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War is always destructive, but sometimes amidst the destruction it causes, war can also be productive. The Cold War is an example, as the essays in this book try to demonstrate. It is argued that the Cold War is not so much a physical and ideological war but also a cultural war, which brought up all the creative energy of artists and writers to serve as ammunitions in their attempts to deal with an invasion of relatively new ideas such as ‘modernism’, ‘nationalism’, and ‘realism’ into the region along with the heated ideological conflict between the socialist east and capitalist west. Viewed in this sense, the Cold War is not ‘cold’ by any means when it comes to the cultural arena. It is true that it brought bitter ideological tensions and rivalries among groups within each country in Southeast Asia. Such tensions, however, were also vibrant with rich cultural productions to which all the artists and writers had made contributions.

In Tony Day’s view, these art workers engaged in highly critical manners with cultural terms – modernism, national identity, realism, among others – resulting in situating the meaning of such terms in the specific context of the local arena rather than sticking to their ideological framework, which was shaped prominently by the Cold War. But to what extent can the notion of a region devastated by a raging ideological war simultaneously witnessing vigorous cultural explorations and experimentations be used as a method to analyze Southeast Asia during the Cold War? In other words, if the war is assumed to play a more instrumental role than simply serve as a setting or a catalyst of everything that happened in the region, it has to function as an analytical category that can be scrutinized as well as a tool to carry out such a scrutiny.

The ways in which this has been attempted vary from one contributor to another. Some essays reinforce the idea that all that took place in the cultural realm was the result of the war rather than a struggle with the impact the war had on culture. Some others show an ambiguous attitude that perceives...
the war as a key factor yet at the same time also argues that Southeast Asian artists managed to maintain a certain degree of independence from it; still some others have made efforts to show that art workers engaged in their own individual battles against the enormity of the Cold War, which threatened to reduce their creative endeavors into mere ideological apparatuses of the warring blocs. Such a fluid positioning was not only visible at the level of the everyday life but also in terms of what Jennifer Lindsay calls ‘cultural Cold War’, which refers to non-governmental areas of contact between groups, in her essay on a Southeast Asia cultural festival taking place in Singapore in 1963 when the region was embroiled in territorial and ideological disputes. The festival displayed Southeast Asia as an entity with shared elements of culture but which had been divided by centuries-long colonialism. This message was conveyed despite the tension caused by Indonesia’s and Philippine’s strong opposition to the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia and the absence of some socialist countries with strong affiliations to Communist China. The representation of Southeast Asia as a multicultural harmony, therefore, also served to hide the fact that the region was severely torn by ideological differences and at the brink of a possible regional war.

Francisco Benitez’ essay reveals how filmmakers could be systematically co-opted by the state in its effort to crush the Huk communist movement in the Philippines by producing films that served as the mouthpiece of liberal capitalist ideology. While the Cold War period in this country is often perceived as the ‘Golden Age’ of Filipino films, film industry at that time was mobilized as a vehicle of ideology by the state in gaining public sympathy in the war against communist rebellion. But what on the surface seemed to be an ideological struggle was actually a much more complex process of coming to terms with modernity. Films produced a sense of ‘coherence and unity’ at the time when the nation was facing a modernity crisis. Thai Cold War films also suffered from a similar fate, but in Thailand anti-communist campaigns were also imbued with anti-Chinese sentiment as the nation was engaged in a search for its ‘national identity’. Rachel Harrison suggests that there was public distrust of Thai Chinese diasporic community’s loyalty, and Thai films exploited such sentiments in their attempts to create a model for ‘national heroes’. Similarly, in Lao the socialist state capitalized from the notions of ‘new type of person’ and ‘new generation’ to create a ‘physical culture’ in which the body became the most important site of nation-building programmes. To be modern was to be physically strong and healthy, achieved at the expense of independent mind, which was considered a dangerous trait of the bourgeois culture, as Simon Creak describes in regard to Lao’s preoccupation with sports during the socialist rule.

In Indonesia and Vietnam, situations were considerably different. Despite the pressure of war between the north and the south, Vietnamese artists
refused to sacrifice their arts for ideological purposes that split the nation into two camps. According to Boitran Huynh-Beattie, their main concern was how influences of western modernity could blend with local elements, creating new types of art that were fundamentally shaped by aesthetics rather than politics. Like their counterparts in Vietnam, Indonesian artists and writers also tried to maintain their creative independence, even though many were willing to commit themselves to active participation in ideological cause at the same time, as Tony Day argued. This duality was not without any consequences. Michael Bodden, in his analysis of Indonesian theatre during the Cold War, suggests that the rifts among theatre workers were concerned more with competing notions of nationalism than an extension of Cold War’s ideological conflict into the realm of art. Modernity was defined and contested by leftist art workers through theatrical production in terms of how it took social commitment and nationalism into account, but in the aftermath of the anti-communist military crush in 1965, the quality and significance of their works were severely downgraded.

In Burma, the Cold War did not only bring civil war but also led to a massive incorporation of the media, particularly popular magazines, by the military as part of its counter-insurgency strategies against the communists while at the same time trying to formulate a democratic-socialist ideology for the state. Bo Bo points out that, although the project failed to unite the conflicting groups, the emergence of popular magazines caused the demise of Burmese traditional theatre and the introduction of the novel as a modern genre to Burmese literature. The struggle to free popular media from the specter of the Cold War lasts much longer in Malaysia. Gaik Cheng Koo writes how a few decades after the end of the war, independent filmmakers in Malaysia still work actively to offer an alternative view of the past that is dominated by the demonization of the Left by bringing to screen the living experience of those who have been marginalized or lived in exile as a result of the communist defeat in this country. Their films, in Gaik’s words, open up ‘an intergenerational dialogue across Malaya history’ despite visible disapproval by the state. Similar efforts have been made by Indonesian filmmakers and traditional theatre workers discussed by Barbara Hatley, who argues that some films and plays produced recently seem to have a shared theme of giving voices to the victims of the 1965-1966 anti-communist massacres that had been hitherto silenced through systematic stigmatization of the Left by the New Order state.

The struggle to come to terms with modernity in Southeast Asia is far from over. It has been a few decades since the end of the Cold War, yet artists and writers are still exploring ways and possibilities of blending external influences with local cultures in order to offer a new sense of identity. The drive towards a unified Southeast Asian identity may no longer be as compelling as it used to be in the 1960s and 1970s, but studies on the impact of the Cold War to the region
will always be able to dig out new perspectives in our effort to understand how much the Cold War has shaped the region politically and culturally. It is in this respect that this book has made a significant contribution and must be taken seriously by anybody who wants to embark in such an endeavor.


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Richard Fox’ *Critical reflections on religion and media in contemporary Bali* is an erudite study that focuses on the articulation of Balinese religiosity through different kinds of local media – television, texts, and dramatic performances – in order to make a more general methodological point, namely to demonstrate how our conceptualization of media affects our interpretation of the historical development of religions. Fox argues that conventional information theorists see media as external to the message, as ‘inert conduits’ (p. 5) of content rather than what Latour called ‘actants’, though Fox does not use the jargon of science and technology studies.

Fox’s reflections benefit from the collection of 1,500 hours of Indonesian television recordings and the transcriptions of 277 programmes on Hindu Dharma that were compiled over a period of eight years (1990-1998) for the Balinese Historical and Instructional Study Materials Archive (BHISMA). The compilation came about in collaboration between scholars from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and staff from the Indonesian Academy of Arts (STSI) in Denpasar. Fox has worked with the materials since 1996 and has succeeded Mark Hobart as Deputy Director of BAJRA, the NGO that has managed the archive and has made its materials available for Indonesian as well as international scholars. Fox’s more nuanced attention to media has discovered uncanny aesthetic parallels between the performance of national citizenship under Suharto and the public display of indicators of local citizenship since the onset of the multi-vocal, yet pervasive nativist ‘Ajeg Bali!’ (‘Strengthen Bali!’) discourse in post-New Order Bali. This is an important observation all the more because most Balinese studies scholars writing on the ‘Ajeg Bali!’ phenomenon have completely left out the role of the media, as Fox rightly criticizes.
Highlighting the performative dimension of Balinese religion, he first turns to the medium of television, abstracting from the recordings the following five performative genres: (1) addresses by Hindu intellectuals or official Hindu Dharma representatives to the television audience; (2) moderated discussions on Hindu topics; (3) situation dramas dramatizing religious perspectives on everyday problems in modern Balinese society; (4) dramatized discussions – or programmes incorporating short situation features along the lines of situation dramas; and (5) pasantian meetings, in which tutored recitations and study of sacred Old Javanese texts serve as religious instruction of the television audience.

Having discussed the televised pasantian meetings, Fox then revisits the Orientalist discourse on the mediation of religion through Old Javanese texts. Critiquing the treatment of Old Javanese texts as privileged media in Orientalist accounts on Balinese religion, he argues that these texts merely constitute inert media for the preservation of ancient grandeur. As Balinese references for contemporary local religious developments, they are strangely absent. While Orientalist scholarship fetishized Old Javanese texts, Balinese literary practices were generally deemed inferior. Not at all concerned with meeting the literary criteria of Western Orientalists, the Balinese have treated their literary heritage as blueprints for dramatic performances to the extent that representations of the sacred history or mythic past contained in Old Javanese manuscripts have continuously been rearticulated in dance dramas in such a way that they bear upon the lives of the audience. Fox’s analysis of a Topeng Pajegan performance on the mythic creation of the traditional Balinese villages that, in 2001, were juridified as desa pakraman, is a case in point. He demonstrates how the performance renders literary content meaningful in the context of contemporary local politics determined by the ‘Ajeg Bali!’ discourse. Thus, his argument has come full circle.

The book contains twenty-five illustrations with scenes from television recordings featuring addresses, discussions, dramatic performances, and pasantian meetings. It comes with an exceptionally well-produced DVD with 45 minutes of footage on the Topeng Pajegan performance that is analyzed in the book. I recommend Fox’s work as indispensable for everyone working on contemporary Bali with one caveat: due to the somewhat convoluted way the various strands of the argument unfold, it is not easy to read.

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In Malaysian politics and society at large Islam is debated incessantly, from within and without, from the theological and the mundane, the sacred and profane. Islam is closely followed by Malayness as a constantly argued about, defended, and politicized identity marker. Both Islam and Malayness dominate the politics of peninsula Malaysia, which is often seen as central to Malaysian affairs, with East Malaysia receiving less coverage. Thus a book that purports to explain the rise of Muslim bumiputera politics in Sarawak is in itself a welcome addition.

This book describes the rise of minority Muslim leaders taking power in Sarawak. East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) are often seen as ‘the other Malaysia’ or as being somehow at the periphery of the nation because of their later inclusion in the federation and the centralization of government and governance in peninsular Malaysia. However, economically and also politically Sarawak has played a crucial role in maintaining the Barisan Nasional (National Alliance) dominance in Malaysian politics for a long time. Thus more attention is due to the East and above all Sarawak.

This is an important background study for the upcoming federal election (although by the time of publication of this review the election may have passed) because Sabah and especially Sarawak are the new battle states. The opposition has to make in-roads and the ruling Barisan government has to desperately cling on to their majority here. Faisal Hazis offers an in depth look at the politics of Sarawak from 1970-2006, focusing on the personal history of the two leading Melanau strongman-politicians, Rahman and his nephew Taib, who have dominated Sarawak politics for this entire time. Hazis traces the personal connections and leads the reader through a maze of political parties, political alliances, and broken agreements in astounding detail and pace. Sometimes the reader may get lost in the overwhelming detail in tables and appendices that demonstrates the meticulous and detailed research but can also lead to acronym fatigue.

Throughout the text Hazis provides insights into strongman leadership, family power transitions gone wrong, and the daily rent-seeking by politicians through patronage networks reminiscent of the neopatrimonialism of Sub-Saharan Africa. Entrenched corruption and patrimonialism with electoral vote buying via development projects or the ‘politics of development’
have made Sarawak into a fiefdom that even the powerful federal Barisan government cannot fully control, in large part because it is too beholden to the votes it duly delivers.

It is here that the author perhaps underestimates the post 1999 ‘new politics’, noting that in Sarawak the ‘old politics’ of racial politics, regional politics and ‘development politics’ still dominate (p. 164). Current opposition and non-aligned campaigns for clean elections have identified East Malaysia as the new battleground in Malaysian politics. At the last election in 2008 Barisan Nasional only held on to a majority in federal parliament because of the strong support it received in East Malaysia, especially Sarawak. Thus Sarawak is receiving renewed attention in peninsula-based news outlets. Barisan Nasional has increased its federal presence and made significant promises in response to campaigns such as ‘Buy a radio to free Sarawak’ that are aimed at increasing awareness and the flow of information to the state’s interior.

A more thorough discussion of Migdal’s state-in-society approach would have been welcome in order to better understand the author’s theoretical grounding in the strong societies – weak state argument. For instance, bringing Migdal’s critics into the discussion, such as Sidel’s work in the Philippines on strongmen politicians there, would have provided an interesting counterpoint and furthered the explanatory model provided by the author. For, the strongman politicians (Rahman and Taib) have, contra Migdal, been enabled and strengthened by a strong (central/federal) state and strengthened it in exchange.

There are a few quibbles with the text in its form, such as the occasional missing reference, for example Reece’s *Masa Jepun: Sarawak under the Japanese, 1941-1945* (1998) is mentioned but not to be found in the bibliography. The book is based on a PhD thesis and some rewriting would have improved the general style and flow. The extensive and detailed literature review could have been abridged, for instance, and more space given to the political and personal stories and histories the book grapples with. Lastly, copy-editing of several sentences could have picked up missing verbs and pronouns but these are minor criticisms in an otherwise well-researched and well-presented book.

One chapter is a short essay on the coastal Malays in Sarawak and, although very interesting and enlightening, sits uncomfortably with the rest of the book as it breaks the previous focus on the politician strongmen and focuses instead on one ethnic minority and how they are dominated by the state’s politics.

Nonetheless, this book demonstrates the importance of charting and investigating the personal (aspirations, motivations, and ideologies) as a key driver in contemporary politics and documents how it was possible for a family dynasty from an ethnic minority to maintain in power in Sarawak for such a long time.
Let me make this abundantly clear: the Dutch historian Liesbeth Hesselink has written an interesting and important book on medical care in the Dutch East Indies, not to be overlooked by anyone writing on the subject. It covers the period between 1850 and 1915, roughly between the erection of the STOVIA (a school for autochthonous doctors, the well-known dokter djawa) in 1851 and the Civil Health Service in 1911; a separate society for autochthonous doctors, and Boeti Oetomo at the STOVIA. Actually Hesselink seems to have written three histories: one on the Indonesian medical world (or the imperfectly termed ‘medical market’), one on the STOVIA, and one on the different attempts to raise an army of Western trained autochthonous midwives.

Though she expertly handles each of these three elements, they remain distinct and not really come together, a fragmentation further hampered by curiously maintaining two separate annotation systems. Furthermore, the wording used is not always clear, mostly due to failing translations of the original Dutch, a language recognizable in many sentences.

By using the education of dokter djawa and midwives Hesselink shows the diversity and character of the Dutch East Indian ‘medical market’, though she admits the term might better be phrased as the ‘market for medical goods and supplies’. One of the problems with this term is that it presupposes choice, but around 1850 there really were none, due to failing infrastructure and poverty. Instead, every societal group had its own medical system, and ‘healer hopping’, as Hesselink calls it, was all but absent. This certainly changed in the sixty years to come, if only because three types of healers were added to the market (the dokter djawa, the midwives, and European dentists), but initially there were few (for example, the number of European dentists rose from 0 to 8 at a time when the population mushroomed). What kind of a ‘market’
has only one midwife for every 115,000 people? Moreover, this midwife typically worked not for the population but for European and Chinese pregnant women because the wages were higher. There were some exceptions in which the Western trained midwives emphasized that they also were Javanese and *dukun bayi*, making themselves intermediaries between West and East, reason and *adat*, God and Allah. But the trust of autochthonous women was seldom gained, mostly due to their young age and *adat*.

During this period, legal and medical boundaries were rigid. In 1870 in Jakarta the Committee of Medical Research and Supervision forbade *dokter djawa* to hand out prescriptions or to run a private practice. In fact, private practice was forbidden in the whole of the Archipelago as long as the *dokter djawa* were working for the government. Even as late as 1905, the Society of Medical Science in the Dutch East Indies did not allow autochthonous doctors to become full members, which is why the *dokter djawa* set up their own society. The medical world remained divided along racial lines: by 1915 the *dukun*’s position had hardly weakened since 1850, and autochthonous distrust of Western medicine continued. The numbers of Western trained doctors were still small and the Europeans amongst them had seldom mastered the local language, nor did they try to gain the population’s trust and convince them of the benefits of Western medicine. In their eyes and in those of the government, the superiority of Western medicine was self-evident. So, while ‘healer hopping’ may have increased by 1915, I’m not sure this supports Hesselink’s conclusion that ‘the medical market model shows that despite all these hindrances, there were definite market forces at work’ (p. 317). I do not need a market model, with its ‘suppliers and consumers’, to know that there are market forces and surely these forces were small. Leaving aside the idea that all the misery of market economy in healthcare started the moment doctors became ‘suppliers’ and patients ‘consumers’, I wonder if this book would really have been fundamentally different if the words ‘medical market’ had been replaced by ‘medical world’.

Let me finish with some details. For instance, it’s not clear why looking at 1760, 1819, and the beginning of the twentieth century, would illuminate a situation in 1850 (pp. 37, 39). Also, when quoting physician Pruys van der Hoeven (p. 96) who argued that providing quality healthcare would increase trust in Dutch government, Hesselink states that around 1850 the view of healthcare as a tool of empire was rare. But immediately she cites military man J. van Swieten who asserted that educating the population ‘in our way of life’ would raise sympathy for Dutch authority. The reader can’t help wondering how ‘rare’ this opinion actually was.

Hesselink states that the fact that the *dokter djawa*-school persevered was ‘a marvel’, ‘a wonder’, ‘amazing’ (p. 118), but, first of all, historians don’t explain historical events by calling them wonders, and, secondly, she con-
continues by pointing out that the school came in handy and therefore kept on receiving governmental funding.

Finally she argues that the separate autochthonous medical organization (founded either in 1909 or 1911, she gives two dates) was a step towards participating in the nationalist movement. But since Boedi Oetomo was erected in 1908, this cannot be the case.

Nevertheless: these criticisms cannot take away the fact that the medical history of the Dutch East Indies has been enriched with a very useful book.


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*Glimpses of freedom* hints at independent cinema initiatives throughout Southeast Asia which poke subtle holes in overarching supremacies of power. Independent film represents unconventional practices in cinematic routines. Self-supporting methods of production and circulation, or the contents of films, challenge the controls of the establishment. They may either disregard government regulation and censorship, big capital or mainstream film industries, conventional styles of storytelling, or a combination of these items. The articles that May Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay have selected for *Glimpses of freedom* give comprehensive insight into the various levels of alternative cinematic practice and off-beat film experience in which different independent film cultures across Southeast Asia operate. The book colourfully exposes the ways in which Southeast Asian independent cinema and its producers, festival organizers, networks of distribution, and screening hubs, try the common order.

*Glimpses of freedom* consists of three parts: Action, Reflection, and Advocacy. Action includes chapters that describe the pioneering efforts of those active in Southeast Asian independent film. In this part, Malaysian film director and artist Hasan Muthalib writes about the recent attention to themes of racial policies and minority positions in Malay society in films by Malaysian-Indian filmmakers. Director of the Thai Film Foundation and festival director of the Thai Short Film and Video Festival, Chalida Uabumringjit, explores the history of Thai independent films by mapping the works, film schools, festivals,
and audiences. In their respective chapters, Singapore journalist and writer, as well as co-founder of Access to Justice LLP, Vinita Ramani, Philippine musician and experimental filmmaker John Torres, and Malaysian independent film director Chris Chong Chan Fui, write about directors and festival organizers in Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. These chapters show the ways in which Southeast Asian directors and festival organizers endeavor to, or are forced to, establish independent channels to distribute and screen their films through postings on the internet, piracy networks, and pioneering (Gay) film festivals.

The second part of the book, Reflection, concentrates on academic articles that critically aim to define the terms, practices, conditions, and themes of independent cinema across the region. This part has two main points of focus. The first includes chapters that discuss in-depth the representations and implications of unconventional films by a selection of filmmakers from Malaysia and Thailand. Cultural studies, gender, and cinema scholar Gaik Cheng Khoo indicates that the films by Malaysian independent filmmaker James Lee represent universal feelings of alienation caused by modern urban life. Local audiences, Khoo asserts, will also grasp the implication of Malaysian society’s political apathy or alienation, whereas international audiences may rather tune into universal senses of individual or class alienation. Late film critic and academic Benjamin McKay views the films by Malaysian director Yasmin Achmad to portray a utopian ‘dreamed’ image of Malaysia in which different races mix and get along effortlessly. Some factions in Malaysia have branded Achmad’s films into ‘cultural pollutants’ because, as McKay argues, the imagery of her films transgresses the state’s official image of a mono-ethnic Islamic Malaysia. Emeritus Professor of international studies Benedict Anderson analyzes Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s Sat Pralaat as a film which is not ‘about’ but ‘made from inside’ Thai ancient culture. Modern Thai middle class movie audiences do not understand Apichatpong’s film as they are not familiar with, or – as nouveau riche trying to climb the social ladder – deny their cultural roots. The other focal point of Reflection is the coming to grips with the meaning and subtexts of independent film in Vietnam, East-Timor, and Thailand. These issues are analyzed by Mariam Lam, associate professor of literature, media, cultural studies, and Southeast Asian studies, through an investigation in the transnational interdependence of Vietnamese local and diasporic communities in Vietnam’s film industry, and in anthropologist Angie Bexley’s focus on the East Timorese young indigenous ‘Supermi Generation’ in the recent production of films that criticize the new nation’s past and present political situation. Another chapter of Reflection, written by arts and media scholar May Adadol Ingawanij, outlines the dynamics and political implications of organization of the Thai Short Film and Video Festival between 1997 up to 2010.
The last part of *Glimpses of freedom*, Advocacy, consists of articles that aim to highlight the existence and value of certain films, sites, or practices of Southeast Asian independent cinema. Late film critic, curator, and lecturer Alexis Tioseco’s passes on the form, content, and worth of works of independent Philippine filmmakers Lav Diaz and Raya Martin. Tioseco first presents a perceptive account of his experience attending the shooting of Lav Diaz’s Heremias and later watching it in the cinema, and then compellingly explores Raya Martin’s Autohystoria and Maicling pelicula naáng ysaňg Nacional’s unusual representations of Philippine national history. Scholar Tilman Baumgärtel deals with pirated DVD’s as a grass roots form of globalization and highlights the educational or inspirational value of pirated DVD’s which have produced a ‘Piracy Generation’ of Southeast Asian filmmakers. Professor of Film Studies Jan Uhde and film critic and writer Yvonne Ng Uhde’s describe the set-up and activities of the Singaporean cultural institution Substation. They point out Substation’s significance as a platform for Singaporean independent filmmakers and the diffusion of independent cinema. Lastly, associate professor of art studies, Eloisa Hernandez, examines the evolution and political economy of digital filmmaking in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Her account evaluates the degrees of independence of digital film in the four countries and the medium’s strengths and limitations.

While the focus of *Glimpses of freedom* is on cinema, the issues raised across the different chapters give a comprehensive view into the social, political, and economic struggles throughout the region. Southeast Asian independent film questions disconcerting outcomes in the different societies of state policies, religious and racial problems, gender and sexual mores, and unresolved political feuds. Moreover, when bringing the articles together, the challenges of independent film exposes interregional issues like coming to terms with the colonial and/or dictatorial past and/or present, forging stable national identities, and minority rights. Since the book consists of contributions by both scholars and practitioners, it succeeds in accurately putting across the crux of the independent film culture: a spirit that combines critical thinking with optimism, and the creation of new national and transnational fora for and kinships of filmmakers, publics, activists, and academics.

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This anthology, which is the first of two planned volumes coming out of a conference held in 2010, commemorates 500 years of Portuguese presence in Southeast Asia. Apart from the doubtful reckoning – the first Portuguese visit took place in 1509, followed by the conquest of Melaka two years later – the question may be raised of what there is to commemorate, and why. In her introduction, the editor Laura Jarnagin addresses exactly this issue. As she puts it, a half millennium is mnemonically convenient, but that does not mean that the volume intends to ‘celebrate’ or ‘commemorate’ the colonial legacy of Portugal, or attach value judgments. Rather, the round number may induce us to reflect, reassess, and reconsider the manifold experiences of the Portuguese in Asia, from the sixteenth century to the near-present. In connection with this, there is also reason to discuss the concept of ‘legacy’. Rather than being a bequeathed property or grant, the term should be seen as something that is subject to continuous change and modification over the centuries but still perceptible as having roots in the establishments of the Portuguese and Luso-Asian peoples in the past.

In spite of the theme of the conference and the title of the book series, the twelve contributions encompass the former Portuguese areas in India and Macao and not just Southeast Asia. Some of them are comparative, such as Isabel Maria da Costa Morais’s study of how two modern authors of Macao and Singapore use literary tropes in a context of Portuguese diaspora. Chronologically they spread rather evenly from the sixteenth century to the post-colonial era. In that way the essays convey something of the diverse experience of the Portuguese legacy. While the scope of the volume is obviously historical, the declared ambition as spelt out in the introduction is also inter-disciplinary. I find this somewhat exaggerated, since few of the essays can be said to be inter-disciplinary in their own right. What we get is rather a collection of individual studies on such diverse fields as demography, literature, history of medicine, and political history. As such I find most of them competently written and often quite illustrative of the resilience of Portuguese cultural forms – or perhaps rather their successful adaptation in an Asian setting. For example, K. David Jackson follows the wanderings of Portuguese popular culture in the form of the folksong ‘Papagaio verde’
(Green parrot) which is traced in various locations of coastal Asia. The parrot is in fact a human symbol of truth-telling that occurs in many civilizations, as nicely pointed out in the essay. A few studies also discuss the shifting identities of groups and individuals with a Luso-Asian background in the twentieth century, such as Felicia Yap’s essay on the vicissitudes of Portuguese communities in East and Southeast Asia during World War II. Here she points out how ‘Portugeseness’ became reactivated for survival reasons during the Japanese occupation, but also how the war resulted in an exodus to Western nations that weakened the Luso-Asian element in many places.

My main problem with the volume is the number of unqualified statements and dated assertions that dot some of the essays. In his study about the royal hospital garden of Goa, Timothy Walker reiterates the old story of a long and irreversible decline of local Portuguese society after the early seventeenth century (p. 33), although this convention has been under attack for a long time by scholars such as Glenn Ames (as actually pointed out in a few other essays in the book). The Asian context is sometimes insufficiently researched. Stefan Halikowski Smith, in his study of Thai-Macanese relations, alleges that the embassy to Ayudhya in 1616 was received by king Ekathotsarot (p. 87), although it has been known for a very long time that this Thai ruler passed away in 1610/11. He also badly misrepresents the sea captain Alexander Hamilton’s comment on the situation in Portuguese Timor in about 1700 (which in itself is hearsay and should have been complemented with better sources). Some kind of internal referee procedure could have eliminated the more obvious errors in an otherwise stimulating volume.


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This ambitious book may fairly be taken as a powerful salvo avant la lettre in what the directors of three of the Netherlands’ most important research institutions have recently proposed as a re-opening of serious debate and investigation of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict between 1945 and 1949. J.J.P. de Jong, who has long observed Indonesia from both a scholar’s armchair and a desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, believes that the virtually universal understanding of this important episode of postwar decolonization has been
vastly oversimplified, overdramatized, and overmoralized. In this exhaustive, landmark study, he offers a sharply revisionist view based on a meticulous examination of the evidence from the perspective of diplomatic history. The immediate focus is the critical period between the Renville Agreement in early 1948 and the recognition (or handing over) of Indonesian sovereignty at the end of 1949, but the implications are far broader.

In De Jong’s view, the more or less standard picture of the decolonization process – a reactionary Netherlands, determined to retain control over its most valuable colony, negotiates in bad faith, takes ill-considered military action, and is ultimately forced by the powers of nationalism and world opinion to surrender to a struggling but forward-looking Indonesia – is fundamentally flawed. He seeks to replace it with something far more nuanced, and far more appreciative of the Dutch role, by turning attention away from Indonesian nationalism, United Nations involvement, and the ‘police actions’ and attendant (Dutch) ‘excesses’ of 1947 and 1948, toward the heretofore neglected or at best glossed-over negotiations themselves. When examined closely, De Jong argues, the published archival record of these negotiations shows, among other things, that they did not fail because Dutch negotiators dragged their feet out of a desire to keep the Indies under their control, but because stakeholders on both sides could not (for different reasons) agree on the terms for what he believes negotiators – again, on both sides – had agreed to from the beginning: a transitional handing over of power. More startling, he also suggests that Dutch military actions ultimately may be said to have had a positive effect, and that, far from being forced to withdraw by Indonesian forces and United Nations (and American) pressure, the Dutch in the end withdrew – or wished to withdraw – themselves from their Asian empire by suddenly and unilaterally abandoning their gradualist policy.

It need hardly be said that these opinions are challenging. Even taking into account that vigorously revisionist histories, especially those dealing with sensitive issues such as this one, frequently overstate their case in order to ensure that their argument is heard, some of De Jong’s claims will seem extreme, even by those inclined to be sympathetic to the general notion that adjustments in the way Dutch decolonization is portrayed are called for, and they will raise questions. One problem area for at least some historians will be this study’s nearly exclusive focus on the diplomatic process and the source material that goes with it. De Jong’s main justification for this approach is that the materials, principally those in the magisterial 20-volume Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische betrekkingen 1945-1950, completed in 1996, remain relatively neglected and that earlier works have not given the negotiations sufficient attention. That is fair enough. But De Jong goes beyond that, suggesting that previous ‘traditionalist’ accounts err by emphasizing outcome over mechanism (process) and that the ‘accepted version’ of the Dutch decoloniza-
tion had little to do with the ‘actual’ drama (implicitly, of the negotiations) (pp. 11-2), which, he implies, hold in their own right the key to an accurate analysis. Whether a narrative of the negotiations, however detailed, can alone bear this historiographical weight and gain acceptance as the most satisfactory basis for understanding the decolonization as a whole seems to me open to question.

In several instances the conclusions De Jong draws from his material seem, at best, strained. The most important example is his signature verdict that the true turning point in the conflict came in late January and February of 1949, when High Representative of the [Dutch] Crown Louis J.M. Beel offered two versions of a plan which, reversing earlier policy aimed at a gradual decolonization, dramatically proposed a virtually immediate surrender of sovereignty, under certain conditions. De Jong links these proposals to those formulated in mid-1948 by Anak Agung, then premier of the Dutch-sponsored state of Eastern Indonesia; claims that they were not at all, or at best only indirectly (p. 676), the result of pressure by the UN Security Council; and professes enormous puzzlement that they were not acceptable to Indonesian leaders, who no longer were as ‘moderate’ as they had earlier appeared to be. Had Beel’s final proposal been a serious one or mere sham, an effort to use the promise of a quick recognition of sovereignty to lure the Republic into a deal which would in fact prolong Dutch ability to influence the outcome? That is a question to which De Jong, perhaps understandably, can give no definitive answer (pp. 433-42). But the rest of the argument is shaky. Without the Dutch second police action (December 1948), which De Jong acknowledges was a political and, though only in part, a military failure, Beel does not seem likely to have made his course-changing proposals in the first place; and indeed without it they, or something like them, might not have failed: neither Beel nor De Jong seems adequately to have understood the deep impact the police action had on Indonesian sensibilities, for example the significance, even to those who opposed Soekarno and might have been inclined to cooperate with Dutch plans, of the refusal to reinstate the Republican leadership to their positions in Yogya. (To be fair, even Anak Agung seems for a moment to have made this fundamental error as well.) In short, and in broad perspective, the second police action changed everything, and in my view can therefore rightly be seen as the prime causative factor in what followed. De Jong is surely correct to suggest that the matter deserves a second, much more careful look, but it remains difficult to see his conclusion as entirely reasonable. Even more fragile are the claims 1. that Dutch military actions, though in many respects disastrous, were in fact successful in that they kept the Republic unified when it might have dissolved in chaos, while also making it possible for the post-Beel accords to succeed (pp. 680-2), and 2. that Dutch desires after late 1945 for a gradual decolonization were also ultimately successful, since the process had after all extended four and a half years (p. 686). It should in fairness
be noted that these and other rather contrarian judgements, which De Jong
with a certain amount of satisfaction acknowledges amount to ‘swearing in
church’ (p. 683), are mostly confined to a concluding chapter that seeks to
sum up and draw logical conclusions from the painstakingly and somewhat
more cautiously analysed material of the previous 670 pages. Many of these
final opinions reach too far, however, and the unfortunate effect is to weaken,
rather than strengthen, the whole. Be that as it may, this is a book to be taken
seriously and as one of several possible starting points in the new round of
debate that is sure to come.

Eben Kirksey, *Freedom in entangled worlds: West Papua and the
architecture of global power*. Durham and London: Duke University
(hardback); 9780822351344, 24.95 (paperback).

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This book is the slightly revised edition of a doctoral dissertation defended by
the author at the University of California in 2008. It can be defined as a selec-
tion of papers on the history of West Papua since the breakout of the Papuan
revolt in 1998, written by an anthropologist. Visiting New Guinea for a study
on the effects of El Niño in May of that year, Eben Kirksey found nothing of
the sort, but was confronted instead with heated discussions among his fel-
low students at Cendrawasih University in Jayapura about the effects of the
withdrawal of Soeharto from the presidency upon the future of their island.
Demonstrations took place for a real plebiscite, which were disbanded by the
police in riot gear and hastily alarmed troops. From that time on, the dismal
Act of Free Choice of 1969 was back on the agenda again.

Not fully understanding what was taking place, and not wishing to get
involved in trouble with police, Kirksey left the city as soon as possible to
further his research in the hopefully more quiet regions of the Birds Head.
However, the spreading wildfire of revolt could not be left behind easily.
When entering Biak by ferry he was immediately confronted with a mass
demonstration on the waterfront. There the strongly forbidden Morning Star
Flag, symbol of Papua nationalism, was raised at the water tower and in an
accompanying speech the accidental leader Filep Karma pledged to uphold
the idea of independence of West Papua. The mood in the city was tense and
full of expectation, whilst the military were busily preparing for countermea-
sures. Fresh troops were flown in from Java and warships laid siege from the
seaside. They opened fire, spreading havoc and death amongst the demonstrators. Army trucks picked up other suspect individuals from the streets to be brought over to the ships. There, an unknown number of them were thrown overboard to be drowned. From that time on, Kirksey’s gradually transformed his earlier anthropological programme for New Guinea. In the following decade he came to concentrate on the progress of the Papua freedom movement and the Indonesian reactions, taking field notes and having hundreds of extensive interviews with more or less prominent Papuans and Indonesian participants. He also became an active participant in the circle of human rights workers, where he joined Elsham Papua until it was forced to close its office in Jayapura in the middle of 2002.

In the present book three periods can be singled out, the first starting in 1998 with the demonstrations in Jayapura and Biak that revealed the harsh reactions of the Indonesian military in the early days of the restart of Papua resistance. These were followed by a rather spectacular softening in the attitudes of the central government in 1999, when president Habibie invited a group of hundred Papua leaders to Jakarta to discuss their grievances, and more positive concessions ensued from his successor Gus Dur. The latter even made possible the mass Papua congress of 2000, which enabled the institutionalization of some representative body in the form of the Papua Presidium. It became the starting point for further discussions on some future form of autonomy.

These discussions continued with ups and downs during the next years, but they are not followed closely by the author. Instead he sticks to reporting on local incidents that can explain the nature of Papua leadership, Indonesian reactions, and international involvement. From these, he analyses the complicated entanglements Papuans find themselves involved in today. His main case study is on the Timika incident of 2002, where a group of workers from the Freeport McMoRan copper and goldmine, among them two American schoolteachers, were ambushed and killed. The question remains if this murderous attack was just a single act of some misguided Papuans, or part of a much more complex operation set up by Indonesian military, in cooperation with the staff of the Freeport Company and the FBI, with the aim of strengthening the position of the Indonesian military in the environment of the valuable US-enterprise. These complicated matters are discussed in detail. In this careful reconstruction, Kirby is giving rather strong evidence in favor of the latter option. Anyhow, it is an established fact that it ended up with strong retaliations from the part of the military against the Papuans, which led to further killings and a grand scale military sweep. These events ran parallel with the coming to power of Megawati Sukarno and the accompanying retreat from the more lenient policies of her two predecessors.

In the third part of this study, the author discusses the international context more closely. Here the opening shot is given in Timika again, with the
breaking up of the pipeline at some place between the mining installations and the coastal shipping station by a group of malcontent Papuans. It led to a run on the slurry-containing fragments of the coveted minerals, and cries of victory that by doing so the Papuans had broken the sinew of Indonesian and foreign control. It brings the author to far flung considerations on the mechanics of international control since the early days of the European expansion, when Spanish galleons had swarmed out over the oceans in search for the wealth of El Dorado. For the author, it was the beginning of The Tube, that until the present day links the outlying parts of the globe to the centres of power through the intermediary of improved techniques and big companies. Though essentially true, it nevertheless seems a point too big for Papua, where mining only had made a real start in the nineteen sixties. Nevertheless, Kirksey manages to make sense of this approach too. As observer and trusted friend, he was helped by Papuans, who provided him with information on the background of the developments, but they wanted something in return. ‘Don’t use your data as a pillow’, they said, asking him to bring their case to the centers of global power. In this way, Papuans were exploring the possibilities of their international contacts, and in this case with positive effects indeed. Kirksey not only approached staff members of the companies in the field and in London and Washington, but found a footing in US Congress too. There he was helpful in organizing a Congressional Hearing by the end of 2010. It was the first time that the Act of Free Choice was discussed in the heart of US power for a sympathetic, though critical, audience.

To conclude, Kirksey has a story to tell, and does so in an inspiring format. The book is loosely structured, linking up widely different elements by using a number of paradigms and parables that enable him to do so effectively. We were already introduced to the concept of the Tube and the idea of the Entangled Worlds. There are more of them, but in this review I will only add the intriguing concept of the Rhizome, drawn from the domain of botany. It represents the type of vegetation in which the roots are spread out widely at or just below the surface, sending upwards their sprouts wherever they fit. According to the author it is the same with the Papuan way of life, that contrast strongly with the Indonesian approach. The latter is aptly reflected in the dominating colossus of the Banyan tree, as depicted in the logo of the Indonesian Golkar party. It seems to be the stronger one, but for Kirksey the Rhizome nevertheless demonstrates a tenacity of its own. When plants with rhizomes are mowed down, they will grow back. Let us hope that the two will find a way out, either by living together or apart. But that reflects the underlying concept of Kirksey’s book. Though sometimes sneaking around at random a bit too much, it manages to cover a wide field and offers us a rich array of portraits, facts, and ideas that make it worthwhile to read.

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Dan Lev’s masterly biography of Yap Thiam Hien, No concessions, has the wrong title. Next to it on the cover is a photo of a solitary Yap standing tall and looking resolute, if slightly quizzical with his thick glasses and a sheaf of dog-eared court documents in one hand, a cigarette in the other. The title suggests a grimly inflexible personality. Or perhaps a politics of impossible demands, like Tan Malaka’s that almost succeeded in sabotaging Republican negotiations with the Dutch in the late 1940s under the slogan ‘100% Independence’. Indonesia hears many ultimatums of unbending principle, not all equally worth dying for. The notorious moral permissiveness of the country’s elites that preserves the peace by ignoring them has perhaps some justification here.

If only those elites had not been so oblivious to the rights of their non-elite fellow-citizens, Citizen Yap might have been a more accurate title for this book. Yap Thiam Hien (1913-1989) became a hero at the height of the New Order by his implacable courtroom appearances in defence of underdogs. He was the nation’s most famous human rights lawyer. But where the general public traced the drama of these televised confrontations to what some called his ‘quixotic’ intransigence, for him they were not about some heroic refusal at all. He ‘wanted to set an example of how an informed citizen should behave in the face of official malfeasance, abuse or corruption’ (p. 318). In his courtroom battles he fought against official prerogative, taking no pity on the injured pride of bureaucrats whose corruption he had exposed. They experienced his ruthlessly logical tongue-lashings as a form of lese-majesty (p. 277). In 1968 some of them accused him of trying to make a laughing stock of the judiciary. After a blatantly unfair trial he was sentenced to a year in prison. It took an appeal to the Supreme Court before this was overturned. Yap was incorruptible.

The book was not quite finished in 2006 when its author died. On his deathbed his friend and colleague Ben Anderson promised he would finish it for him. He wrote a marvellous introduction, first reviewing Lev’s long scholarly career. Lev belonged to that first post-war generation of foreign scholars for whom Indonesia was above all an inspiration to personal political engagement. Anderson then compared Lev and Yap, who had been close friends. Both were born members of minorities – Lev Jewish in small town America, Yap Chinese in Banda Aceh, in the far west of the archipelago. Yap later converted to a (rather liberal) form of Protestant Christianity. Yet both
engaged in decidedly republican citizenship struggles rather than commu-

nitarian ones. The rule of law is the most fundamental right a citizen can

expect. Today, nearly 70 years after independence, it remains a distant hope

for Indonesia’s citizens.

Yap came late to these struggles. For a long time he took no interest in the

Republic of Indonesia, and his introduction to politics came in the late 1950s

through an organization to protect Chinese interests, Baperki. But even there,

instead of pleading for special cultural rights, he spoke out for the rights of

all citizens regardless of their background. As Dan Lev wrote: ‘Yap’s religious

and political convictions met and meshed in his focus on human suffering as

the essential measure of public policy, requiring no sophisticated analysis but

simply a recognition of pain. To ignore pain, like injustice of any kind, was

outrageous and sinful’ (p. 296).

The case that made him famous was his defence of former foreign minister

Subandrio. In a special military tribunal established by President Soeharto,

this unlikable loudmouth under Soekarno became a kind of scapegoat for his

defeated political order. But Yap turned the trial into something far bigger

than Subandrio. He argued against the death penalty on the grounds that

what had happened under Soekarno had also been the responsibility of all

those in the courtroom on that day. ‘For Yap, redemption was a value far

superior to revenge,’ wrote Lev (p. 249). Ultimately, citizenship was for him

not a question of winning court cases or promoting Pancasila ideology. It was

civilized participation in a human community called Indonesia.


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Rémy Madinier’s monograph is a welcome contribution to the scholarly lit-

erature on Indonesian political history. Tracing the history of Masjumi, the

Islamic party created by the Japanese in 1945, Madinier offers his readers a
detailed account of the political developments and dramatic changes that
shaped the Indonesian Republic in its first 15 years.

The book is organized in six chapters, with introduction, epilogue, and

conclusions, all illustrated with reproductions of cartoons taken from
Masjumi periodicals. In the introduction Madinier explains how the history of Masjumi allows ‘d’analyser les ressorts politiques, religieux, culturels et sociaux d’une hésitation fondamentale entre une démocratie musulmane d’inspiration occidentale et un Islam intégral’ (p. 11), attending to the study of a political history still ‘largely unknown’ (p. 15).

Chapter one, entitled ‘Political genesis and historical imaginary’, delves into the early career of several of Masjumi’s future leaders, and the party’s intellectual roots. These pages give a brief yet comprehensive overview of the state of Islam in Indonesia, as well as the mixed influence of European patterns of democracy and Middle Eastern reformism. The author recognizes the origins of Masjumi as resting on the Sarekat Islam party, established in the early 1910s, but the pre-1945 period is dealt with relatively briefly, though for understandable reasons.

Chapters two to four comprise the core of the book, as they cover the 1945-1960 period. The history of Masjumi is divided into three phases: its experience as the opposition party, when the Islamic faction is defeated by the secular nationalists in the debate on the position of Islam in the new state; its rise to power and its struggle to retain it vis-à-vis military concerns over the regional rebellions in the 1950s; and the party’s electoral failure in 1955, followed by the isolation of this Islamic party and its own involvement in the rebellions.

These pages are dense with details, and the reader might well lose perspective of the bigger picture. Yet, this being the first book dedicated to Masjumi’s history, it is unavoidable and necessary for Madinier to provide this amount of data. As stated in his introduction, the thread to follow is Masjumi’s torn identity between securing a place for Islam in Republican politics and this party’s commitment to parliamentary democracy. But things get more complicated than such a dichotomous approach. In chapter two it is made clear that the party’s programmatic religious policy lasts only as long as the debate on the Jakarta Charter is open, and insofar as the call for Islam is useful to the anti-colonial resistance. In this context, Kartosuwiryo’s dedication to an Islamic state is the only embodiment of direction and vision among the Islamists, yet according to Madinier, the opposition it raises in nationalist circles marks the end of Masjumi’s tolerance of the Darul Islam’s methods, and the party’s realization of the ‘impasse d’un discours radical qui conduisait au séparatisme et convertit la majorité du parti a la modération’ (p. 124).

In chapter three Madinier follows Masjumi in the 1950s, tracing the party’s attempt to preserve the country’s unity and political stability through parliamentary democracy. The strategies mentioned include a clear anti-communism policy; commitment to coalition cabinets with the nationalist PNI; an open foreign policy, especially towards the US; a less ideological economic policy; and, towards the end of the decade, a stronger stand against the Darul Islam rebellions. The analysis of these dynamics, which call for
recurrent chronological back-and-forths, nevertheless delivers the message: when Masjumi was in power ‘[l]es impératifs du redressement économique, et surtout la fragilité des coalitions gouvernementales, ne lui [Masyumi] permirent pas de mettre en œuvre les principes islamiques dont il se voulait le porte-parole’ (p. 200).

Chapter four, titled ‘The fall’ (‘La chute’), looks into the defeat of Masjumi in the 1955 elections and the down-hill path that led to the eventual dissolution of the party in 1960. Madinier focuses on three points: the inability to create a majority in the Constitutional assembly, reflecting a decade of political fragmentation (true for nationalists, socialists, and Muslims alike); the lack of a clear strategy for government in Masjumi’s and NU’s campaigns, including the lack of references to an Islamic state; and the image of Masjumi as a ‘martyr de la démocratie’ (p. 224) as Soekarno turned a ‘Western’ parliamentary democracy (p. 233) into the guided democracy.

The last two chapters build on the previous four, addressing diachronically the two themes of ‘Governing in the name of Islam’ and ‘The ideal of an Islamic society’, from the 1930s until the 1960s. Madinier is not convinced of Masjumi’s religious-political intent and commitment. Pointing to the early writings of future Masjumi leaders in the colonial period, he skips the 1920s and focuses on the 1930s instead, a time when pragmatism had already taken over idealism in terms of the relation between Islam and government (pp. 282-5). Other examples are ‘une vision minimaliste du droit pénal musulman’ (p. 299), the gradual rapprochement of party intellectuals to the Pancasila (pp. 310-4), and the final victory of Muhammad Natsir’s strategy of a ‘Negara yang berdasar Islam’ versus Isa Anshary’s understanding of an Islamic state as ‘un État dans lequel l’État lui-même met en œuvre les Lois de l’Islam’ (pp. 336-7).

These considerations are meant to find support in chapter six, an odd fit as a last chapter since it goes into the details of Masjumi’s organizational structure. The party is here defined as ‘une nébuleuse’ (pp. 339, 356), with an ‘anarchique’ and dysfunctional structure (p. 357) and a wide cleavage between plans and actions (p. 362). Through an analysis of its organizational circles, Madinier reaches the conclusion that ‘[l’] ambition du Masjumi était en fait quelque peu différente de celle de ses organisations membres: diffuser les valeurs de l’Islam à l’ensemble de la société par des vecteurs non religieux (économiques, gouvernementaux, sociaux, culturels…)’ (p. 376).

The Epilogue links to his co-authored book with Andrée Feillard (already translated into English as The end of innocence?, published by NUS press, 2011), covering the legacy and various re-embodiments of Masjumi in the New Order and post-reformasi years.

The relation between religious nationalism and pan-Islamism is left untouched, creating a gap in the analysis of the party’s leaders’ ideological milieu: Masjumi’s leadership remains dichotomously identified as spear-
heading nationalism in the anti-colonial struggle, and opposed to the ‘nation-
alis’ in the post-independence years. There is much more in this book than what I have mentioned; this is a detailed history of the Masjumi experiment, its involvement in the shaping of Indonesia as a Republic and its effort to maintain that country’s democratic structures with a religious flavour. As reflected in Madinier’s account, these were not linear developments.

An English translation would make this key contribution available to a wider public, including those scholars and graduate students alike who grapple with the understanding of how an Islamic party, emerging from the organization that led the first structured anti-colonial movement (Sarekat Islam), managed to lose its political standing in the largest Muslim country in the world.

References

Feillard, Andrée and Rémy Madinier


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According to a recent analysis by the Brookings Institute, there are 141 so-called developing countries in the world today, of which 28 are ‘weak states’, 25 ‘critically weak’, and three ‘failed states’. Moreover, there are 25 other states with significant weaknesses in particular areas. In other words, the majority of the developing states are flawed in some serious way – at least according to conventional Western standards. Typically, a failed state is characterized by a corrupt and inept elite that withdraws to the capital area while warlords and terrorists appropriate the role of the state, at length causing instability in the larger region. While East Timor of today is not a failed state, it has certainly got its share of political, economic, and social problems as tellingly illustrated by the crises of 2006-2007. In the present study, Rod Nixon charac-
terizes East Timor as a New Subsistence State, meaning that it is a relatively recent political creation without a history of surplus generated and allocated by an administrative centre. In a New Subsistence State, there is not much workforce stratification, since the majority of the population is involved in subsistence agricultural production. The state has typically been achieved through the adoption of a non-indigenous statehood model (such as Western-style parliamentarian system) while society as a whole falls into the category that Max Weber once called ‘traditional authority’. Against this background Nixon presents two aims with his book. First, he wishes to provide an analytical study of governance in the various stages of East Timor’s history. And secondly, he envisages ways that the weak judiciary sector of the nation could take advantage of traditional conflict resolution in local society, and he links these levels with each other.

As a matter of fact, most of the text (chapters 2-6) consists of a lengthy historical background to the contemporary state of (or lack of) governance in East Timor. Nixon follows the thread from Portuguese colonial rule through the emergence of political factionalism in 1974-1975, the brutal Indonesian occupation in 1975-1999, the United Nations phase in 1999-2002, to the independent republic since 2002. His tone with regard to these five phases is sharply critical. The Portuguese had few resources or indeed incentives to develop the East Timorese economy or institutions of governance, incidentally making the territory an attractive destination for anthropologists in the late colonial era. Internal Timorese squabbles and callous Indonesian manoeuvring prepared the way for the tragic invasion of 1975. While there were some incentives for development in the economy, as well as in education, health care, and more, in the course of the Indonesian period, these efforts were woefully inadequate. Virtually all development indexes pointed out East Timor as the worst-off province of Indonesia in terms of infant mortality, life expectancy, and so on.

The period up to 1999 is based on second-hand sources, and may be more of a survey than an actual analysis. While I more or less agree about the indicated problems of Portuguese and Indonesian rule, it should be pointed out that the account is derived from literature in English; British writers have frequently held a condescending view of Portuguese colonialism which suggests a possible bias in the present study. While the list of references is quite comprehensive, with altogether 432 titles, a mere six are in Portuguese while Indonesian materials are restricted to some statistics. Original research conducted by Nixon in the post-Indonesian period has been used for the last chapter which is the analytical core of the book. Some apparent omissions occur; thus Nixon has not used Douglas Kammen’s important study of the historical background of the keladi (westerners) and firaku (easterners) when discussing the conflicts in 2006-2007.
Nixon’s assessment of the role of the state in present East Timor is not optimistic. The recently imposed democratic system has simply not been able to co-opt the highly localized agricultural society. Apart from the well-known political struggles that ushered in the Dili riots in 2006, there is a long list of key aspects where the fledgling republic has significantly failed to live up to its expectations. The infrastructure has not been developed to any degree, agricultural productivity remains very low, mass media is underdeveloped, and corruption is rife. Some of the worst problems, according to Nixon, concern the justice sector. The judiciary suffers from inept personnel and a formidable backlog of cases that lie waiting to be handled by the courts. In the last chapter, Nixon proposes that the state engages methods of conflict resolution traditionally used within the various *suco* (subunits of the old petty kingdoms). These have their roots in ritual beliefs and values of the kin-based local society, and include negotiations for compensation followed by reconciliation. The shortcomings of Portuguese and Indonesian rule left such localized methods as the only viable alternative among the sucos. As a matter of fact, these have been used in a number of contexts in the post-Indonesian period, most conspicuously when reintegrating former militias. A survey made by Edwin Urresta and Nixon indicates that the great majority of local key persons regarded the traditional way as ‘cheaper, more accessible, faster, less corrupt, more supportive of reconciliation between parties and easier to understand than the [official] courts’ (p. 183). In a New Subsistence State such as East Timor, an institutionalized connection between governmental courts and local ‘traditional’ bodies might have an important role in handling land disputes and family matters and to prevent conflicts from escalating. At the same time, the risk for inter-*suco* conflict and the situation of vulnerable groups such as women means that the traditional method must be monitored in an effective way.

Nixon’s study is important in pointing out possible ways of increasing stability on the local and regional levels in a nation where people’s allegiance is still often with the *suco* or ethnic group rather than the nation. It should be noted that his conclusions are not entirely new, since Sofi Ospina and Tanja Hohe (2001) have likewise indicated the need to make use of traditional power relations on the local level in the process of nation-building. For someone acquainted with the historiography of East Timor, part of Nixon’s work may feel somewhat redundant since the materials in the first half of the book, and the conclusions drawn from it, are largely found elsewhere. On the other hand it is a very handy reference to the history of governance in a still little understood island nation.
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Ospina, Sofi and Tanja Hohe


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The title of this book may be misleading because strictly speaking, Philippe Peycam has not written a history of Vietnamese political newspapers. The scope of his book is far beyond the limits of a town, Saïgon, and of a period of little more than a decade; it encompasses a professional milieu, a micro-society, and simultaneously a part of French colonial policy. For those reasons, it’s a valuable contribution to understanding the period.

The author describes a true media upsurge as well as the birth of public opinion, which were uncommon in the French imperial space. But it is not surprising that it happened in Cochinchina and specifically in Saïgon, since Cochinchina (as the French called it) or Lục Tỉnh (in Vietnamese administrative geography) had long been open to migrations and settlements. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in a declining Cambodian realm, the Chinese had preceded the Vietnamese and the French in conquering the country. At that time, Cochinchina was a frontier, open to foreign influences. But under French rule during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the country became not only a strategic base for economic activities but also a testing ground to experiment with the humanistic part of the colonial expansion: la mission civilisatrice.

The earliest printing house appeared in Saïgon, issuing the first newspaper in quốc ngữ (1865) and the schools were the first in Vietnam where quốc ngữ was taught. So the appearance of a sort of press corps (Làng Báo chí) there does not come as a great surprise. Albert Sarraut, who was twice Governor General and once Minister of Colonies, called on the local élite to collaborate with the
French in managing the country. Sarraut encouraged the expansion of the local press although he was concerned that the French would eventually lose control over the dissemination of printed information: ‘Les Annamites reçoivent la culture française et nous en acceptons les conséquences’ (Pourtalès 1931:35) The southern Vietnamese elite had begun to write newspapers in French as well as in quốc ngữ (as early as 1916, Philippe Peycam quotes 20 titles, pp. 281-2). The last ones started under the ownership or sponsorship of French liberals (often freemasons) like Paul Monin and Georges Garros, who colonials condescendingly called ‘annamitophiles’ because they sought to encourage and support a new social class trained by Frenchmen.

The turning point of the evolution of journalism took place in 1925-1926, when newspapers launched a campaign against the trial of Phan Bội Châu and the death of Phan Chu Trinh. The mourning of Phan Chu Trinh spawned big demonstrations throughout the country. Following this event, journalism adopted a new way to conduct political action: it became a tool for mobilizing masses of people. Returning from France in 1925, Nguyễn An Ninh broke new ground with two papers, La cloche fêlée and L’Annam. Though not a communist, he adopted agitprop methods and practiced a militant journalism, distributing leaflets in markets and other publics places. Ninh went still further by calling on youths to commit themselves to political action even through illegal deeds. This novelty coincided with the failure of Sarraut’s policy when governor general Alexandre Varenne surrendered to the ‘Wall of colonial fortress’ in 1927. It signalled that important changes were on the way.

The repercussions of that defeat became decisive in the 1930’s when Saigon journalism declared independence from French liberals’ support. It had swung to the left, becoming quite critical of the colonial regime, and in the process also revealed political cleavages within public opinion between radicals and reformists. Newspapers became tools of political agitation rather than merely expressing doctrines sympathetic to the colonial system, and this contributed to shifting the balance of power. Significantly, all the press used a unique transcription: quốc ngữ, while enriching it with new terminology. For instance, regarding political vocabulary, in La cloche fêlée, Phan Văn Trường published a serial translation of The communist manifesto from Marx and Engels. Meanwhile, Nguyễn Ai Quốc did the same in the Thanh Niên training school in Canton; while in Huế, Dao Duy Anh implemented a similar programme through his lexicographic works.

Philippe Peycam’s book is drawn from a PhD thesis, a scholarly work which required a careful reading and analysis of original archives, and in this book Peycam has perfectly respected the rules of academic research and writing. His book demonstrates that, in contemporary history, periodicals represent as valuable archives as the documents from State institutions. Since the author is familiar with quốc ngữ, he was able to read those documents and
understand their significance.

In conclusion, the novelty and interest of this book lies in Peycam’s capacity to intertwine factual narration with description to trace the evolution of a socio-professional milieu and analyse the political trends which ran through it. But the author does not content himself with a macrovision of his subject; he goes down to the level of individuals and he includes many biographical details about the most prominent actors of the Làng Báo chí, like Bui Quang Chieu, Nguyen Phan Long, Diep Van Ky, Tran Huy Lieu, Nguyen An Ninh, Phan Van Truong, Dejean de la Bâtie, Cao Van Chanh. Peycam has filled a historiographical gap in the field of the modern history of Viet Nam and of ‘une histoire partagée’.

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Harry Poeze’s book, Verguisd en vergeten: Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945-1949 (2007) has been translated into Indonesian in chronological order in five volumes. The work is not just a biography; it is also concerned on a national level with the revolution of Indonesia during the period of 1945-1949. Unlike other books which investigate bilateral and international aspects of the decolonization of Indonesia, Poeze’s puts greater focus on internal conflicts between groups in the country on which means to use in the fight against the Dutch: ‘armed conflict’ or ‘diplomacy’. Groups enforcing these methods could easily change sides, depending on how situations developed or on political opportunities arising.

Volume six reviewed here discusses the movement of the Partai Kommunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party) in Madiun in 1948. At the time, Tan Malaka had no significant role; the individual who stood out was Musso, who had just returned to Indonesia from Moscow via Czechoslovakia and
the Netherlands. Musso was a PKI leader who parted ways with Tan Malaka following the communist party’s insurgencies in 1926 and 1927. While Tan Malaka, out of disappointment, left Comintern, Musso gradually became the organization’s trusted agent. In 1935 he came back to Indonesia for a short period of time to revitalize the PKI. In writings on brochures he wrote under a pen name published at the time, Musso purposely and personally attacked Tan Malaka. In speeches he made in 1948, Musso accused Tan Malaka of being an ‘international criminal’ or a ‘Trotskyist’ (p. 211). He even made a statement that he would shoot his opponent to death if he had had the power (p. 48).

The book has two chapters: the process leading to conflict breakouts and the historiography of the Madiun Affair (1948-2010). Chapter two of the book has quite a lot of discussions on attempts made by the PKI to revise the story of the struggle over power in East Java. Reigning regimes in Indonesia since the beginning of the New Order have their own versions of history that hold the PKI as the mastermind behind the affair, but the works of Poeze published decades afterward provide arguments and data collected from and based on more convincing archives and interviews. The book even has a more comprehensive account of the death of Musso.

While the narration of the book deals more with communist movements in Indonesia, its illustrated pictures – ironically – show the leftist group as a victim of manslaughter. The only photograph supposedly depicting a violent act committed by members of the communist party turns out to be a wrong insert. The majority of caricatures on many pages of the publication discrediting the communist were taken from a book by Ramelan (1952), Perdjuangan Republik Indonesia dalam karikatur (Struggle of the Republic of Indonesia in pictures). Its publisher, Tintamas, was affiliated to Masyumi known for its stance against the PKI. It was suggested that the title was a sequential part of the ‘Sukiman Raid’ which took place in August 1951 aimed to arrest alleged members of the PKI during the administration of Prime Minister Sukiman. If balanced inclusion of caricatures was not possible, the author should have stated this openly.

Harry Poeze concluded that Musso served as a catalyst in his struggle and Madiun was more than an ‘Affaire’; however, a question remains as to whether it is correct to name it an ‘insurgence’? The English language describes similar events more accurately because it has a number of terms to correctly name them: mutiny, uprising, revolt, rebellion. Authors George Kahin, Ann Swift, and Kate McGregor use the term ‘uprising’ for Madiun.

As for Permesta (Piagem Perjuangan Semesta, Universal Struggle Charter), people refer to it as ‘rebellion’ as does Barbara Harvey (1977) in her book, Permesta: Half a rebellion. Or one may call it a ‘revolt’, the term also used by Amelia Joan Liwe (2010) in From crisis to footnote: The ambiguous Permesta revolt in post-colonial Indonesia. Hersri Setiawan differentiates a coup de ville from a coup d’état, and tends to put what happened in Madiun in the former category.
A new angle on history emerges in Poeze’s book: the story about the long march by the communists after their days-long attempt to take over the city of Madiun was successfully thwarted by the Siliwangi troops. Following their defeat, the leftists took a long march from Madiun to Klambu, a village near Semarang. It is interesting to compare it to the Chinese Long March from October 1934 to October 1935 by 90,000 communists over a distance of 10,000 kilometers from the Province of Jian Xi to Guizhou. An account by Himawan Soetanto (2009) tells us about the Siliwangi Long March (soldiers with no boots and no uniforms walking the paths on foot, heavy equipment loaded on carts, only a small number of officers riding horse-drawn carriages, no means of communications, relying only on messengers). In the Madiun affair, violent acts and killings resulted in a large number of casualties. But the question remains: did the massacre occur during the struggle over power in Madiun or during the long march?

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Islam translated is an important contribution to our understanding of the pivotal importance of textual networks in shaping societies across the littorals of Asia (and indeed beyond). This welcome monograph analyses the creation of an ‘Arabic cosmopolis’ from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. An immediate contribution of this monograph is its consideration of South and Southeast Asia within the same conceptual framework. This was a region that was diverse in every way, but which nevertheless shared a certain identity, set of religious beliefs, and body of circulating stories. Ricci examines Javanese, Malay, and Tamil texts and textual practices and demonstrates that they formed a coherent literary world. Within this region, and intimately linked to Islamization, conversion and translation were the two key and intertwined practices that produced this coherence.

‘Literary networks,’ writes Ricci, ‘were comprised of shared texts, including stories, poems, genealogies, histories, and treatises on a broad range of topics, as well as the readers, listeners, authors, patrons, translators, and scribes who created, translated, supported, and transmitted them’ (p. 2). To explore the role of literary networks in creating an Arabic cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia, Ricci focuses on the popular literary tradition of the Book of one thousand questions in its Tamil, Malay, and Javanese incarnations between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. This catechistic text relates how a Jewish leader and scholar converted to Islam through a dialogue with the Prophet Muhammad.

Ricci’s natural focus is Arabic, which was ‘the bearer of new stories, ideas, beliefs, scripts, and linguistic and literary forms’ (p. 3) in both South and Southeast Asia. Nor was this process one-way; Arabic was localized even as local languages were Arabicized (vocabulary, grammar, and syntax altered). The Book of one thousand questions was one of many vehicles by which this took place, and thus one of many lenses through which scholars can peer to understand this complex dynamic. Engagement with this text allowed Muslims distant from the Middle East to feel connected to the global community (umma). At the same time elements of this tradition were modified to make the story more relevant to particular places, times, cultures, and social needs. In a world where the same story circulated in multiple languages and scripts, localization and universalization were creative and constant dynamics.

Some fascinating transformations took place as this process of adaptation and localization progressed. For example, in Java a clear cluster of texts within the larger One thousand questions corpus moved away from the dialogic conversion framework of the original story to focus on teaching Sufi mystical doctrines. This took place in the late nineteenth century, when the rise of reformist Islam coupled with the fact that initial conversion to Islam was no longer a compelling issue, made interreligious competition between schools of Islam a much more immediate concern for Javanese Muslims. Some ver-
sions of the text highlight a distinction between Arab and Javanese knowledge, differing perceptions of what it meant to be a Javanese Muslim that over time became more important to resolve or confront.

Ricci’s book is a useful reminder of the complex ways in which languages interact. Arabic came to South and Southeast Asia in a variety of overlapping ways. Some texts remained in Arabic, others were juxtaposed with local languages, others subject of interlinear translations, and some glossed. The same fate befell individual Arabic words and phrases, which might be directly translated, interpreted in local languages, preserved in Arabic as sacred and untranslatable, or over time no longer even recognized as borrowed. In addition, Muslim communities in both regions adopted forms of the Arabic script to write their own spoken languages, which further entwined local cultures and identities with the larger Islamic community.

What is particularly fascinating about the Book of one thousand questions and the other similar texts that facilitated Islamization is the way these works defy simple categorization. In subject matter their expansiveness is impressive, and they span multiple genres. They construct an open-ended web of meanings and associations that act as bridges linking the local and the global in manifold ways. Ricci attributes much of their Islamizing power to the way in which they connected the familiar and the strange for believers by incorporating both pre-existing and novel words, titles, etymologies, motifs, phrases, temporalities, places, music, and other elements of the material world. The ability of texts as encompassing as the Book of one thousand questions to form parallels between local histories, frameworks, and ways of making meaning with those coming ashore from distant lands was critical in binding the cosmopolis together through shared associations and elements.

Given the broad, comparative framework of Islam translated, it is unrealistic to expect detailed case studies of how these dynamics worked themselves out in specific places and times. But given the tacking back and forth between the local and the regional that is typical of scholarship within the field, such attention to particulars is precisely what we now need. For example, how did the play of languages, texts, translation, conversion, and identity (among other thematic topics) unfold across the wide range of social hierarchies, political structures, and economic configurations that marked South and Southeast Asian worlds? Attention also needs to be given to the material world in which translation, conversion – and other language practices – takes place. Mosques, pesantren, pilgrimage sites, clothing, trade goods, money, and other aspects of the physical world in which interactions take place surely influenced the shape of the Arabic cosmopolis as well. But this is not to be construed as a criticism of the important work Ricci has done in this monograph. Islam translated is a valuable addition to the study of literary production, Islamization, and translation history, and offers us much to think about and
to think through. No doubt it will spur additional explorations of the Arabic cosmopolis to which we can look forward.


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It seems both apparent and uncontroversial that Western medicine cannot be reduced merely to a colonial weapon nor a proof of benevolence, that native populations were not merely guinea pigs for nor lucky recipients of Western medical blessings. But it is revealing to learn just how this deeply ambivalent generalization plays out in particular historical instances, and that is precisely what Sokhieng Au’s meticulous book has done. It once was thought that ‘the tyranny of public health and the tyranny of imperialism work neatly together’, but today most historians subscribe to Sokhieng Au’s view that ‘once medicine expands into the realm of public health or public hygiene, its implementation becomes a negotiation between collective good and individual freedom’ (p. 96). Nevertheless, in some cases Western policies certainly did pursue colonial interests. ‘Anti-colonial’ medical historiography begins from questioning the assumption (common even today among doctors) that whatever happened in the colonies, physicians’ and the medical establishment’s intentions were always good, and therefore their work remains valuable. Au’s book provides shocking insight into colonial hubris as well as medical callousness (and cluelessness), even from the illustrious Pasteur Institute.

Although French colonial rule of Cambodia lasted from 1863 to 1954, Au focuses on the period between 1907 (when the native medical service became operational) and 1940 (when the Vichy government ended), an era in which medical care expanded. Hospitals were erected, healthcare institutions and a legal framework were established, and French economic and political influence on the Cambodian countryside grew. But Au’s story begins in 1880, when the first vaccinators entered Khmer villages in what must have been a strange and fearful experience for locals. Often these health care providers were the first French people that the villagers had ever seen, and these strangers wanted to stick needles in them claiming it was for their own good. This often proved not to be the case. But according to Au, Khmers did not so
much distrust colonial, French, ‘non-Khmer’ vaccination; rather, they simply refused unknown, ineffective, and even dangerous treatments. Nevertheless, although French healthcare was often distrusted (especially by Cambodian women), French medicines in general were popular. One of the achievements of Mixed medicine is to show how Cambodian attitudes toward French medicine were complex and ambivalent.

Typically a Khmer relied upon his own medication before seeking a French doctor, who therefore often saw the worst patients, resulting in a rather high mortality rate, damaging his reputation. Au reveals the connections between colonial medicine and the European medical (r)evolution, and she highlights the importance of the colonial periphery in the colonial experience. For this she introduces the term ‘cultural insolubility’, which can ‘limit the diffusion of one culture through others, but this is driven in part by a tendency for people to stay within the enclaves of their own cultural thought worlds’ (p. 2), and this included both natural and supernatural elements (witchcraft, ghosts, astrology). Cultural differences, between the French and the Cambodians as well as between the Khmer and the former ruling Vietnamese, hindered the implementation of French medicine, for example in the 1900 French campaign against bacteria. But these were only the most obvious distinctions. Cambodia also has several ethnic groups, each with their own medical views and practices, further complicating the picture. Au offers nuanced perspectives, pointing out for example that French catholic nurses believed Vietnamese were more open than Khmer to adopting Christianity, and non-believing French physicians sometimes argued the nuns were more interested in ‘making angels’ than in healing their patients.

Simply put, the French medical system radically differed from the beliefs and traditions of many Cambodians, and so even well-intended policies often failed miserably. Mosquito nets to prevent malaria were a good idea, but the French did not provide the nets and Cambodians simply did not have the money to buy them. Another example of misguided policy was the attempt to turn a well functioning Khmer leprosy village into a model of French anti-leprosy policy by making it more ‘efficient’ and ‘rational’. Lepers (to whom Au rightfully dedicates an entire chapter) were dramatic and (often long) living proof of failed Western medicine. Deeply compounding these problems was the belief of French doctors that Cambodia was third best, while France of course was the top ranked and Vietnam came in second. Given all this, no one should be surprised by the misery caused by the French medical establishment, even when intentions were not overtly malicious.

In fact, French authorities sent few physicians to Cambodia: there were just four in 1907, and by 1939 out of a population of three million, this number had risen to a mere 29 Indochinese and nine French doctors, who typically held a military rank, regardless of whether they were employed by the Pasteur
Institute or the Assistance Médicale. This would seem to justify Cambodian perceptions of the close relations between French medicine and French colonial practices. Civilian doctors did eventually come to Cambodia, but they were often regarded as inferior by their military colleagues. And this attitude extended to Cambodian doctors who had been educated in Western medicine. They were paid less and were more severely punished for mistakes. Furthermore, ‘the ethnic categories constructed by the French’ only stoked Khmer doctors’ distrust of the colonial administration. As Au illustrates, ‘As an Indian among Indochinese, he was charged with the duties of a doctor. As an Indian among French medical staff, his presumed capabilities and duties diminished considerably.’ (pp. 72-3) In Khmer eyes, a doctor was someone who had proven he could heal, regardless of whether he had a degree, and a Khmer doctor was not only a healer but often as well a farmer, monk, or housewife. Khmer doctors were seen as part of society, while French doctors stood outside it.

All this does not mean French public health policy in Cambodia was a complete failure. Although not eradicated, yaws and smallpox substantially decreased. But a sweeping success of Western benevolence, it certainly was not. In an admirably nuanced way Au makes perfectly clear why. She looks at clashes between the French and the Khmer and between the Khmer and the Vietnamese, and she pictures cultural differences and socioeconomic problems severely compromising the implementation of healthcare policy. It indeed is ‘a story of how norms, institutions, geography, economics, and various other factors directly and indirectly affected’ the negotiations mentioned above, and a ‘history of men and women and how they have negotiated the multiplicity of their identities, ideas and actions’ (pp. 190-1).

There is in fact just one remark I want to make: it truly is a pity Au herself states that her book is ‘innovative’ (p. 1) and ‘more nuanced’ (p. 5) than other books on the subject of colonial medicine. One can only wonder why an author says about his or her own work that it ‘has approached medicine in a way that productive histories of medicine in ‘noncolonial’ settings do: by examining in both descriptive and theoretical depth the wider cultural framework of medical ideologies and practice’. (p. 188) Why downgrade other books? Why not leave judgments like these to readers? Her book is not in need of self-congratulation.

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Kobkua Suwannathat Pian’s latest book, like her *Kings, country and constitutions: Thailand’s political development, 1932-2000* (2003), charts the survival of kingship at a time when monarchies elsewhere were becoming extinct. Both these works describe in detail the vulnerability yet adaptability of Malay and Thai monarchies to modernization and democratic politics. In the case of Thailand, the principal threats were Western imperialism, faction fighting, and the military, while in Malaysia the autonomy of indigenous rulers was progressively pared by colonial rule, the Japanese occupation, and the independence movement led by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). As in *Kings, country and constitutions*, so in *Palace, political party and power* Kobkua examines not only the kings’ political predicaments but also their constitutional positions. Making no secret of her royalist sympathies, she argues that, despite the rapid turn-over of constitutions in Thailand, King Bhumibol fashioned a ‘Southeast Asian model of constitutional monarchy’ by dint of ‘his consistent hard work, dedication and devotion to win the hearts and minds of his subjects’ (p. 409). In Malaysia, by contrast, she shows how the independence constitution has proved more durable; it has underpinned the special position of Malays, the rights of non-Malays, and the socio-political status of the Malay Rulers.

*Palace, political party and power* begins with a brief discussion of the development of Malay kingship from the Melaka sultanate to the colonial period. Exposing the ‘misleading’ and ‘self-serving’ claims of early scholar-administrators that Malay rule was nothing but ‘oriental despotism’ (pp. 15-6), Kobkua argues that by the time of British intervention the principle of royal legitimacy had shifted from unquestionable divine right to personal competence and virtue. She then examines the reduction of monarchical power and authority under foreign rule (chapters 2 and 3). Between 1874 and 1941, the British stripped sultans and rajas of their power but endeavoured to embellish their status. The Japanese reduced them still further to ‘mere ordinary subjects of the Emperor’ (p. 122); by 1945 Malay Rulers were unable to offer protection to their subjects who in turn would ‘abandon their traditionally unquestioned loyalty and obedience to the Rulers’ (p. 110).

The shift in popular support from princes to politicians and the swings in their relative fortunes are the subject of the next four chapters. Chapter 4 pro-
vides an account of the restoration of British control in 1945 and the imposition of the Malayan Union which removed vestigial sovereignty from the Malay rulers and special status from the Malay people. This crisis in Anglo-Malay relations brought together sultans and tribunes of the people in an uneasy alliance which forced the British to abandon the Malayan Union and at the same time initiated a leadership competition between Malay elites. Kobkua declares 'round one' to have been 'a draw'. ‘The real contest’ got underway once the Malayan Union had been replaced by Federation in 1948. Dato Onn (founder-president of UMNO) promoted his claim to represent the Malays and the wider nation. Led by Sultan Badlishah of Kedah, the Rulers fought back. By the end of 1951 Onn had left UMNO and it ‘was clear that the colonial officials... would prefer to deal with the Rulers in matters concerning the future of Malaya than with UMNO or any other groups representing the Malayan masses’ (p. 226).

The hero of the rest of Kobkua’s story (chapters 6-8) is Tunku Abdul Rahman, whose own accounts form her principal source and whose biography she is currently writing. Between 1951 and 1957 the Tunku made UMNO ‘the undisputed champion of the Malays’ (p. 276), forged the Alliance of UMNO, the Malayan Chinese Association and the Malayan Indian Congress, won a landslide electoral victory, neutralised the political pretensions of the Malayan Communist Party, and controlled the independence negotiations. Kobkua sticks with the winners; apart from Dato Onn’s ventures with the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) and the Party Negara, alternatives to UMNO and the Alliance scarcely feature. Though himself the son of a sultan, the Tunku was mistrusted by the Rulers, as Onn had been. When independence approached, however, he won them over by guaranteeing them a position in postcolonial Malaya that ‘was much more meaningful politically, and more honored and esteemed socially than ... they had ever enjoyed during ... colonial rule’ (p. 319). The Tunku’s successors, however, were less inclined to accommodate the whims and failings of self-indulgent and politically myopic Rulers, and Dr Mahathir clipped their wings. More recently a new generation of enlightened royals has been attempting to rejuvenate the Malay monarchy and, Kobkua suggests, at a time of political uncertainty and corruption, Malaysians may come to place greater trust in the ‘just king’ (chapters 8 and 9).

The primary sources used for this study are British government papers at the National Archives at Kew and the English-language press. The former are cited less frequently as the narrative moves beyond the early 1950s and, in any case, have already been scoured by scholars. The Arkib Negara Malaysia appears in the bibliography but none of its specific holdings is listed. The author acknowledges the copious secondary literature but does not fully engage with it. A long footnote on publications about the Briggs Plan is confined to works by Harry Miller, Noel Barber, and Margaret Shennan (p. 305). More to the point, there is no mention of Joseph M. Fernando’s The making
of the Malayan constitution (Fernando 2002). Welcome too would have been some discussion of the impact of A.C. Milner’s work and Simon C. Smith’s defining monograph (Smith 1995), which covers much the same ground as this book. Apart from a footnote on page 127 where Kobkua takes issue with Smith’s assessment of the Japanese impact on the Malay Rulers, she does not indicate the ways in which her research differs from or adds to his conclusions with respect to the colonial period.

While the general argument is clear enough, it is encumbered by detail, raw information, and a tendency to cover the same ground several times. One also encounters loose ends: where, for example, is the IMP manifesto referred to on pages 291 (notes 17 and 18) and 300 (note 35)? Minor errors include: the date of the Johor Constitution (it was 1895, not 1894, pp. 64 and 66); the declaration of the Emergency (June, not December, 1948, p. 285); the identity of the secretary of state who visited Malaya in August 1954 (Lennox-Boyd not Lyttleton, p. 270). Misspelled names include, among the actors, Attlee, Braddell, Cunliffe-Lister, Bloomfield Douglas, Gammans, Gater, Lyttleton, and, among the authors, Noel Barber, Niall Ferguson, F.A. Trindade. Finally, it should be noted that The Malayan Union controversy by Albert Lau is incorrectly attributed to this reviewer (p. 439).

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The Padri War in West Sumatra (1817-1838) marked a critical turning point in the history of the Netherlands East Indies, a moment in which Dutch soldiers not only defeated an Islamic-inspired resistance movement, but also began the process of consolidating control beyond Java in what they called the Buitenbezittingen, or ‘Outer Possessions’. As an early example of conflict between Muslims and Europeans, the Padri War has commanded considerable attention in the extant historiography. Scholars including Christine Dobbin (1983), Nikki Keddie (1994) and Jeffrey Hadler (2008) have all done excellent work describing the internal dynamics of local Minangkabau society that gave rise to war in West Sumatra, demonstrating how the advent of coffee cultivation upended traditional social relations rooted in matriarchy and fueled the rise of the Padri movement as a vehicle for protest and religious purification. This local struggle, tantamount to a civil war, in turn provided the Dutch regime with an opportunity to intervene. By 1838, colonial troops had vanquished most of the resistance and established West Sumatra as their preeminent foothold in the greater Sumatran region.

While the extant literature commendably emphasizes the internal dynamics within Minangkabau society that drove conflict, this emphasis has also had the side effect of relegating the Dutch military in the Indies, which was officially reorganized as the Royal Netherlands Indies Army in 1830, to the background. Much about the conduct of battle during the Padri War remains understudied. For example, what tactics did Dutch soldiers employ to combat Padri rebels and to what extent did it welcome indigenous soldiers into its ranks? How did the Padris and other Minangkabau manage to fend off a presumably better-trained, better-equipped colonial foe for two decades? What sort of challenges stymied the Indies Army on their path to victory? Into this lacunae steps Gerke Teitler, a prominent Dutch military historian, with his fine-grained study *Op het koloniale oorlogpad*. Drawing upon a wealth of archival material from the National Archives of the Netherlands, Teitler provides a comprehensive account of the battles and personalities involved in fighting the war, as well as the attendant logistical considerations and decision-making processes. Additionally, Teitler breaks new ground by situating the Padri War in the context of another struggle which pit European expansionists against Muslim rebels, the Russian war of conquest in Chechnya and Dagestan (1817-1859).

One of the greatest strengths of this book is its description of the sheer enormity of the logistical obstacles confronting the Dutch when staging a war far removed from their colonial base in Java. As Teitler explains, Dutch military planners faced a daunting array of practical challenges, from supplying a sufficient number of troops to finding enough ships to transport those soldiers from Java to Sumatra. Overlapping conflicts, such as the Java War of 1825-30 and the Belgian Revolution of 1831, required significant resources. After the Java War concluded, moreover, the empire needed sufficient strength to
secure Java from rival European powers like the British. At a more basic level, Teitler reveals how the Dutch also struggled to move troops across the seas. The preponderance of Dutch naval ships was designed mainly for offensive naval manoeuvres and lacked substantial capacity for carrying troops. To the extent that specialized transport ships did exist in the fleet, they were limited. As a result, the Dutch had to rely heavily on expensive private ships.

Once these troops arrived in West Sumatra, as Teitler illustrates, the logistical problems only multiplied. To reach the highland centre of Padri resistance from the coastal plain, Dutch troops needed to scale very steep mountain passes and clear dense tracts of forest to build roads that could facilitate heavy artillery. This infrastructure, in turn, required an extensive amount of corvée labor—a tactic which further alienated the local population. The transportation of military supplies further distracted soldiers from their main job of fighting. In addition to transport needs, Teitler also points out that Dutch soldiers struggled not only to fend off illness and tropical diseases with rudimentary medical facilities, but also to bring the injured back from the battle field to medic stations. All of these complications, Teitler argues, substantially hindered Dutch military progress.

Beyond illuminating these logistical issues, another important strength of this book lies in its dismantling of the notion that the Dutch colonial and military regime constituted a monolithic entity. Teitler deftly demonstrates how the range of competing interests, agendas, and personalities produced friction in the Dutch establishment. Although ultimate civil and military authority in West Sumatra was vested in the Office of the Resident in the capital city of Padang, military commanders on the ground often pursued their own strategies with little regard for orders from above. In particular, officers in the field often chafed at the preference of the residents for caution and negotiation over more aggressive offensive action. Resident C.P.J. Elout, the high-born son of a former Minister of the Colonies, clashed repeatedly on this issue with one of his leading battle commanders, Vermeulen Krieger, an officer without formal schooling whom he regarded as a vechtersbaas (hooligan) (p. 81). A few years later, the Governor-General in Batavia openly wondered whether another commander, Lieutenant Colonel Bauer, would even seek the consent of the Elout’s successor, E. Francis, before making an attack. Sometimes, moreover, civilian and military authorities reversed their positions with respect to aggressive action. In 1836, Lieutenant Colonel Bauer warned that a frontal assault on Padris of Bondjol was hopeless, as the enemy would simply decamp to one of the innumerable other kampong villages in the region. In opposition to the Resident who wanted to accelerate offensive action, Bauer thus despaired of the possibility that any military campaign could be successful. These rifts, according to Teitler, impeded the ability of the Dutch to mount a consistent and sustained policy against the Padri rebels.
Even more striking than divisions among leading Dutch administrators, however, was the inclusion of a diverse range of indigenous Indonesian inhabitants within the rank-and-file of the ‘colonial’ Indies Army. Throughout the Padri struggle, Teitler reminds his readers that the number of Indonesian auxiliary troops vastly exceeded the number of Dutch or other European regulars, sometimes by a ratio of as much as four to one, or twelve thousand versus three thousand in mid-1833. The composition of these supporting indigenous troops, moreover, exhibited tremendous variegation. In addition to recruits from the Minangkabau villages that had opposed the Padris, Teitler shows how these auxiliary corps also drew upon Batak ex-slaves liberated from their Padri captors, non-Muslims from Nias or Ambon, and Muslim communities in Java. Among these Javanese Muslims, Dutch authorities even permitted former antagonists from the Java War who had since made peace with colonial rulers, such as the Legion of Sentot, to join their forces during the West Sumatran struggle. While these Indonesian auxiliary troops sometimes caused problems for Dutch commanders, as when liberated slaves sought revenge against their erstwhile captors or Muslims from Java threatened to make common cause with Padri co-religionists, there was no denying their integral contribution to the war-effort. Teitler thus does an excellent job of showing how even midst the crucible of battle, the boundaries between European colonizers and the indigenous colonized could be quite permeable.

The one place that Teitler perhaps could go further is in exploring the racial dimension of the encounter with indigenous troops in the Indies Army. Although Teitler does acknowledge that military commanders exaggerated the shortcomings of their Indonesian auxiliaries, he also sometimes echoes their complaints about the propensity of indigenous soldiers to abandon the battlefield too early, allow corruption in their ranks, and indulge in vengeful looting or arson. It would have been interesting for Teitler to subject these claims to further scrutiny and interrogate how discourses of race may have mediated these assessments of Indonesian capabilities, perhaps affecting the ability of a diverse Indies Army to function as a coherent fighting entity.

These minor shortcomings notwithstanding, Teitler makes an excellent contribution to our understanding of the Padri War, helping to elucidate the complexities and challenges involved in waging a war on such a distant place. Teitler adds immeasurably both to our awareness of disputes within the Dutch decision-making apparatus and to incredible racial and ethnic diversity within the lower ranks. Beyond what was mentioned in this review, Teitler also provides myriad details about the strategies employed in individual battles, the types of weapons deployed, and the nature of defensive fortifications used by the Padris. Furthermore, Teitler devotes a significant amount of time to comparing the Padri War with Russian military campaigns in the Caucasus borderlands, demonstrating, among other things, how the physical
proximity of the battle theater to the Russian heartlands prevented Czarist troops from needing to rely on local recruits as much as the Indies Army did. In sum, Teitler’s *Op het koloniale oorlogspad* offers an important addition to the study of West Sumatran history and comparative colonial warfare.

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Dit boek sluit aan op de eerder verschenen studie van Gerard Termorshuizen (2001) over de geschiedenis van de Indisch-Nederlandse pers in de negentiende eeuw. In dit vervolgdeel komt de twintigste eeuw aan bod, meer precies de periode van 1905 tot aan het begin van de Japanse bezetting. Beide werken zijn primair encyclopedisch van opzet: het leveren van een zo volledig mogelijke persgeschiedenis voor de besproken periode. Zoiets vergt een grondige voorbereiding, en men kan niet anders dan bewondering hebben voor de vasthoudendheid en aandacht waarmee Termorshuizen en zijn medewerkster Anneke Scholten de vele duizenden pagina’s hebben doorgenomen van de honderden dagbladen die jaar in jaar uit in wisselende samenstelling in Nederlands-Indië zijn verschenen. Ook in dit nieuwe boek is de weerslag daarvan terug te vinden. De schrijver demonstreert een superieure beheersing van zijn onderwerp, en zijn bevindingen worden gepresenteerd in heldere zinnen en
met oog voor detail, dat alles gevat in een overzichtelijk kader.

In een korte inleiding wijst de auteur op de toenemende spanningen tussen Indonesische en Nederlandse nationalisten in het besproken tijdperk, die hun weeslag vonden in de dagbladpers. Binnen dit bredere thema gaat zijn aandacht uit naar de Nederlandstalige pers, de organisatie daarvan en de rol van de journalisten als opinieleiders. Onder hen signaleert hij twee hoofdrichtingen, te weten de realisten die streefden naar begrip voor en aanpassing aan de nieuwe ontwikkelingen en de reactionairen, die de hakken in het zand sloegen en niets wilden weten van toegeven aan de wensen van de Indonesische nationalisten. Hiermee ontstond een spanningsveld dat nader wordt uitgewerkt in een Algemeen Overzicht van ruim 300 bladzijden, waarin de kopstukken van Indische pers worden besproken vanuit hun onderlinge discussies en rivaliteiten. Vanaf dit moment zijn zij goede bekenden voor ons, en een lezer met weinig tijd tot zijn beschikking zou het hierbij kunnen laten.

Echter, dan mist hij veel. Bij het schrijven van dit analytisch opgezette Algemeen Overzicht konden de bij het brede onderzoek opgedane bevindingen maar gedeeltelijk worden verwerkt. Om te voldoen aan de eisen van volledigheid bleef het nodig het totaal der resultaten ook afzonderlijk te verwerken. Dit gebeurt in een ‘Beschrijving van de kranten’, die alweer ruim 300 bladzijden in beslag neemt. Hierin passeren meer dan honderd grotere en kleinere kranten de revue, volgeschreven door een kleine kern van enkele tientallen hoofdredacteuren, samen met een grote groep van kleinere goden. De ups en downs van deze kranten kan vooral worden toegeschreven aan de inbreng van deze individuen, en het is daarom goed te begrijpen dat de schrijver het nodig achtte om in een afzonderlijk hoofdstuk de belangrijkste kopstukken nog eens systematisch de revue te laten passeren. Tenslotte worden de puntjes op de i gezet met een uitvoerig notenapparaat en uitvoerige indices van feiten en personen. Alles bij elkaar levert dit een boeiend leesboek op en vormt het tegelijk een onmisbaar naslagwerk voor iedereen die met dit onderwerp te maken krijgt. Bovendien maakt het eens temeer duidelijk hoezeer het centrum van het culturele leven van de Indische Nederlanders op Java lag. De kranten daar bepaalden de toon van het geheel, al vormde Sumatra een goede tweede, met Medan als centrum.

De rest van de archipel bungelt er wat achteraan, al is goed dat Termorshuizen ook hier naar volledigheid heeft gezocht. De berichten uit de *Makassaarsche Courant* en *Ambon Vooruit* blijken meestal niet verder te gaan dan wat lokale bijzonderheden en de nieuwtjes van de dag, maar dan weet je die tenminste ook. De drang tot volledigheid die de encyclopedist siert blijkt verder uit de afsluitende paragraaf over de naoorlogse jaren tot 1958. Dit gebeurt onder de omineuze titel van ‘Grafschrift’, wat enigszins overbodig ook nog eens als ‘laatste stuiptrekking’ geschetst wordt. Dat is wellicht begrijpelijk vanuit de opvattingen van de auteur die weinig waardering kan
opbrengen voor de toen vanuit Nederland gevoerd politiek, maar niettemin onbevredigend. ‘Jede Epoche ist unmittelbar zu Gott’, om Von Ranke nog maar eens te citeren, en dat geldt ook voor deze periode. Ook hier is de beschikbare pers op zichzelf genomen een belangrijke bron voor geschiedenis van deze periode. Zij geeft niet alleen zicht op de verwerking van de dramatische ontwikkelingen door de Nederlanders in Indië, maar laat ook wat zien van de ontwikkelingen in de Indonesische wereld. Het is goed dat Termorshuizen hiermee in ieder geval een voorzetje geeft, maar beter nog is dat hij kan aankondigen dat Angelie Sens van plan is om dit onderdeel nog eens grondiger aan te pakken in een afzonderlijke studie.

Uiteraard staan in dit werk de kranten centraal, niet alleen als object van beschrijving maar ook als heuristisch instrument. Andere bronnen zijn hooguit summier geraadpleegd. Deze aanpak is begrijpelijk, maar heeft ook zijn beperkingen. Hij brengt de lezer licht in de verleiding te denken dat de opiniemakers ook de politieke leiders waren. Termorshuizen vertoont de neiging om deze lijn te volgen, waardoor het beeld van conservativisme van het vooroorlogse Indië dat de meeste van deze kranten eigen was, nog eens sterker wordt aangezet dan nodig is. De raakvlakken tussen pers, publieke opinie en gevoerd beleid zijn niet steeds goed uitgewerkt, en dan ligt misverstand om de hoek. Zo geeft de auteur op pp. 252-3 in bevolgen zinnen een weergave van een in 1931 gevoerde discussie naar aanleiding van een pleidooi in het ethische tijdschrift De Stuw voor indonesianisering van het onderwijsstelsel. Hij laat zien dat dit bij veruit het grootste deel van de pers in het verkeerde keelgat schoot omdat dit met name nadelig zou zijn voor de ‘kleine Indo’. Tot zover terecht, maar het is onjuist wanneer hij daaraan toevoegt, dat dit voorstel nooit in overheidsbeleid is geresulteerd. In feite was het een uitvloeiSEL van het al in 1916 geïntroduceerde unificatiebeginsel waarbij bepaald werd dat bij gelijke betrekkingen gelijk loon betaald werd, en dat met het Besluit Bezoldiging Landsdienaren van 1925 formeel regeringsbeleid was geworden. Het valt bij zo’n passage ook op dat de schrijver zich hierbij uitsluitend baseert op de Java Bode en het Soerabajasch Handelsblad, en daarbij het artikel in De Stuw ongelezen laat, evenals de daarover in historische kring sinds 1981 gevoerde discussie.

Lezing van dit boek versterkt de wens naar een vergelijkbaar werk over de Indonesische pers. Het huidige boek laat iets zien van de reacties in de Nederlandstalige pers op wat er aan Indonesische zijde gebeurde, maar hoe de zaken andersom lagen blijft grotendeels onbesproken. Dat zou het hier gekozen bestek ook ver te boven zijn gegaan. Toch zijn hier wel mogelijkheden, al was het alleen al door de grote hoeveelheid Indonesische kranten die in de collecties in Nederland en Indonesië liggen opgeslagen. Daarbij zal dan niet alleen de Nederlands-Indonesische relatie van belang zijn, maar ook de vraag naar het bredere belangstellingsveld van de Indonesische wereld.
Daarmee kan wellicht een nieuwe dimensie worden toegevoegd aan onze kennis van de Indonesische geschiedenis. Wellicht ligt hier een mooie mogelijkheid voor de Nederlandse instituten die onlangs te kennen hebben gegeven te willen werken aan de revitalisering hiervan. De studie van Termorshuizen biedt daarvoor een inspirerend model.

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What are the benefits of integrating the history of medicine into the political history of Indonesia? _Memoirs of Indonesian doctors and professionals 2_ recounts the history of medical education in post-independent Indonesia through the stories of 10 Chinese Indonesian physicians during the mid and late-1960s during the transition from the Soekarno to the Soeharto era. The contributors collectively investigate the events that precipitated the G30S incident (30 September 1965) that led to the killing of six Indonesian army generals and the subsequent mass killings and violent repression of alleged communists under the New Order Regime of President Soeharto.

The Dutch model of free study emphasised individualised study for the annual examinations which were conducted orally and could be taken whenever the student felt adequately prepared. This model was adopted by the medical and dental faculties in Jakarta prior to 1955, while in Surabaya, the free study curriculum continued until 1959. As a consequence, only a few students managed to graduate as physicians or dentists. John Liem was one dentist out of seven who graduated from the dental school in Surabaya under the free study curriculum in 1954 (pp. 56-7). Soon after graduation, Liem, along with other newly-graduated dentists, was forced to work for the government
for three years as Indonesia faced an acute shortage of physicians and dentists, particularly in the Outer Islands such as Sumatra. During his first assignment in Padang, Central Sumatra (1955-59), Liem had to use his ingenuity to adapt to a variety of challenges, especially, the frequent power failures that hindered the dental treatment and shortages of essential equipment (p. 58). Between 1959 and 1965, he worked as a dentist with the Indonesian army. In his memoirs he recollected that in 1965, due to the prevailing political tension – the differences between the Partai Kommunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party), the Nationalists and the Indonesian military and suspected Chinese support for the communists – discrimination against the Chinese was widespread (p.60). Soon after the G30S incident, Liem was detained as a political prisoner due to his indirect involvement in the educational activities of the Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia (BAPERKI, Indonesian Citizenship Consultative Body). This organization, which was the largest Chinese sociopolitical organization in Indonesia, was dissolved post-G30S due to its suspected links with the PKI. Soon after the political situation in Indonesia stabilized, Liem and his immediate family emigrated to the US.

Tan S. Hien graduated from the medical school at Universitas Indonesia (UI) in 1958 under the free study model. From 1958-61, the Indonesian Ministry of Health assigned him as a physician to the Lemah Abang pilot health project, which was financed by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) in Jakarta and was designed to explore cost-effective solutions to the problem of primary healthcare in Indonesia. During his visits to the Lemah Abang project, Hien observed the poor attendance at the clinics. Paramedics attached to the project earned bribes treating villagers and forbade the latter from consulting physicians for fear of losing their supplementary income (p. 138). During the early1960s, when Hien was appointed as the personal physician to President Soekarno, he observed that despite the increasing anti-Chinese sentiments in Indonesia, the upper echelons of Indonesian society continued to associate with the Chinese (p. 142). As Hien was able to access confidential information issued to President Soekarno, he attributed the G30S incident to a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) plot to overthrow the government by instigating a rumour that the President was very ill and that some members of the army were planning to seize power from him (p. 144). After PKI leader Dipa Nusantara Aidit was alleged to have killed six army generals, mass retaliatory killings of suspected Communist Party sympathizers ensued (pp. 144-5). As Hien was close to President Soekarno, he was interrogated by the Minister of Justice regarding Soekarno’s role in the G30S and was socially ostracized. In June 1968, Hien emigrated to the US.

Sutisna Himawan was one of the first physicians to graduate under the American-inspired guided study model which was implemented through a programme affiliating the UI medical school with the University of California,
San Francisco in 1955. The guided study model, which advocated cohort-based rather than individualized learning and written examinations, was introduced in the UI medical school to facilitate the timely graduation of physicians (p. 33). Himawan recollects that he had difficulty following English, faring better in multiple-choice tests than in essay-type examinations (p. 34). During the vacations, he participated in a Chinese student-led organization at the UI medical school (Sing Ming Hui) that conducted cholera, typhoid and paratyphoid vaccinations in various schools in Jakarta (p. 33). Prior to his graduation in 1961, he was appointed to the staff of the Department of Anatomical Pathology and was certified as a clinical pathologist in 1969. During the G30S, the Sing Ming Hui was disbanded briefly due to its leftist leanings.

Although there is a growing body of Indonesian historians researching the memoirs of political prisoners to reconstruct the political violence that occurred in Indonesia during 1965-66, the role of physicians in post-independent Indonesia, particularly in the G30S incident, remains unexplored in the extant historiographical literature. The Memoirs of Indonesian Doctors and Professionals 2 deserves to be appreciated as a primary repository of historical evidence for scholars investigating political violence in Indonesia during 1965-1966. The numerous typos and the work’s disorganized chronology should not deter the serious historian from consulting these memoirs.


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I was sceptical when I was asked to read Tomomi Ito’s *Modern Thai Buddhism and Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*, not because of the quality of her work, but because of the subject. The life and teachings of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu have been discussed extensively by others and I saw no reason to revisit this subject. I was wrong. I read her book with much enthusiasm and delight. It is the most thorough study of one of Southeast Asia’s most influential Buddhist teachers and public intellectuals. It is clearly a different approach from the previous work by Peter Jackson, Donald Swearer, and Louis Gabaud (works that I know very well and saw no reason to improve upon). It will also make a significant contribution to the history of twentieth century Theravada Buddhist intellectual history. Moreover, it will offer, for the first time, an honest,
non-hagiographical, study of Buddhadāsa, which exposes not only the complexity, but also the inconsistency of his teachings. Instead of merely lauding Buddhadāsa’s liberalism and openness to the West as was done by many previous scholars and enthusiasts, it shows that Buddhadāsa was often rash and reactionary. In most cases, Ito’s arguments are backed up with sufficient evidence. She turns up previously underutilized sources like letters, diaries, interviews, and government and private foundation reports, and writes in a clear and engaging style. This book will have a wide appeal for students of Buddhism, Thai Studies scholars, students of modern Buddhist history, and those interested in Orientalism and Public Culture.

Specifically, Tomomi Ito’s book makes four important contributions to the field. First, through interviews with his followers and most importantly his brother, Dhammadasa, she shows that Buddhadāsa was not the peacemaker and tempered intellectual he has been made out to be. Indeed, she shows that he often dragged his feet on reform, and unnecessarily attacked his opponents in public, which triggered dissension in the Sangha. This was seemingly done, not to promote reform, but to promote his own, often vague, ideas about the origins and ‘true’ practice of the dhamma. Her study of his public speeches, his letters, and his relations to elites in the Buddhist Association of Thailand and other groups shows that Buddhadāsa was not as consistent with his views as is often portrayed. Moreover, she shows that although Buddhadāsa promoted himself as a simple country monk from Suratthani, he was actually from a very wealthy Sino-Thai trading family whose parents had the ability to send him and his brother to the most elite high schools and universities in Bangkok. Second, her use of Habermas’s theory of Public Culture, while remaining a bit underdeveloped in the introduction, enables her to focus on the interchange between religious and political intellectuals in Bangkok and surrounding central provinces (as well as Wat U Mong in Chiang Mai). This is one of the most understudied aspects of modern Thai history. We know very little about the ways in which new religious ideas circulated among the elite and how they used print media, the radio, and public speeches. We also know very little about the history of modern Buddhist magazines, lay elite Buddhist reading and reform groups, and the sources of elite funding for modern Buddhist movements. Her book contributes much to this history far outside of just those movements that influenced Buddhadāsa’s life. I found fascinating her discussion of the Buddhist Association, and movements/ideologies of Narin, Bunmi, Upasika Ki, Naep, Kittivuddho, Pun, and Kukrit Pramoj, among others. Third, she has written the clearest and indeed one of the only studies of modern Abhidhamma movements to date. Chapter five is a goldmine of information. Although she did not cite recent articles by Kelley Meister (2009) and others which might have added much to her work, she provides the first good study of the Abhidhamma Jotika School (a
place I studied at and have written about), as well as revealing the tensions between certain lay intellectual groups, Burmese Abhidhamma teachers, rival monastic schools, and Buddhadāsa on the topic of the proper approach to the Abhidhamma. Fourth, she provides the first examination of Buddhadāsa’s work with women. She shows that Buddhadāsa dragged his feet on bhikkhuni reform, that he ignored Narin’s early ordination movement for women, and that he came to seriously think about women’s practice only after his sister’s illness in the last few years of his own life. Other contributions include a better study of Zen’s influence on Buddhadāsa than has been offered before, as well as the inconsistency of Buddhadāsa’s understanding of Marxism.

There are a few problems with the book, however. She claims that Buddhadāsa studied ‘ancient scripture’ and the ‘tipitaka’. But she seems to take Buddhadāsa’s word for it mainly through the interviews conducted by Phra Pracha even though there is no evidence given for what he studied specifically. Moreover, the statistics she cites from Phra Maha Thongsup (p. 19) seem dubious, and even if they are true they show that the educational reform was centered on the elite. In particular, she should have questioned Buddhadāsa’s recounting of these early encounters with Pali education in Bangkok. He seemed to be embarrassed from failing his fourth level exams. She glosses over some critical points when she writes that Buddhasasa ‘decided to return home in Chaiya in order to start to follow a direction that he believed to be correct’ (p. 33). He failed his studies. The decision was made for him. If we read between the lines, observe that he used the pen name ‘parien dek’, and railed against these exams, we can safely assume that he was overreacting to his own embarrassment. The first chapter on his youth and first forays into public intellectual life need to be questioned. Ito allows Buddhadāsa, through Phra Pracha’s interview, to create his own hagiography. In other chapters she questions his hagiography very well, but in chapter one she isn’t up to the task.

Another problem concerns her reflections on Buddhist modernity. While her focus on public life is novel and intriguing, she does not effectively engage with recent books on Buddhist modernism. For instance, she could have consulted Anne Hansen’s How to behave (2007), Michael Charney’s Powerful learning (2006), Penny Edwards’s Cambodge (2007), and recent work by Thomas Borchert (2008) and Jovan Maud (2008). This might have added some depth and sophistication to her argument in the introduction and placed her work in more direct conversation with her colleagues outside of Australia and Japan. I appreciate her astute reading of Shawn McHale’s Print and Power (although unfortunately, his name is misspelled in the bibliography). Ito’s book is an excellent compliment to McHale’s work on Buddhism in early twentieth century Vietnam.

Over all, this is an exacting and important contribution to the study of Buddhist intellectual and social history, Buddhist modernity, and the rise of
public culture in Thailand. It would make a wonderful addition to courses on modern Southeast Asian history and religion, and forces scholars to rethink the way they have read the work of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu.

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Geoff Wade and Li Tana (eds), Anthony Reid and the study of the Southeast Asian past. Singapore: ISEAS, 2012, xv+400 pp. ISBN 9789814311960, price: USD 42.90 (paperback); 9789814311977, USD 55.00 (e-book).

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This book honours Anthony Reid at the occasion of his retirement from the Asian Research Institute in Singapore where he was a founding father. Tony Reid belongs to the great historians of Southeast Asia who did – and still does – innovative and stimulating research ranging from the history of seismology
in Early Modern History to the histories of revolutions and nationalism. A wonderful academic organizer and institution builder, and an unparalleled networker who demonstrates a deep commitment to numerous places including Aceh, he also has a perfect sense of timing in putting certain topics on the academic agenda. When people with such an impressive track record retire, they certainly deserve a book that does justice to their many-faceted talents. Geoff Wade and Li Tana did their best and succeeded to a large extent.

In Part I the editors offer a biographical sketch of Reid’s life and work, which brought him from New Zealand to England, Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, California, Singapore, and back to Australia and reviews briefly his chief intellectual interests, his main publications, and his institutional legacy. In Part II Robert Cribb looks at Indonesian perceptions of the past which tend to be perceived as sources of menace, threat, and failure. Against the backdrop of these pessimistic views he analyses Reid’s scholarship, which holds promises of what the future can be. Part III contextualizes Southeast Asia in a wider world. Victor Lieberman summarizes the main themes of his impressive two volume magnum opus on Southeast Asian history; Wang Gungwu investigates to what extent the comparison between the South Chinese Sea and the Mediterranean makes sense, which also involves the waxing and waning of Chinese influences in the region; an interesting essay by the late Denys Lombard on changing ideas of space and time – previously published in *Annales*; and Ann Kumar investigates westward Austronesian to Madagascar. Each of these essays illustrates that Southeast Asian history can only be understood in a wider framework of global connections.

Part IV offers a rich collection of essays on the history of Early Modern Southeast Asia. Geoff Wade continues his path-breaking research on the ‘China-connection’ by focusing on Chinese migrations and processes of Islamization in the fourteenth century – a topic which was for a long time a taboo in Indonesia. Pierre-Yves Manguin shows that the Mediterranean galleys were used as models for warships in Aceh; Jim Warren shows to what extent the Manila galleon trade with Mexico was threatened by typhoons; Barbara and Leonard Andaya trace both the history and long term impact of ‘peranakan’ Portuguese in Eastern Indonesia; the late Ishii Yoneo left a note on the Cham diaspora in Ayutthaya; and Li Tana offers new insights in the economic development of the Tongkin basin in the seventeenth century by concentrating on the export of silk and the import of copper and silver which was channeled to the village level.

Part V consists of three chapters covering modern Southeast Asia. Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells focuses on Hadrami migrations to the Malay world and shows how these migrants successfully adapted themselves to local conditions and managed to make important political careers. Robert Elson evaluates the problematic relationship between Islam and nationalism in Indonesia and
argues that Islamic organizations failed to make a successful turn towards nationalism, and so did not offer secular politicians room to manoeuver. Koizumi Junko looks at Chinese communities in Bangkok in the early twentieth century and the contested economic and political nature of major shrines.

Compared to the previous chapters in Early Modern History this part is somewhat orphaned and hardly does justice to Reid’s important work on nationalism and revolution. Perhaps the editors should have concentrated on Early Modern History and added a few leading themes. Nevertheless, this is a rich book, which also reveals that Tony Reid has no inclination to retire from the field which he helped to shape during a long and impressive career.


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This edited volume provides a useful overview of how collective memory is constructed and contested in the major countries of Southeast Asia. The book has excellent case studies from across Southeast Asia which can provide the basis for making good comparisons of the representation of the past. Specialists, students, and practitioners in the area of memory and oral history will find this book a valuable guide to the Southeast Asian region.

Not surprisingly, one of the major themes of the book is that of traumatic memories of violence and war. Ricardo T. Jose reveals the subtle interactions between Philippine collective memory of the Japanese Occupation and the memories of veterans and their associations. Maitrii Aung-Thwin cleverly contrasts the types of memory of the Saya San Rebellion of 1930-32 in Burma recorded in the archives to those of colonial and non-colonial elites.

Budiawan’s chapter gives an insightful account of the traumatic memories of three wives of former political detainees arrested in the wake of the 1965 coup that brought Soeharto to power in Indonesia. Their testimonies in post-Soeharto Indonesia make gripping reading. The essay by Heddy Shri Ahimsa Putra on how certain events of the Indonesian Revolution are recalled or forgotten deepens our understanding of social memory in Indonesia under Soeharto. The two essays complement each other well.

Vatthana Pholsena uses oral history to uncover the discordant memories of Laos’s independence struggle held by its ethnic minorities. The material
compares interestingly with Sharon Seah Li-Lian’s penetrating study of collective memory and museums of recent national history in Vietnam.

Unfortunately, the book lacks essays on the major Southeast Asian countries of Thailand and Malaysia, while Singapore is overrepresented with three chapters on postwar memory. Oddly, Cambodia also does not figure despite the role memory has played in the recent Khmer Rouge trials of genocide. There could have been discussion of these Cambodian trials in the overview in the first chapter, as, strangely, the Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague is reviewed at some length. The overview by the editors could also have zoomed in on Southeast Asia more and demonstrated more strongly why it is important to study the region as a whole in the area of memory studies. This chapter tends to provide more of an overall world view. Nonetheless, the breadth of the essays put together by Roxana Waterson and Kwok Kian-Woon ably demonstrates why Southeast Asia is a region that is worth studying the topic of collective memory in comparison to other regions, such as North America and Europe, where there is more academic work on the topic.

Seven of the 10 chapters were previously published in an issue of the Asian Journal of Social Science from 2001. The updating of them has been uneven. The most thoroughly revised is Kwok Kian-Woon’s and Kelvin Chia’s chapter, which skilfully sketches the social memory of Chinese educated intellectuals in Singapore after Chinese language medium education was closed down in the early 1980s. They bring us up to the present when discussing the impact on Chinese intellectuals in Singapore of the very recent debates over watering down the Chinese language syllabus.

Adeline Low Hwee Cheng’s chapter on the 1964 racial riots in Singapore could have done with similar updating. She describes the National Museum of Singapore as still having the exhibition, From Colony to Nation, even though it was removed as long ago as 2002. Her 2001 essay still stands as the key work on the relationship between collective memory and oral history of the 1964 racial riots. But there are other more recent works that have built upon it and expanded the debate since then that could have been discussed by her in 2012. Dayang Istiaisyah bte Hussin could have also updated her chapter more thoroughly. Her 2001 error of having the Hock Lee Bus Riots in 1950 instead of 1955 stands uncorrected in the first paragraph of her 2012 essay. However, her work on the representation of memory of the tumultuous events of postwar Singapore in the museums is meticulously well documented.

The editors of this book have taken a valuable step in putting together a collection of essays which deepens our understanding about the nature of how collective memory of Southeast Asian nations interacts with personal memories. The book is a welcome addition to the academic study of memory, not just in Southeast Asia, but to the field in general.