

leadership and strong government on one side and an aversion to tyranny on the other. In the process he reflects a certain skepticism toward the popular and scholarly Western expectation of the ultimate universal acceptance of liberal democracy.

The prologue to this work presents many of the political patterns of Southeast Asia analyzed in the rest of the book that do not necessarily fit Western assumptions. These include questions regarding the role of the middle class in developing democracy, the comparative lack of political reaction to authoritarian regimes, and the relation of economic development to political change. The first chapter explores the tenacity of tradition in the region and the extent to which it is employed by ruling elites to maintain their authority. Part of that tradition that the author emphasizes is the colonial foundation for strong rule. This section provides examples from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The second chapter continues this theme, assessing the continued influence of traditional forms of authority and particularly the role of kingship and the reinforcement of collective norms. Here he provides examples primarily from Thailand and Malaysia. The third and fourth chapters analyze the divisions between Southeast Asia and the West over definitions of human rights and democracy. This is a particularly provocative section as the author provides a somewhat empathetic view of Southeast Asian perspectives while not ignoring limits on democracy in the region. He questions the extent to which Southeast Asian rhetoric may in part be a reaction of self-confident elites to external preaching and the weakness in the support for democracy from business and middle class elements of the population. At the same time, the author sees a slow evolution as elites in the region seek their own ideological foundations.

Chapter 5 emphasizes the continuing and growing importance of religion in Southeast Asia. The author underscores the perception of most observers that religious consciousness is increasing in the midst of economic and social change and that it is playing an increasing role in the political life of the region. Extended illustrations are given from Indonesia and Malaysia. The final chapter explores the growing sense of community in Southeast Asia and the role of ASEAN. Emphasis is given the extent to which nervousness and suspicion of the ultimate goals of China is strengthening unity within ASEAN. The prologue continues this latter theme and asks what the future role of an increasingly powerful China might be in influencing Southeast Asia's future.

This is a well-written essay that addresses many of the characteristics of the political process in Southeast Asia that frequently appear to run counter to Western assumptions. This volume can be read by the general reader with considerable profit and shows the real contribution to the understanding of an area that a resident journalist can provide. Those seeking a more systematic scholarly assessment might also look at texts such as *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia* (Clark Neher and Ross Marley. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995) or *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia* (Muthiah Alagappa, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

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Militant Labor in the Philippines. By LOIS A. WEST. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997. ix, 244 pp. \$59.95.

Recent academic interest in the Philippine labor movement has centered on the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU or May First Movement). In common with several other

researchers, Lois West characterizes the KMU as “social movement” or “militant unionism”; her task is thus to establish what makes this form of unionism different from others but, also, what separates the KMU from other international examples of social movement unionism.

On the first count, West does not make the distinction between “social movement” and “political unionism” sufficiently clear. In comparative industrial relations theory, the latter concept traditionally has had two meanings—unionism that has links to political parties in the electoral arena *or* unionism that pursues a broad agenda for fundamental social, political, and economic change. In initially applying the second of these definitions to “social movement unionism,” West does not show how the goals and strategies of the KMU are anything new.

West comes closer to the mark when, later in the book, she discusses the significance of KMU’s organizational links with other, nonlabor movements. Yet, here, she still does not highlight the concept’s relationship to contemporary attempts to “rethink the political” by decentering the role of working classes in social change. As Kim Scipes has argued in his own recent book on the KMU (*KMU: Building Genuine Trade Unionism in the Philippines, 1980–1994*, Quezon City: Philippines, 1996), “social movement unionism” is distinguished by the notion that the workplace is not necessarily “the primary site” for social change and, hence, the understanding that this form of mobilization “seeks alliances with other social movements on an *equal* [rather than a vanguard] basis” (p. ix, emphasis added).

Otherwise, West uses the term “social movement unionism” to compare levels of labor activism on a global scale. Here she borrows from world systems theorists, who argue that the intensification of international economic competition has stimulated labor militancy in the various parts of the “periphery” and “semi-periphery” at the same time as it has weakened organized labor in the “core.” On this basis, West draws international parallels between the KMU in the Philippines and labor militancy in countries like Poland, South Africa, India, Brazil, and Chile. She particularly highlights the KMU’s activism in the political opposition to the Marcos regime in the 1980s, making comparisons with union involvement in the downfall of oppressive administrations in Poland and South Africa.

However, she also claims that the political marginalization of the KMU after the restoration of democracy in the Philippines makes it different from “social movement unionism” in the aforementioned two countries. Indeed, the KMU’s ongoing commitment to a more radical extra-parliamentary agenda is said to bring it closer to a “revolutionary” form of unionism! West makes the further observation that popular support for the KMU rose and fell during the 1980s in inverse proportion to the legitimacy of the state. This is an important point, one which deserves greater attention in the literature on labor generally in the region.

As well as examining the international and national context in which the KMU operated in the 1980s, the book covers organizational factors that set it apart from other labor movements in the Philippines at the time. These include the formation of industry, regional and/or conglomerate-based alliances that were a successful alternative to the fragmentation of workers under enterprise-based unionism and that helped to garner broader community support. As well, she discusses the KMU education program and, in a separate chapter, the center’s relationship to feminism and the women’s movement in the Philippines.

In sum, I would have sometimes preferred more clarity and consistency of argument in this book; nevertheless West has pulled together a number of interesting

observations about the KMU. Students and researchers with an interest in labor in the region will find it useful, as too will those concerned with social and political change in the Philippines.

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