conclusions about Lebanon and Indonesia, about Indonesian views on the Middle East and about intercultural encounters.

As Thohari himself explains in one of the chapters: "*Tulisan ini hanya berdasarkan pengamatan semata, dan inipun bukan pengamatan dalam pengertian observasi seperti yang biasa dilakukan dalam sebuah penelitian ilmiah* [This writing is only based on observations, and even this is not an observation in the sense of an observation in scientific research]" (p. 44). Many sections of the book present anecdotal evidence through an academic lens, from which the author develops questions for further research and suggests related literature. Given the broad variety of themes, the author does not engage with specific scholarly debates at length but refers in a general way to questions from several academic fields. Among other topics that the author touches upon is the current intra-Indonesian debate about the place of Arab-Islamic traditions in Indonesia, for instance claims of Arabisation, which the author denounces as a simplification. This argument corresponds to scholarly observations on the imaginations and localisations of Arabness in Indonesia, for instance by Sumit Mandal, Martin Slama, Mona Abaza, and my own research.

The comparative references to Indonesia, reflections on Islam and arguments on Indonesian-Lebanese relations mirror the deep insights of Hajriyanto Thohari's many years in government service and his role in Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second largest Muslim organisation. Thus the book is undoubtedly a rich source for Indonesian and Lebanese people who work in international relations, and for scholars of Anthropology, International Relations, Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies.

Mirjam Lücking

Ruth Streicher, *Uneasy Military Encounters: The Imperial Politics of Counter-insurgency in Southern Thailand*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020. 186 pages, $25.95. ISBN 978-1-5017-5133-2 (pb)

After centuries of conflict, the contestation of identities and power in the Deep South of Thailand has unfolded into two configurations. At the general level, the Thai state has applied forceful power to confront and suppress Malay Muslims, based on discourses of imperial state formation. On the other hand, amidst delicate social and political dynamics over years, the symbolic contestations among people have also evolved at the local and individual levels. These encounters involve individuals within the state apparatus, communities, groups, individual Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims and others, who have intensely interacted, competed and bargained for their identities. Satisfaction, frustration, misconception as well as irritation have been the result.

Ruth Streicher's *Uneasy Military Encounters: The Imperial Politics of Counterinsurgency in Southern Thailand* attempts to bridge the differences between these two configurations through a combination of political ethnography with genealogy, a rare approach in similar studies of the conflict. As a young Western researcher new to the entanglements of violent conflict in Pattani Province, the author's aim is to not only investigate "military forms of knowledge production as part of an imperial project but also to trace how notions of difference that constitute Thailand's state formation have evolved and now materialize in concrete encounters" (p. 14).

Notions about the formation of local states and identity in the southern peninsula, particularly among the Malay Muslims of Pattani, can be traced back to the thirteenth century, and especially to the moment when the former Hindu state converted to Islam around the fourteenth century. To consolidate its centrifugal power, subjugating defiant Pattani vassals, Siam carried out brutal suppression leading to violent displacement through five subsequent defeats in the eighteenth century. In recent years, the complex situation of the current Deep South conflict necessitates several empirical and theoretical interpretations. Besides Duncan McCargo (*Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*. Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 2008), Chaiwat Satha-Anand (in Duncan McCargo (ed.): *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2007) makes an interesting interpretation of the bullet monument in Dusun-nyor of Narathiwat province, which commemorates the suppression of a violent Muslim uprising in 1948, comparing it to the Kru-Ze incident in 2004. Symbolic connection theory is used here to relate the former to the latter, rendering a representation of the "truth" management by the Thai state to lives of Malay Muslims in a general picture.

In the same manner, Ruth Streicher adds another dimension to the understanding of the complex realities of the conflict on the ground. Her in-depth and systematic accounts unfold from an interpretation of counterinsurgency shaped by Michel Foucault's notion of "police power" – the analysis of counterinsurgency as a process of policing the population through the production of knowledge on cultural difference. A defining factor is thus "historicism": the fact that the imperial modernisation project has constructed temporal and spatial differences for civilised progress ushers in the concept of cultural difference while turning it into a hierarchical regime with an assumption of rigidly linear progress. In consequence, modern Thai history deliberately omits Siam's imperial invasion of former principalities and tributary states, particularly in Pattani, while fabricating a gendered and racialised discourse that Thais are protected from external colonial powers by the paternalistic monarchy (pp. 17–18).

At the macro level, Streicher illustrates how Siam's modern military reproduced imperial structures of difference by imitating Western imperialism. The structures as such were internalised by Siam's military through multiple forms

of "disciplinary power". However, counterinsurgency in Thailand has transformed into another aspect of state formation, involving "a modern state formation with roots in the premodern Buddhist empire of Siam that secures its survival by constructing the southern Muslim population as essentially and hierarchically different" (p. 2). The author makes a strong theoretical argument that central to this discursivity is Western imperialism of "modern categories of race and religion" that shaped the racialised, religious, and gendered Otherness of Pattani. This is the major insight of this book.

To emphasise the connection between the macro analysis of Thai imperial formation and micro narratives, or discursive practices, has been formulated by enforcing counterinsurgency war campaigns. As mentioned above, Streicher carefully analyses the counterinsurgency of the Thai state by using Michel Foucault's notion of police power. In Foucault's lectures at the College de France during 1977–1978 (2004), the word "police" is clearly narrated. The new meaning of the word "police" in seventeenth century Europe referred to "the set of means by which the state's forces can be increased while preserving the state in good order". Indeed, it involved a dynamic yet controllable relationship between the state's internal order and the development of state forces. Streicher uses this conceptual framework to interpret the functions of the Siamese state from the early twentieth century while adding another dimension of imperial state formation that Siamese royal elites also appropriated from Western imperialist countries. The political programme of King Chulalongkorn was based on the assumption that history was a "discipline" that acted both as an objective norm for ruling the kingdom as well as a means for governing his subjects. Siamese sovereignty had unfolded through an imperial formation incorporating different city-states into its racialised territories. For the king, it was necessary that Siam's imperial history absorb all local histories into a unitary state, with the presumption of civilisation and continuous, linear progress (p. 18). Based on this assumption, the design of Siam's modern armed forces was not for any external defence but intended to be a counterinsurgency army.

The basic underlying dimension of the counterinsurgency approach, following the classical theories of David Galula, is the production of knowledge for governmentality. Constructing knowledge has become the significant marker of counterinsurgency since the beginning of the imperial form of policing and was reborn during the Cold War. The Thai military, also influenced by American military doctrine, has collected and applied cultural knowledge in order to conduct counterinsurgency warfare. McFate (2005) reveals that the use of anthropological knowledge collected for the counterinsurgency programme in Thailand during the 1970s led to the "Thai Scandal" in American academia. In the process, the military-constructed "objective truth" gave a boost to the discourse of linear, paternalistic and progressive imperial formation. Alternative histories were identified as misguided and treacherous (p. 20).

Moreover, Streicher asserts that the concept of racism is closely associated with imperial formation. It is a central element of "imperial modernity" in which the mobilisation of race was the hidden discourse of building Siam as a modern nation-state. The author shows how race was used for "measuring, enumerating, and dividing up populations in accordance with central state-building practices such as maps and statistics, locating those populations' differences in physical properties such as skin color" (p. 38). Beginning from the nineteenth century, Siam's traditional elites claimed that the emerging modern state was a place for Thai inhabitants, whereas in southern Thailand, the racial discourse rendered a new distinction, stating that Pattani was now seen as a territory in which the majority of people belong to the "Malay race". Concurrently, fabricated by the royal discourse of King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong and King Vajiravudh, the construction of a "Thai race" was strengthened and combined with Buddhism, the Thai nation and the Thai state in twentieth-century Siam (p. 39). The current Thai military intentionally consolidates the racialised category in its counterinsurgency handbook. It has become central to the operation of "police" power in contemporary Thai counterinsurgency.

The nationalism-cum-racism argument ushers in the new interpretation of counterinsurgency that emerged in Thailand over decades. Scholars who study the Southern counterinsurgency, such as Jeff M. Moore (2013), have explained that Thai counterinsurgency (COIN) is strongly influenced by the writings of David Galula and Robert Thompson, but there is also a "Thai way of COIN." Politics-leads-military was a linchpin for Thai COIN from the 1980s to the 2000s. Moore finds that these tenets have influenced Thai military strategy towards the conflicts in the Deep South. Implementation of the three pillars of COIN – security, political and economic measures – in the Southern conflict appears to be effective, if slowly, but the political discourse behind these pillars is not clearly explicated. In a recent study, Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat (2019) use historical institutionalism to make the argument that Thai security forces' preference for a hard-line policy in the Deep South has resulted in a vicious cycle of tension and violence between security officials and local Malay-Muslims that has not been conducive to peace efforts in the region. Despite a decent structural analysis, narratives about practical interactions between actors, agencies and structure on the ground are still inadequate. Seeing counterinsurgency through the lens of discourse on imperial state formation with the racialised, religious, and gendered Otherness of Pattani's people could represent another way of accounting for the military encounters on the ground.

As such, a distinction of Thailand's Southern counterinsurgency is revealed in the military's daily life experiences in the checkpoints and their activities in managing the young Malay Muslims in the Yalannanbaru training camp. The multiplicity of encounters represents the true character of the Thai state and

the negative relationships between structural discourse and local agencies in different times and spaces. As Foucault (1994) put it when he conducted an archaeology of clinical science, "seeing is knowing". At checkpoints, one can see Thai soldiers involved repeatedly with discourses specifically connecting Malay Muslim men, clad mostly in traditional sarongs, to the threat of insurgency (p. 46). These suspects at checkpoints are depicted as unmanly, weak and misguided by ideology, an effect of the underdeveloped Deep South. The racialised hierarchy of masculinities leads to "practices of suspicion" developed by Thai imperial formation. Seen through Streicher's gaze, Thai Buddhist soldiers perform civilised superiority over racialised and feminised Malay Muslim subjects (p. 47). Streicher reads from her observations that, clearly, the major task of soldiers at the checkpoints is not to protect civic order against any attacks by insurgents with military efficiency, but to further discourse on imperial state formation with racial, religious and gender prejudices.

Another example of the paternalistic state is presented in the description of the Yalannanbaru training camp. Military officers who are Buddhists teach young Muslim men to correct their practice of Islam. Disciplinary power enforces the political discourse here. As a consequence, young Muslim men are disciplined and transformed into religious subjects to be incorporated into the Thai imperial state formation. The whole disciplinary process "depends on the imbrication of Buddhism and statehood" (p. 64). Malay students in Yalannanbaru are trained to perform *katanyu* – an act of gratitude – regularly and repeatedly. Gratitude embodies the influence of Theravada Buddhist tradition, the belief that action today is dependent on past actions to be recognised as the accomplishment of moral virtue in order to have felicitous life in the future. For this, people must be compelled to practice ethical reflection and enact rituals to progress along the Buddhist path while opening themselves to feelings that are considered in the secular production of proper religious subjects. This is a complex process of assimilating and incorporating Muslim subjects into the Thai imperial formation (p. 71). The author therefore interprets the training courses at Yalannanbaru as a form of discipline in the Foucauldian sense, as they construct norms that classify individuals hierarchically and rely on Theravada Buddhist notions of religion and morality to place individuals on the moral path. The monastic way of training is similar to Buddhist ordination to promote self-discipline, male maturation and strength in the Thai Buddhist context (p. 73).

The climax of a "therapeutic counterinsurgency intervention" appears to be the ritual of showing confessions written by participants to their mothers. It is the moment of salvation based on a discourse that positions young Malay Muslims as failed subjects under the imperial order of the national family. As the author puts it: "Repentance, in this military framework, promoted participants' self-subjectification under moral norms that sustain the Thai imperial formation" (p. 84).

Emotions, romantic love and happiness have been instrumental in discursive practices of counterinsurgency. The micro-physics of power works through complex power relationships. Beginning from replacing the royal system of polygyny with a discourse of national love, King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910–1925) mobilised the connection between love and the national family. In the current Deep South conflict, the discourse of love is also used as an explicit political strategy of the Southern counterinsurgency. The imperial practice nurtures affective discourse among local Malay Muslims considered as racially and religiously different from others (p. 95). There are many incidents to substantiate the claim that the Otherness of the southern provinces underlies both the promulgation of love in counterinsurgency policy and the narratives of cross-cultural romance (p. 96). This is also the visible bridge linking structural discourses and delicate discursivity at the micro, individual level.

In the final chapter the author fiercely dissects the junta's main motto, "Returning Happiness to the People" – also the title of a song penned by leader of the junta, Prayut Chan-O-Cha, himself. Directly invoking the glorious history of Siam's old royal empire, the junta leader uses the term "happiness" (*khwam suk*) to include paternal benevolence, the Thai race and Buddhist religion (p. 110). The Thai discourse has established that Sukothai, arguably the first Thai kingdom, was the "quintessence of a happy polity" and military rulers have been patriarchal protectors of Thai people for a long, linear history. This is a metaphorical narrative that implies a gendered binary that masculinises the protectors and feminises those protected. Again, the discourse is reminiscent of the imperial contexts in which a paternalistic government feminised colonial subjects. This influence has been so strong that in many Thai constitutions, sovereignty has been defined as "the sovereign power belongs to the Thai people" but "the King as Head of State shall exercise such power". Ironically, based on this discourse, Thai-style democracy has always denied sovereignty to the Thai people.

Overall, the book's methodology, which combines ethnography with genealogy, makes a pattern of narratives somewhat akin to an acrobatic movement, spinning, falling backward and/or diving forward to elaborate Thai state formation while tracing it to concrete encounters of the military and the people on the ground. It is a difficult job, but the author has delivered it effectively through a strictly parsimonious analysis using both theoretically historical interpretations and dramatic evidence from fieldwork.

However, there are some arguments that need to be considered. The epistemological categories that reiterate a construction of the region and people of Pattani as different and distant in terms of their culture, history and religion is persuasive and the evidence collected by Streicher in her ethnographic research is convincing. It is true that the racialised discourse of Thainess is one of the effects of Western imperial formation, particularly during the late nineteenth

and early twentieth century, but racialised Thainess in traditional ways may also have existed long before that time as well. Winichakul (1985) indicates that there have been contestations of cosmologies, Buddhist space and geography in encounters with Western geography since the early Bangkok period. Power relationships in Siam's traditional way of governance, the Mandala, were also so hierarchical that the centre of power could loosely, if not fully, control the peripheries. Central to this system was loyalty to the Buddhist kingdom in Bangkok. Bradley (2013) finds that Siam's destruction of the Pattani sultanate in the course of five wars, in 1785–1786, 1789–1791, 1808 and 1831–1832, consisted of massacres, slave-raiding and the expulsion of refugees – one of the more brutal examples of warfare in the premodern history of Southeast Asia. Driven by racial and religious beliefs, Siam always suppressed the kingdom's principalities with the pride of race and religion. A better way to construe history in the early twentieth century is that the racialised relationships of power were metamorphosed to be characterised as an amalgam of traditional and Westernised racialised imperial formation. For many members of the Thai military, as well as local Thai Buddhists, feelings of racial superiority and difference have been emboldened through the protracted counterinsurgency campaigns in the Deep South.

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