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efficacy, fecundity, productivity, well-being, prosperity, and humanity are conceptualized rather differently within the ontologies of "animism," world historical religions, and secular scientific naturalism. In this sense, the book is also an exploration of how these contrasting understandings reinforce, negate, supplement, or undermine each other in the daily lives of contemporary mainland Southeast Asians. Hopefully future scholarship about stone masters will more directly investigate these questions as well.

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Independent Scholar

Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories: Jarai and Other Lives in the Cambodian Highlands

Jonathan Padwe
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020.

Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories delves into the relationship the Jarai of Tang Kadon village have forged with their land as it has been tested through times of historical upheavals and intrusions by the "other." From the French protectorate through the Khmer Rouge regime to the recent waves of monocrop cultivation, the history of the village and its inhabitants is intimately intertwined with the villagers' interactions with the landscape.

The book is rich with information on land use in this part of Cambodia's northeast, where hill rice farmers have—often by means of deference and caution—interacted with the forest. To describe the physical and spiritual landscapes that have shaped the lives of the Jarai of Tang Kadon for centuries, the author uses different narrating styles to illustrate different aspects of the local agricultural system. In the first few chapters, Jonathan Padwe immerses the reader in old Jarai tales with the eloquence of a traditional village storyteller. The following chapters are written under a magnifying glass that demands scientific precision. This is particularly the case with the detailed study of rice. From the loss of Cambodian rice varieties at the end of the 1970s to the reintroduction and spontaneous reappearance of several endemic types in Tang Kadon and beyond, the examination of rice cultivation is clinically thorough. The book ends with the author reflecting on Tang Kadon and its immediate region today. To best illustrate how large companies' investments have given a finishing touch to this interactive canvas, the author switches voice to write his concluding remarks in the fashion of a development report, which summarizes the devastating impact of large and powerful companies' presence.

Padwe writes that "landscapes of memory are often portrayed as passive: they appear in these accounts as inanimate canvases, assigned meaning only through human action" (p. 15). In

the context of a land ravaged by war, the various features that compose the physical environment are rarely muted and inactive. In the case of northeast Cambodia, which suffered during the heavy bombardment of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, fragments of conflicts are simultaneously distinct and dangerous actors that command appropriate human behaviors. Appropriate behavior is referred to in a vignette where Twek, a villager on a mission to burn and clear his land for cultivation, takes the cautious decision to leave a cluster of trees marking the precise location where victims have been violently buried. In this context, explosive remnants of war and those who succumbed to bad and violent deaths are potent agents with the ability to influence human beliefs and actions. In light of this, "disturbed fragments, forest memories" are at play where explosive remnants of war buried in the landscape unexpectedly bring back traumatic memories of hiding in the fields or running into the forest to seek protection from the bombs. During the time of the US bombardment, defoliants were also used to destroy and obliterate. The purpose was to turn the forest into its own memory while exposing insurgents, and nullifying supply routes and caches. Fragments of war continue to be found, but they are not made up solely of heavy metals. Fragments of human bodies can also be unearthed, although when they belong to foreigners (i.e., those missing in action) they are not merely disturbed in their long-buried slumber but can be "disturbing" for the ones who find them. The reluctant finder will need to reach a compromise: either by taking the bones to the vast US military program intent on bringing every American soldier back home or by leaving the remains and the *böngat* (soul) of the dead to rest in situ as they are now an integral part (and a fragment) of the local geographical and historical landscapes.

Because the traditional world of the Jarai is animist, their landscapes of memory are replete with a multitude of voices: the voices of the *yang* (spirits) present, living, and embodied in various instances of nature. In *Bois–bambou: Aspect végétal de l'univers jörai* (Bamboo: Vegetal aspect of the Jarai world), Jacques Dournes, who spent most of his life with cousins of Tang Kadon's inhabitants in a Jarai village in the highlands of Vietnam, wrote:

> [P]lants suffer from ill treatment. They cry, and they complain. In days gone by they were able to speak like any other living beings; without our knowing where appearance ends and reality starts, mythological characters appear as plants and humans, animals and humans. (Dournes 1969, 402)

Although we can hear the calls of the white-crested laughing thrush alerting the Jarai hunter, Padwe's landscape is otherwise inaudible. The sounds of water, wind, animals, and insects are not as loud as the sound of the rice. Equally, people who travel seamlessly from the village to the forest, or from the world of humans to the other world, are hardly mentioned. To name only a few, these are the ghosts, the insane who are often naked (*móhlŭn*) and whose mind and body are irresistibly attracted by the call of the forest, the *pöjau* (traditional healers), and the *pötao* (masters of the elements; there are three of them). The *pöjau*, who have been given power by the *yang* to communicate with them and perform healing rituals, are also slightly muted in spite of their crucial

social function. Dournes wrote that the art of the *pöjau* originally came from Laos, where people from different ethnic groups would come to learn the art of the supernatural (Dournes 1978, 168). Finally, those endowed with more-than-human attributes also include the *pötao* or "masters of the elements." Fleetingly mentioned in *Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories*, the cosmic and social powers of the *pötao* were, according to Stéphane Dovert, "the guarantors of social cohesion" within the community (Dovert 2005). The *pötao apui* (connected with fire), *pötao ia* (connected with water), and *pötao angin* (connected with air) were revered marginal beings (wearing few clothes and living in the periphery of the villages) believed to have the power to control the elements. As a result, they historically played a significant role in establishing strong alliances with the Khmer kings, who would seek their support in times of conflict. Such long-term relationships were based on mutual respect and involved exchanges of sophisticated gifts from both sides (Moura 1883; Mikaelian 2009).

Likewise, the voices of those whose work in the region has contributed to a nuanced understanding of ethnic minority groups are unusually absent. The author makes few references to the existing body of literature on ethnic minorities in Ratanakiri Province. The works of geographers, anthropologists, historians, Christian missionaries, journalists, and development consultants who have extensively studied the Jarai, the Tampuon, and the Kreugn—among several other ethnic communities—are worth mentioning, if only to add shades and layers to the overall canvas. One example is the comprehensive work being done at the time of Padwe's research by the French historian Henri Locard (2023), with the support of the anthropologist Frédéric Bourdier (an expert on ethnic minorities in Cambodia and the region), on Phi Phuon, one of Pol Pot's Jarai bodyguards.

Although Padwe's description of Tang Kadon documents in great depth the changes in agricultural practices since the time of the French protectorate, there is more to say about the space where the world of the human slips into nature and where nature takes over. Rituals are moments that create this in-between space. They create a sensorial experience where humans can observe the act of sacrifice; hear the sound of the gongs; smell, taste, and touch the rice wine jars; and dance. The moment the blood of the buffalo is spilled, the villagers open up a corridor that connects the world of the living and the dead so that good wishes may be fulfilled, illnesses may be cured, and the *böngat* of the dead can start its journey to the other world. This space is important in the ordinary life of villagers, and it deserves more scrutiny in order to comprehend the Jarai's perspective on nature, with its codependence and partnership. Such a partnership is best experienced through funerary rituals. In this instance, man starts the process of burial and the construction of the grave, which can be completed only when the forest takes over and breaks the edifice through the effects of time and erosion. Nature's agency is potent and serves the purpose of completion (Uk 2016). But without human intervention to inject meaning in the works of nature, the world of the Jarai would be even more fragmented and disturbed. And when this world falls prey to the predatory investments of rubber companies and the forest is consumed in its

entirety by the rapacious influence of capitalism, there are no more physical markers. With no more forest fragments, memories, identities, and historical narratives are profoundly disturbed.

Padwe associates "fragments" with the narration of marginal and subaltern histories. This is visible in the way the book is written, with chapters and sections of chapters being of different depths and lengths. Some appear like large shards that illustrate the story of villagers under the oppressive and brutal authority of the Khmer Rouge, while others act as splinters revealing slightly more of an outline to the jigsaw. Fragments do not always conjure up ideas of marginality, however. They are not necessarily the result of things and beings that are at the periphery, out of place, disordered, or a source of anxiety. As extensively documented by Dournes, the Jarai people have a tradition of purposefully breaking objects to facilitate the transfer of these objects from the world of humans to the world of *yang* (Dournes 1975). Upon reaching their destination, the objects are believed to be made complete again and able to be used by the dead. The breaking of historical accounts, although conditioned by times of trauma, crisis, and healing, may also be more manageable to some Jarai in a fractured way, whereby memories of past events are condensed and transmitted through short vignettes. These are jigsaw pieces of different shapes, sizes, and materials that tell the stories of "Disturbed Forests, Fragmented Memories," narrate "Disturbed Fragments, Forest Memories," and evoke "Disturbed Memories, Fragmented Forests."

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The Comfort Women of Singapore in History and Memory

Kevin Blackburn

Singapore: NUS Press, 2022.

Kevin Blackburn's *The Comfort Women of Singapore in History and Memory* broadens understanding of "comfort women"[1] by uncovering the "disappeared" collective memory of Singapore as a onetime "centre for comfort stations" (p. 3). The book adds to debates on the silenced voices of comfort women, exploring the interplay of nationalist and paternalistic discourses in Singaporean politics and culture around sexual labor before, during, and after World War II. This book sets out to examine the silence of Singapore women, which is noticeable compared to their counterparts from other Asian countries, including Korea and Indonesia. The absence of the voices of local women coming forward with their narratives led the author to draw on alternative sources, such as the diaries of a brothel manager and a Japanese colonel or the testimony of a doctor or an errand boy who could observe lives at the comfort station. Along with archival records and secondary literature, the creative use of source materials enriches our historical understanding, presenting both strengths and weaknesses of personal written records, which are "credible as not influenced by the heated debates over the circumstances of the comfort women" (p. 72), and oral histories, which are "special connecting the past as memory with the present" (p. 63).

This book begins with Lee Kuan Yew's 1992 statement that the presence of Korean comfort women "saved the chastity of many Singaporean girls" (p. 17) and its silencing effects. Putting aside the statement's incorrectness and insensitivity, the importance of this statement is claimed in its "setting the tone for the public debate" and "discouraging local women from coming forward to speak out" (p. 25), given that many survivors from Korea and other countries had started to seek truth and justice following the Korean survivor Kim Hak-sun's testimony in 1991. Chapter 2 explores comfort women's issues in relation to Singaporean people's fear of rape at war and masculinized understanding of the sexual needs of men, locating it in a broader context of sex work. Chapters 3 and 4 illustrate the daily lives of women, largely from Korea and Indonesia, at comfort stations in Singapore, engaging with diverse sources. The narrative moves on to postwar situations in Singapore in Chapters 5 and 6, focusing on the silencing effects of political and

1) Many scholars and activists, including myself, use quotation marks to indicate that this was a euphemistic term created by Japan's Imperial Army to deceive and downplay the nature of sexual enslavement. In this review the quotation marks have been deleted in the interest of readability, following the book author's choice (pp. 1–2).