

parallel between the way Ershad and Ziaur Rahman emerged from the background as wielders of power, after the killing had been done by others.

Ershad's regime receives perhaps the most sympathetic treatment of the three. After Zia's death and after the initial unrest stirred by the hasty execution of 12 officers court-martialled for complicity in the murder, a certain calm came to the country. In the army the old dissensions between Freedom Fighters and Repatriates had come to an end since the Freedom Fighters had been decimated and finally subdued. The leader of the Repatriate group, the new army chief General Ershad could thus afford to be a "bland" ruler in comparison with Zia or Mujib (p. 153). He seized power in a bloodless coup forcing out the country's elected President Sattar who is conveniently described as "tired" (p. 153, 155). He indeed dispensed with political executions and preferred soft methods of compulsion. The author seems inclined to buy some of Ershad's rhetoric about eradication of corruption and efficient administration. His reforms in local government are described as substantial and promising. Finally, Ershad's long drawn out tug of war with political opposition, his "civilianization policy", gradual restoration of the Constitution and elections, his confrontation with students and attempts to infiltrate Dhaka University are dealt with at some length and with the background of the author's personal knowledge. The eventual downfall of Ershad is attributed to a concerted, relentless agitation by the opposition parties, dubbed a "violent orgy" (p. 203). The constructive contributions of the opposition alliance, the induction of a non-partisan caretaker government to hold elections – meanwhile regularized as part of the Bangladesh Constitution – do not receive attention. There is almost a note of regret about Ershad's ouster. "Although accused of being a dictator, his rule was more benign than ruthless." (p. 171)

Such an assessment of the deposed ruler certainly has a ring of fairness. But it must be noted also that throughout the book there is a discernible bias and tendency to see order and direction represented in the military and conversely chaos and selfish personal aggrandizement in the politicians. There is an underlying option for the "civil-military institution" as an instrument of stability and progress all too familiar from Pakistan history. The question remains whether such an approach is supported by the experience of Bangladesh under the three rulers as told herein. It has to be added that the historical account is sufficiently balanced to enable the reader to draw his own conclusions, and he will be grateful to the author for this comprehensive and vivid portrait of a turbulent period. In sum, therefore, the book is a valuable contribution to the political history of Bangladesh.

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ANTHONY REID (ed.), *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. XX, 458 pages, Glossary, Maps, Index, \$ 75. ISBN 0-333-68825-2

This volume consists of a collection of seventeen important articles, together with an introduction by editor Anthony Reid, on early modern (and mainly) Southeast Asia. It represents the culmination of three years of collaboration, funded by the

Toyota Foundation. Many of the authors together form part of an unofficial early modern Southeast Asianist group which has gathered around Reid over the past decade. Although the range and number of articles do not allow for a detailed discussion of the arguments here, several general observations may be made.

There are a number of special features about this collection that one will not find in any other volume. First, it is the first widely circulated English language collection on early modern Southeast Asia to draw upon the valuable work done by a handful of Myanmar historians at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, even though only one article from these scholars has been included here. In it Teruko Saito examines the *thet kayits* (records of commercial transactions) of the Konbaung period (an article on Vietnam by Yumio Sakurai of the University of Tokyo nicely expands the Japanese academic contribution here). Second, Reid, paralleling efforts by Victor Lieberman elsewhere, has attempted to draw historians of Southeast Asia out of their "land below the winds" shell, by broadening the geographical focus of the volume to include Hochol Lee's study of Late Chosen Korea and Martina Deuchler's article on eighteenth-century Korea. Third, this volume has been knit together more easily by the inclusion, in the second chapter, of Lieberman's study of the similarities and differences between island and mainland Southeast Asia during the last century of the early modern period (1750-1850).

Although this work is enormously stimulating and useful, some problems do emerge. One weakness, especially when one takes into consideration earlier works edited by Anthony Reid, is the lack of "diversity" in a volume dedicated to "diversity". Ignore, for the moment, Lee's and Deuchler's studies of Korea, Reid's introduction and his article on general trade patterns in Southeast Asia, and Lieberman's comparative article on mainland and island Southeast Asia. This leaves thirteen articles, including those written by Yumio Sakurai (Vietnam), Alexander Woodside (Vietnam), Nola Cooke (Vietnam), Vu Minh Giang (Vietnam), David Wyatt (Thailand), Teruko Saito (Myanmar), Carl Trocki (focussing upon the role of the Chinese in the island world), Barbara Watson Andaya (Sumatra), J. Kathirithamby-Wells (Siak), Ann Kumar (Java), Helen Creese (Bali), Esther Velthoen (Sulawesi), and Alfons van der Kraan (Lombok). In other words, out of the articles devoted to specific areas of Southeast Asia, there are four articles on Vietnam, one article on Thailand, one article on Myanmar, and seven articles on insular Southeast Asia (including Siak, on the lower Malay peninsula). There are no articles which specifically treat Cambodia, the Philippines, or Laos per se (although Laos is dealt with generally in the context of the "Tai world" in Wyatt's article). One should expect, with the considerable research completed and underway on Cambodia for example, that at least one study of Cambodia during this period could have been included. An even better case could be made for the Philippines. The paucity of articles on these areas is a serious drawback to this volume. One could have hoped, in other words, for a greater balance in geographical treatment so as to reduce the hegemonic role of the Indonesian archipelago and Vietnam in our perceptions of the late early modern period in Southeast Asia (and Korea): there is much more to Southeast Asia during this period than one would guess after reading this volume. The touted breadth

("Southeast Asia") and "diversity" of the volume thus seems to me to be misleading. Finally, this is an expensive book and is likely beyond the reach of most scholars, especially students who would have benefitted most from it.

These weaknesses, however, do not bear on the work of the scholars included. Indeed, for the areas represented, the scholarship is excellent and insightful. I found Wyatt's article on the Tai world especially stimulating. This article serves as an indirect reproach for those who too often depend upon the perceptions of Southeast Asia embedded in external (European and Chinese) source materials. Teruko Saito's article is also a reproach for those who have viewed Southeast Asian history through the eyes of the court (via court-centered chronicles and inscriptions) and have thus been blinded to dynamic rural societies in which developments occurred independent of and often despite the efforts of the royal center.

Michael W. Charney

SIEGFRIED KEIL, JENS JETZKOWITZ, MATTHIAS KÖNIG (eds.), *Modernisierung und Religion in Südkorea: Studien zur Multireligiosität in einer ostasiatischen Gesellschaft*. (Schriftenreihe Internationales Asienforum, 5). München/Köln/London: Weltforum Verlag, 1998. 298 pages, DM 59,-. ISBN 3-8039-0715-2

Much as readers may have reasons to rub their eyes when perusing the introductory piece to this volume as well as by what comes under the heading of *Schamanismus und Volksreligion*, they should not rashly lay it aside. For by far the larger part of the book contains often novel information no less than a lot of food for thought, and thus warrants full attention.

Food for thought is what one also finds in the less satisfactory pieces, and if it is not for their merits, it is for their failures that a few words need to be said about them. For the inherent shortcomings are of a kind often encountered in writing on Korea, and may therefore be briefly taken into consideration as well.

Being placed first in the volume, the article on ways to relate religion and societal development in South Korea appears to have been meant to set the pace for what follows. Fortunately, however, only a limited number of contributors followed suit – and found themselves caught in a predicament. For adapting their writing to an evolutionary scheme as suggested in the introductory piece obliged the authors to devote at least parts of their contributions to inquiries and statements of a historical nature. But since none of the contributors is a Koreanologist, to have done so turns out to have been too much of a demand. For, not being Koreanologists, the authors who tried to follow the evolutionary scheme would have had to rely on publications on the history and religions of Korea both sound and comprehensive enough to warrant the full confidence of non-Koreanologists. However, in view of the state of Korean studies, such publications are next to non-existent. Still, the blame for having failed to provide satisfactory outlines of historic developments cannot be attributed to the shortcomings in Korea-related scholarship. For together with a minimum of reliance on common sense, an attentive reading of the publications that do meet