

PAMELA GUTMAN, *Burma's Lost Kingdoms. Splendours of Arakan*. Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2001. XII, 176 pages, US\$ 45.00. ISBN 974-8304-98-1

By and large, Arakan has been a white spot on the scholarly world map, until in recent years scholars in France, the USA and the Netherlands wrote dissertations on various periods and aspects of the history of this coastal area. Responding to their research, the Dutch Academy of Sciences sponsored a conference on coastal Burma – in fact mainly dedicated to Arakan – the proceedings of which have just been published in book form. In this newly investigated field, the Australian art historian Pamela Gutman can be regarded as a kind of dinosaur: Her thesis on “Ancient Arakan with special reference to its cultural history between the 5th and the 11th centuries” was submitted to ANU as early as 1976, though it was unfortunately never published.

Therefore, it is to be welcomed that she has used her acquaintance with the Arakanese photographer Zaw Min Yu to produce a splendid volume on the lost kingdoms of Arakan. As the title suggests, the book focusses on the Mrauk-U (or Mrohaung) period when Arakan was an independent kingdom, roughly from the 14th to the 17th century. Most of the monuments at Mrauk-U were built in the course of these (roughly three) centuries. Now declared a national heritage site, the monuments are undergoing a ‘renovation’ programme comparable to the one started at Pagan, and it is to be expected that some of the pictures shown in the book record a state of preservation that future visitors will no longer be able to see.

As indicated above, Gutman’s field of expertise is the early history of Arakan, and therefore artefacts from the centuries preceding Mrauk-U are also documented. Those interested in epigraphy will especially welcome the picture with the rock inscription by King Kawlia from the year 1123 C.E., one of the two Burmo-Arakanese inscriptions known so far (p. 14). Unfortunately, the picture is too poor to allow reading, though judged by the script it appears to be younger than the 12th century when it was supposedly written. Besides Mrauk-U, earlier phases of Arakanese history are taken into regard, too.

Gutman had access to several private collections which consist mostly of bronze (and to a lesser degree, stone) images of Buddhas and Buddhist deities. Arakan had always been a frontier zone between Theravada-dominated Burma and Bengal where other, sometimes syncretist religions flourished. It is therefore not surprising that a considerable number of images found in Arakan were dedicated to Mahayanist and Hindu deities.

It is an enjoyable publication, since it has the qualities of a coffee-table book without ever hiding its scholarly perfections. The only part where the latter are missing is in the introduction which seems to have been produced in a hurry, as it contains a number of mistakes. Thus, Fra Manrique, the Portuguese monk who visited Arakan in the early 17th century belonged to the order of the Augustines (and not Jesuits, p. 20), and it was during the reign of king Sirisudhammaraja (and not Sandasudhammaraja). Another source of mistakes are the references to the illustrations in the text, where on and off the numbers of pages

and plates are mixed. These are, however, minor errors and can hardly detract from the overall positive impression.

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MANFRED KIESERLING (ed.), *Singapur. Metropole im Wandel*. (Edition Suhrkamp, 2113). Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000. 257 pages, DM 22,80. ISBN 3-518-12113-8

This is a collection of essays by four German and seven Singaporean authors under the title "Singapore, changing metropolis". One of the contributors, Manfred Kieserling of Kassel University, is also the editor.

The essay by Manfred Kieserling is a good introduction to the topic of the book, describing the development of the city state in its regional environment and as a continuous process of change. Although the book purports to sideline the economic issues, Kieserling does review Singapore's position in world markets and cursorily describes some elements of Singapore's economic policy. He races through Singapore's colonial history from Raffles' landing in Temasek in 1819 up to independence and the ascension of the People's Action Party to power, before turning to the purposeful transformation of the city state. Up to independence Singapore just grew. Thereafter it was completely transformed. A section devoted to the political system and the methods adopted by the ruling party to enable it to stay in power provides Kieserling with the opportunity to refer to some of the other papers in the book, but, unfortunately for the reader, there is no attempt to place them in some kind of coherent analytical structure.

Heike Stengel deals with expatriates in Singapore. After introducing the reasons for expatriate involvement in Singapore's economic development and describing the psychological and other adjustment problems, we return to Raffles' landing in 1819 and the development of the population up to the present. Singapore's policy towards the immigration of foreigners of different skills is described, before attention reverts to the conditions awaiting the prospective expats and their dependents in the Singapore environment. No doubt, this paper will be of interest to those seeking information on the basic living conditions in Singapore before arrival, whereas the other papers in the book will be of less interest to them, just as Stengel's paper is of less interest to those for whom the other authors seem to be writing.

Rolf Jordan also deals with immigrants but focuses on domestic servants and construction workers. Domestic servants enable educated spouses to enter well-paid employment. And construction workers with fixed term employment passes are useful regulators of construction prices, since the number of workers permitted to enter the Republic can be fine-tuned from day to day. Jordan, too, cannot resist taking us back to Raffles' landing in Singapore, but this is really more the editor's problem than that of the author. Neither Stengel nor Jordan deal with the important problem of emigration from Singapore.

Lee Sing-Kong and Ooi Giok-Ling contribute a paper on eco-tourism in Singapore. After the usual generalities regarding the importance and develop-