

was an arena in which elite cliques compete with each other. Their individual or group behaviours, values and actions determine the structures and hence, the economy. This perspective, however, is too simplified and rather lopsided, as the elites do not act in a social vacuum but are themselves restricted by the underlying structures. Admittedly, for such a book it is not necessary to address these issues in a more in-depth way. However, focusing on the elites only gives a wrong impression of the real power structures and overestimates individuals' powers.

As a whole, this monograph is like the *Van Zorge Report*, the journal O'Rourke worked for. There is definitely enough information to get a good overview about Indonesian politics as it might be useful for business interests or for interested Bali-tourists who want to know why they should be happy to be so far away from chaotic Jakarta. We get a full picture about *what* happened. But for academic purposes, this is not sufficient, as it does not elaborate more thoroughly on the *why*.

Nonetheless, although "Reformasi" fails to deliver a significant contribution amongst the multiplicity of accounts on post-Soeharto Indonesia, it still provides a very convincing answer to the question the author asks in the last paragraph of his book: "how much longer would his [Soeharto's] legacy live on?" (416). O'Rourke's prognosis is grim, and the Indonesian reality seems to prove him right. Readers of this book might be drawn to the fact that the so-called "post-Soeharto Indonesia" is still far from being truly "post-Soeharto" and, perhaps and hopefully, this might galvanise them to assist in putting an end to the New Order finally. More than half a decade after its official demise, the time for this is more than ripe.

CHRISTIAN CHUA
Department of Sociology
National University of Singapore

Delachet-Guillon, Claude (2002) *Birmanie — Côté Femmes*. Genève: Olizane. 304 pages. ISBN 2-88086-291-4.

On the borders of India, China and Southeast Asia, lays Burma, isolated and almost "off-limits" to the outside world since the Burmese Army (*Tatmadaw*) took over the reins of power in 1962. The popular uprising for democracy that burst out in Rangoon in 1988 did not undermine the rule of the Burmese military leaders who took the opportunity to rejuvenate the junta in another palace revolution in September 1988. The new military government (the SLORC — *State Law and Order Restoration Council* — as the junta named itself, and which became the SPDC — *State Peace and Development Council* — in a charming subtlety of rhetoric in 1997), widely

extended the repressive rule, which Burma has been living under for three decades. However, with the return of Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of the hero of the Burmese Independence, *Bogyoke* Aung San, to her native country, the pro-democracy movement gained a charismatic and determined leader, and undoubtedly, an icon. Suu Kyi, an outstanding model of abnegation and determination, often compared to Nelson Mandela who was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (two years after her in 1993), holds the hopes of the Burmese people, especially the Burmese women, who are all yearning for better days.

Claude Delachet-Guillon, with her second book in French, “*Birmanie, Côté Femmes*” (Burma, From Women’s Side), brings an original and well-researched account of the lives and fates of these Burmese women, irrespective of them being Burmans (*bama*) or Karens, Buddhist or Muslim, villagers or urbanes, wealthy or persecuted. With this book, Burma’s current social and political situation under the military dictatorship of the SLORC-SPDC is seen through the eyes of a ring of women who have coped with many ordeals. One cannot deny that throughout the world, women do suffer the burden of much oppression. It is also sadly the case in Burma, where in addition to the affliction of the common man’s living life under a dictatorship, is added the onus of Burmese women.

Yet, Independent Burma has been known for its original society, marked by tolerant Buddhist values, a high literacy rate and a reportedly significant equality between men and women. However, Burmese women, as well as many women around the world, are nowhere close to enjoying the same rights and positions as men do. Therefore, through these women’s accounts, Claude Delachet-Guillon introduces us to the current Burmese political and social life, through all the delights and despairs of a Burmese housewife, the aspirations of young girls as well as the burden or rewards of a well-bred lady. The primary interest of her work lies in its vivid firsthand sources. The personal commitment of the author, who has also experienced life in Burma under Ne Win’s leadership (she had worked in Rangoon between 1968 and 1972), enabled her to collect original sources. Currently chairperson of the COSEFEB (*Comité de Soutien Européen aux Femmes et Enfants de Birmanie, Paris* — European Support Committee for Burmese Women and Children, created in 1998), Claude Delachet-Guillon is well known for her commitment towards the Karens, Shans and Karennis women who have fled Burma’s eastern troubled states. Involved in many projects aimed at helping refugees and more particularly females and children fleeing the Burmese military regime, she has collected many accounts on the life, plight and ordeals of many Burmese women. Yet, it has to be pointed out that her book is not a compendium of tragic stories endured by unfortunate human beings. It offers a panorama of many women’s trajectories.

After having briefly described the historical background, which could have nevertheless been far more accurate, Claude Delachet-Guillon at first

presents the socio-political burden of the impact of Buddhism on Burmese women. Burma is predominantly a Buddhist country, with more than 80 percent of the population following the school of Theravada. Brought to Burma more than 2000 years ago, Buddhism has always been one of the foundations of the Burmese society. Through many popular stories, folktales and legends that she has made judicious use of, Claude Delachet-Guillon depicts the day-to-day life of a Burmese woman (in general and not only in the current military dictatorship). A female has a specific and well-defined role in Burma's Buddhist society. Subjugated to men, they have to initially give way to the *phon* (*hpoun* or masculine power) of their father, then to the husband and lastly to their sons, and as a result maintain a retiring profile. Does it mean that all Burmese women stay in the background of their male relatives? No, and the author provides many examples of active and determined women, with Aung San Suu Kyi in the forefront. Lots of Burmese women indeed have come to terms with themselves. Oppressed but resolute, dominated but influential, submissive but wised, Burmese females have been part and parcel of the political life of Burma (remember the *Thakinna*, the women who took part in the *Thakin* — master — nationalist movement in the 1930s). The author justifiably stressed the role and influence of some determined women in Burma's contemporary society. Nevertheless, even though the country's main religion happens to be Buddhism, we do regret the fact that the author did not mention the impact of other religions (especially Islam and Christianity) on the life of Burmese Muslim and Christian women. While describing the terrible fate of the Muslim Rohingyas, Delachet-Guillon did not analyse the Islamic influence on the daily lives of Burmese Muslim women. Indeed, Rohingyas females are enduring one of the less enviable lot of the region.

Thereafter, once the cultural background has been illustrated, she focuses her work more on Burma's current political situation (since the SLORC-SPDC came to power in 1988). In a very astute manner, Delachet-Guillon opposes ladies who directly benefit from the military regime (military officers' wives, businesswomen linked to the government or clever girls endeavouring to secure a better situation by joining the Government Organised Non Governmental Organisations — GONGO — like the *Union Solidarity of Development Association* or the *Myanmar Women Entrepreneurial Association* that has been taken over by the military junta) and women who has been victim of it (political dissidents, ethnic 'rebels', intellectuals). Even if it lacks other similar pro-regime accounts, the story of a *Tatmadaw* Captain's-wife-turned-smuggler is very eloquent. Furthermore, the long exposé of females who have been targeted by the regime and/or a society dominated by men can capture the reader's attention. Delachet-Guillon gives myriad accounts of women who had to face daily humiliations (at work or within the family household), and also rapes, torture or imprisonment when they

were more or less involved in any cultural or intellectual activity (especially if they belong to any of Burma's ethnic minorities). These are dreadful paths of life, most of which are sadly common to many women throughout the world. However, the author remarkably does not focus only on women suffering within a militarised society, but also more broadly on the daily ordeals of Burmese females — ordeals that will unfortunately outlast the current dictatorial regime.

Finally, Claude Delachet-Guillon describes the painful and everlasting political (and sometimes armed) opposition struggle against the military junta, a democratic or identity fight by either Burmans or ethnic minorities. Inside Burma, some women are participating in this political struggle for democracy. Students have historically been one of the primary opponents of the authorities, whether the latter was the British Colonialists or the Burmese Military Government. Young women were also politically active in student organisations in Burma's Universities and Colleges, and were often seen at the forefront of many student demonstrations (1920–30s, 1962, 1974–76, 1988, 1996). Although their involvement remains marginal (distribution of leaflets, support of their comrades, etc.), they still suffer as much as their male colleagues, if not more.

Delachet also exposes the fate of Burmese females who had to flee the country — some continuing their struggle abroad, others just escaping from persecution. Most of them are now refugees in Thailand, Malaysia and India, or in Western countries. As the author has been involved in managing refugee camps in north-western Thailand, she could gather particular stories of women from the ethnic minorities on the eastern part of Burma (Shans, Karens and Karennis) who had to flee their villages, under waves of military offensives conducted by the *Tatmadaw*. Nevertheless, she also gives an overview of the suffering of the other minorities from the western part of Burma (Rohingyas, Mons, Chins, and Kachins), as if they were all sharing a common plight throughout Burma, regardless of their race or faith.

In a nutshell, this book provides a sober account of the contemporary life of Burmese women. It focuses first on the role females can have in a society, and then leads readers to reflect on Burmese women's place within a Buddhist society and also in a controlled, oppressive and war-torn country. It would beautifully complement (in French) a comprehensive book by Christina Fink (*Living Silence — Burma under military rule*, London: Zed Books, 2001), which is more general and Burma-centred since it highlights the harrowing fates of Burmese women. Indeed, apart from searching for their dignity as a woman, the Burmese also have to face the oppression of a dictatorship. The image of a determined and dogged Aung San Suu Kyi, who so far had to bear many tragedies and undergo tremendous

hardships, while remaining under house arrest, may hide many other tragedies faced by the common Burmese women. The SLORC-SPDC also dreads the assimilation of the women's cause to Suu Kyi's personal fight. Nevertheless, should a democratic transition occur in Burma, women would definitely be part of it, and not only with Suu Kyi at the forefront.

RENAUD EGRETEAU

Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi
Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Paris

Rose, Caroline (2005) *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* RoutledgeCurzon. 175 pages. ISBN 0-415-29722-2.

In April 2005, Sino-Japanese ties reached their lowest point since diplomatic relations were normalised in 1972. Tens of thousands of protesters throughout China took to the streets shouting anti-Japanese slogans, calling for the boycott of Japanese goods, burning Japanese flags and attacking Japanese-owned property, including Japan's Beijing embassy compound and consulates in Shanghai and Shenyang. Backed by an online campaign numbering an estimated 25 million citizens (including diaspora), the Chinese government spoke out in opposition to Japan being given a permanent seat on an expanded United Nations Security Council — one of Tokyo's longstanding foreign policy objectives. The Japanese government demanded that China apologise for the acts of vandalism — something Beijing refused.

Given those recent developments, Caroline Rose's book entitled *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* is a timely contribution to the literature on this troubled relationship. For Rose and other observers, many of the contemporary problems bedevilling Sino-Japanese relations are rooted in the past. Specifically, they relate to Chinese perceptions about Japan's lack of contrition for atrocities committed during its invasion of the Chinese mainland more than 60 years ago. Of course, it is not that Japanese leaders have not issued any apologies or statements of remorse *per se*. As Rose correctly notes (101–102), they have. However, the rhetoric is often undermined by incidents such as prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, where the souls of 15 Class A war criminals are enshrined, and the Ministry of Education's (strictly speaking, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) approval of school history textbooks that gloss over Japanese wartime atrocities.

This book addresses two sets of issues within a broad framework of reconciliation, which is used to demonstrate the way two former enemies attempt to reconcile the past. The first is the history problem, which involves problems relating to the content of Japanese school history textbooks since