

Southeast Asia: an additional bibliographical tool

Antweiler, Christoph. 2004. *Southeast Asia: A Bibliography on Societies and Cultures*. Singapore: ISEAS, 111 pages, ISBN 9 873825 877062

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In spite of the abundance of printed bibliographies and increasing reliance on internet-based tools and information, this bibliography can usefully support general and introductory reading on Southeast Asia in the social sciences.

There are plenty of bibliographies that cater for the needs of researchers on Southeast Asia. Kemp's relatively recent (1998) *Bibliographies of Southeast Asia* published by KITLV lists over 5,380 bibliographies of which 433 refer to the region as a whole. The remaining close to 5,000 entries refer to more specialised subject or geographical bibliographies. The magnificent indices of Kemp's publication greatly facilitate efforts to find specialised bibliographies on the region, or any of its parts.

Contrary to what its title seems to indicate, Antweiler's (2004) contribution, *Southeast Asia – A Bibliography on Societies and Cultures*, is not a comprehensive reference bibliography of publications treating individual societies and cul-

tures within Southeast Asia. His aim is rather to provide an 'orientation about general books on the whole region as well as on books about specific topics which are trans-nationally relevant within Southeast Asia' (Antweiler 2004:3). Perceiving the lack of short, general and interdisciplinary bibliographies featuring publications on Southeast Asia from a general (regional) or disciplinary point of view, Antweiler has collected about 900 references. These titles are presented in alphabetical order by author name, without annotations. However, deviating from the general rule of a regional focus, some works on specific topics or ethnic groups are included if they are 'of exemplary relevance' or of 'general importance for the region'. In practical terms, this refers to studies that have greatly influenced Southeast Asian research and can now be considered classics, such as Freeman's (1980) study on 'Iban Agriculture'. Evidently, there is a lot of discretion at work here regarding what one would consider a work of exemplary relevance.

Coming with no indices, this book would be difficult to use if it did not include

a CD-ROM with all its contents on a word file. This allowed me to perform a number of searches on the CD-ROM to find out more about the potential uses of the bibliography. A simple full-text search on the term 'history' for example produced around 40 titles, most of which would be of genuine interest to anybody intent to read up on Southeast Asian history. As Antweiler indicates in the preface, the references selected would be to the greatest part relatively recent publications (post 1980s). The English language dominates, but some German and French publications are also included.

Looking for broad introductory material on forest issues in the region, I obtained 15 useful references from a search on 'forest', covering various disciplines, also a good start to get a first overview of the subject. A final example: A search on 'agriculture' yielded nine hits, relatively low given the long importance of the subject to Southeast Asian studies. This indicates that the compilation is also a function of the research interests of the author, and that subjects of similar importance

may have received differential treatment. In addition, search terms need to be quite generic to produce useful results. Also, a certain familiarity with research on Southeast Asia is required to assess the value of a search result as the author provides us with no further information or annotations on the entries selected.

Thus, selectivity and interdisciplinarity can be considered as the two merits of Antweiler's compilation. Drawing from a narrow sample focusing on the region as a whole, search results will tend to be small and focused. The user is spared long lists of hits that he or she would then have to narrow down further. The range of disciplines covered – from anthropology, political science, history, geography to economics – may provide useful leads into any of the disciplines of this vast field of study.

A shortcoming is the lack of a review section introducing the major disciplinary traditions and research areas represented in this selection which would expand on the remarks on selection criteria in the introduction.

In sum, this book – or rather the accompanying CD-ROM – can be used to identify general and comparative studies on Southeast Asia. Thus, it may be useful for those who want to find material for introductory courses on Southeast Asia, but also for researchers of specialized topics within the region who are trying to identify studies with a broader or more comparative view. ◀

References

- Freeman, Derek. 1980. *Iban Agriculture. A Report on the Shifting Cultivation of Hill Rice by the Iban of Sarawak*. New York: Ms Press.
- Kemp, Herman C. 1998. *Bibliographies of Southeast Asia*. Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, KITLV Press, Bibliographical Series 22.

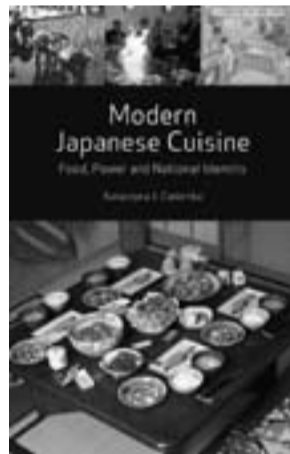
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China & Iran: Ancient Partners in a Post-Imperial World

By John W. Garver
University of Washington Press, Seattle 2006
ISBN 0 295 98631 X

In recent years, Iran's nuclear aspirations have dominated its relations with the US and Europe. China stands as Iran's staunchest ally on the UN security Council, as well as its primary source of advanced technology and military assistance, built on centuries of close economic relations. Successive governments of these two ancient and proud nations have reaffirmed their common interests in seeking an Asia free of Soviet expansionism and US unilateral domination.

This interesting and timely book from Garver, (the first of its kind), charts the evolution of Sino-Iranian relations through several phases, including Iran under the shah, the 1979 revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war. China and Iran also explores the contentious debates over Iran's nuclear programmes and China's role in assisting these programmes and supporting Iran's efforts to modernise its military and oil industry infrastructure.



Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity

by Katarzyna J. Cwiertka
Reaktion Books, London 2006 ISBN 978 1 86189 298 0

Over the last decade the popularity of Japanese food in the West has increased immeasurably, contributing to the continuing diversification of Western eating habits; but Japanese cuisine itself has evolved significantly since pre-modern times. This book explores the origins of Japanese cuisine as we know it today, investigating the transformations and developments food culture in Japan has undergone since the late 19th century.

Among the key factors in the shift in Japanese eating habits were the dietary effects of imperialism, reforms in military catering and home cooking, wartime food management and the rise of urban gastronomy. Japan's patchwork of diverse regional cuisines became homogenised over time and was replaced by a set of foods and practices with which the majority of Japanese today ardently identify. This book demonstrates that Japanese cuisine as it is currently understood and valued, in spite of certain inevitable historical influences, is primarily a modern invention concocted in the midst of the turbulent events of the late 19th and the 20th centuries.

Katarzyna J. Cwiertka is a recognised expert on the subject of Japanese cuisine and its modern history, and this book is a result of more than a decade of research. It also includes a section on the spread of Japanese food and restaurants in Western countries. *Modern Japanese Cuisine* will be of interest to the general reader interested in Japanese culture and society, as well as to a more specialised audience, such as scholars of Japan, anthropologists and food historians.

The Urban Generation: Chinese cinema and society at the turn of the 21st century

Editor, Zhang Zhen
Duke University Press, Durham, NC 2007
ISBN 978 0 8223 4074 4

Since the early 1990s, while mainland China's state-owned movie studios have struggled with financial and ideological constraints, an exciting alternative cinema has developed. Dubbed the "Urban Generation," this new cinema is driven by young filmmakers who emerged in the shadow of the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989. What unites diverse directors under the "Urban Generation" rubric is their creative engagement with the wrenching economic and social transformations underway in China. Urban Generation filmmakers are vanguard interpreters of the confusion and anxiety triggered by the massive urbanisation of contemporary China. This collection brings together some of the most recent original research on this emerging cinema and its relationship to Chinese society.

The contributors analyse the historical and social conditions that gave rise to the Urban Generation, its aesthetic innovation, and its ambivalent relationship to China's mainstream film industry and the international film market. Focusing attention on the Urban Generation's sense of social urgency, its documentary impulses, and its representations of gender and sexuality, the contributors highlight the characters who populate this new urban cinema – ordinary and marginalized city dwellers including aimless bohemians, petty thieves, prostitutes, postal workers, taxi drivers, migrant workers – and the fact that these "floating urban subjects" are often portrayed by non-professional actors. Some essays concentrate on specific films (such as *Shower* and *Suzhou River*) or filmmakers (including Jia Zhangke and Zhang Yuan), while others survey broader concerns. Together the thirteen essays in this collection give a multifaceted account of a significant, ongoing cinematic and cultural phenomenon.

