

concept because it is attuned to the dynamism and interactive character of how colonial domination was exercised and resisted.

Notwithstanding the book's laudable attempt at updating an older scholarship using a popular concept, the sustained play on the metaphor of an onstage performance—"stage" and "script" are two words that appear frequently throughout the book—is distracting and does little to sharpen the analysis. Metaphors of stage and performance are hackneyed and can be applied to any society under any set of historical circumstances, which undermines greater appreciation of the specific transformations colonial Java was experiencing, something that the book documents well. Neither does this metaphorical play modify or advance our understanding of this popular Gramscian concept. It does not help that the concept of hegemony is so overused, such that it is fast becoming a platitude seemingly applicable to every historical context. This makes the author's metaphorical evocation of actors performing on-script and/or off-script appear more predictable than it really is. The element of compounded predictability is unfortunate as it undercuts the book's colourful and palpable accounts of everyday life, which might have been better used to elaborate on the analytical category of everyday life in colonial urban cultures.

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Coup, King, Crisis: A Critical Interregnum in Thailand. By Pavin Chachavalpongpun. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Southeast Asia Studies Monograph, 2020. ix+379 pp.

Pavin Chachavalpongpun has become the leading chronicler of Thailand's strengthening authoritarianism in the twenty-first century, first with his account of the 2006 coup and its aftermath (Pavin 2014), and now with this volume detailing the causes, outcomes

and political challenges following the May 2014 coup. The volume is both enthralling and essential, making the complex dynamics of Thai society, politics, military, monarchy and economy in the post-2014 coup environment coherent and intelligible through a series of powerful, insightful and illuminating essays written by a range of leading scholars of Thailand.

Pavin uses Gramsci's idea of an old order dying with a new order yet to be born as a unifying theme. This notion of an interregnum captures much about the struggle between progressive and conservative forces that has roiled Thai politics in the last decade and a half, especially with regard to the monarchical transition. First, there was an epic contest between the plutocrat, populist prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his followers, and forces aligned with the monarchy, which led to the 2006 coup. Then, fearing the political vacuum resulting from Bhumibol Rama IX (1946–2016)—Thailand's longstanding and beloved monarch—entering a physical and mental decline, the military, implacably opposed to the 2011 general elections victory of Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, and spurred on by an anti-democratic street movement, again seized power in 2014. But without a charismatic monarch on the throne, the Prayuth military-monarchy regime has become brittle, and needed to compensate for its weakened legitimacy with increasingly repressive quasi-legal tools and techniques of sophisticated authoritarianism. At the same time, the desire for a more truly representative form of governance has remained, as evidenced by the rise of a new progressive political party—the Future Forward Party—in 2019 and large-scale youth protests in 2020. All of this signifies a sense of unfinished transition and a country stuck in a rut. This predicament is well captured in this volume.

There are many excellent pieces in this volume that go both deep and wide in exploring the character of this “critical interregnum” (p. 4). There are two chapters that are powerful scene-setters as they explicate the fundamentals of Thailand's political impasse. Claudio Sopranzetti, a political anthropologist, offers a detailed treatment of the different sources of legitimacy that underpin conflicting views

of how Thai democracy should work. While this is a theme well identified by previous writers such as Patrick Jory, Serhat Unaldi, former Australian ambassador James Wise, and Nattapoll Chaiching, among others, it is presented particularly elegantly here. The other, by Federico Ferraro, draws on Fukuyama's concept of the desire for recognition as a driver of political change, placing Thailand's turmoil in a broader global and historical context. This is helpful, as all too often there is a tendency amongst some scholars in Thai studies to see Thailand's political experiences as unique. Pavin's later chapter on Thai foreign policy also does this to an extent, showing how the global trend towards authoritarianism and illiberalism is manifesting in the Thai case, especially in regards to its relations with an ever more powerful and proximate China.

Some chapters perform an important role of documenting, succinctly and lucidly, what reprehensible actions have taken place during this period. Tyrell Haberkorn's meticulous chapter describes how the junta, on taking power in 2014, set about dispensing its own illiberal justice through the military courts. Writing for a future hypothetical prosecution of the junta, Haberkorn provides detailed accounts of the experiences of individual Thais who had incurred the wrath of the regime for small acts of dissent, including cases that resulted in torture and death in custody. Sarah Bishop's chapter is written in the same spirit of disciplined objectivity, but with a slightly different purpose. She seeks to ensure that shades of grey in matters of justice and/or injustice are not oversimplified, by analysing several judgments of the Thai Constitutional Court. Her sympathetic reading aligns with Duncan McCargo's recent book on Thai judges in that the Thai courts themselves are not necessarily politically biased (and have not become more biased as the discourse of "judicialization" argues). In fact, the courts often deliver the only verdicts available, given the body of extant law and statutes that constrains them.

Finally, the book is well rounded in that it offers updates on important matters such as the state of the Thai economy and the internal workings of the Thai military. Chapters on the monarchy, both

the institution and the latest incumbent, are included, as expected, in this volume too. The volume also offers chapters on topics often overlooked. Khemtong Tonsakulrungruang's marvellous account of the government's quest to suppress the middle-class-favoured Dhammakaya Buddhist sect, amidst the corruption and waning authority of the state-sanctioned Sangha Council, opens a window into the fascinating world of Buddhist politics. This world is a critical domain throughout Theravada mainland Southeast Asia, but especially in Thailand and Myanmar. In sum, this book is a valuable asset for scholars and policymakers wanting a deeper understanding of the first half-decade after the Thai coup of May 2014.

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A History of Cambodia-Thailand Diplomatic Relations: 1950–2020. By Sok Udom Deth. Glienicke: Galda, 2020. 231 pp.

Sok Udom Deth's book *A History of Cambodia-Thailand Diplomatic Relations*, which is an updated version of his doctoral dissertation, has a temporal scope covering seventy years of diplomatic relations between the two neighbouring countries. The book covers five periods of Cambodia's modern political history, which are organized as the book's main chapters, comprising the Sangkum Reastr Niyum Period (1955–70), Khmer Republic Period (1970–75), Democratic