilize the population, administer territory, and deploy an army crucially altered social relations toward the end of the long 1950s. The social and economic costs of this process resulted in violent reactions later, in peacetime. Meanwhile, Điện Biên Phủ turned into a symbol of the heroic “Vietnamese” struggle against foreign dominance, obscuring the internal diversity and tensions of the campaign: contested meanings instead of contested territory.

On each page of this compelling book, the reader can feel the author’s commitment and the more than 10 years of intellectual work that inform it. Lentz’s fine writing opens up new perspectives on how global history unfolds on the ground, and on the contingencies and ambiguities of state-making processes. This book will certainly remain the definitive study of Điện Biên Phủ and should inspire related projects at the interstices of history, geography, and ethnography.

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Cina Timor: Baba, Hakka, and Cantonese in the Making of Timor-Leste

DOUGLAS KAMMEN and JONATHAN CHEN

New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2019.

“God made Timor for sandalwood and Banda for mace and the Moluccas for cloves,” wrote Tomé

Pires in his *Suma Oriental* about five centuries ago (1512–15), referring to the trade of these exotic commodities among Malay merchants who made their fortunes in Malacca's busy market. It was also for Timor's sandalwood that Chinese merchants came to the island. They bought it in exchange for porcelain, gold, and other goods, and flooded the market of the Middle Kingdom, which treated it as the base material for incense and skincare products, among others. The presence of Chinese on the island and their thriving trade were well noted by early European travelers in the archipelago. Contemporary scholars are not yet certain whether the Chinese at that time were just sojourners for intra-Asia commercial activities or had already settled on the island. Archival sources suggest that it was only later, in the early nineteenth century—a century after the fierce competition among European merchants for monopolistic trade in the region that led to the establishment of colonies—that the Chinese settled along the island's coastal areas. Douglas Kammen and Jonathan Chen's monograph discusses the start of the formation and the making of "Chinese Timorese" communities (known colloquially as Cina Timor) from this time period until the early twenty-first century.

Kammen and Chen rightly note that as a research subject Chinese Timorese "have received far less attention than their counterparts elsewhere in the region" (p. 6). The study of various Chinese communities in Southeast Asia became a noteworthy subject for research among (Western) sinologists from the mid-twentieth century, and over the last two decades we have seen expanding contributions (notably, in the English language) by young researchers who are mostly based in and affiliated with academic institutions in Northeast and Southeast Asia. Even with such encouraging developments in the field, the history and social lives of Chinese Timorese communities are rarely discussed. It is worth noting that even a book that discusses the issues of "global Hakka" (Leo 2015) fails to mention anything about the Hakka communities in Timor, which are the dominant speech-group on the island. In that context, this monograph has "rescued" the two-centuries-long history and identity adaptations of Chinese Timorese from academic ignorance and oblivion. It fills the gap in the scholarship by cementing the study of Chinese Timorese as part of a larger comparative study of Chinese in Southeast Asia, and the Hakka migration within and across regions.

Based on sources in Chinese, Dutch, English, Indonesian, and Portuguese, this monograph offers a fascinating history of Chinese Timorese at the intersection of colonial and post-colonial state practices, cultural and identity formation, and the rise of the People's Republic of China in the Southeast Asia region. It brings a political economy analysis to the subject that is often overlooked in conventional sociological studies. Such analysis underscores the changing political landscape in the metropole (be it Lisbon or Jakarta, at different periods of time) that affected the colony and its people, which Chinese were a part of, the choices made by the Chinese community in organizing during the Cold War, and the discrimination Chinese have had to endure in dealing with the state. It explains the economic conditions of Timor as an often-neglected outpost in the

Portuguese realm, an underprivileged province of Indonesia, and a young nation in the twenty-first century—each with its own challenges and opportunities for Chinese to adapt, live with, and participate in. It also highlights the important, and in some cases pioneering, roles Chinese played at different times—in trade, local administration, education, and struggles for independence—despite the fact that Chinese made up not more than 1.5 percent of the population (p. 8), which is comparable to Chinese Indonesians, estimated at about 1.2 percent of the population (Evi *et al.* 2017).

Beyond the “process of creolization of the Chinese in Southeast Asia” (Skinner 1996), becoming Chinese Timorese—in the past as well as now—is a challenging experience: whether the markers are based on proficiency in the Hakka language, the celebration of a common origin/ancestor, a shared history of migration, citizenship of a certain nation-state, or the hopes for a safe life wherever they wish to build their homes. The authors accurately conclude that “it would be a mistake to reduce this experience to one of identity politics, minority status, or the role of economic middlemen” (p. 177). Bearing in mind a similar conclusion on Chinese communities elsewhere in the region, we see how Chinese Timorese shape their lives and continue to be “Chinese” over other identities.

With its fresh analysis and detailed description, this monograph is an important contribution to the scholarship. I sincerely hope the authors will consider its translation to Tetum, Indonesian, and Chinese in order to reach a wider audience.

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Fighting for Virtue: Justice and Politics in Thailand

DUNCAN McCARGO

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2020.

Since King Bhumibol’s galvanizing speech in April 2006, urging judges to “serve and save the nation,” the judiciary has played a key role in Thailand’s political chaos, drawing unprecedented