

and development are addressed and discussed from varied angles and are informed by different theoretical frameworks and diverse methodologies. The concepts of quality and equity are not only explored in concrete terms but also in complex terms that offer readers space to come up with their own understanding, assessment and engagement with Cambodia. Decades have passed, much work has been done, many resources have been dedicated to Cambodia's education, and yet issues of quality and equity still seem to be a huge concern.

Closing the book, I find myself more curious about how education reforms in Cambodia could move forward in the coming years, given the profound multilayered challenges and problems that are present. The volume has succeeded in laying out this multifaceted scenario, while also having left readers with recommendations and solutions concerning the obstacles and difficulties identified and discussed by the authors. For those familiar with Cambodia, those new to Cambodia studies, those interested in area studies, and those wanting to learn about a specific educational national context, this volume is a good reference. In other words, it has travelled beyond the sphere of education and development. A thoroughly good read!

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Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order. By Nick Cheesman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 338 pp.

Opposing the Rule of Law is an empirically rich and thoughtfully written book. It is highly relevant to scholars and practitioners interested in the past and present of Myanmar, where ethnic conflict, land grabs, corruption, police abuse of power and other rule-of-law

concerns continue to trouble people's daily lives. It is also relevant to scholars and policymakers not necessarily focused on Myanmar but nonetheless interested in the rule of law, democratization and legal reform.

Cheesman draws from the records of 393 criminal cases in eighty-six courts at various levels across Myanmar, and on other published and unpublished sources, to interrogate the meaning of the "rule of law" in the country, from the era of British Burma up to the present day. He finds that the rule of law is not a recent concept, one associated exclusively with Aung San Suu Kyi and the elected government that she leads. Rather, it "has long been a part of the Burmese political lexicon, common to the language of democrats and dictators alike" (p. 4). Furthermore, he argues, the rule of law has become conflated with "law and order" (p. 29). The latter represents a political ideal that is diametrically opposed to the former, because it justifies the use of the state's coercive power to achieve order without adherence to legal limitations.

The book is divided into a short introduction, nine chapters and an appendix concerned with the sources of data employed. Chapter 1 explains and justifies the book's approach — to interrogate the meaning of the rule of law by studying an oppositional concept, law and order. This second concept has its own normative contents. It inhabits the space vacated by the concept of the rule of law in Myanmar. Chapters 2 and 3 trace the ways in which the concepts of the rule of law and of law and order took on certain meanings from the British colonial period to the decades of military rule in Myanmar. Chapters 4 to 7 focus on particular features of Myanmar's courts and their production of law and order: the prosecution of public enemies, the use of judicial torture to extract confessions, corruption and bribery, and the state's response to the anti-government protests of 2007. Chapter 8 turns towards citizens who mobilize a rule-of-law ideal that does not share the same normative contents as the prevalent concept of law and order. Chapter 9 returns to discussion of opposing concepts and calls for empirical study of the rule of law that situates the concept in local political struggles and thus attends to shifts in its normative contents.

One of the book's strengths is its impressive use of empirical sources that researchers on Myanmar have for the most part not considered. The records of 393 criminal cases consist of primary materials such as police correspondence, citizens' letters of complaint, first information reports on alleged offences, search-and-seizure forms, arrest and charge sheets, court diaries, courtroom testimonies, verdicts, and appeal submissions. To supplement these materials, Cheesman also draws from interviews with and notes from lawyers, journalists and activists, as well as media reports and other published and unpublished materials in English and Burmese. As Cheesman notes in the appendix, he has sought to break away from the usual body of primary sources and secondary literature on which scholars of Myanmar have habitually relied. This aspect of the book makes it an important contribution to a new generation of studies on the country.

This first strength of *Opposing the Rule of Law* is related to a second one, its empirical approach to the study of the rule of law. The book speaks to calls from scholars such as Martin Krygier, whose work the book cites, for more empirically informed theorizing of the rule of law. The concept is an elastic one, on to which scholars, activists and policymakers have seemingly latched as rule-of-law programmes have proliferated. However, we should not assume that everyone has "approximately the same thing" (p. 6) in mind, when applying the concept to a range of different contexts. The meaning of the "rule of law" has been the topic of endless debate. In this context, Cheesman's analysis of the way that the concept is claimed and contested on the ground contributes to a growing body of scholarship that treats the rule of law not as a question for normative debate but as an empirical one.

The third strength of the book lies with its contribution to the study of law and courts in Myanmar, particularly given its use of documentary sources other than reported judgments. The book thus also speaks to the burgeoning law and courts literature on the judiciary in non-liberal, non-Western states. Like these other studies, *Opposing the Rule of Law* demonstrates that, even under the most repressive conditions, courts become meaningful sites of political

struggle, and that police, judges, other state actors and ordinary citizens participate in the production of meanings of law.

One might wonder whether the concepts of law and order and of the rule of law are necessarily opposed to each other, whether the values that they embody are always irreconcilable. While there will from time to time surely be tension between the two, it is perhaps possible to imagine a society in which the rule of law might in practice occasionally overlap in meaning with law and order. For instance, Cheesman highlights the pursuit of “truth” in Burmese courts under the military-led socialist regime of the 1962–88 period. He argues that such a pursuit is antithetical to the rule of law, for it frustrates courts’ collateral purpose of protecting individuals from the abuse of power. Yet one could imagine situations in which courts seek factual truth to achieve legal justice for individuals who have suffered from the abuse of power. However, insofar as these arguments of the book are based on data analysis of Myanmar’s courts, they are persuasive. I raise these points not in the form of criticism. They are in fact consistent with the larger issue emphasized in the book’s final chapter. That is, the normative contents of the rule of law — and, arguably, those of law and order, by extension — merit empirical investigation because they shift across time and across contexts. They depend on the ways in which state actors and citizens mobilize the rule of law and other competing ideals.

By analysing Myanmar citizens’ appeals to a vision of the rule of law different from the one that the state has conflated with law and order, the book’s last empirical chapter, chapter 8, triggers a series of questions. Why do ordinary citizens nevertheless appeal to a vision of the rule of law under repressive conditions that prevent realization of that vision? How have they come to imagine the rule of law as they do? How do they imagine the rule of law in areas beyond the criminal cases on which this book focuses? What do ordinary citizens’ imaginings about the rule of law tell us about the concept, and how do they compare with the version conflated with law and order? In sum, *Opposing the Rule of Law* makes important contributions to the study of Myanmar, the rule of law,

and courts, and it inspires exciting empirical questions about these issues and more.

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Blood, Dreams and Gold: The Changing Face of Burma. By Richard Cockett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. xvii+263 pp.

Blood, Dreams and Gold sets out the historical, political and cultural foundations of some of the problems that confronted Myanmar during the democratic reform process of 2011–15. The book is organized thematically. Chapter 1 traces a number of the distinctive physical and demographic features of the three cities, Yangon (formerly Rangoon), Mawlamyine (Moulmein) and Sittwe (Akyab), back to colonial immigration policies, which resulted in an influx of — mostly Indian and Chinese — foreign residents. Chapter 2 focuses on the growing feeling of marginalization among members of the majority Bamar population as a result of these colonial policies. This feeling provided the basis both for the rise of the Bamar nationalist movement and for the deteriorating and disastrous inter-ethnic relations of the late colonial period and the Second World War. Independent Burma's military regime took hostile measures against the descendants of immigrants on a large scale in the 1960s. It nationalized property and businesses owned by foreign immigrants, particularly Chinese and Indians, and adopted a variety of official discriminatory policies aimed at them.

Chapter 3, the longest in the book, takes up two themes. It first explores the historical foundations and deadly consequences of the hostile and discriminatory actions against minority ethnic groups and Muslims — particularly Rohingyas of northern Rakhine state — on the part of the Myanmar military. It also focuses on the methods