

BOOK REVIEWS



Society, Economics, and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th–8th Centuries. Michael Vickery. The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for UNESCO, The Tokyo Bunko, Tokyo, 1998. 486 pp, 5 maps, 4 plates, 3 tables, bibliography, and index. Paperback \$50.00. ISBN 4-89656-110-4

Reviewed by P. BION GRIFFIN, University of Hawai'i, Manoa

Michael Vickery, a genuine “Old Cambodia Hand,” has offered us a volume full of meat to chew on—not tough old sinew, but a large roast, ranging from rare to well done, and offering much for many tastes. While the anti-Marxist, anti-materialists may foolishly suggest Vickery’s work suffers from “mad cow disease,” I suggest that for once we have a clearly, if densely, argued view of the nature of the evolving pre-Angkorian society of the protohistoric Khmer. The volume has, for the archaeologist, an especially clear and useful theoretical foundation. Vickery, a Marxist historian, tackles the “Asiatic Mode of Production,” looking at the Khmer from the earliest indications of adoption of Indic religious trappings until, but not including, the great Angkorian civilization, which begins about A.D. 800. His effort is not to further examine the genealogies of rulers as an end in itself, but to use the primary source of stele texts, especially those in Old Khmer, to understand the changing organization of society, of the cults, and, most importantly, the economic system on which society, politics, and religion was based. I emphasize that the source of the data comes from the written record, carved on stone, and speaking directly to the matters of concern noted. Vickery argues that previous scholarship has neglected these data, instead focusing on kingly matters. He discusses the textbook understanding of pre-

Angkorian Cambodia, how this understanding was gained, and what is wrong with it. He then proceeds to examine anew the contemporary data, the inscriptions that are the basic pre-Angkorian sources. He does not privilege Chinese sources, and certainly shies from adopting European models of feudalism, kingship, and social organization. His analyses of the works of the late George Coedès and of Claude Jacques, today’s pre-eminent French epigrapher and historian, are intimate and unsparing. Michael Vickery certainly has the credentials to approach the pre-Angkorian; a historian of Cambodia since the 1960s, he has published voluminously on the entire range of Khmer history and has examined the necessary data for decades. Never one to shirk raising difficult questions, or avoid stirring up old passions, he has, in this monograph, “told it as he sees it.”

My review of Vickery is undertaken as an archaeologist, not a historian, epigrapher, or even as an “Old Cambodia Hand.” My interests in ancient Cambodia began in 1994, with my initiation of the University of Hawai’i/East-West Center/Royal University of Fine Arts program in Khmer studies. After my colleague, Dr. Miriam Stark, assumed directorship of the archaeological program at the ancient city of Angkor Borei, my own attention turned to wide-ranging questions concerning the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods. I

review Vickery's monograph as one excited about the thoroughly argued insights it offers and its many leads for model building and hypothesis generation for future archaeological research.

The monograph is logically organized, making following the arguments relatively easy. Chapter 1 is the "Introduction." In it we are offered an unusually clear justification for the theoretical foundations of the study and an overview history of the pre-Angkorian, beginning with Funan (approximately early in the Christian era) in the Mekong Delta and southern Cambodia. Much of the thesis of the rest of the work is encapsulated in this narrative. The less diligent student could obtain the heart of the matter by a careful reading of the Introduction. The rich supporting data and arguments would be neglected, as would the kernels that spark ideas for new research. Chapter 2 is "Pre-Angkorian Cambodia: The Historiographic Situation," and Chapter 3 the "Pre- and Proto-Historic Background." Chapter 4, "The Pre-Angkor Inscriptions," is followed by "The Cult Component" and "Divisions of the Population." Chapter 7, "Social Structure and the Economy," and Chapter 8, "Political Structure, Kingship and the State," complete the monograph, except for a valuable appendix discussing Khmer and Sanskrit terms.

A principal point of the book is that the stele inscriptions inherently encode economic, social, and political data, not being limited to dynastic histories, royal genealogies, and related kingly praises. From these data Vickery develops a structure for inferring the changing organization of society, the economic system as it evolved in concert with changing political structures, and the uses of adopting Indic cult features and aristocratic titles. He engages in, and reports, a close reading of the stone stele upon which the Khmer inscribed texts in Sanskrit and Old Khmer. Vickery's sources are those published, largely by George Coedès, supplemented with unpublished material provided by Claude Jacques. The pre-Angkorian texts considered begin in the early seventh century and end, for a variety

of reasons, by A.D. 802, the traditional date for the founding of the Angkorian state by Jayavarman II. The seventh century is rich in texts carved in stone, but early in the eighth century epigraphy nearly ceases, the hiatus lasting until A.D. 877. Interestingly, Vickery hypothesizes a correlation of stele erection with times of political change; this is but one of the many archaeologically testable ideas one extracts.

The reconstruction of the pre-Angkorian begins with a re-interpretation of the Funan period, or the nature of their social organization, and of the chiefly title *poñ*. That the Khmer were organized matrilineally with male accession to chiefly position based relationship to mother's sister is perhaps one of the most interesting and controversial of Vickery's promotions. "*Poñ*-ship was passed from a man to a sister's son; and a son of a *poñ* only inherited status if it also passed through his mother from her brother" (p. 23). The idea is not new, and cultural anthropologists tend not to be enamored with an ancient matrilineal society in coastal Southeast Asia (Ledgerwood 1995; Parkin 1990). The problem is not resolved. Vickery's ideas as to why a matrilineal society "may have been appropriate" are not compelling, but he does make a case concerning the development of Khmer society from matrilineality to the Angkorian patrilineal bias. His use of the kinship relations inscribed on stone makes sense. The cultural anthropologists have come at the problem from a different angle and database, and really do not address the possibilities of the stele data. As an archaeologist, I would, however, suggest one might model several different bases of trajectory change in Khmer political organization. The Kratie pre-Angkorian, with its eighth-century queens, seems an especially useful area of archaeological inquiry into political change. In any case, the early chiefly *poñ* titles disappeared in the eighth century, being replaced by Indic titles.

The reason why-*varman* replaced other titles and why-*vara* replaced pre-Indic deities was because at a certain level of wealth accumulation chiefs wished to change the rules of

wealth preservation and transmission. There was a new stage of political integration, and ultimately a change in the mode of production. The first signs already appear in the vague Chinese records of Funan, and the process emerges more clearly from the 7th-century Khmer, not Sanskrit, inscriptions. (p. 60)

A strategy of chiefly subordination of local, indigenous deities and customs and adoption of Indic elements runs throughout the entirety of Vickery's argument, as is clear in his statement, "It is important to recognize the indigenous traits and institutions may lie under the Indic façade, rather than assume Indianization . . ." (p. 141).

And, "Very few inscriptions record erection of idols, installation ceremonies, or any particular ritual, but simply assignment of property and personnel to apparently existing foundations" (p. 159).

Vickery argues that the "capital" or "central place" (my term) of Funan was not Ba Phnom, but Angkor Borei in the upper Mekong Delta, and may have been the seat of the early king, Rudravarman. Rudravarman is mentioned by both the Chinese and in the inscriptions, and may have been a lineal ancestor of Īśānavarman, a powerful unifier and ruler located at today's Sambor Prei Kuk (Īśānapura, the first post-Funan capital). The nature of kingly or chiefly succession, and the place of lineality is important as one sees, with Vickery, the move of polity centers from the delta northward, east of the Tonle Sap, edging ever closer to "Angkor."

The hypothesized shift of political and economic strength from the delta inland, and the diminishing of polities located around Angkor Borei and Ba Phnom, and with centers in Kampong Thom and Kratie rising, make for archaeological testable models. Indeed, Vickery positions Jayavarman II at the end of this shift with his capital established immediately north of Tonle Sap. New, research-design-driven archaeological site survey would build on Vickery's inscription-based data, ultimately testing his conclusions.

While one might suspect that the mate-

rial on the "Cult Component" of the monograph would focus on pre-Angkorian religion and be less useful to archaeology, neither is the case. First, the aim is not to provide an understanding of the religion—few texts allow that—but to extract cult aspects from the inscriptions and to better understand the roles of people in the society, roles one may examine concerning political and economic positions.

I intend to show that the cult roles held by those individuals were not their exclusive, or even principal, occupation, that the inscriptions, which seem superficially to be devoted to cult matters, were in their overwhelming majority concerned with practical, not religious affairs. . . . It seems *a priori* probable that the rapid development of Indic cult features at the expense of indigenous cults was linked to political and economic rivalries intimately connected with the shift in dominance from coast Funan to inland Chenla in the 7th century. . . . (p. 140–141)

The chapter goes a long way to doing just that, with extensive discussions of the gods, joint gods (the joining of gods or foundations), and a hint (!) at Khmer religion. To an anthropological archaeologist such as myself, the conclusion that, simply put, Khmer religion involved adaptations of Indic features is, if not self-evident, at least archaeologically testable. Vickery, however, points to proof "... in the non-Sanskritized, or partially Sanskritized native gods in the Khmer language inscriptions ..." (p. 170) and other details.

Moving to the economy, we have abandoned the notion of lists of temple slaves who existed to provide for the temple and the gods. Instead, we see the inscriptions providing endowments by the ruling class of land, people, and animals, all indicating economic and social relationships. The temples are seen as production units, not simply religious establishments supported by gifts. The temples were artifacts of political leaders' machinations aimed at gaining a surplus for their own use; temple personnel produced much more than they

consumed. In addition to singers and dancers, whose tasks beyond singing and dancing can only be imagined, one often finds leaf sewers, spinners, weavers, potters, record keepers, grinders, cooks, and field hands. Metal workers (smiths) are missing, surprisingly, as are all other craft workers. No builders, carpenters, sculptors, jewelers, or animal handlers (mahouts, etc.) are listed. Only one reference to trading is known, and this is late and at Sambhupura on the Mekong, an anomalous context, perhaps. Since an argument can be made that temples produce, in part, luxury goods for exchange with political elite, one wonders at the lack of craftspersons. The archaeological implications suggest a need to locate nontemple residential areas, searching for evidence of localization of specialists associated with noncult leaders.

The final chapter, "Political Structure, Kingship, and the State," questions the received wisdom that state-level societies existed during Funan and Chenla times. The chapter also attempts to see political processes from the seventh into the ninth centuries. These interests are extremely in keeping with those of anthropological archaeologists and do provide grist for hypothesis generation and field testing. Archaeologists have for three decades worried about "chiefdoms" and "states," and how the former could develop into the latter. I suggest that a close reading of Vickery convinces one that the state is a ninth-century construct, realized by Jayavarman II, and that the preceding centuries saw the progression from simple chiefdoms in southern Cambodia and environs through complex chiefdoms at Īśānapura and, perhaps, Sambhupura (although, as an archaeologist, I speculate that the Kratie area, remaining separate from the larger developing polity, remained a chiefdom until Jayavarman II). Much of the archaeological potential of the movement of polity centers and consolidation of power can be seen in Vickery's statement that:

The dates and locations of pre-Angkor and early Angkor inscriptions indicate a gradual shift northward of the political and economic

center of the Cambodian polity during the 7th–8th century, from the Takeo-Kampot-Prey Veng-Kompong Cham-Kompong Thom region, to just north of the Tonle Sap where Angkor was established. (p. 315–316)

And, he asks, "What was the attraction, since the southern provinces were more favorably endowed for agriculture than the Angkor region?" (p. 316).

First, we are pointed to Sambhupura, developing separately but on the Mekong at a key location for control of river traffic and trade. Political and locational changes in Champa to the east in Viet Nam may also be associated. Copper, iron, and lead deposits in the north seem also relevant, especially as social and political complexity must have demanded better arms and armaments as well as nonmilitary metallurgy. Population growth and agricultural expansion are also suggested, and supported by the ever larger and more elaborate temple structures found as the northward emphasis continues. I would, as an aside, question the favorability of the southern agricultural zones, but that is another matter and for future resolution.

As an archaeologist progresses through the monograph, more and more come together for the nonepigrapher/historian. Michael Vickery has produced an extremely detailed, data rich, and well-argued study. Epigraphers and historians will undoubtedly have a variety of views, finding fault with interpretations of inscription texts, translations of Khmer and Sanskrit, and so on. Some will argue, correctly, that far more could be extracted concerning the religions and ideological nature of the temple foundations, but that may be another scholar's task. But, for the archaeologist, we have a comprehensive study that in both its theoretical focus and data sources provides a multitude of inspirations for future research. I have read through the book three times; every time I examine a particular portion, I better understand how archaeology can address issues. The book is a masterpiece and required reading for new, as well as old, Cambodia hands. It is "the beef."

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Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices. Michael A. Aung-Thwin. Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998. 220 pp., maps.

Reviewed by PATRICK A. PRANKE, *Middlebury College, Vermont*

This book brings together five essays by Michael A. Aung-Thwin on the history and historiography of the Burmese kingdoms of Pagan and Ava between the twelfth and early fourteenth centuries. In these essays, each of which is presented as a chapter, the author reexamines five events that, over the course of the last century of Western scholarship, have come to be viewed by Burma scholars as watersheds in the history of Pagan and its successor state, Ava. Stated briefly, the five events are: (1) the Sinhalese capture of Pagan and execution of its king, Kulakya, in 1165 C.E., (2) the flight of Pagan's King Narathihapade in the face of the Chinese (Mongol) invasion of 1284, (3) the destruction of Pagan by Chinese forces in 1284, (4) the murder of Pagan's King Kyawswa by the "Three Shan Brothers" in c. 1304, and (5) the founding of the kingdom of Ava by a descendant of the Three Shan Brothers, Thadominbya, in 1364 (p. 2).

Leading Burma scholars have commented on the significance of the five events and in the process woven them into a more or less continuous narrative. G. H. Luce claimed the Sinhalese capture of Pagan ushered in Pagan's golden age, insofar as it led to the ascendancy of Burman over Mon culture at the capital, and the adoption of Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism as the state religion (p. 26). Pe Maung Tin and G. E. Harvey saw the flight of Narathihapade and the sacking of Pagan by the Chinese as marking the end of the Pagan Empire. And D.G.E. Hall, among others, asserted that the political machinations of the Three

Shan Brothers led to the birth of a new Shan dynasty at Ava in the aftermath of Pagan's destruction (p. 126).

Through a careful review of epigraphic, archaeological, and chronicle evidence, Aung-Thwin demonstrates that the five events are myths with little or no basis in historical fact. Exploring their origins and the motivations underlying their articulation, he shows that four of the myths (nos. 1, 3-5) are of recent vintage, being the product of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century British colonial historiography, while the fifth (no. 2) can be traced to indigenous Burmese chronicles. He argues that these myths were shaped by particular political and intellectual biases of their creators, and that when these biases are recognized and set aside, an entirely different and more cogent picture of Burmese history comes into view.

Aung-Thwin develops his critique incrementally in each of the five chapters, and in each he offers an alternative to the prevailing historical theory under consideration. In his conclusion, he discusses the intellectual, political, and social trends in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Burma that shaped the historiography of pre-colonial, colonial, and independent Burma (p. 3). He ends with a brief look at contemporary Burma in the aftermath of the failed democracy uprising of 1988, where he touches upon the continuing process of historical myth-making in the rhetoric of the military junta and its opponents in the democracy movement.

Aung-Thwin identifies three prejudices in particular that have influenced the interpretation of Burmese history by modern scholars. The first is the "reification of ethnicity" by which he means the attribution of historical causation to ethnicity. He notes that Western scholarship has tended to view Burmese history as an "endless series of battles between ethnic groups," a perspective not shared by indigenous chronicles. Burmese sources, he observes, do not portray the various rebellions, wars, and coups they record as being caused by ethnic differences, but by the quest for power by elite groups competing for the throne (p. 146).

The second prejudice is the "idea of progress" by which Burmese history was placed within the "ancient, medieval, modern" paradigm of Western historiography. Burmese history as a whole was conceived as moving through stages of progressive transformation in a process ultimately driven by the contest of competing races. Aung-Thwin argues that these conceptions had their origins, at least in part, in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western ideas of social Darwinism, natural selection, and survival of the fittest (p. 148).

The third prejudice was the notion that Burmese history was necessarily determined by "momentous events." Specifically, it was the belief that the dramatic transformations presumed to characterize distinct periods in Burmese history had to have been brought about by equally dramatic watershed events (p. 149). Aung-Thwin points out that the latter prejudice is also evident to a certain extent in indigenous chronicles, and that myths of radical junctures in Burmese history found in these sources have generally been accepted uncritically as fact by modern historians (p. 3). This has acted to reinforce the tendency among Western-trained scholars to overlook patterns of political, cultural, and religious continuity otherwise discernable in the epigraphic, archaeological, and literary record.

In his review of the historical evidence, Aung-Thwin describes how these prejudices distorted modern understandings of the Pagan and Ava periods. It was assumed,

for example, that the Pagan Empire collapsed suddenly with the destruction of its capital by Chinese troops in 1284, and that this catastrophe ushered in the Shan period. In fact, the Chinese army never reached the city of Pagan and there is no evidence that the city was ever sacked (p. 92). Instead, Pagan suffered a gradual decline brought about by internal economic contradictions rather than invasion (pp. 63–64), and it continued to survive in diminished form until 1368, when Pagan's last king became a vassal of Ava (p. 93).

It was further assumed that the Shans were less civilized than the Burmans so that their cultural achievements were seen as necessarily inferior as well. Since as early as 1883, with the publication of Sir Arthur Phayre's *History of Burma*, most Burma scholars have characterized the Ava period (1364–1527) as a kind of Burmese dark age, one whose Shan polity was a backwater when compared to the 'classical' Burman empire of Pagan that preceded it and the 'renaissance' Burman empire of Taungoo that followed it (p. 136).

Yet, as Aung-Thwin points out, the kingdom of Ava was neither Shan nor inferior to either Pagan or Taungoo in terms of culture and civilization. The Three Shan Brothers, progenitors of the Ava dynasty, turn out not to have been Shan but ministers of the Pagan court who usurped the throne—their 'shan-ness' being entirely the invention of modern historians beginning with Phayre (p. 122). Furthermore, while the kingdom of Ava controlled less territory than did Pagan, it was nevertheless prosperous and stable during most of its history and remained a major power in the region. Available evidence indicates that Ava maintained all of the "centralized state activities found during the Pagan period, along with the socioeconomic and political institutions they represented and the personnel they would have required" (p. 132). In its production of Buddhist scholasticism and Burmese literature and poetry, Ava actually surpassed Pagan in achievement, setting the standards against which all later generations of literati would measure them-

selves (p. 133). Summarizing the legacy of the kingdom, Aung-Thwin remarks, "Ava was Pagan writ small. By resurrecting the structure and conceptual system of Pagan, the kingdom of Ava preserved and perpetuated the principles of the 'classical' Burmese state, upon which succeeding kingdoms could be (and were) founded" (p. 142).

With this work we have really for the first time in modern scholarship an accurate glimpse at Ava's role and importance in Burmese history. While acknowledging and building upon the work of predecessors in the field, Aung-Thwin moves well beyond

the historiography of the colonial and post-colonial generations of Burma scholars, both in terms of methodology and cogency. At the same time his views on the notion of progress and linear history, the role of ethnicity in Burmese history, and historical myth making in the political arena of contemporary Burma, are as controversial as they are innovative and thought provoking. This is an excellent book for use in upper-level and graduate seminars on Burmese history and culture, sure to stimulate discussion and debate.

Studies in Southeast Asian Art: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. O'Connor. Nora A. Taylor. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2000. 243 pp, \$28.00. ISBN 0-87727-728-1

Reviewed by ROBERT L. BROWN, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Stanley J. O'Connor retired as professor of Southeast Asian art history at Cornell University in 1995. This volume contains articles by eleven of his former graduate students published in his honor. It is clear from these studies that Prof. O'Connor had a profound influence on these students, both in how they approach the study of material culture as well as personally, as it comes across how much the students like and respect him as a person. The intent in his teaching that so affects them in their own research interests is his desire to make the art come alive by relating it to the peoples and cultures who made it. Art is lived by the people.

The essays begin with a bibliographical sketch by Oliver Wolters. Prof. Wolters (who unfortunately died this last year) was an eminent historian of Southeast Asia and colleague of O'Connor's at Cornell. Again, one is struck by the care and affection that Wolters had for "Stan," who "has been no ordinary teacher and friend."

In part, perhaps, the desire to find art that can be spoken for by the people who made it has led O'Connor's students to

work on modern material, to study things that are part of everyday life, or at least modern life, and for which we thus have the written and oral evidence to treat it as part of people's lives.

As the editor, Nora A. Taylor, writes in her Introduction:

Where previous art historical treatments of Southeast Asia have tended to concentrate on religious monuments and statuary, this volume should stand out for the virtual absence of any reference to stone structures and large temple complexes. O'Connor's students were encouraged to search in new places for "art." This emphasis has made the field of Southeast Asian art more diverse and, at the same time, changed it so that it no longer seems frozen or ossified. . . . (p. 12)

We in the field may find it a bit of a shock to realize that what we have been doing is frozen and ossified. Taylor's whiff of hubris throughout her Introduction regarding how innovative her and her fellow students' work is, should not stand in the

way of how admirable the attempt is to find new areas of art historical exploration.

I can only briefly introduce the eleven essays here, using their order in the book. Kaja McGowan explores modern Balinese notions of landscape, particularly how naturally found tiny stones called *manik* retain the pre-Indic megalithic beliefs in a geography of power. McGowan, often writing in eloquent prose, shows caring sensitivity to her informants' opinions. Jan Mrazek views Indonesian wayang puppets and performance through the eyes of the puppeteer, arguing that the puppets must be seen as instruments rather than static museum objects (that is, as art historical objects). It seems to me, however, that the puppeteer brings such highly elite and refined knowledge, judgements of a true connoisseur, that an extremely narrow and scholarly view of the object is created rather than any popular understanding. In other words, such a view of the puppets is no more experiential for most people than is viewing the puppets in glass cases.

Two scholars focus on ceramics. Hilda Soemantri, a ceramic artist as well as art historian, traces the development of ceramic art in modern Indonesia, and Barbara Harrison classifies and interprets various ceramics, Chinese and Southeast Asian, found particularly in Borneo. Astri Wright writes about a contemporary female Indonesian painter, Lucia Hartini, tracing the development in her paintings. It is a story of art as well as personal biography, Hartini's paintings being interpreted primarily through interviews with the artist, connecting paintings of a particular time with the artist's life and experiences of that period. The artist and her work end "liberated, defiant, and strong," an empowered woman. My question here is what about Hartini's quintessential modern [read Western] journey toward female self-expression is Javanese?

Caverlee Cary very nicely reads two well-known photographs of two nineteenth-century Thai kings, King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, through a nu-

anced analysis of the photographs' formal characteristics, which she relates to the historical evidence. Such studies of photography in Southeast Asia hold considerable promise. Nora A. Taylor asks "Whose Art are We Studying?" when we write the art history of Viet Nam. She contrasts colonial art histories with those of two contemporary Vietnamese scholars, concluding that there is no one art history but several histories, and a long list of questions that thus far no approach has yet answered. Robert S. Wicks looks at a modern Burmese silver bowl with repoussé illustrations of the most popular of the Buddhist Jataka stories, the Vessantara Jataka. The bowl was a gift to an American Christian medical missionary in Burma, and Wicks suggests why this particular story was chosen and why its illustrations take the form they do.

The final three papers turn to earlier material. M. L. Pattaratorn Chirapravati associates clay votive tablets from Thailand dating to the seventh to eleventh centuries with various Buddhist schools using the tablets' iconography and geographical distribution. John N. Miksic and E. Edwards McKinnon end the collection with two papers that are similar, being archaeological surveys of areas of Southeast Asia. Miksic, in an extremely interesting paper, looks at archaeological excavations of Chinese ceramics in Singapore and other islands in the South China Sea and suggests how differing understandings among the local peoples regarding ceramics can be identified. McKinnon's paper is also important, a survey of objects from East Kalimantan, showing that several sites, long ignored, may have had a significant role in the Indianization process in island Southeast Asia.

Prof. O'Connor should be very proud of this volume. His concern and interest in making the art and cultures of Southeast Asia come alive to students in his classes, both undergraduates and graduates, has clearly worked (see his article "Humane Literacy and Southeast Asian Art," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, 1 [1995]: 147-158). His legacy is displayed in these essays.

History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives. O. W. Wolters. Revised edition. Southeast Asian Program Publications No. 26, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1999. 275 pp, \$17.00. ISBN: 0-87727-725-7

Reviewed by LAURA JUNKER, *Anthropology Department, Western Michigan University*

Anyone who is familiar with historian O. W. Wolters' original publication in 1982 of this collection of essays on the pre-colonial cultural and political landscape of Southeast Asia will be extremely happy to see this new version come to press. The original book, already a provocative and seminal work appreciated by historians and anthropologists alike, consisted of five theoretically wide-ranging essays on such issues as the meaning of "Southeast Asia" as an entity with historical and cultural commonalities, what the process of "Indianization" in first millennium and early second millennium A.D. Southeast Asia really means, and the implications for continuities between historic kingdoms and the prehistoric past. The essays in the 1982 book were sandwiched by introductory and concluding chapters that nicely emphasized some of the broader implications of Wolters' ideas on political structure in historic and "protohistoric" Southeast Asian complex societies like Funan, Srivijaya, Champa, and Majapahit. The 1982 publication also included several appendixes which illustrated Wolters' masterful use of native texts (Malay Sanskrit, Vietnamese, and Old Javanese) to support his notions about how traditional rulers and other "men of prowess" manipulated political alliances and made convincing displays of ritual potency to expand their authority.

One of the most significant contributions of Wolters' 1982 essays and previous historical work was his challenge to the traditional view of "Indianization" as a wholesale cultural overlay. Including not only aspects of Hindu religion and writing but political power structures, this "Indianization" process has been traditionally seen as catalyzing and shaping "state" development in Southeast Asia. While Wolters was cer-

tainly not alone in questioning the over-emphasis on Indian influence on the emergence of early Southeast Asian kingdoms like Srivijaya and Funan (advanced particularly by Georges Coedès in his classic work *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*), he went further than many others in trying to explain how specific cultural factors and historical trajectories in Southeast Asia made Indian concepts of authority and Indian religious precepts a particularly good "fit" with indigenous notions of kingship and ritual potency in first millennium A.D. Southeast Asia. According to Wolters, such factors as the cosmopolitan outlook of Southeast Asians engendered by an early emphasis on maritime trade, social groups formed through fluid alliance rather than territorially based lineages, and political systems emphasizing personal competition for ideological and material supremacy all were instrumental in the adoption by Southeast Asians of exotic models of arts, religion, and government that could be manipulated for prestige and political gain. Wolters makes a strong argument that Hindu (Sanskrit) literary traditions were particularly attractive to Southeast Asians because they emphasized many precepts of rulership that were already part of Southeast Asian politics (such as how to make effective alliances and political coalitions), but by codifying these precepts in literature and art gave material authority and competitive weight to their local bearers. However, Wolters took care in his 1982 essays not to talk in pan-Southeast Asian generalities, but instead emphasized that it was how these foreign models were "localized" (i.e., integrated into local cultures and given local "meaning") that provides the bridge between work on "local" culture history (where he believes that most

historical research is rightly situated) and attacking broader issues of regional scale.

Consistent with his view that it is useful for historians to continually work between what he calls "local statements" and more general regional models of political, social, and economic development, Wolters fleshed out the concept of *mandala* (a Sanskrit term from Indian manuals of government) in his 1982 essays to describe the type of nonterritorial, fluctuating political structure characteristic of many parts of Southeast Asia. This style of political authority, in which all political relations were personal and immediate rather than remote and hereditarily imbued, fit well with the contemporaneous struggles of anthropologists like Clifford Geertz, Stanley Tambiah, and Robert Winzeler in the 1970s and 1980s to describe the essence of the decentralized ("segmentary," "galactic"), unstable, and "theatrical" politics characteristic of both mainland and island Southeast Asia at the time of European contact. In showing that *mandala*-like features of political structure could be found in places like the Philippines, previously considered relatively politically peripheral and "tribal" in development by anthropologists, Wolters usurped the usual role of anthropologists in demonstrating that there were significant pan-regional patterns of social and political organization worth investigating through multidisciplinary approaches. Wolters' perspective that there is strong cultural continuity rather than an abrupt disjunction between the prehistoric past and historic kingdoms known through Chinese, Indian, Arab, European, and local texts, has allowed him to develop a dialogue with archaeologists as well as cultural anthropologists. Archaeologists like me found much of interest in Wolters' work as embodied in the 1982 essays, attested over the past two decades in the frequent incorporation of his ideas into archaeological projects on complex society development in various parts of Southeast Asia.

The revised version of the book, more than double the size of the original, builds on these important themes by integrating new ideas and approaches that have

emerged in the historical literature over the last two decades on cultural contextualization, multiple ways of "reading" texts, engendering history, and integrating the work of historians with that of their archaeological colleagues. Wolters accomplishes his aim of updating, reevaluating, and in some cases (with unwarranted humility) substantially revising his views *not* by rewriting the original essays which formed the core of his 1982 book, but instead by writing whole new essays in a series of "postscript" chapters, which essentially revisit and expand on the content of the original ones. At first, I was somewhat dubious about the effectiveness of organizing the book in this manner, with the assumption that it would be difficult for the reader to follow Wolters' changing perspectives on specific issues if his discussion was widely separated in the two halves of the book. However, as I moved through both portions of the books, I realized that Wolters' masterful integration of various topics related to political structure, political economy, ecological and demographic factors, writing, and the "localization" of foreign knowledge and religions in both the 1982 and 1999 essays provided a theoretical coherence that allowed the reader to easily follow Wolters' evolution as a historical scholar.

In the new section of the publication, Wolters strengthens some of the points made in his 1982 essays and changes some of his previous views through a more extended discussion of the theoretical arguments, the addition of new historical analyses or case studies (some of which are provided in the detailed appendixes), and responses to critiques that have emerged over the past several decades. For example, he points to the recent research which reinforces his notion that Southeast Asian political configurations have been characterized by a long-term pattern of "multi-centricism," reflecting the unstable and personal nature of political power relations and persistent competition between factionalized elites. We now know through the work of historians and archaeologists that both the Mon-speaking "kingdom" of Dvaravati (in central Thailand) and

the early Khmer kingdom of Funan (in Cambodia) can be best characterized as networks of competing polities with an elite veneer of shared religious iconography, architecture, and writing. Archaeological surveys and excavations on Sumatra in the vicinity of Palembang by Manguin and others, as well as Wisseman-Christie's new epigraphic work on Sanskrit and Old Malay inscriptions in the region, is also cited as support for Wolters' political model in which patron-client relationships and the spatial expansion of social networks are more important than bounded territories in defining the almost-continually changing "Srivijaya" state. Even in what was previously considered a more Chinese-style "centralized" state along the Vietnamese coast, Keith Taylor's recent historical work has shown that the supposed thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tran kingdom may have actually been a series of ethnically distinct polities in close cultural interaction stretching from the Red River delta to the Mekong. Wolters takes even stronger issue than in the 1982 essays with historians and archaeologists who continue to emphasize tendencies toward greater "centralization" and permanence in Southeast Asian polities (i.e., a more literal "Indianization" or "Sinocization") over time.

Wolters also demonstrates in his 1999 essays an even stronger willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries to improve our theories of how Southeast Asian states are structured and how they came to be. He presents an extended discussion of archaeologist Joyce White's use of the concept of *heterarchy* to describe prehistoric complex societies in Thailand, in which the permanent status and political hierarchies assumed by a centralized "state" or "chiefdom" model are not neatly reflected in the archaeological burial record at sites like second millennium Ban Chiang. Heterarchy models, like Wolters' concept of the *mandala*, allow for a decoupling of changes in social, economic, and political institutions, and for fluidity in social relations involving both hierarchical ranking and non-hierarchical forms of differentiation. Wolters argues that archaeologically tested

models of prehistoric societies, such as the heterarchic approach of White, can fruitfully inform historical analysis of later Southeast Asian states, providing a bridge between prehistoric and historic trajectories of complex society development. Thus, in a view that is too rare among historians, Wolters suggests that the archaeology of protohistoric periods does not necessarily have to be a handmaiden to historically derived interpretations.

One of the most significant areas of discussion in the 1999 essays is Wolters' recognition of the need to develop an "engendered" history of Southeast Asia. In the fourth of the "postscript" chapters, he synthesizes a great deal of the important work of the last two decades on this issue, particularly the expanding realization among scholars that Sanskrit writings and other indigenous texts generally speak in a male voice but often contain more subtle hints of female perspectives. Wolters emphasizes that the distinction often made in gender studies between "text" and "practice" is a particularly fruitful line of historical inquiry in Southeast Asia. Since inscriptions with metaphorical writing praising military achievements, economic successes, and ritual potency are the weapons of rulers and would-be rulers in asserting their status as "men of prowess," this discourse of male power tends to mask the traditionally strong role of women in Southeast Asia as political, economic, and ritual authorities. Wolters, echoing other historians such as Lorraine Gesick, Thomas Kirsch, Barbara Andaya, and Anthony Reid, calls for historical analysis of how both males and females wield power and establish themselves as "people of prowess" in Southeast Asia, a plea that is given empirical weight by his own "engendered" analysis of court politics in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Vietnam presented in Appendix 2 of the updated volume.

In sum, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* is an outstanding collection of historical essays that belongs on the book shelf of any historian, archaeologist, or cultural anthropologist interested in questions of how complex societies

were structured in premodern Southeast Asia. While this review has focused on Wolters' more general theoretical perspectives, his wide-ranging discussion contains many "gems" of ideas about the role of writing in Southeast Asia, the nature of

warfare, competitive strategies for foreign trade, etc., that will certainly stimulate and contribute to new directions of historical and archaeological research for years to come.