

which took the government by surprise. The implementation of *persdelict*, meanwhile, could be haphazard and, as in the case of Semaoen, self-defeating. Despite the allegedly repressive colonial censorship regime, the number of Malay-language publications rose steadily, doubling from 60 in 1918 to 120 in 1929.

Yamamoto has done a valuable service by writing a clear and comprehensive study of censorship in colonial Indonesia, adding greatly to the previously limited literature on this topic. His book will be of interest not only to those working on the colonial state but also to students of Indonesian nationalism, communism, Islamic movements and the politics of the Indonesian Chinese community, as all of these ran up against the system of official censorship in one way or another. Particularly useful are the empirical sections of the book, which supply tables of *persdelict* and *persbreidel* cases and detail the circulation of Balai Poestaka publications during the interwar years. The author has also compiled helpful information on how many Malay-language books and periodicals were printed during the late-colonial period and who published them. The book ends abruptly with the Japanese defeat of the Dutch in 1942, which, as Yamamoto notes, ushered in a new censorship regime. It would have been worth exploring the legacies of Dutch policies of press censorship for the government of the Indonesian Republic, which, in due course, introduced repressive censorship measures of its own.

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Moments of Silence: The Unforgetting of the October 6, 1976, Massacre in Bangkok. By Thongchai Winichakul. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020. xi+322 pp.

Long before I knew anything about Thailand or the horrific violence perpetrated by right-wing thugs and state actors against Thammasat

University students in Bangkok on 6 October 1976, I had been aware of the photo of the Chair Guy from an unlikely source: American youth culture of the 1980s. The iconic image shows a rightist criminal using a folding chair to batter the lifeless body of a student swinging from a tree while a gleeful crowd of boys and men cheered him on. The photo adorned the cover of the 1980 EP *Holiday in Cambodia* by the California hardcore punk band the Dead Kennedys. I loved the angry music but hated the cover image. To this day, the perpetrator and the victim captured in Neal Ulevich's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph remain unidentified. The haunting anonymity of perpetrator and victim not only continues to surround this single act of barbarism but also much of the 1976 massacre. Now, one of the country's most famous historians who was a student leader during those traumatic events has written a book on the massacre and its legacy. The result is a study that is both good history and a wrenching personal story. Writing *Moments of Silence* has been, as the author writes, one of his life's missions, and his reckoning with the atrocity that consumed many of his friends has shadowed his professional and private life.

The book is not a history of the events of the mid-1970s that drowned a brief flourishing of Thai democracy in blood—one sandwiched between long periods of military dictatorship. Instead, Thongchai writes about the silence that has surrounded and shaped the memory of the event. The silence, as the author writes, is complex and is not simply a forgetting or disavowal of brutality in a supposedly peaceful society. The silence is active, akin to a haunting, and one that has been shaped by the country's "chronopolitics" (p. 15)—a term borrowed from the historian Carol Gluck that means changing political contexts and their discursive conditions. The result is what Thongchai terms the event's "unforgetting" as an inability to remember or forget the trauma.

Thongchai writes that the wave of memory studies and scholarship that flowered around the world in the 1990s inspired him to think about his experiences and Thailand in the 1970s. The field of memory studies and how it is useful for the author's mission is the

subject of the book's first chapter. The second through sixth chapters are chronological, and they explain the various political contexts; of initial memories of the events in the first two years afterwards, then the long period of silence from 1978 until a breakthrough in 1996. The second chapter briefly describes the events of the day, beginning with the rocket-propelled bomb attack on the university at 5:30 a.m. that signalled the beginning of the killings. This chapter also explains the Cold War context of the massacre. The victories of communist armies in Indochina in 1975 created near hysteria among the Thai elite—in the military and civilian bureaucracies, in businesses and in the palace—that their country would be the next to fall to communism. The four to five thousand people at Thammasat that early October—who gathered to protest peacefully against the late September return of one of the dictators toppled by an October 1973 uprising—became the outlet for their rage and fear, whipped up by rabid anti-communist propaganda. The chapter then asks a series of still unanswered questions that are revisited throughout the book since they inform the unforgetting over the following forty years. Who ordered the siege of the university? Was it planned long in advance of that early October day? Who were the victims? The biggest question, which Thongchai has referred to here and elsewhere as the elephant in the room of Thai politics, concerns the monarchy's role in the massacre. Finally, why was there such brutality, as captured in Ulevich's photo? According to the police, forty-six died on 6 October: forty-one students and others accused of crimes against the state, and five on the attackers' side. The low death toll is more than compensated for by the posthumous violations of the victims, including hangings, beatings, burnings and sexual crimes, and the festive atmosphere in which the atrocities were carried out. Much of the silence stems from an inability to face this barbarism.

The third chapter charts the "beginning of memories" (p. 53) that explain the right-wing, pro-monarchy narrative that the students were part of a communist movement bent on toppling the government, destroying the monarchy and Buddhism, and aligning Thailand with communist powers in the region. The line between individual memory

and the collective position is, as Thongchai explains, fuzzy, with the latter acting as a template on which contradictory personal testimonies may be shaped. Liberals and radicals, too, who survived the trauma are positioned between the personal and the social composites of their recollections.

Three thousand people were arrested in the wake of the crackdown, all of them students or other victims of the right-wing madness. Chapter 4 explains the many ironies of the trials that commenced in September 1977, which became the first public political gatherings allowed since the massacre. The trials targeted the victims and, in the process, the state “forgave themselves” (p. 88), in the later words of one lawyer at the time, for crimes that the prosecutors would not even mention. A troubled, semi-tamed silence spread with the government’s amnesty for everyone—the students and the unnamed state and non-state killers—in September 1978. Historical truth and justice have faced an uphill battle ever since.

Chapter 5 describes the chronopolitics of a more liberal political atmosphere arising from the end of the Cold War in the country in the early 1980s. Some on the right felt ashamed, while many on the left, with the collapse of socialist politics, became, as one put it, historical ruins: robbed of a sense that their sacrifice made any difference at all. The sixth chapter explains the landmark Thammasat University public commemoration of the massacre in October 1996 that Thongchai organized, and which became cathartic for many on the left. While a long overdue civic engagement with the events of 1976, the commemoration was incomplete and still failed to really engage the interest of the general public. Chapters 7 through 9 examine different modes of silence adopted by victims and their families, and by perpetrators of the massacre as well, and also what Thongchai terms “sliding memory” (p. 23), whereby the horror of 6 October is cloaked in the democratic triumph of 1973 to produce the memory of an amorphous, made-up event that combines the two Octobers. The last chapter returns to chronopolitics to discuss the October 6 generation in the context of the democratic struggles of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, when many

former student radicals played roles across the political spectrum. Their identity, like the nation's treatment of the massacre, has no permanent home.

For scholars of Southeast Asia, Thongchai needs no introduction. His 1994 book *Siam Mapped* is the only book in Thai historiography to be read widely outside of its field. Briefly in *Moments of Silence*, but at greater length in one of his Thai-language articles about 1976, Thongchai writes that *Siam Mapped* was a personal catharsis of a particular type. He dedicated it to all those lost or hurt in the October massacre. And in its rigorous history he shows how the Thai state and its myths—of kingly foresight and benevolence, toleration and assimilation of others—are just that: ideologies serving power and constructed as the modern state took its cartographic shape. The truth of history, as he writes in *Memories of Silence*, is otherwise; it is often cruel, hateful and irrational, and in any case leaves out most people from the story. Giving a fuller portrait of the national biography means remembering those battered by the cruelty and documenting how society handles what it has done.

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Traces of Trauma: Cambodian Visual Culture and National Identity in the Aftermath of Genocide. By Boreth Ly. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020. 190 pp.

This remarkable book takes an arts-based approach to the question of “how a morally shattered [Cambodian] culture and nation [found]