

other ethnic groups making a living in the hills of Southeast Asia. And, in showing that Hmong are not necessarily victims of economic pressure and political assimilation but that they are competent users of economic, social and cultural resources and that their economic strategies are embedded in their social and cultural organization, this volume is marked by optimism. It is to be hoped that Hmong are able to stay where they are and that they are not exotized or exposed to tourists as primitive people.

The book thus provides new insights into borderlands and everyday politics of ethnic minorities in the Southeast Asian Massif and might thus be used fruitfully in undergraduate teaching in the fields of both Southeast Asian studies and anthropology.

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Human Trafficking in Colonial Vietnam. By Micheline Lessard. New York: Routledge, 2015. xxi+152 pp.

Focusing on the period of French colonial rule, Micheline Lessard studies human trafficking in Vietnam using sources written by French missionaries (pp. 1–47), by French military men (pp. 48–89), by French consuls (pp. 90–102), and by French colonial administrators (pp. 103–36). Since the available sources provide little direct testimony from the victims, the analysis is more political than social. This book studies the impact of French colonization of Vietnam on a phenomenon that had existed in pre-colonial times and shows that it increased during the colonial era because French policies exacerbated the conditions that allowed it to flourish. In a time of military conflicts and economic transformations, the most vulnerable elements of Vietnamese society, meaning women and children, were easy prey for the armed bands that ruled large areas of the northern

part of Vietnam, Tonkin. The book also studies the consequences of human trafficking for the French colonial project.

From a pretext for the French intervention, human trafficking rapidly became a political problem for the French authorities who failed to put an end to it: “it continued in spite of the military campaigns, in spite of measures taken by the French authorities and metropolitan governments” (p. 81). According to Lessard, the inability of colonial authorities to stop this traffic “undermined colonial authority [and] fuelled two political fires” (p. 103). The first one was anti-colonial resistance, as France’s failings proved a good argument for those Vietnamese who wanted to rid the country of its presence. The second, more interesting because less studied, was anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam. The lack of clear borders between China and Tonkin, piracy and the fact that China was the destination for Vietnamese victims of trafficking made Chinese the main, if not the only, persons responsible for this trade in the view of the public. The principal contribution of this study is its analysis of the complex relationship among Vietnamese, French and Chinese in the area of human trafficking. The third chapter of the study explains, for example, how the French consuls in China often found themselves embroiled in legal disputes with both Chinese officials and other Chinese who claimed to be the rightful owners of the Vietnamese whom the consuls sought to repatriate. In a way, then, this book focuses on southern China as much as on northern Vietnam. And, contrary to what its title leads one to imagine, the study does not focus on the whole of Vietnam, but only on Tonkin. There is almost no information on Cochinchina or on destinations for trafficked Vietnamese, such as Thailand or Singapore, besides China.

The reader is also under the impression that the traffic was one-way and one-way only. One reference shows, in passing, that young women from Hong Kong, Canton or Singapore could be found in Chợ Lớn (p. 118), but this point is not explored more deeply, notwithstanding the availability of studies (Roustan 2012; Tracol-Huynh 2013).

This book intends to fill an “historiographical void” (p. xviii), but some important references are missing. Lessard also argues that her book is the first to draw on “systematic archival research on this phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century” (ibid.), but one could object on two grounds. First, she has not conducted research in Vietnamese archives, and, second, she focuses mostly on the late nineteenth century. Three of the four chapters do not go further in time than the turn of the twentieth century, and only one third of the examples used in the fourth chapter come from the 1920s and 1930s. It is therefore difficult to understand the scale, both in space and in time, of the human traffic in colonial Vietnam, especially since there is no map and no chronological analysis. For example, the last chapter ends with an example from 1936, followed by a quotation from 1906. Another issue concerns the lack of consistency among and within chapters. Since there are no subtitles, no real introductions and no conclusions, it is challenging to understand the links among the chapters, and among all the examples. This book does not really “provide insight into the trade, its scope, and its whereabouts” or “a glimpse into the impact of the trade on its victims’ lives” (p. 91). Rather, it provides a good reading of how the French saw this traffic and how they tried to fight it.

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The Political Development of Modern Thailand. By Federico Ferrara. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xvi+328 pp.

The Political Development of Modern Thailand is a brilliant accomplishment. Its depth and erudition, its historical perspective and interpretive vigor, its closely argued analysis and attention to the disciplinary concerns of comparative politics, its intellectual unity, and, yes, even the quality of its writing make it a monument of scholarship. The range of Thai-language sources and of secondary materials on Thailand and from the field of political science on which it draws is dazzling, and its synthesis of these materials marks it as a work of uncommon intelligence. Federico Ferrara's book gratifies, enlightens, inspires and above all challenges those of us in the Thailand field.

Ferrara's principal goal is to offer "an explanation for Thailand's decades-long history of political instability" (p. xiv). He centres his search for that explanation on "the fight over the content of Thailand's national identity — and, therefore, over the formal and informal institutions, constitutive of alternative political regimes, through which the nation exercises its sovereignty" (p. xiii). One might read this, groan, and ask, another study of Bangkok's long history of coups and instability? Another study of national identity in Thailand? Another book focused on the contest between "populist