

in Southeast Asia is to provide an understanding about how “heritage is formed, constructed and operationalized, what conservation measures have been put in place and who the self-appointed custodians of natural and cultural heritage are, what tourists are looking for at heritage sites and how this dovetails or conflicts with local needs and interests, and how the tension between the protection and mobilization of heritage resources is rationalized” (20). This objective has clearly been met and exceeded. The editors and contributors should be applauded for putting together an erudite work that will no doubt become the standard reference work for cultural heritage-based tourism in Southeast Asia.

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**GLIMPSES OF FREEDOM: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia.** *Studies on Southeast Asia, no. 55.* May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay, editors. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2012. viii, 239 pp. (Illus.) US\$23.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-8772-7755-2.

*Glimpses of Freedom* is a 16-chapter edited volume which examines the varied practices of the independent cinema in Southeast Asia, arguably one of the freshest and most exciting areas of scholarship in Southeast Asian Studies today. Independent or indie cinema is not a new phenomenon in the region, as May Adadol Ingawanij carefully qualifies in the introduction to the volume. However, it has made a forceful resurgence since the late 1990s as a result of a combination of cultural, technological, economic and political transformations unfolding locally as well as globally. It is on this resurgence that the volume sets its critical eye.

Precisely what these transformations are and how they serve as the conditions of possibility for the twenty-first-century resurgence of independent cinema in the region constitute the first of three key questions which the editors of the volume asked the contributors to tackle in their respective chapters. The second question pertains to the problematic nature of the term “independent” itself. Is the common definition of “independent” cinema as operating outside of the usual strictures, including the major studio system, sufficient to grasp the current phenomenon; or rather, as Ingawanij poses, should the term not be reconceived in light of the practical multiple dependencies of indie cinema in the region? In what ways, in other words, is independent cinema in Southeast Asia simultaneously free and unfree from not only the studio system of funding, production and exhibition but also from such factors as state power and transnational market forces? The third and final question which the contributors to this volume were tasked to investigate concerns viewing practices, cinema’s potential for creating alternative public spheres, and the role of film piracy. How do these issues relate or apply to independent filmmaking and film culture in the region?

These overarching questions are deftly tackled by the contributors in a style and format of their choice, as befits their approach. A key strength of the volume is that not all contributors chose to adopt the conventional academic language or format to get their point across. Chris Chong's chapter, "Aku, Perempuan, dan Perempuan Itu: Me, Woman, and That Woman," for instance, is a sprightly interview with John Badalu, director of Indonesia's Q! Film Festival, set in the question-and-answer format. "Piracy Boom Boom" by Filipino filmmaker, John Torres, is an offbeat first-person narrative about his adventure as an undercover agent of sorts on the streets of Katipunan. There he tries to make a sales pitch to a pirated DVD peddler with the hope of selling the DVDs of his films through the pirate network and street "outlets." Yet another example of a chapter that eschews the usual straight-laced academic approach is Benedict Anderson's "The Strange Story of a Strange Beast," which examines the different receptions to Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Cannes-celebrated *Sat pralaat* (Tropical Malady). Breezily, yet astutely, Anderson throws light on the ironic gulf of interpretation between urban Bangkokians (who found the film difficult and mysterious) and upcountry Thais (for whom the film was clear and gripping). These varied ways of talking about indie cinema in Southeast Asia all add up to make *Glimpses of Freedom* a generally accessible book, one that is both timely and necessary in defining the contours of an emerging field still riddled with large gaps of knowledge.

Most of the other chapters are written in an academic style; a couple of these use somewhat dense or jargon-heavy language. While this is unlikely to be an issue for experts and informed enthusiasts of Southeast Asian independent cinema, general readers might find some chapters more challenging than others, especially if they are unfamiliar with the films discussed. But then such is the hazard of writing about film, at least until a workable way is found to package a book on film together with the films discussed on an accompanying DVD at reasonable cost.

Other minor issues in *Glimpses of Freedom* do not detract from it being a solid book and essential reading for anyone, expert and general readers alike, wanting to know more about indie cinema in Southeast Asia. The first lies in the way the volume is sectioned. The chapters are divided into three parts, namely Action, Reflection, and Advocacy. While explanation for the sectioning provided in the introduction makes sense, the chapters could in fact be sectioned differently and the explanations would still hold. Second, the significance of the title given to the volume, *Glimpses of Freedom*, is not explicitly discussed. No doubt, readers will be able to make their own meaning of the title but some would prefer it if some pointers were given. Third, the final chapter, titled "The Beginnings of Digital Cinema in Southeast Asia," while interesting in itself, seems somewhat out of place in the volume, for it mostly repeats much of what has been covered in the rest of the chapters. Finally, the chapter by Tilman Baumgärtel, which otherwise does a fine job

in thinking through the role of film piracy in the expansion of film culture in Southeast Asia, mistranslates *Ciplak*, the title of the Malaysian indie discussed, as “pariah” instead “copy” (or, in context, illegal inferior copy or copying of an original DVD).

Notwithstanding these, *Glimpses of Freedom* remains an important book which readers might find profitable to read alongside two other related volumes published around the same time. The first, also on indie cinema, is *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema* (Hong Kong University Press and NUS Press, 2012), edited by Tilman Baumgärtel; while the second, on films across genres, is *Film in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Cultural Interpretation and Social Intervention* (Routledge, 2012), edited by myself and Hiroyuki Yamamoto.

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**HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF THE INDOCHINA WAR (1945-1954): An International and Interdisciplinary Approach.** By *Christopher E. Goscha*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. 564 pp. (Figures, maps.) US\$175.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-36047.

The first Indo-China War drove France from its empire in Southeast Asia at the cost of an estimated 400,000 lives. It was both an anti-colonial confrontation and a conflict like the contemporaneous Korean War, that pitted Cold War foes against each other. When it was over, the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia were independent, but Vietnam, whose Communist-led forces had won the war, was “temporarily” split in two.

This richly textured, magisterial volume draws on an impressive range of Vietnamese, French and English-language archival and secondary sources. It contains 1,600 crisply written entries, a 12-page time-line, 7 pages of maps, an elegant 9-page photographic essay, a 20-page introduction and a 72-page bibliography.

The dictionary opens on August 15, 1945, the date when Japan surrendered, and closes on July 21, 1954, with the signings at Geneva that officially ended the war. In his introduction, Professor Goscha tells us that he could easily have started with the Franco-Thai War of 1940-41 and ended with the final withdrawal of French troops in 1956, but decided against doing so. The Japanese *coup de force* of March 9, 1945, which temporarily “freed” the components of French Indo-China might also have been a feasible starting point, but the time-frame that Goscha has chosen makes historical sense. It does mean, however, that some important actors who left the scene before August 1945 (like French Governor General Jean Decoux) crop up repeatedly but fail to merit entries of their own.

One of his intentions in preparing the dictionary, Goscha writes in his thought-provoking introduction, was to “liberate the study of the Indo-China