

RUI GRAÇA FEIJÓ, *Dynamics of Democracy in Timor-Leste. The Birth of a Democratic Nation, 1999–2012*. (Emerging Asia, 2). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016. 336 pages, €89.00. ISBN 978-9-08964-804-4

Timor-Leste is a small, poor, post-conflict state which has overcome the ravages of a brutal occupation and severe internal crisis to emerge as a successful, stable democracy. The core subject matter and research issues of this book are what the concept of democracy means in the 21st century, and whether and how it has been achieved and consolidated in Timor-Leste, apparently against all odds and in the face of severe challenges and continuing shortcomings. Although its timeframe is ostensibly limited, the discussion goes beyond 2012 and considers serious concerns that will inform and influence the next electoral cycle in the country in 2017.

The author contends that democratic consolidation has been accomplished in Timor-Leste through the installation and maintenance of a balance of power in which an inherently flexible system of checks and balances has allowed political actors to accommodate dissent. This has created the conditions for inclusive consensus in the political and social milieu, through the incorporation of diverse views into institutional governance. This central argument is grounded in the author's core thesis: in a political and social environment in which problems, conflict and competition are unavoidable, the role of democratic institutions is to confine responses to them "within commonly defined and accepted boundaries" (p. 242) which are framed by a consensual, pluralist, social milieu. This has been achieved in Timor-Leste in four core institutional areas, examined in separate chapters of the book, which are posited as a theoretical framework for the assessment of the country's democratic credentials. These are identified as a) the constitution, b) election processes and outcomes, c) the inclusiveness of government institutions epitomized particularly in the semi-presidential model of government, and d) the process of decentralization.

Although there are on-going concerns with respect to aspects of these institutions, their success has provided the basis for Timor-Leste's democratic consolidation, with the result that the state largely satisfies the principal criteria for its status as a democracy. Democratic practices have been incorporated into the "popular culture" as "traditional political values" (p. 279) in which a "common house" (p. 244) with historical and cultural roots in the identity and nationalist narrative of Timor-Leste society has established a "construction of trust" (p. 244) between competing political and social actors.

The author's thesis is grounded on an incisive analysis of the history, nature, and critical elements of democracy, and its development into its present form. The author conducts an extensive analysis and appraisal of both classical and leading contemporary work in his discussion, and in his account of the evolution of democracy in Timor-Leste. Together with his comprehensive literature review and references, the author's exhaustive examination of his subject is

the major strength of the book. He adopts an interdisciplinary approach to his research: it is structured upon a number of methodological devices embracing tools from diverse disciplinary fields, including innovative SWOT analysis which he uses as a device to analyse strategic decisions, and factors that have influenced Timor-Leste's democratisation. This is combined with a range of theoretical approaches which incorporate history, politics and institutional design.

The author's detailed approach to his scientific discussion unfolds in his arguments and in the formulation of his findings. Timor-Leste meets, indeed lies above, the minimum threshold for democracy. The two fundamental criteria of a fully operational and stable democracy, vertical and horizontal accountability, are foundational characteristics of the state's polity. Elected rulers are vertically accountable to a sovereign and the people, and are subject to horizontal controls from different branches of government which exert limitations on the powers of one another. Together, these axes of accountability are embedded within the four core areas of democratic accountability which structure the author's theoretical framework. They underpin the key criteria of popular control and inclusive governance of the political process which he asserts are fundamental standards for the construction of democracy and evaluation of the democratic credentials of the state.

This analysis is a significant contribution to scientific debate on contemporary controversial issues on the nature of democracy and its consolidation in post-conflict states. Without diminishing his achievement in other areas of his research, one can say that here the author's work is particularly valuable in his analysis of the system of semi-presidentialism and of the presidential-parliamentary model that he argues operates in Timor-Leste. Likewise valuable is his examination of the concept of decentralisation, particularly the failure to implement meaningful reform and the risk that this constitutes for the consolidation of democracy in the country. These areas of critique and analysis, the parameters of which are not clearly defined despite considerable academic debate, are identified as issues for further research. The author sets out to examine and critique current literature, and successfully explores new ground, linking both to the fundamental themes of his work of inclusivity, participation, empowerment and accountability, thereby providing incisive opinion as to their conditionality in the process of the consolidation of a democratic polity in the state.

Given that the next general elections in Timor-Leste will take place in 2017, this extremely interesting book is a timely and valuable analysis of the state of the polity that will be re-assessed by the people on this occasion. It is a work of knowledge, insight and analysis in which the author demonstrates a passion for his subject. He successfully demonstrates that democracy is a zeitgeist that has shaped Timor-Leste, permeates its social and political milieu, and is the foundation of its well-being as a state and a people that can accommodate pluralism through inclusive mechanisms of popular peaceful regulation. Every-

one inside and outside of Timor-Leste who has thought about and cares for democracy as a universal but threatened concept will learn from this book.

*Guy Cumes*

MARTIN KRIEGER, *Kaffee. Geschichte eines Genussmittels*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2011. 307 pages, €24.90. ISBN 978-3-412-20786-1

*Coffee. History of a Luxury Food*, is a coffee-table book in more than one sense: it discusses coffee in all its aspects and facets, including its botanical characteristics, areas and methods of cultivation, and its role as a trade commodity and lifestyle (and luxury) product.

In an overview in the first chapter the author traces the path of coffee from its origins in the highlands of Eastern Africa through the Arabic peninsula to modern plantations in all parts of the world, particularly Latin America and Southeast Asia, as well as its development from a local “health” drink to a world-wide consumer good. He then dedicates each of the remaining chapters to one aspect of coffee respectively, working both synchronically and diachronically, and ending with a discussion of the German coffee landscape.

The second chapter outlines the botanical properties of the coffee plant and its stimulating and stamina-aiding qualities, and presents – as also later in the book – some of the legends surrounding the coffee plant and its discovery. From there the author turns to the original home of the coffee plant: Kaffa in the Ethiopian highlands, from where the name might possibly have come. Here he also outlines methods of cultivation and harvesting as well as of consumption.

This is continued in the next chapter, aptly entitled Arabia Felix, although, as the author also mentions, current-day Yemen is anything but happy. This was different from the first centuries A.D. until at least early modern times, when some of the best coffee was cultivated, consumed and traded from the area’s ports, not least because of the safety and security provided for the travellers. The port of Mocha here stands for the product in general, though today it is more or less a ghost town. From Yemen, coffee conquered not only Arabia, but eventually also the Ottoman Empire and from there, Europe.

What is interesting, and is outlined by the author in considerable detail, is the role of coffee as a commodity, traded early on not only within Arabia, but to South Asia and back to Africa as well. Traders from the west coast of India played a prominent role in the intermediate trade and were soon joined by Europeans who had begun to expand their trade interests to South and Southeast Asia, leading to considerable interregional trade between Arabia and