

this section is quite short, which is a disappointment because Acharya is a highly reputable expert on this topic whose observations have much to offer.

Overall, this is a thought-provoking book, loaded with valuable observations and insights. It also provides a needed corrective to orientalist perspectives and to the sometimes tunnel vision of international relations scholars. It is highly recommended, and should be added to the reading lists of every Southeast Asia international relations course.

DIANE K. MAUZY
University of British Columbia
Canada

***Environment and Development in the Straits of Malacca.* By Mark Cleary and Goh Kim Chuan.** London: Routledge, 2000. 214pp.

This study of the Straits of Malacca and the countries or parts of countries that abut on it invokes Fernand Braudel's Mediterranean: it "has no unity, but that created by the movements of men, the relationships they imply and the routes they follow ... an immense network of regular and causal connections, the life-giving bloodstream of the region" (p. 2). "It is this notion of unity through movement and causal flows of goods, ideas and peoples", the authors tell us, "that underlies our own conception of the Straits" (p. 2).

There is indeed a contrast not only in size. The Straits have been, at least since the fifth century, a major route for international traffic, initially involving India and China, then from the sixteenth century the Europeans, and in the twentieth, the Japanese. The point is well recognized by the authors. They give us a useful account of the challenges that internationalization currently presents, particularly because the Straits are a major route for the tankers that supply Japan with oil: "there is a dilemma between keeping the Straits open as a sea-lane of enormous economic importance and maintaining their ecology as to be a source of fishery resources and healthy marine life" (p. 173).

The Straits contrast, too, in the nature of the political divisions among the littoral countries. Those are much more recent than in the case of the Mediterranean, yet very real. For most of their history, the Straits formed a link among the principalities of the region, one or more of which asserted dominance over the others. It was only with the treaty

of 17 March 1824 that the political fortunes of Sumatra and the peninsula were pushed apart; only much more recently that the political fate of Singapore and the peninsula came to differ.

The geographical material that the authors present and the arguments they deploy may be stronger than the historical. In both cases, they use up-to-date sources. They have, for instance, not neglected Dianne Lewis' valuable monograph, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca, 1641–1795* (Athens: Ohio University, 1995), though neither she, nor your reviewer, would have told them that Bangka is "on Java" (p. 105). Do they mean Bantam?

If that is a geographical slip, the authors' history is somewhat more risk-prone, even in respect, for example, of the two issues already mentioned. The treaty of 1824 did not make the Dutch the "governing power" to the west of the notional line, nor the British to the east: more negatively, it stipulated that the British could not be the governing power to the west, nor the Dutch to the east (p. 106). A serious error includes Singapore in the federation of Malaya in 1957 (p. 123). There are other errors less serious in themselves, but tending to reduce confidence in the whole. Java is transferred to the British in 1796: in fact it had to be conquered in 1811 (p. 105). Aceh succumbed to the Dutch by the mid-nineteenth-century (p. 105): thirty years of bitter conflict, still of crucial importance, are thus elided.

The reviewer would take issue with the authors' account of the development of Singapore's trade. They tend more generally to predate the impact of the products of Britain's industrial revolution on its Asian trade. Though benefiting from Indian subsidy, Singapore was in its early years not unlike a traditional *entrepôt*, understandably described as Kota Bahru by the indigenous traders who frequented it. Penang, on the other hand, was surely not "well-placed" as an *entrepôt*, as the authors suggest (p. 102).

There are other smaller historical errors. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) was "virtually bankrupted by the early nineteenth century" (p. 76): it was abolished in 1799. The concept of the "dual economy" should surely be attributed to Boeke not Furnivall (p. 125): he invented the "plural society". It seems unlikely that Dutch policy in the Spice Islands in the seventeenth century "presaged a new, more intense form of intervention further west": the systems were quite different (p. 99).

The authors recognize that the littoral countries have common interests, and that, through growth triangles and ASEAN membership, some of the consequences of political division are mitigated. The differences remain striking and have increased in recent years: a global city, an industrializing Malaysian west coast, a Sumatran east coast productive in parts, neglected in general. Seeking to "unravel" the diversity of

the region is one of the authors' aims (p. 191).

It is an enjoyable book, partly because of their enthusiasm and engagement. Pleasure is marred, however, not only by their historiographical errors, but even more by the many errors of spelling and grammar that they or the copy-editor or the proof-reader should have corrected. "Mittshappij" for Maatschappij (p. 110); "Mollucas" for Moluccas (pp. 1, 107); "Richardo" for Rachado (p. 177); "Whickham" for Wickham (p. 74). In the above I have, I think, used "mitigated" correctly; they use it for "militated" (p. 127). And I fear they specialize in misrelated phrases. "Increasingly by-passed by the India-China trade, the high hopes Francis Light had placed in the island settlement had evaporated by the 1820s" (p. 103) is one example; others are on pages 131 and 145. In reading this book, the errors may distress the scholar (and set a bad example).

NICHOLAS TARLING
New Zealand Asia Institute
The University of Auckland
New Zealand

***China and the South Sea Dialogues.* By Lee Lai To.** Westport and London: Praeger, 1999. 168pp.

Stretching 1,800 miles from Sumatra to Taiwan, the South China Sea is larger than the Mediterranean and contains five zones of potential conflict, of which the most contentious dispute is over the Spratly Islands (referred to as Nansha by the Chinese, and the Truong Sa islands by the Vietnamese). The islands, which are located in the southeastern portion of the South China Sea, are disputed by China, Taiwan, and four ASEAN states: Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei.

This work by Lee Lai To presents a detailed and balanced analysis of the territorial and maritime disputes involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the South China Sea, including the Spratlys. However, it is not a detailed historical analysis of the competing claims over the disputed territories. Instead, Lee's study explores China's diplomatic strategy in bilateral and multilateral negotiations on the South China Sea. Indeed, the analysis and consideration of both the formal and, more significantly, the *informal* dimensions to this diplomacy is a clear strength of the study.