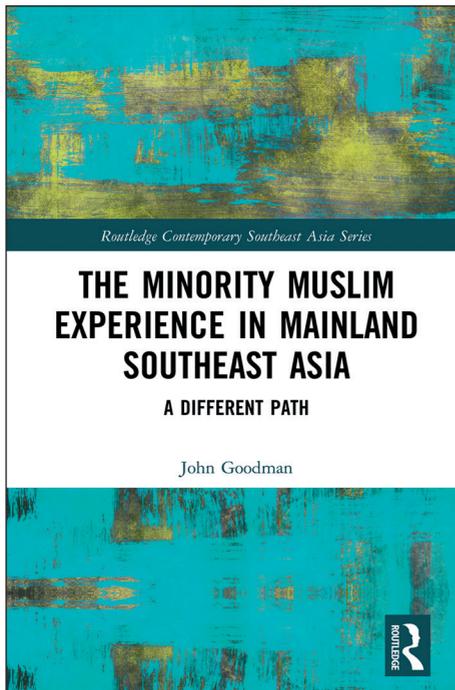


animation, character products, stickers, digital memes and fine art. That is beyond the already crowded remit of this book, but the time is ripe for someone to do such a study on the history of Thai political cartooning, though that might be unpublishable here.

“Ultimately, Thai comics are an in-between transnational space in which Thailand’s intricate scaffolding is revealed,” Verstappen concludes. “Thai graphic narratives celebrate the nation’s richness and diversity... Indeed the popularity and pervasiveness of a hybrid art form as highly textured as the Thai nation itself might be explained by the way comics composition makes each element one with everything.” He ends by quoting the graphic novelist, Songsin Tiewsomboon, son of Kasem: “Thai cartoonists don’t have a Thai style because Thai people absorb everything. By doing so, they are themselves.”

Philip Cornwel-Smith

*The Minority Muslim Experience in Mainland Southeast Asia: A Different Path* by John Goodman (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2022). ISBN: 9781032005171. £120 (hardback), £33.29 (eBook).



John Goodman’s monograph focuses on the recent history and current experience of Cham (in Vietnam and Cambodia) and Malays (in Thailand) in ways that explain how they have been both treated as, and adapted to, being religious minorities in these three nation-states. These governments are monocultural and either have a “strong (non-Muslim) religious component in their view of national identity”, or “discourage religion as a part of national and local identity.” Neither Vietnam, Cambodia nor Thailand is a democracy. Moreover, they are monocultural, which privilege “one religion or political system as superior to all others.” Nevertheless, none of these has prevented Muslim citizens sustaining a “significant and unique lifestyle, through which they have led “fulfilling and open lives.” This challenges assumptions that multiculturalism is only possible in Western

environments where “democracy and political liberalism are prevalent.” Goodman argues that the achievement of Muslim minorities in Mainland Southeast Asia is also significant, given that they are both ethnic and religious minorities. This leads Goodman to survey Cham and Malays from a “much broader perspective”, by covering “all aspects of their societies.” He seeks to answer questions about whether—as well as

by what means—these minorities negotiated paths permitting them freely to lead Muslim lives, and what accommodations had to be made within these nation-states. Moreover, what accommodations are made by these nation-states? Goodman condenses his primary research by asking how Southeast Asian Muslim minorities live with—and lead a fulfilling life in—predominantly monocultural societies, where the dominant religious and social practices and culture are not Muslim. Are religious differences more important than ethnic ones, and how are minority rights achieved in largely monocultural environments?

After presenting his research agenda and methodology in Chapter 1, in the two chapters that follow Goodman summarises the history of Muslim minorities in these three ASEAN member states. Chapter 2 discusses the presence of Cham settlements and polities in the Mekong region, and the Malay Sultanates in the Thai-Malay Peninsula—the most important of which was Pattani. These chapters orientate readers to the most important differences between Vietnam and Cambodia, and Thailand. Arguably, the most important is that Thailand did not experience long and traumatic wars of liberation or the Khmer Rouge’s genocidal regime, which reduced the Cham population from 700,000 (in 1975) to approximately 300,000 (in 1979) (page 26). By contrast, Chapter 3 focuses on developments over recent decades. This includes a brief summary of the background to Thailand’s southern “troubles” since 2004. Goodman documents how Cambodia was rebuilt by the Vietnamese-sponsored government and the UN, leading to the revival of the local Cham communities which helped to re-establish this minority in Khmer society and reconnect them to the wider Islamic world (elaborated on in Chapter 6), while in Vietnam market reforms integrated Cham into the Mekong Delta’s economy.

In Chapter 4, Goodman analyses some often overlooked themes, namely how these Muslim minorities have been impacted by the approach to citizenship, education policy, developing a judiciary. Goodman documents ways that these religious minorities have developed systems that meet their needs, and how these have impacted their relationships with the state. The central concern of Chapter 5 is change, specifically how (a) both conventional and more social media have impacted perceptions of Muslim minorities in local society, (b) globalisation has affected Muslim employment and migration, (c) Muslim women have adapted to changes in the economy and dress codes, and (d) the rise of political populism fuelled by print and social media between Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. The latter has led to Muslims being profiled as all too familiar scapegoats, undermining both national unity and economic prosperity through the unruly beast of social media. Chapter 6 presents a summary of Islamic diversity amongst these Muslim minorities, including forms of vernacular “Islams” practised in Mainland Southeast Asia. Although much has been written about the achievements of the Tablighi Jamaat—a huge revivalist movement originating in South Asia—in Thailand and wider Southeast Asia, Goodman provides an interesting account of its achievements amongst the Cham, as they recovered from the aforementioned genocide. This is followed by accounts of how Malaysia and a range of Middle Eastern influences have changed Cambodia’s local religious landscape. Chapter 6 also describes the range of intra-religious conflicts brought about by outsider religious entrepreneurs, and forms of what he refers to as religious persecution. Details about the involvement of Muslim communities in both local and national politics, and civil society activism, are provided in Chapter 7. Goodman’s

inclusion of Muslim involvement in civil society activism is welcome, given the size of these minorities. The Cham minorities of Vietnam and Cambodia are tiny compared to Thailand's southern Malays, leading them to pursue very different strategies. The Cham in Cambodia aligned themselves with the ruling Cambodian People's Party, while the (Malay-Muslim) Wadah group worked with the Democrats before joining Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai governments prior to his ouster.

Chapter 8 surveys interactions between these Muslim minorities in Buddhist Southeast Asia, that Iselin Frydenlund and (the late) Michael Jerryson referred to as the "Theravada World" (Frydenlund and Jerryson 2020)—that did not include a chapter on Cambodia. Goodman contributes to the growing literature on Buddhist-Muslim relations, but (again) documents important differences in the role that Buddhism plays in nationalist discourses. Arguably, the most striking is Vietnam's religious make-up, and this is an atheist, communist state. Goodman's final substantive chapter documents how religious minorities have preserved their linguistic rights and cultural heritage in largely monocultural societies. This is another example of Goodman's comparative study seeking to correct interests in ethno-religious difference which neglect equally, if not more, important ethno-linguistic otherness.

I warmly recommend anyone responsible for teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian Islam, and Islamophobia to interact with Goodman's *The Minority Muslim Experience in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Like all comparative studies, these would need to be complemented by articles and monographs dealing specifically with these three ASEAN member states. The material dealing with Vietnam's Cham minority is comparatively thin, and Philip Bruckmayr's recent monograph is destined to become a benchmark for scholars studying the Cham (Bruckmayr 2019). My main criticism of Goodman's monograph is its neglect of Thailand's Central and Southern Thai-speaking Muslims. These make up roughly half of Thailand's Muslim minority—most of whom acknowledge Malay cultural heritage—but profited most to be gained than lost by their linguistic defection, and broader cultural assimilation that included adopting the state-sponsored ethnonym, "Thai Muslim." Anyone interested by Goodman's study should consult important quantitative studies in Thailand by Robert Albritton (Albritton 2010), and the global study by Steven Fish (Fish 2011).

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