

reinforce the idea that a top-down approach to rebuilding houses and settlements may disempower a community. Architects and planners should be more sensitive to the impact of their work in places with strong traditional values. The cultural potency of a landscape in this regard is always in flux, shaped by the endless negotiations of various actors.

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NICHOLAS TARLING. *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2014. 375 pp.

Emeritus Professor Nicholas Tarling has been one of the most prolific voices on Southeast Asian history for decades. His *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia* is the latest in a long line of works on Britain's role in Southeast Asia. With his prodigious use of the British archives he has delivered the most in-depth account of British relations with Cambodia to date. According to Tarling, from 1954 to 1970, Britain generally supported Norodom Sihanouk's goal of an independent Cambodia as it faced antagonism from its neighbours and geopolitical pressures at the height of the Cold War. As Tarling concludes, "the policy that Sihanouk had been trying to follow was the only conceivable one" (Tarling 2014: 320). British officials found themselves limited in their actions, however, both by deference to their ally, the United States, and by the strategic reorientation away from direct involvement in Southeast Asia.

As with any study of modern Cambodian history, it is nearly impossible to ignore the grandiose figure that was Norodom Sihanouk. In this respect, Tarling's monograph is no different from other seminal works such as those by David Chandler, Milton Osborne, and Kenton Clymer. Chandler, the preminent scholar on Cambodian history, presents Sihanouk as both a resourceful and skilled diplomat, but also as ruthless and politically calculating, which led to

the development of an underground resistance (Chandler 1991, 2007). Southeast Asian historian Milton Osborne's biography of Norodom Sihanouk, *Sihanouk: Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness* (1994), is oftentimes critical in its analysis. As the title suggests, Sihanouk is presented as a complex, mercurial figure, beloved by many in the country, but also ruthless at the same time. Osborne does not shy away from a harsh analysis. United States diplomatic historian Kenton Clymer has written the most complete analysis of US-Cambodian relations in his two-volume study, *The United States and Cambodia* (Clymer 2004a, 2004b). Sihanouk is again a central figure in these works, and he receives a sympathetic treatment at times, with Clymer critical of the American failure to understand the complexities of Cambodia's internal political situation, especially in light of the war in Vietnam (*ibid.*). Where Tarling differentiates himself is in his discussion of British policy toward Cambodia. No other historical work has gone to this depth on the relationship.

Tarling is at his best in providing a British view of Sihanouk's actions. There is great historical value in providing an additional perspective into the mind and motivations of Norodom Sihanouk, although we oftentimes remain on the periphery of the man himself. According to Tarling, British "objectives were often remarkably similar to Sihanouk's and its officials often sympathetic to him" (p. 1). It must, however, be noted that Britain was in the process of distancing itself from a leadership role in the region during this period, the culmination of which was the closure of its military bases in Singapore and Malaysia from 1967. Its subsequent deference to American diplomatic policy is thus understandable.

While at times wary of US policy toward Cambodia, British diplomats generally followed the American course. Many American officials saw Sihanouk as a flamboyant and belligerent statesman. While many in the British Foreign Office also made those assumptions, despite the Prince's idiosyncratic and bombastic nature, British officials often saw Sihanouk in a more sympathetic light. One foreign officer noted that there were "always clear and intelligent motives behind his tantrums" (p. 58).

British foreign policy was balanced (or trapped) between deference toward US interests in the region and its own more sympathetic stance vis-à-vis Sihanouk. Although it did not always agree with US policy, Britain could not, however, afford a break with its closest ally. Regarding the decision to not support an international conference on Cambodian neutrality, for instance, the British Foreign Office was "prepared to be guided by the Americans' preferences" (p. 64). Yet, Britain also "sought to influence the way Americans used their power" (p. 2), and while it supported a large American military presence in the region, it preferred this presence "to be moderate rather than provocative" (p. 3). This approach limited British ability to work with Sihanouk, who saw Cambodia's greatest immediate threat in its neighbours, namely, Thailand and South Vietnam. Sihanouk's push for a neutral zone encompassing both Cambodia and Laos must be seen in this light. His neutrality was not idealistic, but a "practical necessity" (p. 21). His shift toward China, which began in earnest in the late 1950s, was largely due to his fear of that country. Both he and the British assumed that China's role in the region would only grow.

Tarling's work is organised chronologically and around topic-based discussions, beginning with the Geneva Convention in 1954. There is little in the way of an introduction or historical background. Instead, Tarling jumps right into the narrative. The early section of the book may prove confusing for those with little background on modern Cambodian history or British actions in the region.

Tarling goes to great lengths to not only describe events as they unfolded, but to also insert the reader into the internal debates British officials had over the best diplomatic course. Unfortunately, the narrative can become bogged down in the minutia of back and forth correspondence between mid-level diplomats, and Tarling's historical analysis of events is oftentimes buried underneath. Because the United States played a central role in British diplomacy during this period, additional American sources could have been used to provide an insight into Washington's thoughts on British initiatives. Although not the most accessible or easy to navigate, the Cambodian National Archives likely holds hidden gems which would augment the history of Britain's role in Cambodia. Despite these limitations, Tarling's is a valuable contribution to both histories of British foreign relations and modern Cambodia.

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OONA PAREDES. *A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Studies Program Publications, 2013. 195 pp.

In this richly sourced study, Oona Paredes reconsiders the place and politics of the Lumad, or indigenous peoples, in the early history of colonial Mindanao. Based on a critical reading of rare and difficult-to-access archival sources, as well as extensive ethnographic research among Lumad communities in the southern Philippines,