

Finally, it seems not altogether surprising that in periods of rapid social, cultural, economic, and political change, the human search for meaning and reassurance turns to the spiritual, to domains that are not within the reach of the market and the production of commodities. Nor is it a great surprise that “familiarity with rational-scientific explanations does not necessarily imply the refutation of religious and spiritual interpretations and experiences” (p. 65). Yet the juxtaposition of the twin concepts of magic and modernity does provide a framework which generates some interesting ideas and findings in the examination of the dynamics of religions in Southeast Asia.

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The Historical Construction of Southeast Asian Studies: Korea and Beyond

PARK SEUNG WOO and VICTOR T. KING, eds.

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013, xviii+468p.

Before this important edited volume by Park and King was published, I had the pleasure to be invited to endorse it. I wrote the following message, “At a time when Southeast Asian Studies is declining in North America and Europe, this book serves to remind us of the fresh, constructive, and encouraging view of the field from Asia. On behalf of Taiwan’s Southeast Asian research community, I sincerely congratulate Professors Park and King for making such a great and timely contribution to the making of Southeast Asian Studies in Asia.”

After having reviewed the whole text once again, I am further convinced that this collective

effort made by Korean Southeast Asian scholars and other selected contributors from Australia, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom should be modeled in other Asian countries so as to re-energize and to transform current Southeast Asian studies into a truly new global form of scholarship. Such a paradigm shift is simple: Southeast Asian studies is no longer a field monopolized by Western academics. It is a free and open frontier for rising Southeast Asian scholars to study their own societies and for other Asian researchers studying their neighboring countries. It should also be a fertile land for both Asian (insider) and non-Asian (outsider) theorists to engage in substantive dialogues and discourses to hopefully create more authentic, indigenous, and ground-making knowledge about Southeast Asia. To push further, one can even envision the potential yet significant contribution of a solid and theoretically minded area studies, including a Southeast Asian studies that can lead to a “truly globalized” humanities and social science in the future.

I am not sure if the editors and authors had the above in mind, but certainly the fruitful discussions presented in this volume of institutional developments and the contributions to Southeast Asian studies in South Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, Vietnam, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and the Netherlands, shed light on the above inspiration and vision.

With the exception of the three chapters on United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Australia that are written by scholars based in those nations, the other six cases dealing with the development of Southeast Asian studies are all written through Korean scholars' observations and interpretations. It is a unique feature of this book, but it also raises a question. Why is it that only three countries are tackled by their own scholars?

Though the region's definition has always been an issue, I tend to agree with the editors not to problematize this particular matter too much. Rather, they have raised a few significant and substantive issues that remain unsolved as a way to draw out some constructive conclusions.

The first one is area studies versus disciplinary research. The various related chapters that focus on Southeast Asian studies in the countries covered are in fact a random mix of multi-disciplinary or single disciplinary perspectives on either regional studies or research dealing with individual countries. No specific rationale is provided on the different cases under review and may be due to accidental reasons that inform research motivations, available funding, and individual scholars' academic training. However, we can observe that in Southeast Asia studying one's own country is the primary mode that constitutes the core of Southeast Asian studies by insiders. Outside the region, however, we can observe a more logical colonial historical legacy, one with strategic concerns or preoccupied theoretical explanations that take up the focus of some specific national studies instead of others. That can be found in the concentration of Indonesian studies in Australia and the Netherlands, research on Singapore and Malaysia in the United Kingdom, and in recent years, the cross-boundary approach en vogue in the United States.

I can understand why this edited volume has no intention to offer specific solutions to the debates listed above, but it would have been more useful for readers if a more solid assessment of

the major accomplishments made by either descriptive-historical area studies in one country or any innovative theorizing achieved in another country were provided in the chapters. In the case of Taiwan, which is not covered in this volume, all the above debatable issues are also prevalent within the Southeast Asian studies community. One pragmatic strategy adopted there from the inception of Southeast Asian studies was to match the specified subject matter with a relevant discipline and keep ongoing theoretical discourses in mind. This may constitute a point of reference for future discussions that engage with the issue of “what area studies is or means by discipline.”

The second issue is what happens when Northeast Asia meets Southeast Asia in Southeast Asian studies? As is also quite clearly revealed from the three chapters on Japan, South Korea, and China, it has become an emerging trend for East Asian scholars to engage in area studies of various kinds in Southeast Asia countries. This involves not just individual research activities, but rather more institutionalized and collaborative endeavors in the making. The three chapters have done a fair job in depicting respective histories and their different institutional features of Southeast Asian studies in these three East Asian countries. Readers are informed of the different historical backgrounds and motivations as well as the academic rationale behind the recent enterprises of Southeast Asian studies in each country. These range, for example, from the historical legacy and the remaking of a Japanese national image, business and economic opportunities for South Korea, and China’s need to become an aggressive rising power. Though uneven, the three chapters provide a useful primer on the names of scholars, institutions, and centers in this field as well as tables and figures of what has been achieved in relation to Southeast Asia.

The chapter on China points out a biased Sino-centric perspective toward Southeast Asia in Chinese scholarship. This is dictated by a Chinese governmentality and its preoccupation with outdated “blood connections” in researching the overseas Chinese in the region. The chapter on Japan, though overly one-sided with a focus on the study of Southeast Asian history, also comments on the lack of translation of the major Japanese works into English language with many inadequately known to the non-Japanese speaking academics. The chapter on South Korea further raises the serious problem of the under-recognition of Southeast Asian studies by the wider academic community as a unique and independent discipline. Besides the Chinese problem which is an exceptionally political and ideological one, the problems presented by the Japanese and Korean cases are actually quite common and Taiwan is also no exception.

The editors and the chapter authors seem not to be inspired to go deeper and tackle the following important questions. What advantages and disadvantages exist for Northeast Asian scholars to engage in Southeast Asian studies? Have they truly made new discoveries that have been appreciated by local Southeast Asian academics in the same area of research? Are there any differences in the ways and approaches that Northeast Asian scholar employ toward studying Southeast Asia that differ from those employed by Western researchers in previous years? What are the best ways for Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian scholars to collaborate and to learn

from each other to advance scholarship in Southeast Asian studies? Finally and collectively, in which direction should we move in order to develop a new Southeast Asian scholarship that reflects a shift to a more autonomous Asian paradigm of Southeast Asian studies?

Though this current volume does not answer all issues I raise, after having read the book with great interest, I believe it is, nonetheless, a very useful contribution to a new and better understanding of the state of the field of Southeast Asian studies today. As stated at the beginning, it marks a good beginning for a new scholarship of Asian studies of Southeast Asia. I certainly recommend all serious readers in this field to read it and to make an intelligent comparison with previous field review volumes.

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Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture

ARIEL HERYANTO

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 xiv+246p.

At the risk of rehashing the old orientalist clichés we must acknowledge that contemporary Indonesia can be a bewildering place. This holds true both for outside observers and for Indonesians engaged in fashioning the practice of daily life. During my daily motorcycle commute to Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta (Jogja) in 2012–13, the massive billboards at major intersections never ceased to fascinate me and make me question what I thought I knew about Indonesia. Advertisements for self-help seminars by Muslim televangelists competed with images of Korean boy bands; Coca-Cola offered itself as the perfect drink for breaking the Ramadan fast; an appliance store suggested buying a refrigerator to celebrate Kartini Day (a national holiday honoring a Javanese princess who promoted education for women); and portraits of political candidates in stock poses blocked the view of Monjali, a massive monument left-over from Suharto's authoritarian New Order which now housed a nightly display of Hello-Kitty-themed paper lanterns. In March 2013, after a bar fight led to the murder of an off duty soldier and a commando squad broke into the prison and executed the suspects, banners applauding Kopassus (the elite army special forces) and denouncing *preman* (street thugs) mysteriously appeared at these intersections. I was constantly amazed by what one saw on the street of Jogja. Fortunately, Ariel Heryanto's latest book offers wide-ranging and insightful analysis into Indonesian political culture and cultural politics since the fall of Suharto in 1998. *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* is a brilliant study of the diverse and seemingly contradictory forces at play in the world's fourth largest nation-