

Islam has attracted a substantial number of supporters in the West Coast, particularly in the urban centres.

In Part III, Wong Chin Huat (Chapter 11) traces some of the problems in the majoritarian system to the multi-ethnic and multi-regional character of Malaysian society. He underlines some important issues for reforming the electoral system and considers whether it needs to be repaired or re-engineered. In closing, Meredith Weiss (Chapter 12) critically highlights four arenas of transformation in consolidating the political transition in Malaysia, with the reformation of political culture considered the most difficult challenge.

This edited volume is comprehensive, with political and electoral analyses on various dimensions of GE 2018 and beyond. The findings highlighted by the authors of various backgrounds and approaches largely complement each other, although there are also conflicting thoughts among them, which demonstrates diverse views. Although lacking in terms of a comparative analysis from East Malaysia, a historical perspective or coverage of minority politics, the book is well-structured, includes a variety of insightful discussions and contributes to the academic corpus of Malaysian politics in particular and the discourse of transitology in general. Hence, despite many works that have been published to unravel the political phenomenon of GE 2018, this book is definitely an important contribution to the field.

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*Everyday Justice in Myanmar: Informal Resolutions and State Evasion in a Time of Contested Transition.* Edited by Helene Maria Kyed. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2020. 367 pp.

This collaborative collection edited by Helene Maria Kyed makes an important and timely contribution to discussions about Myanmar's

changing legal and political landscape. *Everyday Justice in Myanmar* foregrounds the perspectives and experiences of local communities in accessing and practising justice, effectively highlighting the diversity of politico-legal orders in Myanmar, a country that recently experienced a decade of semi-democratic change amidst long periods of military rule. Indeed, while patterns of exclusion and repression reminiscent of the military past were still present in Myanmar, the fact that the research for this book could take place at all is remarkable in view of the decades of isolation that previously made this type of ethnographic, collaborative research all but impossible. The current political situation—the most recent iteration of an oppressive junta ruling Myanmar—might render this type of knowledge creation impossible again.

The book has emerged from several months of field research undertaken across Myanmar, from rural villages in the western Naga Hills to the Pa-O Self-administrated Zone in southern Shan state to urban centres like Yangon and Mawlamyine. The book's primary contribution lies in this careful and detailed consideration of local conceptualizations and experiences of justice, which are brought into conversation with larger scholarly and policy-oriented debates in the fields of legal pluralism, rebel governance, state formation and evasion. The authors' focus on everyday justice providers, which includes spirit mediums, ethnic armed groups, religious practitioners and village elders, provides a rich and nuanced analysis of the varied and messy political contexts in which justice is provided (or withheld!) in Myanmar.

For example, several of the case studies focusing on ethnic minority communities highlight how the existence of dual authorities—whether armed or not—results in a clash of legal systems as well as unclear jurisdictions. In areas under mixed governance, such as southern Mon state (Chapter 1 by Mi Thang Sorn Poine and Helene Maria Kyed) and the Pa-O administrative zones (Chapter 2 by Mi Thang Sorn Poine and Nan Tin Nilar Win), local-level preference for justice provisioning offered by ethnic armed actors reflects the long history of conflict. The conflict has not only resulted in widespread

distrust of the state and its institutions but also in the development of multiple, sometimes overlapping, justice systems. These can appear confusing to the outside observer, as Mi Thang Sorn Poine and Nan Tin Nilar Win note in their chapter, even though the degree of legal institutionalization may in fact be more sophisticated in these territories than in areas fully under the control of the Myanmar state.

Despite the widespread use of local systems of justice, the lack of state recognition hampers their ability to dispense justice effectively and renders them unable to deal with cases outside their immediate jurisdiction. They also appear vulnerable to capture by “men with guns” (p. 96), who wield influence even in areas supposedly removed from armed conflict. And as the chapter on Naga shows (Chapter 3 by Lue Htar, Myat The Thitsar and Helene Maria Kyed), local customary systems are closely embedded in relations of power. As a result, they may not have sufficiently addressed the rights of women, favouring androcentric forms of community justice over gender justice. While these are traditionally transmitted orally from village to village across the Naga Hills, currently efforts are under way to codify the Naga customary system, providing productive opportunities for engaging women’s rights. However, as the chapter on the Karen refugee camp shows (Chapter 10 by Kirsten McConnachie), international efforts to codify laws and regulations without due consultations with local communities may lead to a clash of politico-legal orders and, ultimately, a hollowing out of local justice systems. As these studies illustrate, the local justice system is anything but a static, fixed entity. Rather, and as is further explored in subsequent chapters on Karen and mixed minority communities (Chapter 4 by Maria Knakkegaard Richthammer, Chapter 5 by Lwin Lwin Mon and Chapter 6 by Than Pale), justice in Myanmar is dispersed throughout a complex and tangled web of local justice actors. This tendency to favour local arrangements over state mechanisms often reflects commonly held beliefs that state conceptualizations of justice do not correspond to local understandings of justice, stressing social harmony and spiritual remedies rather than secular punishment. These ways of ‘doing’ justice are further bolstered by the notion that the state is predatory

and in conflict with ethnic minority communities, war or no war. Here, state evasion must be understood in relation to community and ethnic boundary-making (p. 29), as several chapters make clear.

However, state evasion is not the purview of rural areas only, but is prevalent also across urban areas, where informal brokers (*pweza*) provide communities with access to critical documentation (Chapter 8 by Annika Pohl Harrisson) and property rights (Chapter 9 by Elizabeth Rhoades). It is clear that, across Myanmar, distrust of the state system combined with high levels of informality and unclear jurisdiction results in people relying on local justice providers to settle disputes and access rights. Taken together, the ten case studies in the book—especially when read against the backdrop of the current military coup—demonstrate that while the country's most recent attempts at semi-democratic governance may have changed official state structures and practices, in many ways, everyday relationships with justice have remained predatory and violent.

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