

cooperation. Several authors are moderately optimistic that a new level of engagement can be achieved, although Michael Reiterer stresses that the meaning of “strategic partnership” should be defined much more clearly. He argues that instruments based on sharing experiences – people-to-people exchanges, employing instruments of public diplomacy, taking care of common security and common foreign policy interests such as global public health or human security, and engagement in the wider context of inter- and cross-regional engagement in Asia and Europe – could lay the groundwork for suitable actions.

The book has been carefully edited. Due to the nature of the topics, some of the chapters are quite dry, but some passages, like Albrecht Rothacher’s narration of the so-called Nagoya Connection, i.e. covert channels to bring cheap Taiwanese pork imports into Japan, and of how the EU delegation tried to support Danish pork producers, make fascinating reading. In a number of papers, some graphs or an explanation of the different layers of organizations involved would have been handy, and sometimes the reader misses an appendix containing the most important texts discussed, but these are minor desiderata.

“EU-Japan Relations, 1970–2012” is a very helpful sourcebook for those interested in the bilateral relationship, and indeed also for those interested in the more general development of the EU’s foreign relations. It is destined to become the standard work on the subject. Future, more theory-focussed analyses can build on this solid basis.

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VICTORIA GLENDINNING, *Raffles and the Golden Opportunity, 1781–1826*. London: Profile Books, 2013. XVIII, 350 pages, £9.99 (pb). ISBN 978-1-84668-604-7 (originally published in hardback in 2012)

This book offers a contemporary re-assessment of the life of Sir Stamford Raffles, a British statesman who spent his entire thirty-year career in the service of the East India Company. The author, Victoria Glendinning is an established literary figure, both as a biographer and novelist. Indeed, as in the case of Sir Steven Runciman half a century ago, the profile of South-East Asian studies itself is raised when a personality of such standing turns his or her attention to the field. To some extent Glendinning herself stands on the shoulders of giants, and generously acknowledges her debt to her predecessors. Among other things, her book emphasises the authority of Professor John Bastin in modern scholarship on Raffles.

Born off the coast of Jamaica in 1781, the son of an impecunious master of a West Indiaman, Raffles enjoyed no social advantages – he was ‘neither born nor bred a gentleman’, according to one hostile source (p. 101) – and had almost no formal education. After ten years as an ‘Extra Clerk’ at India House in

London (1795-1805), he served as Assistant Secretary for Penang from 1805 until 1811. On 14 March 1805, just before setting off for the East, he married his first wife, Olivia Mariamne Fancourt, née Devenish, a widow ten years his senior, who died in Java in late 1814. There were no children of this marriage, although both parties had children by their other spouses.

The 'golden opportunity' of the title was the chance offered Raffles in 1818-1819 by Lord Hastings, Governor-General of India, to found a settlement at Singapore (p. 210). Raffles immediately threw himself into town planning, issuing proclamations, laws, orders and even 'positive commands' (p. 265). Also highlighted here is the foundation of the Singapore Institution on 1 April 1823. Trade flourished: as early as 1822 no fewer than 139 square-rigged ships and 1,434 indigenous vessels used the port, which already had a population of ten thousand (p. 245). Singapore – 'my almost only child' (pp. 245, 265) – transformed the economic and political geography of the entire region. The rebirth of the ancient stronghold of Malay civilisation as a centre of British influence 'meant much to him' (p. 219); but he accurately anticipated that the Chinese would 'always form by far the largest portion of the community' (p. 247).

Glendinning seems actually to be rather less interested in Singapore than in Raffles' term as Lieutenant-Governor of Java between 1811 and 1816. Her judgement is that 'the whole tragedy of the British administration of Java is that Raffles was trying, against a ticking clock, to make a first-class country out of a bankrupt one, with neither support nor investment from the Company' (p. 144).

Back in England in 1816-17, after having met Napoleon on St Helena on the way home, Raffles was lionised, rather as Sir James Brooke (Raja of Sarawak) would be in 1847. Raffles was knighted and elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society, mixed in the upper echelons of society, met and married his second wife, had his portrait painted and a bust sculpted and published his *History of Java*, a *succès d'estime* that was rather more wide-ranging in content than the title suggests. He was also – again rather like Brooke in the early 1850s in Sarawak – completely exonerated (by the East India Company) of charges brought against his administration of Java. He even made a grand tour of Europe.

Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen in Sumatra from 1817 until 1824, the title in this case being personal to himself, and from 1819 his remit in this capacity included responsibility for Singapore. Raffles was often berated by headquarters for acting *ultra vires*, but his integrity, zeal and ability were also recognised.

Whilst in Bencoolen – 'the most wretched place I ever beheld' (p. 197) – Raffles lost three of his four infant children in the space of six months, a tragedy which calls to mind similar losses experienced by Raja Charles and Raneë Margaret Brooke in the Red Sea in 1873. Another daughter (Flora) was born to Raffles later; but she too died within weeks (pp. 269-70). When leaving Bencoolen on 2 February 1824 he was shipwrecked and lost his priceless natural history collection, along with his drawings, maps and papers. In a work

of fiction, Glendinning suggests, Raffles' story 'would strain credulity. His good fortune and his ill-fortune were both of an extreme kind' (p. xii).

In his last two years (1824-6) Raffles was made LL.D. by the University of Edinburgh and helped to found London Zoo. He purchased Highwood, an estate of 112 acres, suffered a succession of financial misfortunes, and found himself landed with a bill from the East India Company for £22,272. He died of a brain haemorrhage (cerebral arteriovenous malformation, according to modern diagnosis) on 5 July 1826, the day before his forty-fifth birthday (p. 296). His one surviving child (Ella) died at the age of nineteen in 1840 (p. 309).

In 1830 Raffles' widow, Sophia, published a *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Stamford Raffles*; a second edition followed in 1835. Indeed, Raffles' fame was initially entirely due to her: 'She was not only the keeper of the flame but the one who ignited it; and the curator, not only of his collections, but of his memory and reputation' (p. 298). A statue was erected in Westminster Abbey in 1833. His standing was never greater than on the publication of Demetrius Boulger's biography in 1897 at the height of the British Empire. Lady Raffles died in 1858, the same year in which the East India Company was nationalised by the British government: 'Nothing is too big to fail', comments Glendinning rather sententiously (p. 312).

This book suffers from the occasional misprint, including 'principle' and 'principal' (pp. 207, 314), and colloquialism ('a tad', p. 41; 'morphed', p. 158). But these are mere quibbles. Overall, *Raffles and the Golden Opportunity* is a work of fine scholarship, beautifully written and well balanced. Furthermore, Glendinning makes telling use of sources such as the *Hikayat Abdullah*, and her expertise in mainstream English literature enables her to make references which would probably have escaped the notice of a specialist South-East Asianist.

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