



***Popular Culture Co-productions and Collaborations in East and Southeast Asia***

NISSIM OTMAZGIN and EYAL BEN-ARI

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The recent growth of Asian media markets coincides with the emergence of an academic area which can be labelled as (inter-)Asian media and cultural studies. English-language academic publications such as *Trajectories: Inter-Asian Cultural Studies* (Chen 1998) and *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Iwabuchi 2002) may be given credit for launching this new academic field. Its further development was subsequently enabled by the publication of a string of academic volumes, including *Rogue Flows: Trans-Asian Cultural Traffic* (Iwabuchi *et al.* 2004), *Asian Media Studies* (Erni and Chua 2005), and *East Asian Pop Culture: Analyzing the Korean Wave* (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008), among many others.

The publication of *Popular Culture Co-productions and Collaborations in East and Southeast Asia* constitutes an interesting contribution to this rapidly emerging field. In particular, this new edited volume distinguishes itself from previous titles in its focus on cultural production. While other volumes predominantly focus on the international consumption and reception of media and cultural texts across Asian countries, this volume casts light on international dimensions of production. In this way, it extends the primary thesis of the field—namely, the interconnectedness of media and cultural experiences in Asian societies—to the realm of production, which is entwined with processes of transnational creation and construction, not only of cultural products but also of social values.

Yoshiko Nakano's chapter in this volume is emblematic of such a perspective. It draws upon historical examples which reveal the contributions made by other Asian personnel (Hong Kong and Thai) to the localization (further development) of Japanese rice cookers—often recognized as a quintessential made-in-Japan electric product in Asia. Shin Hyunjoon's chapter elaborates how K-pop has been developed in line with different agents' contingent strategies designed to infiltrate into different Asian markets. As a result, according to Shin, the “K-” in K-pop “has become more

than the abbreviation of ‘Korean’” (p. 146) and the phenomenon indicates a “trans-Asian version of pop cosmopolitanism” (p. 147). Doobo Shim’s chapter similarly associates the recent development of the Korean film industry with the changing environment of Asian media industries and international cultural flows in the region.

The extension in scope of the regional approach is also one of the book’s strengths. In common with other volumes, it includes chapters which highlight the roles of Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong as main cultural producers in the Asian region. However, such an emphasis is complemented by chapters covering cultural production (in connection with the outer world) in the Philippines, Indonesia, and China. Rolando B. Tolentino’s chapter presents a historical overview of the international export and the co-production of Philippine media texts. Abidin Kusno’s chapter highlights the appropriation of cultural forms and genres—Hong Kong comics and kung fu novels—in the articulation and assertion of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia under the repressive Suharto regime.

The volume does not avoid confronting colonial histories and the Cold War era which shaped the process of regional formation of Asia. In his chapter, Nissim Otmazgin underlines the middle class-centered “economic and consumerist” characteristic of regionalization in Asia, in contrast with “the slow progress in the formation of regional political institutions” (pp. 33–34). This insight helps explain why much Asian media and cultural studies research focuses in a limited fashion on the growing volume of contemporary transnational consumption, often bracketing, or otherwise downplaying, historical and political issues in the process. Caroline S. Hau and Takashi Shiraishi’s chapter on Hong Kong cinema’s international collaborations clearly maps out the political configuration of the region, which was set out during the Cold War period, while elaborating on Hong Kong cinema’s various Asian ventures at different times. Leung Yuk Ming (Lisa)’s chapter can be aligned with this work in that it also delves into the critical (and political) issues and practical strategies of the “global” Hong Kong film industry, this time vis-à-vis its lucrative but also precarious China venture: in other words, Hong Kong-China film co-production. Rob Efrid’s chapter on a documentary, Li Ying’s *Yasukuni* (2007), registers not only the ongoing legacies of imperial and colonial history in Asian societies, but also the changes that were brought into those societies—in particular, Japan—by the presence of other Asians. The chapter casts light on some of the positive changes, which may occur within Asian societies with the growing volume of human and cultural traffic in the region.

Last but not least, another virtue of the volume lies in the way in which it deploys the frameworks of co-production and collaboration. Although these frameworks may require further refinement (i.e. how to define collaboration and how to delineate popular culture co-production), this approach encompasses a variety of productive conceptualizations which induce creative and critical thinking. For example, the notion of “niche globality,” advanced by Tolentino, recognizes subtle differences among the particularities of transnational engagements of Philippine media texts:

“Other than the enclaves of the nation’s 10 million migrant workers all over the world, the export of Philippine media texts has produced transnational pocket markets—a niche globality in which specific media texts engage with unintended audiences” (p. 152). Kelly Hu’s chapter on Chinese fan subtitling of Japanese and American TV drama series explicates how those fan-subtitlers function as cultural intermediaries linking China with other (Asian) countries and analyzes their affective labor in terms of neoliberal capitalistic work ethics. Hu highlights that, by collaborating with one another to produce subtitles for other Chinese consumers, these fans also “co-produce” global media culture.

In sum, *Popular Culture Co-productions and Collaborations in East and Southeast Asia* is another valuable entry to the currently burgeoning academic field of Asian media and cultural studies. It engages with a number of important historical and cultural subjects by presenting new conceptual methods for understanding processes of international cultural production in the region.

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## *Organising under the Revolution: Unions and the State in Java, 1945–48*

JAFAR SURYOMENGGOLO

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Visitors to Lawang Sewu might be confused as to the building’s significance. Situated in the heart of Semarang on the north coast of Central Java, the building is Indonesia’s most famous haunted house; hence the crowds of domestic tourists. In addition to ghosts, the massive colonial era building is also home to conflicting and competing historical narratives. Once the center of the Dutch East Indies Railway Company, Lawang Sewu was an important site in the history of imperialism and the struggle for independence. Today, as in most of post-colonial Indonesia, the public history

monuments in Semarang speak to the role of the military and other state institutions in the revolution. For over three decades, Suharto's New Order promoted this army-centric narrative as the only acceptable story of the revolution. The Suharto regime explicitly rejected the contribution of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), unions, and other workers' organization to the fight for "*merdeka*," freedom and independence. In Semarang, the Diponegoro Division army museum and a generic phallic nationalist obelisk dwarf Lawang Sewu's small brick memorial to the railway workers who died fighting in 1945. Nowhere is there a mention of history of Semarang as center for union and PKI organization. Indeed, one has to be extremely attentive to find mention of Indonesian workers in the national revolution. Jafar Suryomenggolo's *Organising under the Revolution: Unions and the State in Java, 1945–48* is an important effort to reframe the narrative and write the worker in the revolution.

*Organising under the Revolution* is ostensibly a work of labor history. However, the implication of Suryomenggolo's well-researched and carefully argued book go far beyond the specifics of these four years of union activism. This work calls for a reconsideration of the Suharto era paradigm of the army and the state being the primary actors in the Indonesian revolution. He persuasively demonstrates that workers, organized more often as local syndicalist groups rather than in a nationally controlled movement, made independent and significant contributions to both the struggle for *merdeka* and to the creation of a new socio-economic order. Reminiscent of E. P. Thompson's argument that the English working class was at its own making and actually played a role in creating its own identity, Suryomenggolo offers a strategic intervention that situates the Indonesian workers as active players in their own history.

While based upon primary research into the details of labor activism in Central and East Java, *Organising under the Revolution* is also theoretically sophisticated. From the opening sentence the author acknowledges his inspiration came from a reading of Benedict Anderson's *Java in a Time of Revolution* (1972). The influence of Anderson's critical, politically engaged, and intellectually rigorous approach to Indonesian history can be seen throughout Suryomenggolo's work. Both authors recognize the crucial impact of the revolutionary events on the construction of post-colonial Indonesia. Their concern with the details of the revolution is to reinsert the Indonesian workers into a narrative dominated by the state-centric approach. As both the introduction and chapter one, "Organised Labour and the Postcolonial State," make clear, what is at stake is not simply getting the details of history right but rather putting the people's agency back into history. Doing so would return labor's political credibility, something Suharto successfully destroyed. The implications of the book's opening argument are that rescuing the lost history of Indonesian labor would help to revitalize contemporary Indonesian labor activism and organizations. Suryomenggolo's de-centering of the state and de-militarizing of the historical narrative, thus has direct implications for issues of social justice in Indonesia's post-colonial socio-economic order.

The book's next four chapters present Suryomenggolo's research. "Workers' Control and

‘Political’ Activism” details how spontaneous and autonomous actions by rail, plantation, and oil refinery workers caught the new revolutionary state off-guard. Unable to reign in the movement, elite nationalists had to accept such actions as a *fait accompli*—at least for the time being. This research carefully details the contributions of labor to achieving independence in moves free of state control that the governing elites decried as “anarcho-syndicalism.” The situation set up an eventual state-labor conflict. “The Politics of Labor Union Formation” covers the efforts of the workers to keep control localized in the face of young state system bent on centralization. Perhaps the strongest chapter is “Building up Organisational Strength: The SBKA in Action.” Here we see how the Serikat Boeroeh Kereta Api (Railway Workers Union) defended the interests of its members against an increasingly aggressive state, often manifest in the army. The discussion of army on railway worker violence is one section of the book which is meticulously researched. Suryomenggolo details the use of strikes to resist arbitrary violence and authoritarian bullying by local officers. Faced with an internecine crisis, the fragile state was evidently unable to reign in the army but did increase its surveillance of the unions. Intelligence gathering indicated a less than favorable view of autonomous labor. The SBKA also sought to assist the material conditions and economic interests of its members by pushing for a stronger “Rice for Workers” program. The final full chapter “Labour and the Law: *Undang Undang Kerdja* 1948,” demonstrates that while unions influenced the first national labor legislation, the state used said legislation to reinforce its dominance over autonomous labor organizations. The paternalist state system defined rights on an individual basis, weakening collective legal identities and limiting collective action. The book ends with an epilogue, conclusion, and appendices on Chinese labor organizations and May Day celebrations. In these final pages we learn that while the state banned strikes in essential industries and government institutions, local army commanders in Java frequently banned all strikes.

This admirable book is difficult to criticize. Theoretically informed, it offers a clear explanation of the significance of this specific historical case study. The supporting research is firmly grounded in archival research in Bahasa Indonesia and Dutch. Perhaps the discussion of the conflict between labor and the army could have been elaborated in more detail. Considering the all-out war on unions and the left that would come under Suharto’s New Order, this is an area of great significance. The book is weak on gender history and analysis. Union and state policies towards women are only discussed on two pages in the middle of the book and not in a sustained manner. There are occasional typos and an inconsistency in spelling (for example, “Suharto” on page 50 but “Soeharto” on page 51).

*Organising under the Revolution* contributes to a variety of subjects and fields. More than just a history of labor, it offers a revisionist narrative to the state centered story of Indonesia’s revolution. The book offers important theoretical insights into labor historiography and the nature of post-colonial state systems. With its theory firmly grounded in historically specific examples, the book should be of interest to not just scholars of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, but to those who

seek to frame labor history in a global comparative perspective. That said, Suryomenggolo's greatest achievement is to put labor back into Indonesia's history, thus explaining what is missing from Lawang Sewu. As seen on the various popular television shows where adventurers look for ghosts in Semarang's famous haunted house, Suryomenggolo indicates that Indonesian historiography is due for an exorcism.

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### ***An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Illegal Trade in Arms, Drugs, People, Counterfeit Goods and Natural Resources in Mainland Southeast Asia***

PIERRE-ARNAUD CHOUVY, ed.

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In the context of regional integration, Mainland Southeast Asia is subject to considerable economic activity and cross border trade. An intimately related question concerns extra-legal cross-border activities, such as the trade in drugs, wildlife, contraband, and people. The scholarly attention to these topics is rather large both within Southeast Asia and beyond. However, few attempts have been made in bringing together these different forms of "trafficking," both conceptually and empirically. This is what *An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia* attempts to do. As editor Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy makes clear in the introduction, the aim is not merely to juxtapose these different forms of trade, but to "provide a regional and systemic understanding of the variety of smuggling and trafficking activities" (p. 3) as well as illuminating synergies between them.

The book brings together several authors with considerable expertise within the region. The various chapters cover diverse topics such as the trafficking in drugs, arms, logging, wildlife, counterfeit goods, and humans. These different forms of trade are supplemented by several colorful maps which visualize trafficking routes and patterns in Mainland Southeast Asia. One of the key claims the book is making is that there is considerable overlap between these trade routes and that they have significant historical trajectories. For example, as argued by David Capie, one cannot appreciate the arms trade in Mainland Southeast Asia without considering the post-conflict situation in several of the countries. Similarly, the contemporaneous drugs trade can only be understood in

light of previous drug economies which were often blessed and even actively encouraged by Western powers.

The book is rich in detail and one of its main strengths is its illumination of the various connections between these different economies. In Burma, a country which is subject to considerable inter-ethnic tension, semiautonomous armed groups depend on drug production; similarly drug reduction policies in Thailand are directly related to out-migration, prostitution, and human trafficking in Northern Thailand.

All the chapters consider policy implications. It would have been interesting if the policy implications of regulation and prohibition had been analyzed more explicitly in a comparative framework. For example, Vanda Felbab-Brown's discussion of the certification of logging (p. 134) raises extremely interesting questions in terms of how this relates to its labor-equivalent (i.e. current certification of labor recruitment firms in the context of legalizing labor migration between Thailand and several of its neighbors).

The conceptual framework, which is outlined in the introduction, relies on Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham's influential book *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things* (2005), where a key conceptual heuristic is the interrelation between the (il)legal and (il)licit. A key concern of Schendel and Abraham's work is to critically interrogate the inherent state-ism which is commonplace in much analysis of trafficking and smuggling. For this reason one must avoid treating concepts, such as "illegality," as self-evident. Although *An Atlas of Trafficking* is often similarly critical of such concepts, it commonly slips precisely into "seeing like a state" (Scott 1998) in the way it maps trafficking practices in Mainland Southeast Asia. For example in the context of human trafficking, it argues that it is necessary to examine trafficking routes and key border sites. But this is to echo the state's vision of trafficking which privileges state-borders over the work conditions of migrant laborers. The danger here is ironically (yet fortunately) illuminated by David Feingold in his chapter on human trafficking. It is the fixation with border control in the combat against trafficking, Feingold argues, that is precisely one of the reasons why mobility which is often licit, yet technically illegal, has become more dangerous for young migrants in the region. The state-bias resurfaces throughout the book (many of the chapters consider policy interventions that are largely discussed along these lines), and concepts, such as "illegality" and "the state" are often presented as self-evident.

This conceptual problem is not helped by a rather unclear exposition of "trafficking" and "smuggling." Smuggling is simply defined as "the importation and/or exportation of legal goods contrary to the law . . ." (p.5); conversely, trafficking constitutes "trade in goods that are illegal per se—that is, a trade therefore illegal by definition" (p. 5). Again, human trafficking exemplifies how this is highly problematic. It is now well-established that human trafficking often starts off as voluntary, but it is later on in the recruitment process (often at the workplace) where questions of non-consensual labor emerge. At what point, then, does human trafficking become "illegal?"

Conversely, does that mean that smuggled people can—in a rather oxymoronic fashion—be thought of as “legal goods”? And what about the large body of research that shows how exploitative labor and trafficking may involve perfectly legal recruitment chains that involve the use of passports and working permits? Part of the problem here is that human trafficking discourse blurs the distinction between person and things (Kopytoff 1986). In other words, trafficking in persons intertwines notions of commodification with questions of *labor*. This in turn raises complex questions regarding markets and the role of the state that could have been more clearly elaborated in the book. The result is that the task of mapping trafficking carries a somewhat equivocal tone throughout many of the chapters.

The book is rather uneven in terms of methodological considerations. There is a puzzling double argument unfolding. Throughout, criticism of the dubious reliability of data reported on by government, aid organizations, and media is provided. Yet, several of the authors tend to rely precisely on this body of source material to advance their points. The methodological problems with such as “dustbag” approach (Anderson 2008) are fairly well known. The accompanying maps are given no methodological explanation, making it impossible for readers to assess their validity. Indeed, I was somewhat struck by the numerous unsubstantiated claims made in many of the chapters. For example, in the chapter on arms trafficking we are told:

There are also sophisticated local and transnational criminal networks that are involved in a range of illicit activities, including drug trafficking, the illegal movement of people, money laundering, counterfeiting and extortion. (p. 92)

The claim may be plausible. But given that the book examines a topic that is widely understood to be clandestine and highly politicized, it is surprising that the volume, which aims to provide a systematic overview of routes, trends, and synergies, does not substantiate these sorts of claims more strongly. No doubt, studying extra-legal trade is very difficult, but evidently there are several academics who have gone well beyond newspapers and secondary literature on this topic (Nordstrom 2007; Zhang and Chin 2002; Scheper-Hughes 2000).

Many of the chapters are on their own terms useful and insightful, such as Bertil Lintner’s discussion of local practices of corruption in Thailand in the context of counterfeit goods and contraband. However, the tremendously fascinating and important comparative study which this book has initiated ought to be elaborated further with a clearer conceptual and methodical consideration, so a more lucid explanatory accounts can come to light.

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## *Consoling Ghosts: Stories of Medicine and Mourning from Southeast Asians in Exile*

JEAN M. LANGFORD

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, vii + 263p.

*Consoling Ghosts* focuses on how Southeast Asians in the United States—Khmer from Cambodia, and Hmong, Kmhmu, and Lao from Laos; all refugee emigrants from US wars in the region—engage with death, ghosts, spirits, and souls. Jean Langford's study was initiated when the research unit of a hospital in the United States hired her to interview Southeast Asian emigrants about their ideas concerning death. The idea was that each ethnic group had its unique ideas about death, spirits, and such and that the hospital stood to benefit from knowing the key to each culture. The reader does not learn the details of that initial research (location, duration, or results). Instead, the book is a rich exploration that draws on Langford's change in focus. She found no particular value in the quest for ethnically specific cultures, and shifted to her own study of how people manage the ethics of life and death.

The Southeast Asian materials come from interviews—aided by translators fluent in the four Southeast Asian languages—and the ethnographic literature on the region. These are framed by people's engagement with hospital and hospice care, particularly the repeated frustrations generated by the expert management of death that precludes Southeast Asian engagements with the dying person, the dead body, and the soul of the dead. The material is interspersed with western theory (Sigmund Freud on the uncanny, Michel Foucault on biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben on thanatopolitics, and so on) and Jean Langford's own experiences of death and loss. The book's

sometimes-heavy academic tone is balanced, between chapters, by poetry; Kmhmu ritual chants, more self-conscious Southeast Asian émigré reflections on war and exile, and a western doctor's reflections involving some Southeast Asian patients. "By evoking the possibility of haunting, emigrants call spirits as witnesses to violations of the dead in wartime Asia that resonate with similar violations within U.S. institutions. Rather than read the violations of the dead as metaphorical of violence against the living, I understand them as metonymic of a pervasive tendency within thanatopolitical regimes (in which I include war and state terror alongside medicine and mortuary science) to foreclose social interchange between living and dead" (p. 4).

Chapter 1 brings up the importance of dealing with ghosts of war, through interaction, ritual, and exchange. This is in sharp contrast to the prevailing focus on truth-telling and reconciliation as the adequate closure to wartime. In the stories that Langford heard from Laos and Cambodia there was an excess of suffering and death. No one appears consoled by telling the stories. Instead, the suffering that the Southeast Asian wars triggered appears accentuated "by the everyday violence of minoritization, poverty, and social fragmentation in the present" (p. 47). Chapter 2 introduces ideas of place spirits (*neak ta*, *phi ban*) and various creatures on the borders of animality. Such discussions never stray too far into ethnographic detail and instead trigger strings of theoretical associations: were-tigers and water serpents evoke Agamben on "bare life," Derrida on stealthy wolves, and Deleuze and Guattari on "becoming-animal" (pp. 65–70). In one recollection, a log hit a boat carrying people across the Mekong River as they fled Laos at the end of war. The teller of the event was eerily aware of the power of *phi-ban* place spirits, but for Langford it occasions recall of what Sigmund Freud said of the uncanny and what Dipesh Chakrabarty observed regarding the chance of encountering spirits in modern life (p. 71). But in the context of state violence even spirits suffered; interviewees from both Cambodia and Laos mentioned that the spirits communicated their inability to protect their constituents when Buddhist monks and various spirit mediums were being harassed and persecuted by the authorities (p. 73).

Chapters 3 and 4 bring out various dimensions of how hospitals in the United States control death and constrain how people can engage with it, such as by separating family members from the dying person and insisting on full disclosure of terminal diagnosis to the patient in ways that are disagreeable within Southeast Asian communities. These dynamics have created mistrust among many emigrant communities, and the study brings out some fundamental tensions between the negotiation of soul-stuff and the emphasis on individual autonomy and rational decision making. The "cultural" framework of much hospital work does not get characterized as just another perspective; biomedical control takes its own rationality for granted. Langford's study shows some of the cultural presuppositions of Euroamerican engagements with death and mourning, including an expectation of a soul that is in the body during life and leaves at death. Southeast Asian notions of souls and the need to tend to them, sometimes to call them back, and then to send them on at death rest on different premises. Death in one scheme leads to loss and bereavement and in the

other, to a funeral ceremony that may go on for days and is in part intended to reorient a soul now that it is no longer among the living.

Souls, ghosts, and exchanges are prominent in chapters 5, 6, and 7. What emerges in these chapters is a set of related ideas that crosscut any difference in ethnic culture. There are various Southeast Asian commonalities that the anthropological focus on ethnic specificities has often ignored. Langford's point is not to reassert areal anthropology but rather to juxtapose Southeast Asian materials with Euroamerican ones to examine bioethics and alternative engagements with life and death. In the aftermath of Asian wars and in the contemporary US context, the Southeast Asian dead appear cut off "from a reassuring participation in daily life, too often inconsolable and therefore without the power to console" (p. 207). The study strikes various balances among Southeast Asian worlds, contemporary western lives, medical practice, and academic orientations, including a welcome move to use Southeast Asian ideas about souls, spirits, and were-animals to put western theory in its place, regarding the recognition of "concrete socialities of living and dead [and the occasional] violation of those socialities" (p. 165).

In the afterword, on the status of ghosts, Langford offers creative play on the binaries of ghosts and guests, and ghosts and ancestors; "the literality of the ghost pulls at certain central thread of biopolitical theory, tending to unravel it" (p. 215). She is clear and sympathetic to the need to engage with the dead on terms other than the predominant Euroamerican one. While she tends to highlight how hospitals assert particular measures of control over life and death, some of the characters in her study suggest alternatives. One is a certain Dr. Stoltz who has long worked with Southeast Asian patients. With his Southeast Asian-language interpreters he has arrived at various creative ways to sidestep the confines of biomedical culture and its discursive regimes of control, in ways that have often surprised him. New options emerge when doctor and patient exchange messages that cannot be translated directly and people instead have to negotiate their differences toward an outcome that somehow facilitates each side toward a positive and agreeable goal (pp. 40–51, 204, 214–215). To me, these improvised balancing acts offered an unexpected parallel to the Southeast Asian engagements with souls and ghosts that Langford describes and analyzes.

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***Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy***

ANDREW WALKER

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This is a very important book for understanding political conflict in contemporary Thailand. The

stated aim of this book is to investigate “the underlying economic, political, and cultural processes that contributed to Thailand’s contemporary contests over power” (p. 5). To achieve this aim Walker examines “rural transformations that have produced a major new player in the Thai political landscape: the middle-income peasant” via ethnographic engagement in Ban Tiam, a village of 130 households in Chiang Mai province, a major town of Northern Thailand (p. 5). Walker argues that “in order to understand the politics of Thailand’s middle-income peasantry—including its strong electoral support for Thaksin’s populist policies, the political passions that brought the red shirts to Bangkok, and the electoral triumph of Yingluck Shinawatra—it is necessary to address how power is perceived in a context of rising living standards and a transformed relationship with the state” (pp. 5–6).

According to Walker, most Thai peasants are no longer poor. In the 1960s some 96 percent of rural households were living below the poverty line. However, sustained economic growth since then helped to reduce the number of poor rural households to 10 percent in 2007 (p. 39). Thailand’s poverty line in that year was 57,000 baht per household per year (p. 41). Annual income of rural households was 187,000 baht in the Central Plains, 175,000 baht in the South, 166,000 baht in the Northeast, and 160,000 baht in the North (p. 39). As a result, “In most areas of rural Thailand, the primary livelihood challenges have moved away from the classic low-income challenges of food security and subsistence survival to the middle-income challenges of diversification and productivity improvement” (p. 8). Most Thai middle-income peasants engage in farming and non-farming economic activities. Only some 20 percent of rural households rely solely on agricultural income. More importantly, “nonagricultural sources of income have proliferated and they are now more significant than farming for a great many rural households” (p. 8).

The emergence of middle-income peasants mentioned above is a result of state support for rural development. Worried about the spread of communist influence in the countryside, in the 1950s and the 1960s Thai governments started to invest in rural areas aimed at improving the living standards of peasants. A program of investment in rural development was laid out in the first National Social and Economic Development Plan (p. 49). In the 1970s pressure from politically assertive peasant movements and the victory of communist revolutions in Indochina saw the Thai state increase its efforts to win over rural populations. Since then, argues Walker, “there have been important long-term shifts in the fiscal treatment of the countryside, laying the foundation for the emergence of a middle-income peasantry” (p. 50).

Such policy alters state-peasants relationships in areas ranging from taxation to subsidies (pp. 8–9). Agricultural tax, such as the rice premium, which taxed rice exports to generate state revenue and reduce domestic rice prices, was abolished in 1986 (pp. 49–50), while the government invested heavily in rural development. Apart from infrastructure, government supported farmers on price, credit, land tenure, health, education, and welfare among others (p. 56).

Despite the significant improvement of living standards in rural areas Walker argues that

disparities in income and living standards between rural and urban populations are widening. The income gap between the richest 20 percent of the population and the poorest 20 percent rose from 8 times in the 1970s to between 12 and 14 in the 2000s. The average household in Bangkok is about three times higher than in the rural northeast and the north. "Although the national (and rural) poverty rate has declined dramatically, poverty is still about ten times more prevalent in the north and northeast than it is in Bangkok" (p. 45). Walker has pointed out that inequality in Thailand is not the product of surplus extraction by dominating elites. The cause of this disparity lies in uneven economic development. While labor productivity in agriculture is quite low, labor productivity in industry increased rapidly during the economic boom from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Labor productivity in industry was about 8 times higher than that of agriculture in 1980 and the number increased to 16 times in 1990. This difference in productivity led to a difference in wages paid in the agricultural and industrial sector. For example, in 2006 wages in agricultural sector were only 44 percent of those in manufacturer sector (p. 48).

Income disparity has caused discontent among peasants, who have pushed for a fair share of the benefits of economic development. Peasants' bargaining power is enhanced by socio-economic transformations in recent decades. As Walker puts it, "the forces of socioeconomic modernization that increase disparity also increase the power and eloquence of rural political opinion" (p. 48). Such transformations have helped to improve rural education, communication, and mobility. Urban-rural linkages not only supported the likelihood of diversification, promoted new forms of consumption, and blurred spatial distinctions, but also enabled rural dwellers to compare their disadvantages with affluent urban populations. "This heightened awareness of inequality can easily undermine some of the satisfaction gained from improved quality of life" (p. 48).

As we have seen, on the one hand, economic development in Thailand helps to reduce rural poverty and turns a majority of the rural population into middle-income peasants, yet on the other hand, it creates and fosters income disparities between urban and rural populations. For Walker, such a dilemma of uneven development is the root cause of the current political tension in Thailand (p. 220).

To improve their situation, peasants are seeking support from the state. They expect that "the state will improve its efforts to enhance rural livelihoods, reduce inequality, and provide a secure backup when experimental engagements with private capital fail" (p. 221). According to Walker, weaving the power and resources of the state into the economic and social fabric of village life is central to peasants' political strategies (p. 221).

Thaksin Shinawatra recognized the needs of peasants and shaped his policies around their aspirations. As a result, he received strong support from peasants in the 2001, 2005, 2006 general elections (p. 221). However, Bangkok elites and intellectuals condemned the immorality of Thaksin and the electorate that had voted him into power (pp. 23–24). Bangkok elites prefer a "civil society" that emphasized law and institutions over rural "political society" characterized by "special inter-

ests, personal ties, a plethora of programs serving specific population groups, charismatic and controversial personalities, and recipients who are skilled in negotiating access to the state's resources" (p. 22).

The 2006 elite-backed coup ended the relationship between Thaksin and rural political society. In the post-coup period we have seen political conflict in Thailand centered around the contest of power between elites and peasants who mobilize under the banner of the Red Shirts. Contemporary peasant mobilizations, argues Walker, are the actions of rural political society to defend its relationship with the state. As he makes clear, "The red-shirt protesters have been defending political society's direct transactions with power in all its regular and irregular forms and rejecting the view that economic development and other matters of state should be guided by the elite embodiments of virtuous power located in the nation's capital" (p. 223).

The above account is the main argument of *Thailand's Political Peasants*. The book contains interesting evidence, analysis and insights on rural transformations and political contestation in contemporary Thailand that will be of benefit to students and scholars of Thai and Southeast Asian studies.

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***Global Movements, Local Concerns: Medicine and Health in Southeast Asia***

LAURENCE MONNAIS and HAROLD J. COOK, eds.

Singapore: NUS Press, 2012, xxxi+290p.

This edited volume contributes to the growing scholarly literature dealing with the history of medicine. The editors collaborated with 12 scholars of Southeast Asia to come up with an 11-chapter compilation dealing with six countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. This is a difficult task to perform, as most scholarship tends to focus on one Southeast Asian country or a comparison between countries with similar histories, given that a characteristic of Southeast Asian countries is their diversity.

The volume begins by deconstructing the prevalent notion that the term "Southeast Asia" was constructed by North American scholars and its allies during the Second World War as a way to group the countries into "a community of nation-states." Southeast Asia, to quote Benedict Anderson, is an artificial construct and the region is "remote, heterogeneous, and . . . imperially segmented" (Anderson 1998, 5). Another strategy has been to group these countries according to the influences of the region's powerful neighbors, China and India. However, this proved to be insufficient with the migration of Arab, Chinese, and Indians to various countries fostering an image

of “plural societies.” It was only with the introduction of the Braudelian view of long durée—researching one topic over an extended period of time and analyzing material culture in the context of global history—that a framework for studying Southeast Asia as a whole became possible.<sup>1)</sup>

The editors of the volume make clear that the chapters deal with issues of health rather than disease in the countries involved. The chapters avoid dealing with “colonial medicine,” and focus on the development of “modern medicine.” Hence, instead of colonial masters imposing their policies upon the locals, the chapters examine the negotiations between colonial masters and locals and the appropriation of medical practices and policies within a local context.

This is a welcome compilation for Southeast Asian scholars and those who study the history of medicine due to its ambition in attempting to tell the history of Southeast Asia using micro-level narratives and social histories. However, one of the main issues that arise out of any compilation on the history of Southeast Asia is the difficulty in grappling with the diversity that exists in region. This difficulty makes itself felt in the compilation and can be seen in the confusing order of the chapters from what initially seems to be chronological (chapters 1 to 8) to an abrupt transition to the modern period with chapter 9, and then back to a chronological order with chapters 10 and 11.

Thomas B. Colvin’s study deals with the expedition of Francisco Xavier Balmis, a doctor to the Spanish court who proposed to bring the smallpox vaccine to all of Spain’s colonies. The Balmis expedition brought the vaccine using the “human chain” method, which meant transporting a number of healthy young boys who had not been exposed to smallpox and transferring the vaccine from one boy to another until they arrived at the final destination. The Spanish monarchy approved the expedition in order to increase the population of the colonies that had been afflicted by smallpox and stimulate economic activity in the colonies. Despite encountering problems not only with the locals, but with the Spanish as well, the expedition was successful and would have further influence within the surrounding countries.

C. Michele Thompson narrates how the Nguyen Dynasty addressed the problem of smallpox and how officials transported the vaccine to Vietnam from France. The smallpox vaccination project was a long-term policy; however, the methods in transporting the vaccine introduced by the French proved to be unsuccessful, since it was brought via glass vials, which failed to preserve the live virus on its journey through the summer heat of the South China Sea. With the success of the Balmis expedition, the Nguyen court negotiated with the Spanish to obtain samples from Macao. The negotiations were successful, and the vaccine was transported safely to Vietnam.

Liew Kai Khiun’s study examines the Rockefeller Foundation’s (RF) International Health Board and assesses the influence of America in Southeast Asia. It tries to deconstruct the idea of the Americanism of the foundation as a form of imperialism, such as its anti-hookworm proposal

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1) Taken from the citation of the compilation. For instance: Crosby (1986), Grove (1997), Zuckerman (2000), Elvin (2004), Cook (2007).

to the colonial officials of the Malay states. The study tries to differentiate the RF project from that of “colonial medicine,” given that RF relied heavily on consultations with local players and their monetary contributions as well as community mobilization. For example, the hookworm campaign implemented in Singapore and Thailand promoted medical research and education, and thus helped finance medical colleges. This project was able to popularize the ethos of western public health in Southeast Asia.

Annick Guenel studies the 1937 Bandung Conference on Rural Hygiene held by the League of Nations Health Organization. The conference gathered together various Asian countries to discuss and deal with issues on rural hygiene and asked each country to survey and provide a country report on health and medical services, rural reconstruction and collaboration of the populations, sanitation and sanitary engineering, nutrition, and measures for combating diseases. The reports presented by the countries carried varied information, given the reluctance of local authorities in their countries to disclose the information requested of them. Another issue was that of cooperation involving regional public health officials and local communities. The body identified the following as primary problems in the implementation of programs in the countries: peasant apathy, customary habits, and local superstitions and religious beliefs.

Raquel A. G. Reyes provides a smooth transition in the book with her study on midwifery in nineteenth century Philippines. Her chapter addresses issues regarding the mistrust harbored by Western medicine towards the practices of local midwives, who were also attacked by western-trained Filipino doctors. While the chapter deals with the concept of science versus superstitions, which is not unique to the Philippines, Reyes further develops her argument from a gendered perspective: most midwives were women and criticism of these women could be seen as a form of colonization of their bodies (both the midwives and pregnant women). Despite the concern with safety exhibited by Western medicine with regards to childbirth, the severe lack of trained professionals allowed for the continued existence of these midwives.

Liesbeth Hesselink continues on the same thread as Reyes in the context of the *Dokter Djawa* and the *Dukun*. The *Dokter Djawa* or locally born, Western-trained physician, was a creation of Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch sought to increase the numbers of trained professionals to service the populace of Indonesia. The *Dokter Djawa* occasionally used treatments prescribed by the *Dukun*. Furthermore, due to issues of trust, locals preferred to deal with the *Dukun*, who was a local medical provider capable of restoring spiritual potency that they believed to be the root cause of illnesses. However, the *Dukun* also realized the limitations of their abilities, and would occasionally ask for help from *Dokter Djawa*. Thus, we see in the Indonesian context an interesting coexistence between the *Dokter Djawa* and the *Dukun*.

Ooi Keat Gin's chapter deals with the anti-opium movement and its effect on the diasporic Chinese communities in Malaya. Western-trained Chinese physicians attempted to combat the practice of opium smoking by promoting the idea that it was bad for Chinese nationalism because



it promoted weakness and was a source of criminality. However, these anti-opium advocates went against a complex structure that included fellow countrymen and British colonials who were involved in the production and trade of opium. Nevertheless, the campaign played its part in eradicating the practice from British Malaya.

Michael G. Vann's chapter looks at the policies by which the French organized the city of Hanoi. The French embarked on developments and infrastructure within their settlements while leaving the fringes—where the Vietnamese were residing—to their own devices. Hence, during an epidemic, one would find discrepancies in the implementation of policies based on their location. The source of the epidemics originated from locals living in the peripheries, since infrastructure which promoted health and hygiene was grossly lacking within these areas. The failures of the colonial government were aggravated by policies such as forced inoculations, the examination of the dead and the criminalization of the sick among the Vietnamese, all of which provoked resentment and non-compliance.

An advantage of two interrelated chapters would be the ability to cover points that each individual chapter failed to discuss, although there is also the risk of needless repetition of the points discussed in a chapter, as with the chapters by Colvin and Thompson. Furthermore, one of the aims of the compilation is to move Southeast Asian studies beyond colonial history. Despite the efforts of authors to deconstruct the activities of the colonizers or international organizations such as the RF, traces of imperialism or neo-imperialism remain, since the solutions themselves come from the colonizers and organizations who did not “impose” their ideas, but rather “negotiated” with the local populace.

Yu-Ling Huang's chapter abruptly jumps to the contemporary period, thereby breaking away from the flow of the previous chapters. Huang provides a history of the HIV/AIDS issue and how it was addressed by various agencies and NGOs in Thailand from the 1980s to 2000s. The issue was compounded by the sex tourism industry, and transmissions were largely due to unprotected heterosexual sex. Although campaigns for the use of condoms were launched and generally successful, new cases still emerged and led to the development and importation of medicines to treat HIV. Since Thailand could not manufacture or import cheaper medication, there were still a significant number of deaths. Trade pressures by America via the US Trade Representative and the formation of a global patent regime prevented the Thai government from obtaining better access to HIV/AIDS medications.

Ayo Wahlberg also focuses on the modern period with his chapter on the developments of “Western” and “Eastern” medicine in medical practice in Vietnam. In 1955, through the efforts of President Ho Chi Minh, the use of traditional medicine was promulgated with the establishment of institutions for research, development, and use of traditional medicine. One reason for such a movement was to promote national identity by “de-colonizing” all aspects of Vietnamese society including medicine. The chapter explains the battle of the Vietnamese government against “back-

wardness,” including health practices that complemented the move towards research on medicine with which people are familiar. The program is not a movement to criticize old practices and medicines, but rather to re-educate Vietnamese people towards better health practices and rediscover effective traditional medicines.

The final chapter is on Thai medical historiography. Chatichai Muksong and Komatra Chuengsatiansup look into the histories of Thailand to uncover narratives relating to medicine and public health. Prior to the colonial period, most texts relating to medical knowledge were derived from Buddhism. With the advent of the West colonizing Southeast Asia, there was a surge in the number of Western medical practitioners in Thailand. Rather than being overwhelmed by this new knowledge, the elite attempted to utilize it to further legitimize themselves. This relates to the previous chapter where localization of imported knowledge and practices occurred. The changing political environment of Thailand was accompanied by a subsequent shift from elite medical narratives to their democratization, not only due to the Westernization of Thai medical practices, but also owing to increased access by the general public to medical knowledge through medical schools.

The shortcomings of the book do not detract from the fact that each chapter presents a new perspective in Southeast Asian historiography that goes beyond the colonial framework. However, this does not mean that a Southeast Asian compilation by multiple authors is not with difficulties. A successful example would be Norman Owen’s edited volume entitled *The Emergence of Southeast Asia: A New History* (2004). As such, owing to the variety and discontinuity of some chapters, one might better appreciate reading the pieces in this volume individually.

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### *Contestations of Memory in Southeast Asia*

ROXANA WATERSON and KWOK KIAN-WOON, eds.

Singapore: NUS Press, 2012, vi+300p.

#### **Is memory a cul-de-sac?**

At long last, an anthology of case studies on social memory used the frame that defined memory studies in the 80s and 90s. At that time, when memory studies became popular, the literature were mainly concerned with invented traditions and the problem of nation-building (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992; Hutton 1991), memories of the Second World War in Europe, etc. (Adorno 1989; Bourget *et al.* 1990; Olick and Robbins 1998; Climo and Cattell 2002). In this book, we can see the lineage of that earlier scholarship and how it is applied to the Southeast Asian region. Overall, the book is notable for its rich mix of talents and topics relating to the vicissitudes of how crucial historical events in the region are remembered by, *inter alia*, individuals, social groups, communities, and nations. Likewise, the book offers a wide diversity of empirical studies in an effort to elaborate the fusion between historically and geographically specific case studies with memory studies. The book is thus a significant contribution to the vast scholarship on memory.

In approaching the study of memory in Southeast Asia, the book highlights tumultuous events of the last century, thereby anchoring the book to the larger themes that have characterized memory studies: trauma and identity. Specifically, the book highlights the tensions inherent in memory studies between psychological or individual and collective approaches, between the popular and the official, between forgetting and remembering, and between dominant or suppressed narratives. The book is divided into three parts: the first offers a theoretical formulation of memory studies and tries to link this with other disciplinary approaches to the study of memory such as history, sociology, anthropology, and politics. The next two parts are empirical studies dealing with the stories of nations, destinies, and identities (Part II) and those concerned with traumatic memories of select groups and specific historical events (Part III).

Articles in Part I focus on memories of individuals and how they impact on national history and historiography. In Chapter 2 (“Remembering Kings: Archives, Resistance and Memory in Colonial and Post-colonial Burma”) British colonial administrators in Burma, in dealing with the Saya San Rebellion of 1931–32, framed the event as a revolt whereby Saya San (Teacher San), a monk who claimed supernatural powers and monarchical ambitions, incited naïve (read “pre-rational”) peasants to revolt as a means to justify the state’s suppression of dissenters. Instead, as author Maitrii Aung-Thwin shows, the rebellion was not about rallying peasants incapable of modern political discourse and restoring an abolished monarchy to prevent Burmese unity, but rather a result of the peasants’ increasing economic marginalization brought about by onerous tax policies.

Ong Keo, a member of the Nge ethnic minority and regarded as a national hero in the aftermath of the victory of the Lao revolutionary forces in 1975, is the central figure in Chapter 3 (“Shifting Visions of the Past: Ethnic Minorities and the ‘Struggle for National Independence’ in Laos”). Fighting the aggressors (French), imperialists (American), and their local lackeys (a right-wing monarchy), Ong Keo became a source of identification for the Nge community as they formed part of the Pathet Lao’s narrative whereby “heroic provinces” became an essential element in the struggle for national liberation. With the passing of time, however, orthodox communist renditions of history have taken a back seat to “more purely nationalist sources of legitimization” (p. 84). As author Vatthana Pholsena observes, Buddhism, previously identified with the rival Royal Lao Government, has been relegated to the so-called dustbin of history in the decades following the Pathet Lao victory in 1975. However, the changing political and economic environment has altered the party-state’s historical narrative. The revival of Buddhism as a potent symbol of national identity at both the popular and state levels had brought to the fore the link between Buddhism and socialism. Furthermore, Laos’ economic liberalization has opened the country to the benefits of external trade as well as opportunities for its citizens beyond the avenue provided by the single party-state. As a result, the article concludes that “history as written by authoritarian states constitutes the most extreme example of a highly selective, if not distorted, representation of the past. History must be ‘correct’, that is, it must legitimize the leadership’s rule” (p. 83).

Corollary to the preceding article, Vietnam’s attempts to reconstruct an official and patriotic memory of the “American War” has not brought about the patching up of the country’s ideological and geographical divide after reunification in 1975, but instead has created more ruptures. Monuments and historical narratives that extol the North Vietnamese army and the southern National Liberation Front only betray the difficulty of remembering the opposite side: the soldiers and supporters of the former South Vietnamese regime. Sharon Seah Li Lian’s “Truth and Memory: Narrating Viet Nam” (Chapter 4) highlights the complex relationship between truth, memory, and history, i.e. the telling of one story occludes another, that the “already said” conceals the “never said” (p. 5). As the author concedes, the search for truth would not yield a single historical narrative. History should then be a knowledge-producing process or uncover other narratives to make possible the inclusion of other representations, even if they contradict the dominant narrative.

The theme of how memory is shaped by a changed political and economic setting is repeated in Ricardo Jose’s rendition of memorial and commemorative events relating to the Second World War in the Philippines in Chapter 7, “War and Violence, History and Memory: The Philippine Experience of the Second World War.” If US intentions to liberate the Philippines from Japanese occupation were seen as altruistic and necessary, by the 1970s these motives were now re-interpreted under the rubric of imperialism. The streak of nationalism and radicalism that swept the Philippines at this time, coupled with the disillusionment of Filipino veterans with getting back pay (financial remuneration for serving under the American flag) plus the payment of reparations

by Japan and the latter's increasing role in the economic recovery of the country further complicated the memories of the war. Moreover, the tensions between official and popular memories of the war were managed by the state in official commemorations of the event in order to dovetail them with its interests in foreign relations.

However, the succeeding articles that were framed by psychological approaches are not that convincing as far as utilizing the explanatory power of memory studies in understanding these watershed events are concerned. There is a tendency to overstate the topics or to infer a general narrative from very little historical information, a drawback to specialists on the topic. For example, the reader may wonder how representative are the experiences of three wives compared to the thousands of wives whose husbands suffered persecution in the aftermath of the "1965 Event" in Indonesia (Chapter 10).

Ironically, the book exhibits an inherent aversion to history. While the anthology is filled with historically momentous events, the editors juxtaposed memory studies with what may now be regarded as "traditional" history. For example, "although historians have often claimed for their craft a greater objectivity and accuracy, in contrast to memory, which is seen as unreliable and partial, it is clear that much historical writing has itself been driven by mythical meta-narratives concerning issues such as national 'destiny'" (p. 25). This makes the reader wonder whether the book may have overlooked the many developments in the field of history since the 70s and 80s which profoundly altered the way history is conceived and written. Since then, much of the younger generation of historians has discarded this positivist type of historicizing. And if the book and some scholars of memory studies took a labyrinthine and verbose path of making this point, by elaborating arduously how memories become malleable, contested, and negotiated, historians would simply retort with their dictum "there is only one past but there are many histories!" Indeed, much has changed between the time the book was published and the time when the works cited in the theoretical part and in some of the chapters were being debated.

After reading the anthology, a reader is likely to ask: is memory studies a cul-de-sac, a trap with no exit? Is scholarship on memory studies characterized only by relentless and seemingly never ending contestation? Although the book has amply demonstrated and accomplished what it has set out to do, the question of what happens now to these contested memories is left hanging. It may be said that contested memories can be a good starting point in bringing them to public attention. However, the reader may find it difficult if in the end, memories are simply posed as a problematic. For several years now, other scholars of memory studies, sometimes in collaboration with legal experts and human rights advocates, have grappled with how to address the issue of repairing historical injustices and making memory a tool for redress and reconciliation (Torpey 2003; Hayner 2001; Minow 1998). The main drawback of the book is that it comes too late, and is published at a time when the study of memory has shifted beyond questions of meaning and identity to exploring various modes of redressing injustice. It must be stressed, however, that the book

is commendable for putting together a highly interesting anthology that navigates the terrain of Southeast Asia's contentious past. The book includes many chapters that are of interest to both specialists and non-specialists alike and provides important reading material for the study of the history of modern and contemporary Southeast Asia.

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## ***Space and the Production of Cultural Difference among the Akha Prior to Globalization: Channeling the Flow of Life***

DEBORAH E. TOOKER

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012, 344p.

The Akha were the last highland group to move to Thailand in substantial numbers. On reaching Chiang Rai, where almost all their villages are now located, they were obliged to settle in areas passed over by the groups that had preceded them. When I participated in an evaluation of an indigenous Akha NGO, the Development and Agricultural Project for Akha, in the early-1990s, their relatively late arrival and the generally remote location of their villages seemed to significantly

contribute to the difficulties they were facing. Following visits to most of the Akha settlements in the province, the evaluation team could not identify even one thriving village self-sufficient in rice that was not beset with such challenges as the lack of citizenship for its members, victimization of its women such as through commercial sex, and high rates of HIV.

There are indeed thriving villages in neighboring countries at the present time, such as in Mong Long District of Luang Namtha in Laos and in the Mong Pawk area of the Wa Region in Myanmar where the villagers enjoy rice surpluses, sell handicrafts and forest items, and remain relatively free of such problems as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and social challenges. However, in Thailand since the 1990s, this has no longer been the case, with most villages suffering food shortages, the threat (sometimes the reality) of being expelled from the country, and obstacles in accessing the public education and health care to which citizens are entitled.

In *Space and the Production of Cultural Difference among the Akha Prior to Globalization*, Deborah Tooker reviews Akha spatial practices from 1982 to 1985. At this time, there were sustainable and thriving Akha villages in Thailand. Focusing on the use of space and how this delineated differences between the Akha and neighboring groups, she has written a focused ethnography on the Akha of the sort that is going out of fashion in anthropology that is increasingly dominated by postmodernist approaches.

This time frame, 1982–85, coincides with the start of her “participant-observational fieldwork” (p. 13) among the Akha, particularly the Loimi sub-group near Mae Sai. In 1985, not only did her initial fieldwork come to an end but she also observed “serious structural discontinuities” (p. 13) that the reader is obliged to conclude were to unsettle the practices she observed during her fieldwork. This year is also when “globalization” began to impact upon the Akha. Although she never defines globalization (despite its use in the book’s subtitle and its absence from the index), it indeed refers here to increased lowland and official Thai government mandates in the Akha hills. More specifically, globalization here refers to “the expansion of capitalism and the nation-state into the Northern Thai uplands” (p. 214).

As explained in Chapter 1, the author studies the use of space among the Akha using three interpretive frameworks. These are “the cultural meaning of space,” “the relationship of that meaning to regional meaning systems,” and “larger comparative and theoretical discussions about the meaning of space in relation to economic and political contexts . . . and identity construction” (p. 21). She explains that her focus is on space because it is “actively produced by social agents” (p. 24) and contributes to cultural differences between the Akha and others. Tooker contends that space is used by the Akha to access the “life force” that she calls “potency” (translated from the Akha term, *gylā*). She explains that potency is the force that “maintains, and indeed, serves to construct ‘Akha’ as an autonomous identity” (p. 42). She explains that potency provides access to a “cosmic energy” that maintains and creates social hierarchies both within Akha society and between the Akha and other ethnic groups (p. 24). Spatial practices (or tactics) include the relation-

ship established between the center and the periphery and the direction in which certain features, such as houses and gates, are placed.

She explains further that some may disagree with her viewing the Akha as a bounded culture; yet she takes this view because the Akha see themselves in this way. Similarly, while she recognizes the changing nature of village society, she explains that the main aspects of her study village did not change significantly during her three-year study period (but have since then).

Tooker describes in Chapter 2 how the Akha she studied, although living on the periphery of states run by powerful groups, viewed themselves as autonomous and having their own identity. Special reference is made to the community in which she conducted her research. In Chapter 3, she describes how the Akha's spatial dynamics, such as orienting the village in a particular direction consistent with cosmic forces, enabled them to access potency without having to depend on the larger states. When the Akha establish villages, they see it as reenacting the creation of the world and in so doing, reestablish critical spatial configurations. Chapter 4 covers how the Akha village is constructed. The Akha see the village as an entity extracted from the wilderness to form a settlement established apart from lowland states. It is through a dialectical relationship between Akha and lowland states, Tooker argues, that defines the Akha polity and identity. This chapter also reviews the "spatial tactics" within the village that are relevant to village-lowland state relationships. In Chapter 5, Tooker provides a detailed description of spatial practices relative to the household and the agricultural fields. She shows how the households have their own independent access to potency as a characteristic of an egalitarian society and that the household's spatial practices sometimes differ from those of the village as a whole. At the same time, the household and the village exist in a dynamic hierarchical relationship so that the household is never fully autonomous. Chapter 6 reviews the rituals that are related to the Akha's construction of inside and outside aspects of village life. While inside rituals comprise the Akha world, outside rituals defend the village against external forces that could threaten the community. In Chapter 7, Tooker discusses the relationships between the Akha world and the outside states as well as describing how the Akha view of spatial relationships compares with those of other groups in Southeast Asia.

Tooker argues that previous models of premodern "cosmic polities" in Southeast Asia, such as *mandala*, galactic polity, and emboxment, have been defined from the perspective of dominant lowland groups (p.215). This has resulted, she argues, in the scholarship on the subject being skewed to represent a top-down view of premodern states that ignores other models such as that of the Akha described in this book.

It should be noted, though, that the authors of these models referred to by her (such as Heine-Geldern and Condominas, to cite two of them) did not claim to be describing all the models of Southeast Asia. They were depicting the lowland states and other lowland groups such as the Tai whose communities are in valleys.

Heine-Geldern, for example, wrote "I shall confine myself to a discussion of some funda-



mental conceptions of state and kingship in those parts of Southeast Asia where Hindu-Buddhist civilization prevailed" (1942, 15). Although knowledgeable of upland societies, having written a thesis at the University of Vienna on highland groups near the border of India with Burma, he wanted here to describe lowland states.

Georges Condominas' discussions of social space and emboxment referred to the socio-political organization of Tai groups. In his book on social space, in which the concept (if not the actual term) of emboxment was introduced, he discusses Tai polities in one chapter (1980a, 259–316). In the same book, he describes how the Mnong Gar establish a new longhouse, thus covering some of the same ground examined in Tooker's book (1980b, 411–430). His review of the spatial and political organization of the people makes no reference to anything that can be compared to emboxment and does not attempt to place how the Mnong Gar organize the longhouse spatially into the system of emboxment.

More important, however, than whether Heine-Geldern and Condominas intended to produce a comprehensive model for all the societies of Southeast Asia is Tooker's point that there are diverse ways of spatial organization in the region. In making the case for diversity, especially among upland groups in Southeast Asia, Tooker diverges from the approach of James Scott who puts all the uplanders (and some valley dwellers) into the macro-grouping of Zomia (Scott 2009). Although his book appeared too close to the release of Tooker's work for her to thoroughly integrate an analysis of it into her text, Tooker clearly envisions a diversity of cultures and methods of spatial organization in Southeast Asia.

As an indication of the diversity in Southeast Asia, she challenges the idea that hill people necessarily organize their societies in less hierarchical ways than lowlanders. She points out (p. 233) that "hierarchy is embedded just as much in [Akha] ritual space as it is in that of the lowland polities." Other examples of hierarchical upland societies were in Karenni and in the Palaung center of Nam San, all of which had leaders who styled themselves as Saohpa (Shan rulers) with palaces and other accouterments of royalty (in what conventionally has been associated with lowland states).

All of this represents the continuing maturation of the study of highland cultures and peoples in Mainland Southeast Asia. As the understanding of highland groups grows more nuanced, the diversity of these peoples is being increasingly recognized as well as the ways that they have changed over time.

The fact that she has studied this village for so long has enabled her to attain a comprehensive understanding of the people and the place. This has precluded the need for her to write (as sometimes happens) a revision of her dissertation to accommodate some important new information she missed while doing her initial field research.

It is hoped that Tooker will continue with her analysis of Akha society into the more troubling times these people have been encountering since 1985 in what she calls the modern age. How the

Akha system of spatial organization coped (and/or failed to cope) with the monumental changes of increased access to the lowlands, the expansion of lowland political control over their villages, the spread of new diseases as well as various social problems is of considerable interest. Given her deep understanding of Akha society in the 1980s, any analytical study she might choose to undertake on Akha life since then should be enlightening to students of many disciplines. Such a study would also give clues on how to study Akha society prior to the 1980s as well.

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## *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*

ERIC TAGLIACOZZO

New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, ix+356p.

In *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Eric Tagliacozzo presents a magisterial historical survey of the “undertaking of the Hajj from Southeast Asia to Arabia from earliest times to the present” (p. 3). The journey to Mecca required of all Muslims not only surpasses most other religious pilgrimages in size, number, and geographic extent, but also comprises one of the largest annual human migrations on earth—religious or otherwise. In turn, it should be no surprise that one of the biggest sources of Hajjis is Southeast Asia. Tagliacozzo weaves fragmentary extant scholarship and original new research into a compelling narrative of this “enormous phenomenon that draws in literally millions of people and spans the width and breadth of the Indian Ocean” (p. 7).

*The Longest Journey* is notable for its ambitious chronological sweep, the eclecticism of its methodology, and the range of its subject matter. Tagliacozzo organizes his book into three over-

arching parts that correspond with the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, gliding from Marco Polo's thirteenth century accounts of Hajjis to the machinations of early twentieth century colonial officials like Snouck Hurgronje all the way to the oral testimonies of present-day pilgrims in the twenty-first century. *The Longest Journey* embraces this *longue durée* approach without sacrificing the granular richness of Hajji histories or succumbing to an overly deterministic analytic framework. By making use of "archeology, archival history, literary criticism, sociology, epidemiology, political science, and ethnography" (p. 7), Tagliacozzo illuminates the myriad and often idiosyncratic aspects of this enormous movement of people, including some that might surprise readers. Individual chapters cover topics ranging from ancient pilgrims to the management of the Hajj by postcolonial states, from the involvement of sultanates in Hajji routes to surveillance and cholera outbreaks among pilgrims, from literary representations of Hajjis in Joseph Conrad's work to the experiences of people who made the journey from minority Muslim nations like Thailand and the Philippines. Through this diversity of approaches and topics, Tagliacozzo mirrors the multifaceted nature of this religious procession.

A significant contribution of *The Longest Journey* lies in its collection, compilation, and collation of a staggering array of historical documentation pertaining to the Hajj. Tagliacozzo not only incorporates classical Malay texts, European literary works, colonial records, statistics, Hajji memoirs, and oral accounts into his work, but also makes these diverse sources accessible to the reader. For instance, the book highlights many firsthand historical accounts as self-contained insets, among them a journal entry from a Javanese Regent about his time in quarantine en route to Mecca and a narrative of sickness among Hajjis by an English traveler (pp. 142–143, 148). Beyond reproducing individual sources, Tagliacozzo deftly encapsulates entire document collections through tables and lists. At one point, he spares the reader the laborious undertaking of poring through the two volumes, thousand-plus page compendia of official advice from Snouck Hurgronje by distilling it into a digestible list of 24 thematic "rubrics," such as "costs of the Indies Hajj," "caravan safety," and "economic effect of the Hajj" (p. 163). Likewise, *The Longest Journey* provides a comprehensive list of all known classical Malay texts to mention the Hajj between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries—thus furnishing a sense of the scope of extant indigenous documentation (p. 89). These thoughtful presentations of sources enrich the reading experience for students and scholars alike.

Tagliacozzo also brings analytic sharpness to this treasure trove of documentation by locating the Hajj amidst its political and economic contexts. Although the "Hajj is first and foremost a religious ritual," Tagliacozzo observes that "devotion cannot be divorced from the ways and means of performing it, namely, the financial wherewithal of undertaking a pilgrimage that may be thousands of miles from one's home" (p. 63). *The Longest Journey* illustrates the interweaving of Indian Ocean trading networks with the Hajj while also highlighting surprising historical facts, such as the great profitability of the pilgrimage for European steamship companies. Similarly, Tagliacozzo

illustrates how inter-imperial competition and cooperation in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea arenas shaped the contours of the Hajj. Indeed, European projects for controlling their Muslim subjects streaming into Arabia included an interlocking system of consulates in the coastal city of Jeddah and an international sanitary station at the Red Sea island of Kamarin intended to monitor pilgrims as vectors of disease. Much of this analysis also helps to draw out the fundamental paradox that the Hajj burgeoned as an institution at the precise moment that it fell under the control of non-Muslim Europeans. Stimulated by the colonial expansion of commerce and shipping while simultaneously posing a subversive threat to the new imperial order, it was this paradox that drove the projects of surveillance and control described in Tagliacozzo's book.

Yet, even as *The Longest Journey* meticulously documents the material underpinnings and paradoxical operations of the Southeast Asian Hajj, it is also careful not to ignore the profound spiritual meaning it holds for believers. Leaving behind the colonial archives, Tagliacozzo devotes his last three chapters to Hajji memoirs and over 100 oral interviews, which he sees as an invaluable resource for retrieving the history of pilgrimage "from the inside" (p. 271). Indeed, this research yields a textured portrait of sojourns to Arabia that would otherwise be inaccessible to many, as "the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are forbidden to non-Muslims" (p. 272). Among other things, Tagliacozzo's Southeast Asian interlocutors discuss their experience of "holiness and contemplation" at sites like the Plain of Arafat, the feeling some had of being "clean" for the first time in their lives after circumambulating the Ka'ba, as well as recollections of interactions with diverse co-religionists from places as far away as Afghanistan and Africa. Through these stories, the reader can glean an understanding of "what it means to fully give one's self over to devotion on a journey that lasts a few weeks or even several months but that resonates for a lifetime" (p. 288).

It is perhaps inevitable that a book of such ambitious breadth includes some minor shortcomings. Tagliacozzo's thesis that the pilgrimage evolved from an individual experience in precolonial times to a "state-sponsored" enterprise in the colonial era does not fully wrestle with the question of how the colonial archives might have concealed journeys that did not conform to Dutch or British expectations. Likewise, Tagliacozzo could better explore the implications of what it meant for the Hajj to go from the jurisdiction of non-Muslim colonial states to majority Muslim post-colonial states—a signal transition that Tagliacozzo only touches upon in Chapter Nine. However, *The Longest Journey* cannot chronicle every aspect of Hajji history, and the small gaps that do exist serve mainly to underscore promising avenues for future research. Tantalizing glimpses into the Arab reception of Southeast Asian Hajjis, for example, such as when Holy City shopkeepers learned basic Indonesian, is suggestive of possible work on local Meccan engagements vis-à-vis Southeast Asian Hajjis, Arab media representations, and Saudi state machinations. In this way, *The Longest Journey* not only embodies the promise of an interactive, trans-regional history of the pilgrimage, but also charts the path for deepening and extending this research agenda in the years ahead.

Indeed, small quibbles in no way detract from Tagliacozzo's formidable achievement. Juxtaposing archival and ethnographic research with a strong commitment to accessibility and jargon free prose, *The Longest Journey* will serve both as an important resource for scholars of Islam in Southeast Asia as well as an indispensable primer for anyone who wants to learn more about the global history of the Hajj.

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***Achieving the ASEAN Economic Community 2015: Challenges for Member Countries and Businesses***

SANCHITA BASU DAS, ed.

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012, xxvi+347p.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015 is the most anticipated economic integration project for the people in ASEAN countries. Despite being a form of state-level cooperation, the inclusion of the private sector in integration is undoubtedly a crucial factor in the implementation of AEC. This book's aim is to examine the progress of the states as they implement soft and hard infrastructures to milestones that were attained over the years and how the private sector responded to these achievements.

In the first part of the book the first chapter by Sanchita Basu Das specifically explores ASEAN member countries' challenges including their infrastructure effectiveness to ensure regional integration and the importance of their business sector's involvements in realizing an effective AEC by 2015. The second chapter by Pushpanathan Sundram highlights the future challenges that include integration process management and focuses on the non-implementation of regional commitments, and the importance of private sector engagements as drivers of economic integration.

The second part of the book examines the readiness and challenges of individual ASEAN member states with regard to the AEC. The chapters show that as the ASEAN economies widely diversify the variation in progress and challenges also become apparent. For example, chapter 4 by Chan Sophal and Larry Strange, chapter 5 by Pradeep Srivastava, and chapter 11 by Vo Tri Thanh highlight the fact that the main problems for the new member countries of Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam (CMLV) are domestic ones such as poor capacity for resources mobilization, a lack of private sector coordination and networks, and institution-building. In particular, the importance of the Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) in Cambodia and Laos on cross border transportation for trade facilitation highlights sub-regional integration issues. On the other hand, the original member countries—with the exception of the smaller ones such as

Singapore and Brunei Darussalam—face political and resources mobilization problems. Furthermore, both the Philippine and Indonesian governments are under pressure to address governance issues that may hinder gaining advantages from regional integration and additionally we also see that in Malaysia, ethnic policies have hindered state institutional capacities to support economic growth (p. 96).

The third part of the book discusses the private sector's readiness for the AEC. This part includes studies drawn from interviews and data analysis of the private sector's perception and demands on AEC implementation. However, this part is insufficient as it only has one chapter on Vietnam, and lacks concrete studies that deal with CMLV countries case studies. Chapter 18 by Vo Tri Thanh and Nguyen Anh Duong shows how the private sector's main problem with AEC is poor information dissemination and knowledge. Interestingly, this problem is also the main issue for original member countries: that ASEAN and member countries' attempts have been insufficient in promoting and accelerating AEC implementation beyond government and academic research. This limited attempt at information dissemination and poor governance of ASEAN as a supra-national institution has been recognized since the implementation of ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) with the poor performance of Form D. This form is for applications for a lower tariff under the Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) Scheme for AFTA (Nesadurai 2003; Chandra 2008). The cases in Indonesia and Thailand show that limited dissemination of information on integration processes, tariffs, regulations, and Rules of Origins (ROOs) has undermined the private sector's enthusiasm for AEC. Furthermore, the chapters on the Philippines and Malaysia show how cultural-related business activities have hindered the rate of AEC acceptance and implementation in these respective countries. Race policy in Malaysia restricts business ownership and poor governance has had a negative effect on the investment climate and private sector innovation, as seen in the continuity of the "Ali Baba" business scheme where the "Ali" or the Malay as the sleeping partner and "Baba" is the Chinese as the active half of the alliance (Whah 2007). In the case of the Philippines, the term *ningas cogon* (p. 270), is employed to refer to people who are enthusiastic about something but then lose interest quickly. As a consequence, the Philippines faces regulation inconsistencies and constraints with long-term commitments on law enactment, corruption eradication, and rent seeking abolishment (Lim 2013). This hinders the country's development in the realms of business innovation and trade. Finally, the Singapore case provides an exception whereby the private sectors that felt themselves to be marginalized from the AEC have demanded that the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) accelerate consultation, coordination, and transparency on AEC milestones programs.

The book provides a general discussion and analysis of the readiness by ASEAN governments and respective private sectors to implement the AEC. The chapters offer discussion, based on secondary data and formal documents, of the achievements of the governments, while questionnaires and fieldworks were used to assess the readiness of the private sector. Based on these

studies, the book highlights the importance of private sector involvement in the implementation of AEC and argues that it should go beyond information dissemination and become involved in domestic regulations and administrative reforms.

However, the book suffers from a few structural and analytical problems such as repetitive discussion on individual country's readiness on AEC in parts two and three on the comparisons of states and business achievements in Brunei Darussalam (chapters 3 and 12), Indonesia (6 and 13), Malaysia (7 and 14), the Philippines (8 and 15), Singapore (9 and 16), Thailand (10 and 17), and Vietnam (11 and 18). Similar discussions, structures and themes among countries lead to a rather monotonous presentation of information and facts. For instance, the lack of information dissemination and poor government capacities are referred to as common challenges faced by the region as it prepares for economic integration. Furthermore, the variation of data availability and questionnaire sizes creates an unbalanced discussion on the analysis of private sector readiness for AEC. These issues should have been addressed by the editor, who should have made sure that qualified researchers and the papers compiled would ensure a better balance and more in-depth discussion on state and private sector readiness on AEC.

Recent developments point to an interesting direction for AEC. For instance, Indonesia has established the AEC preparatory committee to analyze, evaluate, and advise the government on AEC issues. The reason for the establishment of this committee is that Indonesia is not ready and has merely been forced to welcome AEC in 2015. Furthermore, recent riots in Singapore involving immigrant workers have led to further questioning of the national security of member countries following free labor movement under the AEC.

Overall, this book provides a wide-ranging semi-academic analysis on state readiness and achievements, and the current level of private involvement towards AEC. This is an important book, as there are few that detail the current progress of both sectors and how they communicate with each other. In this sense, the book achieves its main aim. However, differences in the depth of analysis and the quality of discussion of specific countries and specific state-private sectors potentially lead to a skewed perception of each country's progress in the build-up to 2015. Nevertheless, the book provides a comprehensive analysis on AEC challenges for member countries and business up to 2010.

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