

Reviews

Pre-colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia. Edited by Anthony Reid and Lance Castles. Monographs of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, No. 6, Kuala Lumpur, 1975. x, 135 pp., maps. N.Z. price: \$8.

THE Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History at the Australian National University has been performing a valuable service in organizing a number of seminars on various themes in Southeast Asian history. They have drawn substantially on scholars resident in or visiting Australia and testify to the growing sophistication of Southeast Asian studies there. Further testimony is provided by this volume, which includes the papers delivered at a colloquium at the University in April 1973.

It focusses on pre-colonial systems in several sectors of the Indonesian world. The contributors are mostly historians, but there are students of Southeast Asian literatures, and the insights of both disciplines are brought to bear on the Peninsula, Aceh, and Bali-Lombok. The study of pre-colonial realms has been a neglected field, though some work had appeared at the time of the colloquium — such as J. M. Gullick's pioneering *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (1958); Denys Lombard's excellent *Le Sultanat d'Atjeh au temps d'Iskandar Muda* (1967); Reynaldo Ileto's penetrating *Magindanao 1860-1888* (1971); D. E. Brown's incisive *Brunei* (1970)—while *The Kingdom of Johor* by Leonard Andaya, one of the contributors to the Canberra colloquium, has appeared since (1975). Some work has been done on the Sulu sultanate, too: that of H. de la Costa, C. A. Majul, and Thomas Kiefer comes to mind.

The authors and editors of the present volume are chary, at this stage, of offering generalizations. A reviewer should be even more cautious. It is, however, hard to resist using the examples at hand for purposes of comparison, and decrying similarities that seem to derive both from pre-Islamic traditions as well as Islamic patterns. In the end, however, one tends to be overwhelmed by the dissimilarity of the polities described, and to conclude that their most common feature was absence of prime features of the European state-system, such as regular frontiers and centralized control.

The question of the adaptation or otherwise of these polities to the European pattern takes us generally into the 'colonial' period. No doubt similarities and contrasts can be discerned then, too, and it may be that again it is easy to overstress the similarities and neglect the contrasts. It is a pity that only one of the present papers really takes us across this barrier, Dianne Lewis's suggestive paper on Kedah. This reviewer would have been glad to have, for example, a clearer picture of the *orang laut* of Johor. Loyal to the Sultan at least before the regicide of 1699, they gave their allegiance by the early nineteenth century to officers of state like the Temenggong. Then the Temenggong was assimilated

into the British-Malayan political framework and transmuted into a Maharaja and a Sultan. Perhaps the transition — pre-colonial to colonial — could form the theme of another colloquium?

One generalization the editors do venture upon is worth emphasis. The polities were not static, even if they were 'traditional'. Major changes were associated with the regicide in Johor, for example, and with transfer of power from the *orang besar* to the *waris negeri* in eighteenth-century Perak, described in Barbara Andaya's paper. Anthony Reid's contribution discusses a crucial development in Aceh: the shift of influence to the territorial *panglimas* in the seventeenth century, so important for the nineteenth-century transition. Leonard Andaya's paper on seventeenth-century Bone points to the extraordinary power of La Tenritatta, though that clearly derived in part from his association with the Dutch conquerors of Macassar.

This is a stimulating volume: it shows how much there is to be done in this field, but also how rewarding a field it is.

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China: Cultural and Political Perspectives. Edited by D. Bing. Longman Paul, Auckland/Hawthorn, Victoria, 1975. xviii, 237 pp. N.Z. price: \$12.50.

THIS BOOK, subtitled 'A Selection of Papers Presented at The First New Zealand International Conference on Chinese Studies, University of Waikato, 1972', is an unsatisfying mixture of contributions, ranging from simple to complex, and from non-controversial portrayals of China's extended past to detailed interpretations of modern China, but cut short at 1971. An appendix lists the complete proceedings of the four-day conference, and from this it is clear that items with general plus scholarly interest were selected for inclusion, omitting travelogues and papers on the experience of living in China. Within this framework the editor was left with little control over the disparate nature of the contributions and even forfeited the duty of seeking to provide coherence by inviting the conference president, Professor Douglas Lancashire, to write the preface. At a more technical level the editor has failed to provide uniformity in transcriptions of Chinese words and to apply guidelines for the use of footnotes. Also there are several misprint howlers in the book, e.g. Leonardo da Vinci 1690–1730 (p. 194).

The brief preface by Lancashire comments on the growing interest in China throughout New Zealand's secondary and higher education, and suggests the best order for reading the chapters, but nowhere does he attempt to clarify the intended readership of the book. The 'reader with little previous knowledge of the subject' (p. x), following the preface's advice to read S. A. M. Adshad on the Cultural Revolution as the second section on politics, might well be forgiven for bewilderment at Adshad's rapid description of selected events, full of Chinese names and backed by references to Western writers, all without footnotes. This, surely, is an argumentative, even provocative analysis for the initiated; yet the initiated might find other items in the book a little elementary.