

much emphasis is put on the Indian divisions, but the efforts and successes of the West African troops are completely ignored or underrated.

In the 25 page appendix the reader will find additional information such as lists of commanders, biographies of the Generals C.G. Woolner and F.J.L. Tottenham, statistical data on casualties, approved honors and awards, auxiliary groups, air supply etc. Some poems by African soldiers are added to give an impression of the atmosphere in the jungle. A ten page bibliography lists the original sources analysed by the author, and gives important bibliographical data for further reading and research.

Not only does Hamilton's work provide very detailed information on the history of the Burma campaign and many facts concerning the movements and the battles, it also describes the natural environment and aspects of everyday life of the African soldiers, their experiences in the jungle and in villages, and their relationship with their European (mostly British and Polish) officers. As such it is a valuable source for further research. Although Hamilton does not critically discuss the involvement of Africans (as well as Indians) in the war under the British forces, the book should be acknowledged and appreciated most especially in the field of Southeast Asian studies, since there is still a lack of knowledge about the African involvement in Southeast Asian history.

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ASHLEY SOUTH, *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma. The Golden Sheldrake*. London: RoutledgeCurzon 2003. xxii, 419 pages, 3 maps, 1 table, £ 55.00. ISBN 0-7007-1609-2

Right from its foundation in 1948, the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state of Burma has accumulated a sad record of constant internal unrest and civil war – as Charles Keyes recently remarked, it has perhaps more independence movements per square mile than any other state in the world. One of the major participants in this war, the Mons of Lower Burma, are portrayed in this book.

The book starts with an introduction in two parts, the first containing a summary of the history of the Mon people in Burma and beyond. As the author admits right at the outset of the chapter, this is neither his true field of expertise, nor is it the major subject of the book, so it may seem inappropriate to criticize this part too harshly. However, it contains too many mistakes, wrong spellings and doubtful statements to remain completely silent about them. To list but a small selection chosen at random: I have never come across a single reference to Mon monks visiting Sri Lanka in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (p. 59); both the existence of king Anawrahta and his campaign in Lower Burma are attested by a great deal of votive tablets bearing his name (perhaps even his signature), which he left at religious sites all over Burma (p. 66); the word for king-to-be must read *min-laung* and not *min-luang* (p. 62, 77, 89); "Sinhalese" is spelt without double

"n", (p. 68, 73); the name of the king is Anaukpetlun, not Aneukpetlun (p. 76, 77), and so forth.

A critical remark of a different kind must be made regarding the second part of the introduction, in which an attempt is made to define Mon 'nationalism' and its components. According to the author, the Mon people are ethnically a mixture of Burmese, Karen, Thai and other peoples, Buddhist in religion, originating from Thailand rather than from Lower Burma, and customarily centered round their families (though the tradition of keeping a family totem has been forgotten by many Mon people today). We would have expected the Mon language to emerge as a crucial mark of Mon identity, but on the contrary, the author asserts that Mon nationalism was not based on language. What is left, then, is that either a mere self-descriptive ethnonym, Mon/Rmen/Raman, expressing the desire to be different, suffices to make a nation, or that the Mon nationalists were just a bunch of armed gangsters, who used the opportunity of living on the border of Burma for their own material and political ends. To assume this, however, would have been cynical, given the author's personal background on the one hand and the miserable situation of the minorities in Burma on the other, both of which seem to have contributed to the engagement and partiality that have flown into the writing. Still, a more consistent and convincing definition of "nationalism" in relation to the Mons would have enhanced the value of this chapter.

The second part of the book is a detailed account of the development of Mon nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (after 1948, to be more precise) and the methods adopted by various Mon factions. Here, the author could make full use of his experience and familiarity with the Mon groups on both sides of the Thai-Burmese border, and his presentation provides many fresh insights. The Mons are not seen in isolation, their movement is intertwined with the moves of other agents in the field of Burmese politics, viz. the governments on the one hand and other insurgent groups, especially the Karens, on the other. Likewise, regional and international implications of the struggle are taken into consideration. Though the presentation becomes a bit technical here and there, abounding in three or four letter acronyms (listed on pp. IX–XI, though one would have welcomed this list being arranged in alphabetical order), this part of the book is very informative and doubtlessly forms the best overview and analysis of Mon nationalist movements available. The work concludes with an appeal for justice and democracy, which again shows that the author has a political agenda.

On the whole, if we neglect the first hundred pages, what we have in hand is a very informative, comprehensive and yet concise survey of the social, political and military aspects of Mon nationalist movements in 20<sup>th</sup> century Burma. As such, the book is not only an important addition to the field of Burmese studies, but should also be of interest for historians and political scientists engaged in the study of (sub-)nationalist movements and ethnic identities.

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