

This is a succinctly written volume; the documents are mastered and the argument develops briskly and unflinchingly. The felicitous style matches the production of the book. And Dr. Beaglehole is uncommonly fair. He never credits Munro with more than his due: both Read in the Baramahal and Cumming in his office in London emerge from this book as important figures in their own right. Dr. Beaglehole's brief concluding chapter is excellent. While inevitably it owes something to the brilliant early pages of Dr. Eric Stokes's study of *The English Utilitarians and India*, in places it provides a most valuable corrective to Dr. Stokes's generalizations.

Yet one has a feeling that it is a pity that Dr. Beaglehole limited himself to a book with only 140 pages of text. One would like to know more, for example, about Munro's early life. We are told simply that he was 'well educated'. But was he not educated at the old college of Glasgow, the home of Adam Smith and John Millar and that extraordinary flowering of later eighteenth-century Scottish thought? Dr. Beaglehole's brevity may also mean that some readers will feel that he has not delved quite deeply enough into the indigenous background to Munro's administration. South Indian *panchayats* (village councils), for example, do not receive a great deal of attention, though there is a hint that they might not have been 'as widespread and flourishing immediately before the British assumed control as Munro suggested'. One would like to know more, too, about the degree of resilience, in the face of the British impact, of other indigenous centres of power, such as the caste. Dr. Robert E. Frykenberg's recent study of *Guntur District, 1788 - 1848*, would lead one to suspect that there is still a good deal to be said on this matter. Dr. Beaglehole's book, then, appears to lack what might be described as an 'anthropological' dimension. But, certainly, to what he has written Dr. Beaglehole has brought grace and considerable analytical skill. Let us hope that Dr. Beaglehole has more in store for us on the Madras Presidency in the early years of British rule.

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Southeast Asia Past and Present. By Nicholas Tarling. Melbourne, F. W. Cheshire, 1966. 334 pp. Australian price: \$5.55.

PROFESSOR Tarling's fourth book is something of a milestone in the development of Southeast Asian studies in Australasia. That a scholarly condensation of current historical knowledge on the whole field of modern Southeast Asia should be written in New Zealand and published in Australia for an Australasian readership is a measure of the intense interest which is now felt towards the 'Near North'.

The specialist historian is apt to regret that the nature of that interest is such as to produce further general reviews rather than the detailed monographs which he needs, especially in the many fields more or less neglected during the colonial period. Since the publication of the existing general histories (Harrison 1954, revised 1963; Hall 1955, revised 1964; Pearn 1963; Cady 1964; and now Vandenbosch & Butwell 1966; plus a recent plethora of general studies of Southeast Asia in the post-war period), extremely little has been added to our understanding, still less our knowledge, of Southeast Asian history. Nevertheless it is always interesting to see how another historian views the whole vast canvas, what themes he is able to draw from it, what periodisation he chooses, and how far he is able to

advance in the direction of an 'autochthonous' history of the region in view of the 'Eurocentricity' of most of the available materials.

The author has slightly varied the usual definition of Southeast Asia in order to include the usually-forgotten Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This step will presumably be of most concern to the Government of India, which now administers them. Like most of its predecessors, however, the book does little to establish the coherence of its subject as a field of study. Professor Tarling has chosen the cautious path of dividing his book in terms of European imperialisms and modern nations, even in the case of the one period, 1942-5, when the region was politically united. The most stimulating passages in the book, therefore, are the prefaces to parts two and three, where a comprehensive view is attempted. Here indeed we find common themes and novel insights into the policies of the European powers, the position of the Chinese, and the economic pressures to which all countries of the region were subject. It is only the outside influences, however, which Professor Tarling finds it easy to discuss in this stimulating fashion. Of the common Asian reaction to the Western impact, for example, we are told only that 'the mass of the people were inclined to react negatively, by xenophobia, by harking back to an imagined golden age' (p. 97). This reluctance to generalise owes something to the author's conviction that the archipelago and the mainland 'had only latterly [late nineteenth century] converged in the experience of European domination' (p. 157). In the longer view it might be truer to say that the success of Islam in the south in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and its eventual failure in the north created a dichotomy which the Western impact did little to dispel. Common notions of kingship, and interdependent commerce, together with the close politico-cultural connections of Champa (and to a lesser extent Thailand) with the archipelago, suggest that Professor Tarling could have made more of shared pre-colonial experience. It is disappointing that he has not considered the erratic but stimulating new work of S. Q. Fatimi on the spread of Islam, which forces us to consider again the Champa connection.

It is the period after 1760, however, which receives the bulk of Professor Tarling's attention. The choice of this date as one of the two symbolic turning-points in the history of the region (few would quarrel with 1942 as the other) is an interesting departure. It has become orthodox to regard 1870 as a convenient inaugural date for the 'new imperialism' which brought such radical change to Southeast Asia, if for no other reason than the opening of the Suez Canal. On the other hand older writers—and even Hall was guilty here in Asian eyes—regarded the Portuguese intrusion as marking the beginning of a period in Southeast Asian history which might be called 'the earlier phase of European expansion'. Professor Tarling's choice is certainly more realistic than the latter. It lays due emphasis on the expansion of European (especially British) commerce accompanying the industrial revolution, which provided in Manchester cotton the first European bulk export to Asia and turned the balance of world power very sharply in favour of Europe.

More questionable is the emphasis on the crucial role of the British which is involved in this periodisation. That British commerce and naval power was supreme in Southeast Asia for more than a century after 1760 is indisputable, but to speak of 'the colonial régimes the British had permitted in Southeast Asia' (p. 111) is to make too much of this point. Let us hope we have no repetition of the Anglo-Dutch scholarly pettiness which Professor Tarling himself has done much to bury.

By dismissing the pre-European period in a brief thirty pages and devoting much of the immediately succeeding chapters to the spread of European commerce, the author denies himself the easiest answer to the inevitable charge of Eurocentricity—one adopted, for example, by Hall. This may be commendable honesty. The dynastic struggles of Java or Annam in the first millenium are of little relevance to an understanding of modern Southeast Asia. Professor Tarling should be judged by his expressed aim, 'to provide a framework for appraising the interaction of external influences and given conditions' (p. xv). Here the critic might fairly point out that the external influences are described with more clarity than the given conditions. Ample attention is given to the development of nationalism, including the invaluable sociological material recently provided on Indonesia by some American-trained scholars. This material, however, does not sit easily in a book whose emphasis is overwhelmingly political and commercial. Thus the continuity is not always easy to grasp between the Asians we meet in the first chapters and those who reappear in the centre of the political arena in the second half of the book. The fault is less in the author than in the inadequacy of existing secondary material to cope with the social continuum over such a vast area.

Because *Southeast Asia Past and Present* does little to solve this vexatious problem, it is unlikely to be received with joy in Southeast Asia itself. This is not its purpose; nor should it be. The book is specifically designed to describe Southeast Asian development in terms which will be meaningful to Australasians, who may be expected to have a more detached view than either the colonised or the colonisers. Despite this emphasis, however, the book is less different from its predecessors than it might have been. New Guinea is of course treated more generously than usual, and mention is made of the few common experiences of the two regions—Dutch explorations of the seventeenth century, British expansion of the eighteenth, and fear of expanding communism in the twentieth. But New Zealand readers might reasonably have expected more than a single deprecatory sentence to explain the complex Malaysian-Polynesian relationship. The strategic interest of Australia in Southeast Asia could also have been pushed back to include the defence of Singapore, and Australia's wartime position. The common experience of the frontier, particularly relevant to the Malay Peninsula and parts of Borneo, might have been taken further.

Professor Tarling may see these as the promptings of a new devil of Australo-centricity. He allows himself no illusions about the completely separate paths the two areas followed, with Southeast Asia remaining the *Terra Septentrionalis Incognita* until almost the present day. Only now, he urges, are Australians and New Zealanders beginning to think of themselves as Austral-Asians, and he holds out no bright hopes for the future.

Southeast Asia Past and Present is a careful, factual, and sober account of modern Southeast Asian history by one well familiar with the available published material. There are very few blunders for a work of such scope. The casual enquirer, however, will not find it easy reading. The publishers have succeeded in undercutting Hall only by closing up the type and omitting illustrations. The writer himself is commendably reluctant to omit details, with the result that stylistic ease is frequently sacrificed to accuracy and compression. The book can be recommended with confidence as a reliable guide and reference for the serious student.

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