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Email: v.t.king@leeds.ac.uk

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Email: sc66@soas.ac.uk

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Email: pk2@soas.ac.uk

Professor Vladimir Braginsky (SOAS)
Email: vb1@soas.ac.uk

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Email: R.J.Elmhirst@bton.ac.uk

Dr Annabel Teh Gallop (British Library) – South East Asia Library Group representative
Email: annabel.gallop@bl.uk

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Email: F.Hughes-Freeland@swansea.ac.uk

Dr Monica Janowski (University of Sussex) – on ASEASUK Research Committee
Email: M.Janowski@sussex.ac.uk

Dr Nicholas White (Liverpool John Moores University)
Email: n.j.white@ljmu.ac.uk

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Pauline Khng and VT King; email: aseasuk@soas.ac.uk

ASEASUK WEBSITE

www.aseasuk.org.uk

INSTITUTIONAL HOST

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.
Contact: Dr Justin Watkins, Department of Southeast Asia, Faculty of Language and Culture, SOAS, Thornhaugh St/Russell Sq., London WC1H 0XG;
email: aseasuk@soas.ac.uk

ASEASUK RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Chair: Professor A. J. Stockwell

Email: tony@ajstockwell.co.uk

Secretary: Dr Becky Elmhirst (University of Brighton)

Email: R.J.Elmhirst@bton.ac.uk

Professor Graeme Barker (University of Cambridge)

Email: graeme.barker@mcdonald.cam.ac.uk

Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen, (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Email: matthew.cohen@rhul.ac.uk

Professor Joern Dosch (University of Leeds)

Email: j.dosch@leeds.ac.uk

Professor Mike Hitchcock (University of Chichester)

Email: m.hitchcock@chi.ac.uk

Professor W.G. Huff (University of Glasgow)

Email: w.g.huff@socsci.gla.ac.uk

Dr Monica Janowski (University of Sussex)

Email: M.Janowski@sussex.ac.uk

Dr Justin Watkins (SOAS)

Email: justin.watkins@soas.ac.uk

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NEWS

UK Southeast Asianists

Dr Raymond Bryant (King's College London) has been appointed Professor of Political Ecology as of September 2009. He is currently conducting exploratory work on Malaysia/Singapore 'alternative' consumption' (i.e. organic, fair trade). Raymond was invited speaker at the Conference of the University of Chicago's Program on the Global Environment in May 2008 where he delivered a paper on 'The fate of the branded forest: science, violence and seduction in the world of teak'.

Dr Ruth Barnes (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) has been appointed the inaugural curator for the Indo-Pacific Art Department of **Yale University Art Gallery**. Ruth begins on a consulting basis as of April 2009 and will assume full time responsibility in January 2010. The gallery has some 500 artefacts from Southeast Asia and a similar number of Indonesian textiles. Besides organising rotating installations, Ruth will also be directing research, publications, special exhibitions, and teaching based on current Yale holdings and artworks to be borrowed from private and public institutions. Meanwhile at the Ashmolean, Ruth is lead curator for three exhibitions in 2009: Asian Crossroads (400 AD to 1500 AD), West meets East (1500 AD onwards), and Textiles.

Dr Matthew Isaac Cohen (Royal Holloway) is in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, between February and June 2009 as a visiting academic at Sanata Dharma, giving seminars at Sanata Dharma, ISI

Yogyakarta, Universitas Gajdh Mada and other higher educational institutions on his forthcoming book *Performing otherness: Java and Bali on international stages, 1905-1952* (Palgrave Macmillan). He has also visited his old field site of Cirebon, West Java, where he is planning to do further research on puppetry, and has been performing puppetry around Cirebon and Yogyakarta, including a contemporary wayang based on the underground cartoons of Eko Nugroho. He was appointed to the research and publication commissions of UNIMA, the international, UNESCO-affiliated puppetry organisation in 2008.

Professor Graeme Barker (University of Cambridge) is currently involved in the publication of the Niah Cave Project, Sarawak, an investigation by a team of archaeologists and geographers of the human and environmental history of the caves, to be published as two monographs by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research and Sarawak Museums: Graeme Barker, David Gilbertson, and Tim Reynolds (eds) 'Rainforest Foraging and Farming in Island Southeast Asia: the Archaeology and Environmental History of the Niah Caves, Sarawak', and 'The Archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak: Excavations 1954-2004'. About 40 papers have been published on the project since its inception in 2000.

Graeme is also Principal Investigator on 'The Cultured Rainforest: long-term human ecological histories in the highlands of Borneo' project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council within their Landscape and Environment strategic research initiative,

with funding from April 2007 to March 2010. The project involves archaeology, palaeoecology, and anthropology, and collaboration between the Universities of Cambridge, Queens University Belfast (Dr Chris Hunt), Leicester (Dr Huw Barton), Oxford (Professor Chris Gosden), and Sussex (Dr Monica Janowski) in the UK and UNIMAS (Jayl Langub) in Sarawak, with Sarawak Museums (Ipoi Datan).

Dr Lindsay Lloyd-Smith (University of Cambridge) is currently a Research Associate for the multi-disciplinary Cultured Rainforest Project directed by Professor Barker. This initiative combines palaeoecology, archaeology and anthropo-logy to investigate long-term and present-day human-rainforest relationships in the Kelabit highlands of Sarawak. Lindsay is coordinating the archaeological research for the project and will be carrying out an extended period of fieldwork later this year.

Professor VT King (Leeds University) is currently on a seven-month period of research leave and is engaged in writing a companion volume to his *The sociology of Southeast Asia: transformations in a developing region* (2008) provisionally entitled 'Identities in motion: the sociology of culture and cultural change in Southeast Asia', which he hopes to have finished by mid 2010.

As Chair of the RAE 2008 sub-panel on Asian Studies he was responsible for co-ordinating and, with input and advice from fellow panellists, writing an overview report on Asian Studies in the UK based on the submissions and the results of the exercise. The report will be

available in the public domain in due course.

He recently served as external examiner for two PhD theses on Sabah/British North Borneo, both of which were successfully defended, one at SOAS and the other at Loughborough. He has also been re-appointed as external examiner by Universiti Brunei Darussalam in sociology and anthropology for 2009-2011, a responsibility he took on in the early 2000s when the university launched its anthropology programme. He chaired a panel at the conference organised by CRASSH in Cambridge 26-28 March 2009 on the theme of 'Continuity and Change: (Re)-Conceptualizing Power in Southeast Asia' (see Conference reports).

Dr Laura Noszlopy (Royal Holloway, University of London) won the 'Best Abstract' award at the ASAA (Asian Studies Association of Australia) conference at Monash, Melbourne for her paper, 'Getting it up and keeping it up: young men, community and competitive kiting in contemporary Bali'. She is currently doing research for a biography of John Coast, who had a life-long passion for Southeast Asia and its cultures. In 2008, she was in Thailand to visits sites where Coast was interned along the 'Kwai' Railway line, and Indonesia to work with surviving dancers from his 1950s Dancers of Bali tour and others who remember him. She also visited New York to research the archive of Coast's personal letters, notes and files, kept by his former partner and for personal interviews.

In May-June 2009, Laura will be taking up a research fellowship at IIAS, Leiden

University, and making a research trip to Jakarta and Bali in the autumn. Laura convened the 'Southeast Asian Performance: transnational perspectives' panel with Matthew I Cohen at ASEASUK June 2008 conference at Liverpool John Moores University. She presented a paper on the transnational aspects of John Coast's Dancers of Bali tour. The papers have formed the basis for a volume co-edited with Matthew and due for completion later this year.

In February 2009 **Dr Katherine Brickell (Royal Holloway)** spoke on 'Youth rural-urban migration in Cambodia' at an ASEF Alliance Workshop Series conference in Bangkok, Thailand, entitled 'Perspectives on Children's Active Engagement with Migration in the Southeast Asian Context'. She was also in central Vietnam for a preliminary research trip with collaborations formed with Hue University and the local NGO, Centre for Social Research and Development (CSRD). In March this year Katherine organised a session entitled 'Gendered Geographies of Transition in Southeast Asia' at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting, Las Vegas where she presented a paper entitled: 'Gendered Discourses on Ideals and Practices of Women in Contemporary Cambodia'. Katherine has also been awarded a grant by the Aseasuk Research Committee for a project entitled 'Gender, Labour and Domestic Life in Luang Prabang' (£4,000 from October 09- September 2010).

Dr Alexandra Winkels (University of East Anglia) is continuing her research (since 2000) on the connections between migration and development in Vietnam

with special attention to the vulnerability of migrants and their families in the contexts of social, economic and environmental changes. Alexandra presented a joint paper with H. Eakin and J. Sendzimir on 'Nested vulnerability: exploring cross-scale linkages and tele-connections in Mexican and Vietnamese coffee systems', at the IDHP Open Meeting 2009 and 7th International Science Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, 26-30 April 2009, Bonn.

Dr Fiona Kerlogue (Horniman Museum) is currently researching the Horniman Museum's collections of photographs and film from Walter Spies, Beryl de Zoete and others, through elicitation in the field with a focus on religious context. This research will lead to an exhibition on aspects of Balinese culture relating to the documentary material, planned for 2012. In July 2008 Fiona was in Kalimantan, Indonesia, to present 'Memory, materiality and Malay culture: a case study' at the 5th International Symposium of Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia, 22-26 July 2008, University of Lambung Mangkurat.

Dr Annabel Gallop (British Library) has been helping to organise the exhibition 'Raffles' Ark Redrawn: Natural History Drawings from the Collection of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles', which will be held at Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, from 9 May to 5 July 2009. On display will be 29 drawings of birds, plants and mammals from Sumatra and Penang, part of the Raffles Family Collection acquired in 2007 by the British Library. The exhibition is curated by Dr Henry Noltie, author of the accom-

panying book of the same title, comprising a full-colour complete catalogue of the 120 natural history drawings in the Raffles Family Collection.

On 24 February 2009 Annabel attended the International Board meeting of the newly formed International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, representing ASEASUK, an institutional member of the Board. Her visit to Aceh was jointly supported by ASEASUK and the ASEASUK -British Institute in Ankara's three-year British Academy-funded project on Ottoman links with Southeast Asia. She also presented a paper on 'Sultanah Tajul Alam's *tarakata* of 1666: the earliest known original royal decree from Aceh,' 2nd International Conference on Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 23-24 February 2009. Annabel delivered two further papers in Malaysia in November 2008: 'The art of the Qur'an in Java: some preliminary observations', Islamic Area Studies Conference, Waseda University and Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, and 'Palace and *pondok*: artistic patronage on the East Coast of the Malay peninsula', at Seminar Seni Ukir Kayu Melayu: Warisan Nik Rashiddin Nik Hussein, ATMA & Kandis Resource Centre, Kampung Kandis, Kelantan.

Following the publication of her monograph, *Embodied communities: dance traditions and change in Java*, Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland (Swansea University) is now developing new research projects which build on or develop her dance and visual anthropology interests in different ways. If the first of these, ANR-ESRC funding for a collaborative dance project

of French and British scholars, is successful, she will complete her research and film about the horse dance (*jathilan*) in the Yogyakarta region. As part of her research on cultural politics, she is currently editing a special issue of *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. Meanwhile, Felicia is organizing the 25th ASEASUK conference in Swansea this year, and trying to develop the university's Southeast Asian network (SEANS) into a research centre.

Felicia delivered the following paper, 'The seduction of stones: monuments as narratives of nationhood', panel on 'Monumentalizing the Past, Archaeologies of the Future', that she and Dr P. Dransart convened at the conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of UK and the Commonwealth on 'Anthropological and Archaeological Imaginations: Past, Present and Future', Bristol, 8 April 2009.

Dr Margaret Coldiron (Durham University) brought Professor I Wayan Dibia from ISI Denpasar for a week of intensive, practice-based work with the AHRC-funded research project 'The body and the mask in ancient theatre space'. Margaret also appeared as the demon king Rahwana in a performance of *Kecak Ramayana* directed by I Wayan Dibia at LSO St Luke's in London.

Centre of South East Asian Studies, SOAS

Dr Ben Murtagh is the current Director of the Royal Asiatic Society. He spent a month in Jakarta and three months in Surabaya in the second half of 2008 researching representations of gay, lesbian and *waria* in Indonesian cinema. While there he gave two papers at

Universiti Airlangga on 'Representing other sexualities in Indonesian cinema' and 'Approaching sexuality in Indonesia through film' (November and December 2008). Ben continues to be co-managing editor of *Indonesia and the Malay World* and Chair of the SOAS Centre for South East Asian Studies.

Dr Rachel Harrison (SOAS) is currently undertaking research for a monograph on contemporary Thai cinema. Rachel is Head of Department of South East Asia and also Head of the South Asia Department.

Dr Susan Conway (SOAS) has been awarded a British Academy grant for her research on Shan Buddhist ritual practices (2009-2010). She undertook a field trip to Shan monasteries in Thailand (Jan-Feb 2009). Susan also presented a paper on 'Shan dress and textiles: ancient traditions and modern trends' at the 2nd ASEAN Cultural Conference in Manila, February 2009.

PhDs

The following candidates successfully defended their dissertations: **Nicola Garsten (SOAS)** on 'A political reading of home and family in English-language Singaporean novels (1972-2002) (supervisor: Dr Rachel Harrison); **Maureen de Silva (SOAS)** on 'Javanese indentured labourers in British North Borneo, 1914-1932' (supervisor: Professor William G Clarence-Smith), **Vu Hong Lien Warden (SOAS)** on 'Mongol invasions in Southeast Asia and their impact on relations between Dai Viet and Champa (1226-1326 CE)' (supervisor: Professor W.G. Clarence-Smith); **Sher Banu Abdul Latiff Khan (Queen Mary,**

University of London) on 'Rule behind the silk curtain: the sultanahs of Aceh 1641-1699' (supervisor: Professor Felipe Fernández-Armesto); **Fausto Barlocco (Loughborough University)** on 'Between the local and the state: practices and discourses of identity among the Kadazan of Sabah (East Malaysia)' (supervisor: Professor Sarah Pink); **Glenn Miles (Swansea University)** on 'Cambodian children's experiences and understandings of violence involving children' (supervisors Dr Nigel Thomas & Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland); **Lindsay Lloyd-Smith (Cambridge University)** on 'Chronologies of the Dead: Later Prehistoric burial practice at the Niah Caves, Sarawak' (supervisor: Professor Graeme Barker).

Cambridge University Southeast Asian Forum

Southeast Asia is a region of interest to increasing numbers of scholars and students in Cambridge. 2009 alone will have seen the staging of a major interdisciplinary conference on 'power' in Southeast Asia, a conference on trading in Southeast Asia, the launch of a new undergraduate paper on 'The Ethnography of Southeast Asia' within the Archaeology and Anthropology faculty, and the consolidation of a new paper on 'The Politics of Southeast Asia' within PPSIS. Southeast Asian affairs are increasingly on Cambridge's intellectual agenda. They are also very much on the personal agendas of the university's large and vibrant community of Southeast Asian students, which the *Cambridge University Reporter* numbers at approximately 500 in any given year.

The Southeast Asian Forum aims to connect and to some extent co-ordinate this rising tide of interest in the region. The Forum provides an opportunity for Cambridge-based scholars working on Southeast Asia as well as those with a personal interest in the region to discuss and debate issues affecting it with experts from around the world, including academics, activists, and professionals. Distinctively, we want to move beyond the format of guest 'seminar papers' and 'lectures'. Where possible, we wish to foreground discussion and dialogue, putting visiting guests 'in conversation' with expert Cambridge academics to allow issues of great academic significance to be accessible to as wide an audience as possible. For a list of planned events as well as a new directory of Cambridge students and staff working on Southeast Asia see: www.cuseaf.com (and conference reports in this issue).

ASEASUK Register 2008

ASEASUK is updating its 2000 Register and invites Southeast Asianists in the UK to provide information on their research and publications. There are now about 110 entries on the database. The form and data protection notice can be downloaded from www.aseasuk.org.uk.

Completed forms should be sent as an email attachment to aseasuk@soas.ac.uk and a signed copy of the data protection notice has to be posted to ASEASUK, c/o Centre for South East Asian Studies, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Continuity and change: (re)conceptualising power in Southeast Asia
University of Cambridge
26-28 March 2009

*Report by Nicholas J. Long
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Cambridge*

Over the last half-century, Southeast Asia has witnessed the rise of postcolonial nation-states, rapid industrialisation, economic growth and democratisation but also genocide, political upheaval and widespread repression. Power lies at the core of these developments, whether in the form of brute military force or as a more capillary 'disciplinary' influence on religious and political subjectivities. This conference facilitated one of the first truly interdisciplinary and international engagements with power in the region, revisiting and debating the 'classic' analyses of power in Southeast Asia that helped mark the region out as a distinctively compelling area to study, and providing an opportunity to workshop new paradigms, theories and approaches.

Panels covered a wide variety of topics, including virtue, sovereignty, welfare, landscape and the arts. Contributors – drawn from Europe, Australia, North America and Singapore – hailed from a range of disciplines, including social anthropology, political science, music, law, architecture and Asian studies. The fruits of such interdisciplinarity were evident in the first keynote speech, given

by James Scott, who argued that the physical geography and ecology of Southeast Asia is central to understanding historical hill-valley relations. Scott suggested that so-called 'hill tribes' were 'societies against the state' who had escaped from lowland states into ungovernable mountainous terrain. This was followed by a screening of the film *Terlena* by activist Andre Vltchek. Both events set the stage for two of the major issues to be debated in the conference: the role of aspiration and desire, and the significance of connection and encompassment.

Throughout many of the papers, aspirations, expectations and desires – for prosperity, modernity and recognition, or for the ability to bring these to others – played a central role. **Holly High** examined motivations for giving in rural Laos, arguing that they were driven by multiple, competing – fantasies of what it meant to be a good person. The broader question of how such fantasies and aspirations are forged thus emerged as a key research priority. The consequences of their being thwarted also appeared to offer great potential as a site for studying 'power'. **Ruth Toulson** suggested that the failure of working class Singaporeans to realise the aspirations integral to contemporary capitalism led to their performing a 'necessary mistake': the invocation of 'the dead' as exerting power over their lives. Could the phenomenological realities of power that Southeast Asians inhabit sometimes be artefacts of crushed expectations, inexpressible in their own terms?

'Connections' comprised the second major theme. **Andrew Walker** suggested

that in Northern Thailand, 'string' represents a distinct local modality of power, as individuals seek to bind themselves into localised fields of auspiciousness. The same practice, he argued, could also be seen in development projects. As the conference continued, it became clear that binding oneself into networks was of wide significance. Patron-client relations were extensively discussed, whilst **Yanuar Nugroho** and **Nicola Frost**'s papers suggested that 'networks' were not just instruments for achieving aims: 'connection' could be powerful in itself.

This raised questions regarding how consistently 'networks' or 'fields of auspiciousness' were construed across Southeast Asia. Moreover, several papers examined how national polities appeared to be binding themselves into 'Western' projects of statecraft and good governance – the values of the ASEAN Charter, constitutionalism, and anti-narcotics programmes – raising the intriguing question of whether these could be seen in similar ways to smaller-scale networking. Could *aspirations* be increasingly inflected by non-Southeast Asian ideals, whilst the *practices* of connecting to 'fields of auspiciousness' remain influenced by regional understandings of power? The possibility is exciting, although **Michele Ford** and **Lenore Lyons** warned that the apparent inclusion of certain actors in a network – notably global capital – has misled many scholars into attributing more power to such actors than they deserve. For them, the best analytic framework was less the network than the concrete relations between states, territories and subjects.

A final theme concerned the enduring usefulness of classic notions of power in Southeast Asia. In her keynote speech, **Shelly Errington** traced the intellectual trajectory of such concepts, and suggested they remained relevant, but were taking on new inflections, now that hierarchies were becoming unmoored by globalisation and political instability. Catherine Allerton argued that notions of power as an energy that animates the landscape remained salient in contemporary life; **Adrian Vickers** drew on Indonesian horror films to make a similar point, but stressed that the meaning of 'power' is being rendered increasingly national, and freshly imbricated in class and commodity relations.

'Classic' understandings of power have also been instrumentalised as political techniques. Ingrid Jordt and Nicholas Farrelly explored how notions of Buddhist merit, royalty and chieftainship were used as strategies of control by the Burmese military, but had also been turned against them in the Saffron Revolution. Other papers charted the innovation or resurgence of novel, yet distinctly Southeast Asian, tropes of power – such as *wibawa* (charismatic authority) amongst Indonesian parliamentarians, or 'prayer power' in the Christian Philippines. 'Indigenous' notions of power thus appeared to be fertile areas of study for years to come.

The conference was organised by **Liana Chua, Joanna Cook, Nick Long and Lee Wilson**, of the University of Cambridge. It was supported by the Department of Social Anthropology, Trinity College, the Evans Fund and the Centre for Research

in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge.

Strategies and consequences of intercultural exchange in Southeast Asia c.1500–1800
Jesus College
Cambridge
25 April 2009

*Report by Tara Alberts &
David R. M. Irving
University of Cambridge*

Scholars from a number of different disciplines met at Jesus College, Cambridge on 25 April 2009 for a one-day conference on intercultural exchange, interaction, and representation in early modern Southeast Asia. This event was organised by Tara Alberts and David R. M. Irving as a means of bringing together a forum of specialists to explore, debate, and engage with issues relating to the study of the field from the disciplinary perspectives of history, geography, historical anthropology, art history, English literature, and musicology. It was made possible through financial sponsorship from the Association of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom, the Trevelyan Fund (Faculty History, University of Cambridge), and the John Stewart of Rannoch Fund (Faculty of Music, Cambridge). A special feature of the day was a rare performance of Thai classical music by the professional performing ensemble **SEAmusic**

<www.seamusic.org.uk>

The day's programme began with a fascinating paper by **Alan Strathern** (University of Cambridge) on the politics of conversion to monotheism in early modern Southeast Asia. Strathern explored the differences between mainland and island Southeast Asian theological perspectives and their implications for the maintenance of state power, theorising a system of kingship categories, and exploring the potential for a conversion that never took place – that of Narai of Siam. He pointed out that the conversion from a transcendentalist to a monotheistic religion was often seen as an act of exclusivity, in the sense that it involved the abandonment of old rites; it thereby had the potential to undermine the legitimacy of kingship as perceived by the ruler's subjects. **Marya Rosenberg** (University of Hawaii at Manoa) then surveyed representations of women in artworks from the colonial Philippines, refiguring the position of women in Filipino society from one of dominance and sexual freedom in pre-Hispanic society to one of submissiveness and chastity in the Spanish colonial period. Using artworks that ranged from pre-Hispanic sculptures to images of the Virgin Mary (the Marian manifestations including those of Nuestra Señora de Guía, Antipolo, Casaysay, and Peñafrancia), she showed how animist beliefs and associated elements of visual symbolism were able to survive suppression and persist in syncretic forms of Roman Catholic devotion.

In the next session, **Marjorie Rubright** (University of Toronto) focused on the little-known theme of Anglo-Dutch relations on the island of Bantam. She explored how representatives of these

northern European nations used both the interchangeability of their national stereotypes and also particular representational strategies of cultural self-distinction as a means of furthering their respective and common commercial objectives, and also as a way in which they could strengthen their respective cultural identities in an unfamiliar host environment. Her re-reading of Edmund Scott's *An exact discourse of the subtleties, fashions [sic], pollicies, religion, and ceremonies of the East Indians* (London, 1606) in the context of Anglo-Dutch interchangeability opened up discussion on the crisis of cultural and national representation in Southeast Asia, in the face of emerging categories of sovereignty and statehood in the early modern world. **Katrina Gulliver** (Institute of Historical Research, London) offered a valuable examination of the urban development of Malacca from the perspective of comparative metropolitan history. The crucial geographical position of this city had important ramifications for the development of Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial strategies in Southeast Asia, and consideration of Malacca's role as a locus of intercultural exchange provided the basis for discussion of how symbolic sites themselves swapped hands and were reconceptualised in the context of different power structures.

During the lunch-break, SEAmusic's performance of two brackets of Thai classical music brought the sonic aspect of early modern Southeast Asian culture to the foreground. Led by Larry Oliver Catungal on the *khong wong yai* (bronzed gong-circle), the instrumentalists played the *sor u* (two-stringed low-pitch fiddle),

sor duang (two-stringed high-pitch fiddle), *ranad ek* (wooden xylophone with twenty-one bars), *klong khaek* (pair of double-headed drums), and a pair of *ching* (finger cymbals). In keeping with the theme of the conference, their selection included music demonstrating Thai imaginings of the musical cultures of foreign lands.

Leading off the first session after lunch, **Matthew Sargent** (University of California, Berkeley) explored the role of local informants used by European naturalists to gather scientific knowledge. Focusing on the employees of the Dutch East India Company in the Indonesian archipelago, he demonstrated how close ties between naturalist and their informants were necessary in order to gather detailed and useful information. The role of women in the transmission of medical and botanical knowledge was also thoughtfully uncovered. **Christina Granroth** (University of Cambridge) considered the importance of indigenous knowledge in her examination of two Swedish accounts of Java from the eighteenth century. The work of Carl Peter Thunberg and Carl Fredrik Hornstedt contrasted with many other European accounts of Java and its inhabitants. Granroth argued that by asking comprehensive questions of the local inhabitants, recording observations systematically and in detail, the Swedish authors apply a Linnean 'scientific gaze' which foregrounded indigenous knowledge.

Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells (University of Cambridge) presented an intriguing exploration of the alternative networks of power in early modern

Malay-Indonesian polities. Her treatment of the political economy of the region highlighted the complex systems of commerce and cultural exchange that contested and resisted forms of European colonial expansion; the Hadarami *sayyid* from the early modern period to the 20th century formed the focus of this discussion. **Janice Stuardt** (University of Cambridge) closed the day with her consideration of the contrasts and similarities between Chinese voyages to Southeast Asia and beyond in the early 15th-century and 16th-century Portuguese maritime projects. Drawing on material from archaeological sites as well as written records, she considered the role of tribute missions between Southeast Asian polities and China, and how Chinese and Portuguese concepts of 'empire' could vary.

Important themes that emerged from the day included the idea of legitimacy of power (and of knowledge), changing ideas of indigenous sovereignty in the face of European colonial and trading projects, and the subsumption of local knowledge and social and economic structures by European colonial powers. Lively discussion followed each of the papers, and fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue continued at the dinner that followed. The organisers are currently proposing the publication of this day's proceedings, and hope that similar events focusing on early modern Southeast Asia will take place in the near future.

CONFERENCES

25th ASEASUK conference

Swansea University

11-13 September 2009

The 25th conference in the 40th year* of the Association of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom (ASEASUK) is organised by the South-East Asian Network Swansea and the School of the Environment & Society.

Registration:

http://www.aseasuk.swan.ac.uk/del_reg.html

Contact for all technical enquiries:

Chris Barrow - c.j.barrow@swansea.ac.uk

tel: +44 (0)1792 205678 ext 4362

Contact for all general academic and programme enquiries:

Felicia Hughes-Freeland

f.hughes-freeland@swansea.ac.uk

tel: +44 (0)1792 295921

Environment, sustainability and livelihoods

Convenors: Chris J. Barrow (Swansea University)

Email: c.j.barrow@swansea.ac.uk

Becky Elmhirst (University of Brighton)

Email: R.J.Elmhirst@bton.ac.uk

Across Southeast Asia, environments are facing mounting pressures from natural resource exploitation, climate change, urbanisation and intensified geographical mobility. The aim of this panel is to explore some of the ecological, social and political dimensions of environment, sustainability and natural resource-based livelihoods in Southeast Asia, insofar as these are being played out against new geopolitical and global economic conditions. We welcome papers which cover any one of these broad areas and/or the inter-linkages between them, and we are open to submissions from any disciplinary perspective.

Creating resilient tourism in Southeast Asia

Convenor: Janet Cochrane (Leeds Met)

Email: J.Cochrane@leedsmet.ac.uk

Prominent in the economic landscape of Southeast Asia, tourism also impinges on social, cultural and environmental aspects. It is well known that the industry follows a clear life-cycle, with growth often leading to stagnation and then decline or rejuvenation. Less well understood are the factors which influence these stages, in particular rejuvenation. Papers using case studies and providing conceptual frameworks to explore the different stages and their underlying processes will be welcomed, especially those which apply resilience theory to tourism. It is hoped that an outcome of the panel will be insights into achieving resilient models of tourism.

* For this anniversary Professor V.T. King who is chair of the Aseasuk executive committee has prepared 'A Brief and Personal History of the Association of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom on the 40th Anniversary of its Birth' which will be published by Aseasuk and available as a print copy for the conference. A shorter version will be sent Aseasuk's website www.aseasuk.org.uk

Theravada Buddhism and culture of the Tai of the Shan States and south-west China

Convenor: Susan Conway (SOAS)
Email: sc66@soas.ac.uk

The Southeast Asian inland region of the Shan States, Sipsong Pan Na (south-west China), Lan Na (north Thailand) and Lan Xang (western Laos) is inhabited by Tai people who have a distinctive culture expressed in secular and religious scripts, literature, architecture, and arts and crafts. The Tai in this region practice a form of Theravada Buddhism distinguished by monastic literary traditions and rituals. This panel focuses on the religious and cultural traditions of the Tai of the Shan States and south-west China that in recent history have been under pressure as a result of extensive cross-border migration, major changes in social structure and loss of traditional monastic sponsorship.

Creativity and gender in Southeast Asia

Convenor: F. Hughes-Freeland (Swansea University)
Email: f.hughes-freeland@swansea.ac.uk

Proposals for papers which address any aspect of gender and creativity in Southeast Asia are welcome. Topics include gendered styles of creativity in performance, patterns of gendered creativity in the literature, film, television or other media, the gendering of creativity in everyday life. You are encouraged to present examples from particular societies and to situate your cases against the changing dynamics of creative processes which arise from distinctive local patterns of gender relations and identities. Our discussions

will be set against the proliferation of academic debates about gender relations and representations in Southeast Asia since the mid-1990s. I intend to develop a publication from these and other papers on the subject.

Malay/Indonesian manuscripts

Convenor: Annabel Gallop (British Library); email: Annabel.Gallop@bl.uk

Papers are welcomed on all aspects of the writing traditions of maritime Southeast Asia. Of particular interest are contributions on the arts of the book; documents and chancery practice in the courts of the archipelago; and previously undescribed manuscript collections. Papers should be based on new unpublished research, and contributions from doctoral students are especially encouraged.

Preliminary Ottoman/Turkish-Southeast Asia findings (British Academy funded project: ASEASUK and the British Institute in Ankara)

Contact: Michael Hitchcock (Chichester)
Email: m.hitchcock@chi.ac.uk
This session will take the form of a round table discussion.

Emerging scholars panel

Convenor: Fiona Kerlogue (Horniman Museum)
Email: FKerlogue@horniman.ac.uk

This panel presents a space for doctoral students working on any subject relating to Southeast Asia to present their research. It is an opportunity to try out new presentation techniques, to gain experience in presenting papers and also to meet colleagues working across the

UK and beyond. All this is in a positive and supportive environment.

Migration and security

Convenors: Alan Collins (Swansea University)
Email: A.Collins@swansea.ac.uk
Nicola Piper (Swansea University)
Email: N.Piper@Swansea.ac.uk

With the end of the Cold War and the re-envisioning of security, with threats now perceived to emanate from a number of non-traditional sources, a space has been created for rethinking the relationship between migration and security. Migration can pose a threat to the people and governments of both the sending and receiving states. It can threaten state security by turning civil conflicts into international conflicts as tensions cross borders and it facilitates the spread of terrorism. Migration can also pose threats at the human level by causing economic hardship and threatening cultural identities and societal cohesion. In this panel we want not just to examine the types of threats that migration can cause, and to whom they cause them, but also whether thinking about migration in security terms is itself a cause of insecurity.

New insights into human-environment histories in Southeast Asia

Convenors: Monica Janowski (Sussex University)
Email: M.Janowski@sussex.ac.uk
Chris Hunt (Queens University Belfast)
Email: c.hunt@qub.ac.uk

Over the past ten years, we have seen significant advances in our knowledge about ways in which the environment

and landscape of Southeast Asia have evolved, and how these changes have been related to human activity. These advances have drawn on new techniques within a number of disciplines including archaeology, anthropology, genetics, biogeography, palynology, physical geography, ecology, animal bone studies and historical research.

We welcome contributions to the panel which present insights which have resulted from these recent advances, and which have led to new ways of envisioning the ways in which humans and their activities have shaped, and been shaped by, the SE Asian environment

Contesting the state: violence, identity and sovereign practices in Southeast Asia

Convenors: Lee Wilson (Cambridge University)
Email: lw243@cam.ac.uk
Laurens Bakker (Radboud University)
Email: l.bakker@jur.ru.nl

The panel seeks to explore the ways in which the threat and execution of violence is related to non-violent aspects of identity formation in Southeast Asia. Throughout Southeast Asia the burgeoning growth of sites of non-state authority is well documented. Guerrilla movements, civil militias, community organisations and NGOs are just some of the many kinds of non-state agents whose authority contests or exceeds that of the state within their domains. Significantly, the authority of these groups often rests on their potential for violence, not just its enactment. Common to these sites of informal or localised

authority are familiar discourses of exclusion and territorial control that are often cited as the hallmark of sovereign relations in modernity. Ethnic and religious identities frequently define the contours of communal relations maintained by these groups. Custom and tradition are offered as principles of local governance and a countervailing force to the authority of the state. Are these alternate sites of authority echoes of the formal authoritative structures in which they are embedded, a consequence of the violent ontology of modernity (Burke 2007)? Or does the capacity for violence and the ontological dimensions of its threat and execution shape social and political relations and the mobilisation of identities?

Health, knowledge and power: providers, seekers and places of health care in Southeast Asia

Convenor: Claudia Merli (Durham University)
Email: claudia.merli@durham.ac.uk

This panel aims to explore the historical and contemporary dimensions of health and health care in Southeast Asia as they are associated with social spaces and places where power and contesting strategies are enacted. The processes analysed include the introduction and consolidation of local versions of biomedicine, the governments' revitalisation of selected local medical knowledge (proposed as national traditional medicine), and the maintenance or emergence of counter-hegemonic healing practices and ritual practitioners. In all these cases, the quest for and access to health care are processes charged with power relations.

Colonial and postcolonial interventions to improve the health of local people, family planning programmes, and modern NGOs' campaigns can be analysed beyond health policy planning discourses into the political economy of health and health care. Specific places which become expressions of the dominant health systems (hospitals, public health stations, village health centres, private surgeries), alternative medicines and therapies (centres providing acupuncture, massage, herbal preparations and treatments, and temples), or contesting rituals (for example spirit mediums' houses) are constructed to be the spaces in which complex interpersonal dynamics, hierarchies and social strategies are performed.

ICAS 6

Daejon, Korea
6-9 August 2009

For further information on the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) see:
<http://www.icassecretariat.org>

Buddhism and mind sciences: ancient wisdom and modern knowledge
2nd conference on Buddhism and Sciences
Mahidol University
6-7 August 2009

For more information see:
http://www.crs.mahidol.ac.th/news/International%20Conference_EN.pdf

Vietnam Update 2009: Migration Nation

19-20 November 2009

Australian National University
Canberra

Topics include:

- Mapping the landscape of historical and contemporary Vietnamese migration
- Policy and governance
- Economics and development
- Local and household experiences
- Diasporas and transnationalism

Contributors should send their proposals and a one page CV to Dr Ashley Carruthers by 15 May 2009.

Email: ashley.carruthers@anu.edu.au

ASEASUK DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development

Did Southeast Asia learn the correct lessons from the 1997-1998 crisis?

SOAS

27 November 2009

Brunei Gallery, SOAS

6pm

This lecture is organised by ASEASUK in partnership with the British Academy and the Centre for South East Asian Studies (SOAS).

Centre for South East Asian Studies, SOAS

Room G52, SOAS main building

Tuesday 5 May 2009 – 17.00-19.00

Dr Thanet Apornsuvan (Thammasat University)

Democracy in Siam / Thailand: from separatism to sectionalism

B111, Brunei Gallery

Thursday, 11 June 2009 - 17.00-19.00

Professor Tony Milner (Australia

National University)

The localisation of 'The Malays': comments from a new book

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BOOK REVIEWS



GREG FEALY and SALLY WHITE, eds.

Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008. 296 pp. ISBN 978-981-230-850-4, pb US\$25.90, S\$29.90

*Reviewed by John Sidel
LSE*

Since 11 September 2001, Islam in Indonesia has largely been viewed through the prism of the 'Global War on Terrorism', with Islamic 'extremism', 'fundamentalism', and 'radicalism' dominating discussions of the world's most populous majority-Muslim country. With the rise of ICMI in the late Suharto era, the ascendancy of ICMI chairman B.J. Habibie to the presidency in May 1998, and the emergence of diverse new Islamic parties in 1998-99, the question of politics had already come to overshadow all other trends and developments in Indonesian Islam. With the Christian-Muslim conflict in Maluku, North Maluku, and Poso in 1999-2001, the rise of Front Pembela Islam and Laskar Jihad during the same years, and the terrorist bombings by Jemaah Islamiyah in 2002-2005, the connection between Islam and violence also attracted enormous attention.

With the fading of inter-religious violence and terrorism in the name of Islam in recent years, however, broader

sociological trends have finally begun to receive the kind of close attention they have always deserved among scholars and other interested observers of Islam in Indonesia. Indeed, the past few years have seen the publication of a growing number of articles, monographs, and edited volumes treating in great depth and with ample nuance and sophistication the highly varied religious terrain of the Indonesian archipelago. The recently published volume *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White offers the best available overview, in terms of breadth of coverage, diversity of themes and trends treated, and quality of scholarship represented. Emerging out of the 25th annual Indonesia Update conference held at the Australian National University in September 2007, the volume showcases important new work by specialists on Islam in Indonesia based in Australia and Southeast Asia (and, in one instance, the United States).

The first section of the volume, 'Expressing Personal Piety,' traces patterns of religious activity over the past decade with close attention to the ways in which commodification and communications technology are transforming Islamic practices and understandings among Indonesian Muslims. The pieces here by Greg Fealy, Julia Day Howell, George Quinn, Julian Millie, and James Hoesterey range widely across the field of religious activity, from Sufism (Howell) to pilgrimages to the grave sites of Javanese Islamic 'saints' (Quinn) to shifting forms of *dakwah* oratory (Millie) and the trajectory of the celebrated Islamic *da'i* Aa Gym

(Hoesterey). In these fine pieces, we can now see Indonesian Islam through fine-grained ethnographic lenses enhanced by familiarity with scholarship – the works of Jon Anderson and Dale Eickelman, Charles Hirschkind, Patrick Haënni, and Gregory Starrett – on parallel trends in the Middle East and elsewhere across the Muslim world. Greg Fealy's essay, 'Consuming Islam: commodified Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia,' provides an excellent overview of these trends in what stands as the keystone piece of the volume as a whole.

The second section of the volume, 'Political Islam and Legal Expressions of Islam,' shifts attention from the sociological trends treated above back to the realm of politics, paying close attention to historical and sociological context. The eminent historian Merle Ricklefs, for example, provides a richly detailed account of the diversity of forms of Islamic piety across Java, noting, for example, how the Central Javanese village of Ngruki, home to the *pesantren* identified as the recruiting ground for the Islamist terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah, 'is also home to a local mystical group that brings together followers of both Islamic and Christian backgrounds to undertake indigenous spiritual disciplines. They ignore the Islamic school in their midst, practise supernatural and healing skills, and insist that "Javanese culture is more pure than religion" (pp. 130-31). Sally White and Maria Ulfah Anshor discuss a range of ongoing public debates and disputes about Islam and gender in Indonesia, covering what some have termed a 'culture war' with greater nuance and

sophistication. Nadirsyah Hosen, Robin Bush, and Ian Douglas Wilson treat online *fatwa*, local experiments with so-called *shariah* legislation, and Islamic *preman* (gangsters), respectively, with similar care and clarity. Ken Ward provides a very interesting account of religious practices and beliefs among Islamic activists affiliated with the terrorist *Jemaah Islamiyah* network. The third and final section of the book, 'The Islamic Economy,' features three illuminating essays on Islamic banking (Umar Juoro) and Islamic microfinance (Muhammad Syafii Antonio and Minako Sakai).

Overall, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* offers the best overview of the diversity of trends in Indonesian Islam over the past decade. Greg Fealy and Sally White, as well as the various contributing authors, are to be commended for an excellent collection of essays, which merit a close reading by all students of Indonesia and of Islam in Southeast Asia.

K.A. STEENBRINK and J.S. ARITONANG, eds.
A history of Christianity in Indonesia
Leiden: Brill, 2008. xvi, 1,004 pp.
ISBN 9789004170261, hb €179 /US\$ 267

Reviewed by R. H. Barnes
University of Oxford

This excellent book not only tells its story (or stories) very well, but is also full of interesting insights on many topics, some of which present information not readily available elsewhere. It has been put

together by an impressive assemblage of leading experts, mostly Catholics and Protestants, and including one Muslim. Indonesia is of course the largest Muslim nation in the world. Christians, however, form an important and growing minority, whose influence has sometimes been out of proportion to their numbers.

Christians were reported as early as 650 AD as being in Qalah, possibly Kalah in Malaya. The Portuguese brought their religion with them and established Christian toeholds in the Moluccas and Solor early in the 16th century, and Francis Xavier was active in Ambon in 1546-1547. These early communities were vulnerable and suffered much through the rivalries between Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands. Catholic priests were lacking from 1600 to 1808 in the territories of the Dutch East India Company, because the Company prohibited the Catholic religion. A religious duty was written into its charter of 1623. It supported Protestant mission activity in some areas, while in others it confined itself to pastoral care for mostly European communities. However, the personnel of the Company were never confined to members of the Reformed Church. There were even Lutherans and Catholics among the governors-general. Following the Restoration of the Dutch East Indies to a new Dutch colonial government in the early 19th century, the colonial government did not consider the church or the mission to be its own affair. Catholicism was permitted from this period, but there were few priests available for much of the century. When Protestant and Catholic mission activity gradually became more vigorous the government maintained a somewhat

loose policy of preventing 'dual missions' (different groups of missionaries working in the same region), which the Catholics never really accepted. Although there were some regional successes of both versions of Christianity before the 20th century, it was in that century that they finally gained significant strength, but large scale conversions waited until the government demanded that all Indonesians adopt one or another of the world religions following the mass slaughter of alleged communists in 1965 and afterwards.

One peculiarity of this book is that the authors of the individual contributions are not listed in the table of contents. Instead the reader has to go to the end of each chapter just before the bibliography to find out who has written what. Perhaps this arrangement derives from the ambition, as the editors put it, of giving an encyclopedic view of the history of Christians in Indonesia and from the desire to emphasise that the result is a collective work. Though some chapters have a single author, many are multi-authored, typically with the sections on Catholics and Protestants the responsibility of different persons. Though in general the book is a well integrated whole, there are a few minor slips, which perhaps is inevitable in an undertaking of this magnitude. For example there are four references to the 'Grooff affair' of 1844-1847. Only in the last is there a brief description of what this affair might have been. For a full explanation the reader will have to turn to pages 22-25 of the first volume of Steenbrink's *Catholics in Indonesia*, but no reference is given in this book to that passage. The various chapters contain

numerous references to conflicts between secular and religious authorities as well as to intramural and inter-denominational conflicts and to the 'race' between Islam and Christianity, but the book itself in no way contributes to those polemics and conflicts.

The first part covers the period up to 1800 with chapters on Christianity in pre-colonial Indonesia, a race between Islam and Christianity in the period 1530-1670 (the single chapter authored by a Muslim), Catholic conversion in the Moluccas, Minahasa and Sangihe-Talaud in the period 1512-1680, the Dominican mission in the Solor-Timor region from 1562 until 1800, and finally the arrival and consolidation of Protestantism in the Moluccas between 1605 and 1800. Part Two contains a national overview from 1800 until 2005, as well as nine regional surveys. The regional chapters cover the Southeastern Islands (Nusa Tenggara Timur) – Protestant and Catholic – Christianity in Papua, Moluccan Christianity and its relation to Agama Ambon ('Ambon Religion' – a mixture of Christianity or Islam and traditional, i.e. indigenous, religion) and Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as Christianity in Minahasa, Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), Sumatra, Java and Bali. Part Three calls itself 'Issues of National Concern'. Its six chapters cover theological thinking by Indonesian Christians between 1850 and 2000, the ecumenical movement in Indonesia and the National Council of Churches, the growth of Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Indonesian Chinese Christian communities, Christian art in Indonesia and finally Christian media, where the reader will find, for example, interesting

information about the founding and financing of important Christian national daily newspapers.

Of the many issues broached a brief sample may be mentioned. Among them are the shifting attitudes toward indigenous culture (including architecture and dance), the matter of double loyalties towards local and introduced religions, the history of Bible translation, recognising marriages (including 'mixed' marriages), policies against double missions, baptism, the revival of traditional religion and customary law (*adat*), admission of Indonesians to the ministry, the relation of the mission to the colonial state (and indeed of the hierarchy to the government of the day), the social background of missionaries, and finally, the general issue of inculcation and contextualisation of the gospel. Much more attention needs to be given to events of 1965 and their aftermath and to the role of Christians and their institutions in relation to them – a point made by John Prior and Eduard Jebarus who draw attention specifically to the so-far unrecorded massacre of between 800 to 2,000 'suspected communists', almost all Catholics, in Maumere, Flores in 1966. They also draw attention to fears about desecration of the host in East Nusa Tenggara in the mid to late 1990s and resulting murders and destruction of shops of innocent Muslim traders in various places on Flores and Timor.

This history of Indonesian Christianity is an extremely useful and well-documented reference resource which will be welcome to scholars of any discipline with a professional interest in

Indonesia. It should have a broader appeal as well to other Southeast Asianists or indeed anyone with an interest in major transformations in the colonial and post-colonial world.

MARTIN RAVALLION and DOMINIQUE VAN DE WALLE

Land in transition: reform and poverty in rural Vietnam

Washington: World Bank and Palgrave

Macmillan, 2008. 220 pp.

ISBN 978 0 8213 7274 6 pb £21

Reviewed by Dimitrios Konstadakopoulos
University of the West of England

While much has been written about the agrarian reforms in the two largest transition economies of East Asia – China and Vietnam – relatively little has focused upon the impact on poverty alleviation. This excellent book co-authored by Martin Ravallion and Dominique van de Walle, leading economists in the World Bank, attempts to explain how Vietnamese people's living standards were affected by changes in land allocations in their country after the *doi moi* programme of 1986. In the early 1980s, the government of Vietnam undertook radical reforms of agriculture and began to dismantle the national network of collective farms. These were replaced by a household contract system in which farmers fulfilled individual, rather than collective, contracts. However, as Ravallion and van de Walle point out in Chapter 2, it was not until the late 1980s that the new system gained momentum, through the *doi moi* policies that brought free market

to Vietnam. One of these policies – Resolution 10, introduced in 1988 – recognised the household, for the first time, as the basic unit of the agrarian economy, and created new land laws that leased out former cooperative land to individual farmers. Households were given contracts which granted them the right to use the land for 15 years; they were also allowed to buy and sell inputs and outputs, and choose which crops to produce. However, Resolution 10 had a major drawback: it severely restricted land transactions, because the 1988 guidelines had proposed auctioning the most fertile land to the highest bidder. But widespread accusations of favouritism in land allocation eventually forced the government to change its policy.

The revised Land Law of 1993 permitted long-term lease of land from the state. This new law was immensely significant, as it granted households five rights: to transfer, exchange, inherit, rent, and mortgage their land. Moreover, households were issued with Land-Use Rights Certificates, otherwise known as Red Books, which gave legal recognition to a household's use of land. My own work in northern Vietnam confirms the authors' assertion that rural reforms gave villagers the opportunity to diversify away from agriculture and concentrate on low-tech production – mainly in handicrafts, which had virtually disappeared during the quarter-century of collectivism. More recently, a revision of the Land Law (No. 13/2003, implemented 1 July 2004) extended land-use rights, made mortgages available, and permitted the utilisation of land on a stable, long-term basis.

Chapter 2 also focuses on the welfare distributional impact of land reforms. The main arguments are based on the following two assumptions: firstly, unequal allocation of land would put at risk the prospects of higher output of key crops such as rice, thus reducing economic growth, which in turn would have less impact on poverty alleviation; and secondly, a more equal allocation of land that ignored the differing productive capabilities of households might jeopardise economic activity, thus creating food shortages or even a famine. In the following chapters (3 to 7), the authors embark on a number of econometric analyses, drawing from four national household surveys, which cover the period 1993 to 2004. After providing some useful statistics on changes in poverty, inequality and landlessness, they build a theoretical model for assessing the welfare outcomes of Vietnam's first stage of agrarian reforms that followed the 1988 Land Law. In this model they show that land distribution was generally executed in an equitable way. They also found that land reallocation occurring after the 1993 Land Law was largely efficient, despite the fact that the process of reform was slow. For instance, households that started with a small parcel of land that was economically inefficient tended to increase their holding after a period of time. Land allocation adjustment was also equitable, as it favoured mostly the 'land poor'; households headed by educated males with long roots in their local communities were also favoured by the law reforms (p. 119).

The next issue addressed by Ravallion and van de Walle is the controversy over

rising landlessness among Vietnam's poor, which resulted from the agrarian reforms. They reject the idea that increasing landlessness has exacerbated poverty in Vietnam, and argue that in fact the opposite is the case. The various statistical tests they apply indicate that 'rising landlessness has been a positive factor in poverty reduction in Vietnam as a whole ... as some farm households took up new economic opportunities, particularly wage labor' (pp. 148-49). However, the authors found that landless households have fewer opportunities for obtaining private credit from market and non-market institutions, because they lack collateral. Such problematic access to credit by the landless poor is a concern for efficiency and equity, and might jeopardise Vietnam's anti-poverty programme (pp. 172-73). Finally, the authors argue that land reforms, and the pace of transition to a market economy, have been greater in Vietnam than in China. Just a decade after collectivisation, 'Vietnam's agricultural output and factor markets had become roughly as free as found in most (long-standing) market economies' (p. 180). Since the publication of their book, however, it has become apparent that land allocation has also had one undesirable outcome: rampant land speculation has created a 'bubble' in Vietnam's land and property market, especially in the two large cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Overall, this is a comprehensible book, drawing from a wealth of statistical data although this profusion of statistical analysis might be a little off-putting for the non-specialist reader. However, this is a valuable publication, which should be of great interest to scholars and

students of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian studies, as well as to anyone interested in development studies and transition economies.

LEON COMBER

Malaya's secret police 1945-60: the role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency
Singapore: ISEAS, 2008. 324pp.
ISBN 9789812308290 hb £46.95 hb;
ISBN 9789812308153 pb £21.95

Reviewed by Simon C. Smith
University of Hull

The Malayan Emergency – Britain's 'Asian Cold War' – has unsurprisingly attracted a great deal of historical attention. Leon Comber, a former Chinese-speaking officer in the Special Branch of the Malayan Police and now prolific writer on Southeast Asia, has added to this literature by producing a thoughtful, well-researched, and penetrating examination of the role of Special Branch in combating, and eventually defeating, the Malayan Emergency. His achievement is all the greater given the lacuna in the records, especially among 'classified documents'.

Comber's study begins by examining the decidedly uncertain start made in counter-insurgency operations against the Communist Party of Malaya and its military wing, the Malayan Races Liberation Army, by the Malayan Security Service (MSS). The failure of the MSS to warn the colonial government of the impending outbreak of violence by the communists, coupled with

disenchantment with its director, Col. John Dalley, led to its winding up in August 1948 and replacement by Special Branch, one located in Malaya the other in Singapore. Quite apart from the difficulty of establishing a new intelligence gathering service at the height of a major insurrection, Special Branch initially lacked Chinese language competency which impeded its effectiveness. Nevertheless, Comber notes that by the early 1950s, 'Special Branch had begun to settle down as the "eyes and ears" of the government', adding that it had become 'more confident and proficient in establishing a widespread network of agents and informers and collecting, collating, analysing and disseminating information' (p. 98). Comber pays particular attention to the work of Sir William Jenkin who, as Director of Intelligence, reorganised and retrained Special Branch. Among Jenkin's successes was a recruitment drive to increase the number of Chinese probationary Special Branch inspectors. According to Comber, the work of Jenkin made the Head of the Federal Special Branch, Guy Madoc's, task 'much easier' when he assumed this role in February 1952 (p. 143). Comber also pays glowing tribute to the Director of Operations, General Harold Briggs, whose eponymous Briggs Plan 'provided the Special Branch and the uniformed branch of the police, the civil administration and the fighting forces with a set of directives that laid down clearly the path they should follow ... to defeat the communist insurgency' (p. 167). Indeed, the author goes so far as to suggest that 'it is impossible to imagine the maturation of the Special Branch without the brilliantly conceived Briggs Plan and the

developments involving the Special Branch that arose from it' (p. 288).

In emphasising the role of Briggs and Jenkin, both of whom left Malaya before the arrival of the new High Commissioner and Director of Operations, General Sir Gerald Templer, in early 1952, Comber is implicitly giving support to the interpretation, presented most recently by Karl Hack, that the tide was turning in Britain's favour before the arrival of Templer and that much of this was due to the success of the Briggs Plan. Indeed, Comber argues that the Briggs Plan 'had a large part to play ... in the continued improvement in the security situation that took place during General Sir Gerald Templer's time as High Commissioner and Director of Operations' (p. 167). This interpretation contrasts with the so-called 'stalemate thesis' associated with Richard Stubbs, Anthony Short, and others that deadlock had been reached by the end of 1951 which required Templer's energy, drive, and much-vaunted 'hearts and minds' strategy to break. If the Templer period did have a defining moment, it was the separation of Special Branch from the Criminal Investigation Department since this 'provided Special Branch with an enhanced status, enabled it to develop professionally along its own lines, and cast off the perception that it was somehow an appendage of the CID' (p. 287).

Comber has succeeded in producing a highly readable account that significantly enhances our understanding of the reasons for British success in defeating the post-war communist insurrection in Malaya. If there is a criticism, it is that his

relatively light engagement with the historiography means that his contribution to existing debates is implicit rather than explicit. Nevertheless, he makes a strong case for the centrality of Special Branch in British success during the Emergency. As he concludes: 'In the final analysis, the Special Branch outwitted the communist insurgents' (p. 287).

TRUDY JACOBSEN

Lost goddesses: the denial of female power in Cambodian history
 Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008. 336 pp.
 ISBN: 978-87-7694-001-0, pb £17.99

Reviewed by Katherine Brickell
Royal Holloway, University of London

Lost goddesses makes a fascinating and highly original contribution to deepening our understanding of Cambodian history. Jacobsen brings to life the gendered history of the Southeast Asian country in a critical and sensitive manner through the book's focus on the ways in which Cambodian women have wielded power in the past. Tracing the relationship between women and power over time, Jacobsen eloquently assesses which diametrically opposing images of women – as powerful or powerless – are most accurate. Jacobsen sets up a number of important questions in this regard: 'Who or what is responsible for the denial of female power in Cambodian history? Have Cambodian women ever been powerful? If so, when did this begin to change, and by what agency?' (p. 2).

Analyses of these key questions starts from the 3rd to the 9th centuries where Jacobsen questions what (if any) power women wielded (Chapter 2). To examine this and other periods, ethnography and a diversity of historical sources are drawn up as appropriate, from *inter alia*, stone inscriptions in Sanskrit and Old Khmer, chronicles kept at courts, legal instruments, didactic codes for correct behaviour, observations of travellers, preserved folktales, official records of the French Protectorate, newspapers, autobiographies and biographies.

Using these various sources, the book argues that 'the "tradition" of female powerlessness is false, constructed out of bias and perpetuated by those who have dismissed the significance of women in Cambodia's past and ignored evidence for their consequence in the present' (p. 279). With this compelling conspiracy argument running consistently throughout the book, the unravelling of this mystery and the suspense this provides the reader makes it quite an 'academic thriller'. As Jacobsen expands, the book reveals 'the circumstances of their deceit and identify the perpetrators of the denial of female power in Cambodian history' (p. 14).

An excellent example of such deceit can be seen in relation to *Cbpab*, normative poems that describe the correct way for society and its members to act. In the middle period (1431- 1867 Chapter 4), many of these *Cbpab* representing the earliest extant of Cambodian literature reflecting Buddhist characteristics, perceived women as spiritually equal to men. Accompanied by a whole host of further evidence, Jacobsen therefore concludes that 'the middle period was

not the epoch in which power was denied to Cambodian women' (p. 103).

However in the 19th century (Chapter 5), the *Cpbab Srei* - 'Code of conduct for women' - began 'a tradition of misogynist literature' (p. 109) as conservative male interests were privileged under the reign of Ang Duong. As a result, there was an overall decline in the status of women as the literature produced before the imposition of colonial rule was taken to represent 'traditional' gender roles and maintained as a form of resistance to French influence to ensure that Khmer culture would not be lost. Jacobsen thus casts the 1950s and 1960s as critical for understanding the relationship of women to power as these rules became absorbed uncritically into the Cambodian educational system. This deceit post-Khmer Rouge was then perpetrated once again as the constructs of 'traditional' Cambodia were re-sourced from conservative literature such as the *Cpbab Srei* as an example of the purity and unassailability of Cambodian culture (Chapter 10).

Such examples of deceit are also found in addition to examples of western constructs of power which fail to incorporate the supernatural world. This is important as Jacobsen argues, as in Cambodia, the significance of women in this sphere has never been diminished, 'despite repeated assaults on the role of women in the tangible world' (p. 289). These assaults are finally analysed in the context of Cambodian society today as Jacobsen scopes out some of the main tensions arising in the contemporary

period, albeit in a slightly anecdotal manner.

Overall however, this is an exceptional book of considerable merit that will be of interest to a wide range of academics working in history, anthropology, gender studies, politics, religion and Southeast Asian studies. It is excellent value and would be a clear candidate to be published in Khmer so that the false constructs of earlier periods can be revealed. This is especially important, as Jacobsen herself (p. 4) comments: 'most Cambodians have little idea of gender relations prior to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, believing that male pre-eminence has always been a facet of Cambodian society'. It is this erroneous belief which *Lost goddesses* so powerfully erodes.

PHILIP TAYLOR

Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: place and mobility in the cosmopolitan periphery
Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007. xvi & 313 pp.
ISBN 978-87-7694-009-6, pb £16.99

Reviewed by William G. Clarence-Smith
School of Oriental and African Studies

Given the paucity of materials in English on the Cham people of mainland Southeast Asia, any new publication would be welcome. As this is an excellent book, it is doubly welcome. The topic is limited to the Cham of Vietnam's Mekong delta, who live along the Cambodian frontier, but there are some interesting asides on the Cham of

Cambodia itself, and on those in central Vietnam. The Mekong delta community is entirely Islamic by faith, and many of its members live in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), whether temporarily or permanently. Taylor made eight field trips over the period 1999-2005, and collected a wealth of ethnographic data in 'open-ended' conversations, mainly conducted in Vietnamese rather than in Cham or Khmer. While not specifically historical in his focus, the author says quite a bit about the origins and evolution of this dynamic community. The book is generally well-written and illustrated, with telling anecdotes, useful maps, and revealing photographs. However, the theoretical emphasis on hybridity and multiple identities becomes a little laboured and oppressive at times.

At the heart of the book, there lies a fine dissection of the tension between intense localism and remarkable globalism. This leads these 'rural cosmopolitans' to make highly universal claims in a very localised idiom. They are emotionally rooted in their home area, and resistant to a long tradition of Vietnamese efforts at assimilation. Cham villages in the delta are instantly recognisable, due to mosques, houses, and sarongs. Also striking is the minor importance of rice agriculture, as compared to trade, river transport, fishing, boat-building, and artisanal industry. However, the Cham are simultaneously a cosmopolitan people. They are aware of their relatively recent origins in the south-central highlands of Vietnam, although they rarely feel strong bonds of affinity with their 'Hindu' or 'mixed Islam' kin. As pious Muslims, they are part of the global

umma, and they realise that they have long mingled their genes with those of Muslim immigrants from all over Southeast Asia and beyond. Malay loan words are common in their Austronesian language, and Arabic is fairly widely studied. As keen traders, they travel widely, and, partly due to centuries of persecution, resident communities have formed in many parts of the world. Some of the gains of trade and diasporic living have been ploughed back into home villages, in a pattern familiar from many other mobile peoples.

Much of the book, notably in chapters 4 to 6, is devoted to the impact of the Communist take-over in 1975, followed by economic liberalisation. Some Cham did rather well in exploiting the failures of top-down economic management after 1975, but others were sent to New Economic Zones and lost their lands to Vietnamese settlers, being perceived as having favoured French colonialism and 'puppet regimes' supported by the Americans. In the 1990s, political pressures eased, but the Cham often found it hard to survive in the free-for-all capitalism of the reform period. Weaving suffered badly from the liberalisation of textile imports, although 'ethnic tourism' offset some of these losses. Saigon has become increasingly important to the Mekong delta Cham, with the traditional seven Cham mosques expanding in number to around a dozen.

Another important section of the book, mainly in chapters 2 and 3, investigates the progress of Islamic reform, as the group's identity gradually comes to be expressed more in religious than in ethnic terms. For Kinh (ethnic

Vietnamese) women marrying into the community, conversion to Islam is a symbolic moment. Support, both financial and moral, comes from the wider Islamic world, and returning pilgrims are significant sources of outside influence. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, 'Wahhabi' reform tends to be expressed by building separate mosques, rejecting the veneration of 'saints' and ancestors, frowning on celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, hostility to Sufi mysticism, and a strict dress code for women.

Taylor's intellectual background lies in studies of the extraordinary religious and ethnic diversity of the Mekong delta, and he is occasionally a little wobbly on matters relating to Islam and maritime Southeast Asia. He seems unaware of the role played by Muslim Tamils, arriving under the umbrella of French colonialism, even though he mentions, in passing, that 'Indians' built the Trà Vinh mosque in 1921 (p. 118). He is almost as hazy about Arab influence, with no grasp of the workings of the Hadhrami Arab diaspora in Southeast Asia, despite mentioning an Arab 'saint' of the lineage of 'Ali (p. 77), almost certainly a Hadhrami *sayyid*. There is much on the importance of the coffee shop as a place for socialising, and on coffee drinking more generally, but no glossing of the possible association of coffee with the Islamic world, and conversely of tea with the Sinic world.

The real strengths of this book lie in a deep and complex understanding of the fragmented societies of Vietnam's far south. As Taylor puts it in his conclusion, 'the Mekong delta remains divided,

ironically, by competing visions of human unity, not one of which compels universal authority over the entire region'. The Cham version of this localised universality is an Islamic one, and increasingly so, and it remains unclear whether the tensions building up around 'Wahhabi' reform may lead to violence over time. In any event, it is much to be hoped that this fine book will stimulate more studies of the Cham, including those of the south-central highlands of Vietnam, who have retained much of the Hinduism that characterised them when they were one of the most powerful peoples of Southeast Asia.

ANDERS POUlsen

Childbirth and tradition in Northeast Thailand. Forty years of development and cultural change
Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007. 267 pp.
ISBN 978-87-7694-003-4, pb £18.99

Reviewed by Jana Igunma
British Library

Anders Poulsen's field of specialisation is child psychology, in which he worked for many years and became well known internationally as founder-president of the International School Psychology Association (ISPA), and as director of the Danish Psychological Press.

His interest in Thailand rose with his involvement in a UNESCO-funded project studying social influences on the development of Thai children. In connection with this project, Poulsen worked in the village of Baan Phraan

Muean in Northeast Thailand in 1961-62. Several appointments by the Danish International Development Agency brought him back to this same village in 1967, 1977, 1988, and 1999 to continue his research. His most recent stay there in 2005 made it possible to conclude a longitudinal study which also focuses on traditions and socio-cultural conditions surrounding pregnancy and childbirth in Northeast Thailand.

The book, which is dedicated to pregnancy, birth and puerperium, is divided into three parts. Firstly, an introductory description gives insight into the village and its population, together with an analysis of the traditions, beliefs, and rituals associated with pregnancy and birth, and the changes and developments in this respect over about 40 years. The *khwan* rites ('calling the soul' rites) are of particular interest in this part, and the importance of the *mae kamlerd*, a spiritual entity that is believed to cause illness or misfortune of the newborn, is explained. The rituals associated with the *mae kamlerd* and other spirit cults are analysed, before the author gives a survey of ritual practice, pregnancy and birth that he witnessed between 1961 and 2005. Interestingly, the ritual practice has not changed very much whereas nutritional habits during pregnancy and actions taken if the baby falls ill have changed significantly. Poulsen also examines the role and work of traditional midwives (*mae tamya*), including practical aspects of giving birth, confinement and postnatal care of both mother and child.

The second part, which accounts for far more than a third of the book, is on the

ritual texts connected to the rites mentioned earlier. It contains a critical Thai and English edition of the three most important ritual texts, which were originally written on palm leaves in *Tham* script and/or Lao *buhan* script. Some smaller, however not less important texts, have been added, too. The transliterations and translations were prepared by Pernille Askerud and Supranee Khammuang who attempt to interpret the original texts for the non-Isan/Lao speakers, and which at the same time corresponds best with the original texts. Personally, this is the most valuable part of the book since transliterations (into Thai) and translations (into English) of such texts from Northeast Thailand are very rare and extremely difficult to find. Also included is some information on the ritual masters who carry out the rites, and their work and role within the community is described. Furthermore, the recipes for various traditional medicines, which are used in the village during pregnancy, birth and puerperium, are presented.

Part 3 reveals details of the research methodology that has been applied throughout Poulsen's research as well as a very useful glossary and notes on the language spoken in Northeast Thailand, which is similar to Lao. Finally, there is a 12-page bibliography which is a good entry point for further studies on the topic and on Northeast Thai or Lao traditions.

Richard A. Engelhardt, UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, states in the foreword to the book that 'Anders Poulsen's work is an

invaluable contribution to the safeguarding of the oral culture that is so determining a component of Isan culture. At the same time, it documents aspects of that culture which is seldom the subject of research and documentation... future researchers now have a chance to study these texts and traditions in depth and unveil layers of meaning that continue to make these rites so relevant and meaningful today.'

I would go even further to say that Poulsen's work proves how important it is to work with original texts and with those who are still able to understand the ritual and religious background of these texts which may appear strange and perhaps unreasonable to the outsider. Poulsen's revelations about the traditional confinement, for example, show that traditions and practices considered to have died out were still very much alive when he conducted his research in Northeast Thailand. Poulsen's book highlights understanding of cultural diversity and oral traditions in particular – most especially the role they continue to play – even in modernising cultures and societies.

ROXANA WATERSON, ed.

Southeast Asian lives: personal narratives and historical experience
Singapore: NUS Press;
Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.
viii + 317 pp, photographs, index.
ISBN 9789971693442, pb US\$27; S\$38

Reviewed by Michael Hitchcock
University of Chichester

The turbulence that accompanied the demise of colonialism, the Japanese occupation of World War II and the emergence of new nation states had a marked impact on the lives of the people of Southeast Asia that has been documented in the memoirs of the region's leaders, most famously Lee Kuan Yew. However, very little is known about the experiences of ordinary people through these difficult times and, though fragmentary accounts do exist, it is almost impossible to find an overview. This welcome volume neatly fills that gap with a series of fascinating narratives with accompanying analyses that reveal remarkable stories of adaptation and survival in a time of rapid transition.

All the contributors are anthropologists, but the volume is not aimed at anthropologists and instead addresses a multi-disciplinary audience covering heritage, social history, literature and biography. These biographies may be diverse, but they are unified by ethnography with all the contributors reflecting on what it means to do this kind of research in the current era while focusing on the past. This reviewer's hunch is that these kinds of debates will

prove attractive to various disciplines, notably history, underpinning the steady spread and acceptance of ethnographical approaches throughout the humanities and social sciences. In fact, so interesting and varied are the observations about the value of ethnography in elucidating history that it is impossible to capture all of them in a review such as this.

Therefore to give a flavour of the vitality of these debates on research methods this reviewer would like to draw attention to Robert Knox Dentan's observation that traditional descriptive ethnography had come under fire because it was conducted by Anglophone men based in universities whose master narratives simply added to the injustices inflicted on subaltern peoples. The fact that researchers from other social categories have become involved in ethnography over the last half century has not, in the minds of its critics, outdated this critique, and, though Dentan is inclined to agree with them, he has one caveat; talking about 'postcolonial studies' vexes him. He asks what is postcolonial about colonialism when one considers that the policies of the educated ruling Malaysians of today towards indigenous people like the Semai are almost indistinguishable from those of the former colonists. Dentan argues that through narrative ethnography he tries to present facts as he experienced them, leaving readers to make up their own minds about the facts and the research. That said, he appears to be wary about the essentialism of potential readers in his own country, particularly with regard to popular notions of violence, which he himself shares to some extent.

Another interesting reflection is that of Annette Hamilton who points out that life history or life story inevitably overlaps with oral history and questions of veracity and accuracy emerge. She argues that in anthropology it is not a concern with the accuracy of the informant's memories, but with the ethnographer's forms of eliciting and recording that have led to questions about the validity of life history writing or at least recognition of its collaborative character. Despite these observations, Hamilton's study is located in Thailand and she argues that her approach offers perspectives on the individuals' encounters with the local and the national, an important consideration given the process of 'nationalist narrativisation' that began in Thailand in the 19th century and had by the 1980s produced a consistent and homogeneous version of Thai history and Thai culture. Hamilton points out that these questions are of particular interest in Thailand because of the extent to which national consciousness had obscured local particularities and memories, though this reviewer would add that they are equally applicable in other parts of Southeast Asia.

There could have been a conclusion on the value of ethnography in recovering history at the end of the book, though there is a mini-conclusion to this effect in the first chapter, but clearly the editor and her contributors wanted the life-histories themselves to occupy centre stage and not be overshadowed by a debate on methodology. This leaves us with a diverse and engaging series of narratives that often reveal how tightly constrained ordinary peoples' lives were

in 'traditional societies' where local leaders exercised almost dictatorial power. The fact that many of the societies were under colonial rule at the time did not necessarily mean that foreign domination percolated down to ordinary people and as Warren's Balinese informant opines 'I don't think the Dutch really ran things completely then' (p. 55), a bottom up rebuke to both colonial and contemporary national narrative. This book deserves to be warmly welcomed not just because it fills an important gap and provides some fascinating reflections on methodology, but because it does what it says on the cover and 'will intrigue anyone living in or concerned with this extraordinary region'.

STELLA R. QUAH

Families in Asia. Home and kin
London: Routledge, 2009; xiii, 212 pp.
ISBN 9780415455688 (hb £85);
9780415455701 (pb £19.99);
9780203888506 (ebk), 2nd edn.

Reviewed by Victor T. King
Leeds University

This is an important and ambitious reference work with a substantial bibliography, now in second edition. It provides a comparative perspective and a historical, conceptual and methodological investigation of the family across East and Southeast Asia, specifically from 1990 to 2007, though with attention to changing trends in family life over the past 50 years. The four East Asian countries covered comprise China, Japan, Hong Kong (a Special Administrative

Region) and South Korea, and there are six Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. As Stella Quah explains the choice of case material was dictated primarily by the availability of comparable national data from a range of qualitative micro-level social science studies, some of which she has undertaken herself, and larger-scale demographic and statistical-survey data gathered by international organisations and national government bodies. Even so some of the data are still relatively uneven and render the exercise of systematic comparison difficult. The purpose of Quah's comparative study which commenced in 2000 after a long career spanning the previous two decades in examining 'marriage and parenthood policies' in both Western and Asian countries and undertaking detailed and extended studies of the family in Singapore, was 'to investigate how different or similar family life is across Asia' (p. xi). A major question which triggered her interest, based originally on her detailed and well known studies of Singapore, was 'Is there then a 'typical' Asian family?

The promotional blurb to the book indicates that this new edition is 'updated and expanded throughout' with 'new material on dowry, singlehood, adoption, the transformation of the senior generation, changes in family courts and the role of the state in family wellbeing' (p. i). The first edition, published in Singapore in 2003 under the title *Home and kin: families in Asia*, received very encouraging reviews indeed and presumably sold well. Indeed, such eulogies as 'remarkable'

and 'classic' appeared in reviews at the time.

Quah informs us in her preface that the themes addressed in this second edition are guided by those discussed in the second edition of her country-based case study *Families in Singapore: sociological perspectives* (1998) in order 'to facilitate cross-national comparisons' (pp. xi-xii). Interestingly, one notes in passing that there is no direct reference to and commentary on the first edition of *Families in Asia* either in the preface or the introductory chapter and no attempt to respond to reviewers' and others' comments or indicate how the second edition derives, develops and differs from the first. Be that as it may the major themes and issues carried forward from 1998 rather than 2003 with some elaboration and additions comprise: the formation of families, including such processes as the identification of eligible partners, dating, match-making, marriage, dowries and co-habitation; parenthood, state-driven family policy and population control, parent-child relations and socialisation; ageing, grandparenthood, social capital and the inter-generational transmission of values; gender roles and the tensions which women have to address in terms of traditional expectations of male-female roles and statuses, changing economic demands in the work place, and the increasing importance of gender equality in the context of such developments as women's movements; divorce, family courts and conflict resolution in family life; and finally the effects of government policies and socio-economic development on the family.

Of course, in any comparative endeavour there is a requirement to establish units which are comparable. In sociology and anthropology the term 'family' has been used to cover a range of socio-economic units which has involved social scientists in the rather pedestrian task of developing classifications of family types. The 'family' also jostles with such other terms as 'household' and 'domestic group' in the literature. For me and with reference to anthropological concerns 'family' refers to the domain of kinship; 'household' to the residential dimension; and 'domestic group' to the arena of activities including house-keeping, and physical and social support. What I find especially interesting is the considerable difference (though with some overlap) in the kinds of literature and the perspectives which are deployed by sociologists (like Quah) and anthropologists (like me) studying family issues in Southeast Asia. Following David Klein and James White, in their work on 'family theories', Quah states that the family is a unique social group which has four main characteristics; it has significant continuity or endurance (it persists); it is cross-generational; it is based on both biological and affinal relationships; and it is embedded in a wider set of kinship relationships or has links to 'a larger kinship organisation' (p. 2) She also draws a useful distinction between ideal, actual and 'affectual' families and indicates that in Asia the 'ideal form' tends to be a three-generational extended family. Yet in practice and in response to a range of circumstances, policies and pressures 'actual' families can vary in form and character. I should note here that among anthropologists there have also been

debates about what constitutes an extended family and, depending on the definition used, whether or not such a unit is in ideal terms characteristic of Asia.

Notwithstanding these terminological and disciplinary quibbles I have enormous admiration for the way Quah handles a truly substantial amount of qualitative and quantitative material. Her book bristles with charts and tables. Her analysis is wide-ranging and skilful, her argument and narrative fluent, her scholarship of a high quality. She identifies and examines several noticeable trends, some of which affect and others which arise from family life. People are living longer and having fewer children; women face conflicting pressures in modernising economies; there is a noticeable tendency to postpone marriage; there is increasing divorce in selected countries, though a value is still placed on marriage and parenthood. However, Quah argues that 'what is changing radically is the perception of marriage, the perception of the ideal number of children and the inclination of women to expand their horizons by getting more education, becoming income-earners holding paid jobs or pursuing a career' (pp. 161-62). Quah also devotes considerable attention to state policies in relation to family affairs in fast-changing societies, particularly in the context of economic growth and recession. Overall she is in favour of measured intervention, both preventive and remedial, to help families cope with stress, conflicts and crises and she makes a case for the state 'to contribute to family well-being' (p. 180).

The first edition of *Families* has already become a standard reference in the comparative sociological study of kinship and family trends in Asia. This second edition which develops the analysis and extends the empirical scope much further will only serve to confirm the status of Quah's work.

ROBERT H. TAYLOR

The state in Myanmar

London: Hurst, 2009. 445 pp.

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Reviewed by Ashley South
Australian National University

This is an updated version of Professor Taylor's *The state in Burma* (Hurst 1987), with an additional chapter describing developments over the past two decades. The original book remains the most comprehensive account of the state-socialist period in Burma (1962-88). Unfortunately, this new version adds little of interest, while retaining many of the problems which detract from its predecessor's value.

The first five chapters are reproduced largely unchanged from the earlier volume: in these 373 pages, there are just 16 citations of post-1987 publications. Given the large amount of new scholarship and other material regarding Burma/Myanmar produced over the past 20 years, the selection of new material is somewhat idiosyncratic. Furthermore, Taylor has not updated the non-Burma-specific political science references. In

consequence, his theoretical framework is rather dated.

In his preface, the author notes that some reviewers of the original book were critical of its 'reification of the state'. The new volume likewise focuses almost exclusively on the state, with the justification that this 'has been the dominant institution in shaping economic, social and other opportunities for the population (p. 1). This emphasis on 'bringing the state back in' may have been necessarily corrective in the 1980s, but tends to obscure important alternative perspectives.

Taylor describes the manner in which the state emerged in the pre-colonial era, was 'rationalised' during the colonial period, and was displaced during the chaos of the early years after independence, before being 'reasserted' under military control. The account is replete with useful and interesting detail (often derived from primary sources). However, it fails to acknowledge the manner in which the state was effectively captured (in the 1950s and early 1960s) by a faction within the officer corps, which has since pursued policies designed to perpetuate military rule, and the interests of the military class.

Taylor praises the role of the state in guarding against ethnic recidivism. However, he fails to appreciate that – far from being a disinterested arbiter – the militarised state has come to be identified with the Burman majority, through the attempted imposition of a homogenising cultural and linguistic 'national identity', derived from the Burman historical core.

In the 1980s Taylor produced important work on ethnic politics in Burma. He described how the colonial administration's proto-anthropological notions of Burmese social structures helped to create (or at least consolidate) the categories of ethnic identity which subsequently came to dominate state-society relations in the country. Unfortunately, this important critique of essentialist notions of ethnicity has been deployed in ways which suggest that all forms of ethnic identity in Burma, beyond the purely decorative, are inauthentic, because they were partly derived from non-indigenous sources.

Taylor is much concerned with issues of legitimacy. However, such discussions are undermined by his failure to seriously engage with the criticisms of military rule elaborated by a range of opposition actors. He refers to 'allegations about human rights abuses' committed by the Burma Army (p. 377; similar wording echoes throughout the book, e.g. pp. 398, 449). In fact, such abuses are very well-documented, in numerous reports produced by (admittedly, often opposition-sympathising) human rights organisations.

Taylor is highly sceptical regarding the positions of non-state actors. This approach is illustrated by a comment attached to the book's updated bibliography (p. 523). The author correctly states that many 'advocacy documents are careless in their use of allegations and claims about causality'. However, he does not provide similar caveats regarding official (government) publications, which despite their many

deficiencies are treated as unproblematically accurate.

Other errors are more banal, but equally revealing. It is claimed that, at the time of the 1988 'democracy uprising', Mon and Karen insurgents were engaged in infighting at the border town of Myawati (p. 389). In fact, the skirmishes occurred about 100 miles further to the south, at Three Pagodas Pass. Although this may be regarded as a minor mistake, it is not one which would be made by anyone with a passing knowledge of Burma's ethnic politics. (A further amusing error occurs two pages later, where – in his determination to avoid using the word 'Burma' – Taylor mistakenly refers to the Myanmar Socialist Program Party, which ran the country in the period before it was renamed.)

Taylor's veneration of the state, and dislike of opposition politicians (particularly Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), colours his account of politics over the past two decades. Rightly sceptical of the activities of exile political formations, Taylor gives very little attention to popular anti-regime sentiment inside the country, devoting just one fleeting reference to the mass protests led by monks in August and September 2007 (p. 447). However, his analysis of the ceasefires agreed since 1989 between the military government and various armed ethnic groups is reasonably balanced.

In general, the military government in Burma/Myanmar is presented as wilfully misunderstood by other commentators, and unjustly put-upon. It is true that many observers fail to understand the manner in which the country's military rulers claim 'state legitimacy [on the basis

of] their capacity to maintain and protect a number of values held dear by themselves ... including sovereignty and territorial integrity' (p. 471). However, Taylor over-compensates for such shortcomings, by providing an extended – and strangely naïve – apology for military rule in Burma.

SYED HUSIN ALI

Ethnic relations in Malaysia: harmony and conflict

Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2008, xxiv, 169, ISBN 978-983-3782-59-8 (pb)

*Reviewed by Victor T. King
University of Leeds*

Syed Husin Ali is one of the most distinguished social scientists in Malaysia and has long had a sociological interest in the topical issues (including inter-ethnic relations, social class, inequality and poverty) which animate Malaysian academic and political life. Indeed he has been engaged in active and critical political dialogue with the governments of the day which in the early part of his career resulted in his detention without trial in Kamunting from 1974 to 1980 under the Internal Security Act. He has been both a scholar and a social and political activist, demonstrating above all that action and application have to be based on a considered and evidence-based social conscience.

However, I discovered with a little regret that the book is a compilation of mainly published work, much of which I already

know: from his edited book *Ethnicity, class and development* (1984), and the chapters in *Challenging politics: indigenous people's experiences with political parties and elections* (2001) and *Out of the Tempurong: critical essays on Malaysian society* (2008), from the widely read and recently revised *The Malays: their problems and future* (1981/2008), his article on 'Economic growth, stratification and ethnicity' (1976), plus articles in the popular media (*The New Straits Times* [1996], *Malaysia Today/The Sun* [2007], *Malaysiakini* [2000], and *Newsweek* [2000]). However, there is a newly written introduction on the theme of national unity and recent inter-ethnic conflicts in which Husin Ali gives us some of his views on recent political events and social issues in Malaysia. There is also an adaptation of some published material from *Ethnicity, class and development* which serves as a general orientation on the characteristics of ethnicity in Malaysia, and the inclusion of a previously unpublished talk entitled 'Southeast Asia (especially Malaysia) following 9/11 and 10/12 Attacks' which was delivered in several British universities in 2003.

In fairness to Husin Ali he has a reasonable case for not updating or revising much of his earlier writings because he wishes his readers 'to understand them in the context of their time' and 'observe the common thread and the trend of views and ideas that link them to the recent articles' (pp. vi-vii). In this connection therefore Husin Ali's long engagement with the subject matter serves to demonstrate significant transformations in action, behaviour, ideas and understandings in relation to

ethnicity in Malaysia. But more especially what the collection does is to demonstrate the continuity and steadfastness in much of Husin Ali's social and political worldview and the persistent interconnections which he makes between ethnicity, social class, political processes and development. There is an academic objectivity in his work, but both in his more seriously scholarly writing and in his popular pronouncements there is a passion and commitment to causes which always shine through. The collection expresses in part at least a personal scholarly and political journey and it cannot be read without understanding this autobiographical context.

We all recognise that no one, least of all a sociologist, can ignore the vital and all-pervasive social organisational, behavioural and ideational principle of ethnicity or identity in attempting to understand the structures and transformations of Malaysian society. Indeed, one seldom finds a social scientific study of Malaysia which does not address relationships within and between ethnic categories and groupings in one way or another. Husin Ali also warns that in both the academic and popular literature these relationships are sometimes referred to incorrectly and unhelpfully in terms of the concept of race which for him is a 'myth ... constructed and manipulated by human beings themselves, often by small minorities greedy for wealth and power' (p. 156). However, we have to acknowledge the fact that ethnic identities are also constructed and manipulated (Malay, Chinese, Indian, Dayak, Orang Asli and so on); they are

products of history, interaction and political action; ethnicities are internally differentiated, permeable and cross-cutting; and in studying them we have to make distinctions between what people do, how they behave, the roles they play and what people say, think and sometimes believe. I think Husin Ali could have been much more explicit and detailed in his treatment of these properties and distinctions. Nevertheless, with his very early interest in issues of social stratification and inequality, what he does do in some depth is argue that we shall not understand ethnicity if we do not examine how it interacts with social class and power, and for former colonial dependencies like Malaysia, how these in turn interrelate with developmental possibilities and constraints.

Husin Ali's overriding commitment has always been to the importance of Malaysians and those who govern them building and sustaining inter-ethnic relations and cooperation, founding and supporting multi-ethnic political parties, and promoting social equality and justice in the interest of a genuine nationhood - an ideal of national identity expressed eloquently and forcefully in the *merdeka* proclamation. Who would not agree with Husin Ali when he says 'inter-ethnic relations should be encouraged and promoted in schools, playgrounds, clubs and organizations, especially among the young; state politico-administrative institutions and private economic organizations should be planned and encouraged to include reasonable multi-ethnic participation' (pp. xxiii-xxiv). Of course by its very nature ethnicity can generate conflict because it is an

organisational principle which differentiates and divides, particularly when political parties and identities are configured in relation to it. What dismays Husin Ali above all is the political use of ethnicity in exercising control, operating patronage relations and exacerbating divisions, and the associated processes of undermining democratic institutions, an independent judiciary and university sector, human rights and various individual and collective freedoms. He bemoans the inexorable increase of authoritarianism in Malaysia.

Of course, there are those who might wish to qualify some of Husin Ali's more passionate pronouncements, but as a set of statements made with authority and emotion the book is most certainly worth reading, or in large part re-reading, even for those who are very familiar with his work and its guiding principles. Has the preoccupation with ethnicity been overdone in Malaysia? This is definitely not the case for Husin Ali because for him there is a continuing need for independent scholarly enquiry 'into the factors that cause the increase or decrease of ethnic conflicts ... [and] ... the circumstances most conducive to the growth of ethnic understanding and the establishment of national unity' (p. 6).

TAN SIEW EE and ROSNAH OPAI, eds.
The economy of Brunei Darussalam: perspectives and insights
 Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Petaling Jaya: HBJ Education, 2008;
 x, 386 pp. ISBN 978-983-3026-04-3 pb
 S\$49.90/ US\$39.90

Reviewed by Victor T. King
 Leeds University

This is the third in a series of edited volumes on the economy of Brunei co-edited by Tan Siew Ee and written by 'mainly young local' researchers in Brunei based primarily at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). General social science books on Brunei produced by local academics are few and far between. The preface indicates that the volume is a basic student reference text for the 'Economy of Brunei' course at UBD but it also serves as a handy compendium for those interested in the economic affairs of Brunei. The volume is heavily concerned with quite practical economic matters, including policy issues in relation to economic development and the management of Brunei's economy in relation to the analysis of basic statistical and other relevant data (on imports and exports, income, consumption, economic growth, human resources, training and infrastructure, demography, government budgeting and expenditure, and taxation). In this sense it is a quite straightforward piece of work, even for those of us without an economics background, though I am leaving aside the complexities of econometric analysis; it does not set the pulse racing.

The 14 chapters, several of them co-written by the editors, range over such broad issues as socio-economic development in relation to Brunei's five-year planning cycle and the associated administrative structure (Tan and Rosnah); economic diversification policies (Rosnah); diversification and specialisation in trade (Pang Wei Loon); household consumption and expenditure patterns according to ethnicity (Haji Zulazrin Haji Mohidin and Rosnah); personal consumption and savings (Jessica Lai Teck Choo); private sector demand for cars (Suziyati Mohammad Ali and Tan); the socio-economic factors influencing cigarette consumption (Haji Roslee Haji Baha); determinants of inbound tourism from various ASEAN countries (Rosnah and Tan); travel agencies and inbound tourism and the constraints on tourism development (Chin Yick Moi and Tan); Brunei-Japan trade linkages and the gradual shift from Japan towards closer integration with other ASEAN countries (Pang and Tan); export-led growth and its relevance to Brunei (Haji Suhaimi Haji Ali); money demand and money supply (two papers by Tan Eu Chye, a Visiting Professor to UBD from Universiti Malaya); and finally Brunei's tax performance (Shahriman Haji Besar and Tan).

One of the main preoccupations of the book, not unexpectedly, is Brunei's dependence on oil and gas and the ways in which government policy and action can assist in economic diversification processes. The government's attempts at developing other non-oil sectors of the economy including agriculture, forestry, fishing, manufacturing and services such as tourism have met with mixed success.

It has been the services sector and specifically finance and tourism-related activities which have responded most positively, along with textile/garment production. The difficulties which Brunei experiences with regard to its limited labour supply, and especially the availability of skilled labour, its location and communications infrastructure, the relatively high cost of living, and competition from its neighbours are discussed frankly as are the tendencies of Bruneians to consume luxury goods and to incur personal debt through loans, as well as the disinclination to direct sufficient levels of income to savings and investments. As a result of the deliberations of the contributors to the volume a range of policy recommendations are proposed which seem to me to make sense in the Brunei context and include, among others, the monitoring of consumption practices, changes in various elements of the tax regime, the improvement of public transport and the communications infrastructure, the need to develop the skills and expertise of the work force, and the provision of more and better appointed facilities, particularly accommodation, for international tourists and other visitors.

Of course, as a resource-rich country with a small population Brunei is still in a very enviable economic position in comparison with most of its ASEAN neighbours, but wealth generates its own problems and the co-editors have provided some useful pointers for 'policy-makers in Brunei who are grappling with the difficult task of transforming tiny and laid back Brunei into a modern and developed state'

(p.iv). My one major criticism of the book is that the several chapters, despite their focus upon 'the economic' are relatively loosely integrated. I felt the need for a more robust introduction which would serve to demonstrate the positive achievements of Brunei's economic planning but also, and perhaps more importantly, its contradictions and inadequacies as revealed across the rather diverse chapters. Much of what is discussed in the book also ideally needs to be located in a political, social and cultural context. No economy works in a vacuum.

DUNCAN McCARGO

Tearing apart the land: Islam and legitimacy in southern Thailand
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
264 pp.
ISBN 978-0-8014-7499-6, pb US\$24; 978-0-8014-4527-9, hb US\$59.95

Tomas Larsson
University of Cambridge

Duncan McCargo has written a highly informative study of the enigmatic conflict in southern Thailand, which from 2004 to March 2009 has claimed more than 3,400 lives. The book, which is based on a year of field work in the region, aims to provide a 'full elaboration of the Southern Thai conflict, rooting that conflict in Thailand's persistent failure to establish legitimate participatory rule in the Malay-Muslim majority provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat'. While a 'full' elaboration may not be possible within the confines of any academic

book, *Tearing apart the land* does provide what is clearly the most detailed study yet of the recent spate of violence in the south.

The book is organised into four main sections. Chapter 1 on 'Islam' addresses the question of the nature of the link between conflict and religion. According to McCargo, the conflict is not caused by religious grievances as these are commonly understood. However, Islam does play a role as a rhetorical resource and, more importantly, as an institutional field. In this chapter, McCargo links the upsurge in violence to increasingly fragmented and weak Islamic institutions. The growing insecurity of Islamic institutions is, in turn, related to increasing competition between rival Islamic schools of thought (with syncretic traditionalists pitted against Wahhabi-inspired modernists); the introduction of competitive elections for imams, mosque committees, and provincial-level Islamic councils; the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pondok*) into government-subsidised private Islamic schools offering both Islamic and secular instruction; and the cooptation and manipulation of *ulama* by the Thai state. McCargo argues that the cumulative effect of these processes was that Malay-Muslim society 'lost its moral center' and the collective ability to identify legitimate religious authorities, thus leaving the field open for 'extremists, separatists, jihadists, and advocates of violence'. According to McCargo, the latter groups tend to be associated with traditional forms of Islam with deep local roots, rather than the more recently introduced Wahhabi varieties of Islam.

Chapter 2 on 'Politics' focuses mainly on the rise and shortcomings of electoral politics in the region. Perhaps unexpectedly, the increase in violence coincides with the triumph of electoral politics (as enshrined in the 1997 constitution which was ripped up following the 2006 military coup) and the rise to prominent national positions of power by Malay-Muslim politicians such as Den Tohmeena and Wan Muhammad Nor Matha. In a parallel development at the local level, political decentralisation resulted in elected Muslim leaders taking charge of local government authorities. In short, political inclusion rather than exclusion of the Malay-Muslim minority was the order of the day leading up to the upsurge in violence. McCargo explains that the problem with this process of political assimilation was that it took place on 'Thai' terms and conditions, and in the process alienated important segments of the population in the southern provinces.

Chapter 3 on 'Security' provides a strong critique of the weak and poorly coordinated Thai state authorities, with a particular focus on the justice system and the security forces. While few insurgents have been found guilty of any crimes, McCargo argues that the criminal justice system has become characterised by 'structural harassment' of Malay Muslims. While the judicial system has been unable to provide an effective response to the violence, it is the Thai army and police which are the more important sources of local grievances. Sources of grievance range from excessive violence (as illustrated by the Kru-Ze and Tak Bai incidents) by Thai troops, to their sexual relations with

Muslim women. McCargo argues that provocative actions by the Thai police provided the sparks for the upsurge in violence in 2004. He makes clear that intra-bureaucratic rivalries, infighting, and politicisation have served as serious obstacles to any coherent response to the southern challenge to the Thai state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. McCargo believes that the Thai state's security policies add up to little more than 'a lamentable catalogue of criminal blunders, negligence, incompetence, lack of coordination, and sheer misdirection'.

In Chapter 4 on 'Militants' we finally get closer to the enigmatic movement that has provided the background for the previous three chapters. McCargo characterises the militant movement as a 'loose network rather than a structured hierarchy'. Behind the violence – much of which has targeted fellow Muslims – stand small cells of young men (known as *yuwae*) who are animated by historical myths about ancient Patani, insecurities about their identity as Malays living in a Thai state, Islamist rhetoric, and local grievances. Old-style separatist organisations such as the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) have played a limited role in the recent spate of violence, argues McCargo.

In the concluding chapter, McCargo suggests that his study's two most significant findings may be negative. First, that the conflict is not about Islam. Second, that the conflict in southern Thailand is not part of a global jihad. McCargo characterises the militant movement as a 'fiercely nationalist

struggle' which thrives 'because the Thai state lacks sufficient legitimacy'.

This book is required reading for anyone wishing to understand the conflict in southern Thailand. There is, however, a methodological issue which it might have addressed in order to provide a more compelling explanation of the phenomenon under scrutiny. McCargo doesn't avail himself of important opportunities that southern Thailand presents for comparative analysis.

The first such opportunity is found within Thailand itself. While insecurity of Islamic institutions and political reforms (as described in chapters 1 and 2) may be thought of as necessary conditions for the upsurge in violence, they are probably not sufficient. The population living in the neighbouring province of Satun, which is Thailand's fourth Muslim-majority province, would have been subject to many of the same religious and political processes, but there violent conflict is conspicuous only by its absence. If we extend McCargo's argument, this would suggest that the Thai state has succeeded in establishing a sufficient degree of legitimacy in one out of four Muslim-majority provinces that are conceived by the nationalist militants to have been part of the ancient Patani sultanate. How are we to understand this curious outcome?

The second opportunity for comparative analysis relates to similar movements in other parts of Southeast Asia. Given that McCargo believes this to be a nationalist movement with a separatist agenda, many readers would probably have found it extremely useful if he had

sought to situate his work in relation to earlier studies of this type of political phenomena in Southeast Asia, and particularly, the important body of work that has been produced in recent years by scholars of the Philippines and Indonesia.* In what ways does the Thai case support or challenge the arguments made in this literature on the nature and causes of violent nationalist militancy?

If this book's greatest strength is its empirical depth, its limited comparative ambition may perhaps be regarded as its main source of weakness.

* On the Philippines, see Patricio N. Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the formation of the Philippine nation-state*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000; Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim rulers and rebels: everyday politics and armed separatism in the southern Philippines*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. On Indonesia, see Edward Aspinall, 'Violence and identity formation in Aceh under Indonesian rule' in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Verandah of violence: the background to the Aceh problem*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006; Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Geoffrey Robinson, 'Rawan is as rawan does: the origins of disorder in New Order Aceh', *Indonesia* 66 (1998).