



REVIEWS

Lydia Yu-Jose, ed. 2005. *Asian Cooperation: Problems and Challenges in the New Century*. Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Asian Studies. 173 pp.

This volume is a collection of six papers that were chosen from a pool of presentations in the 2004 Ateneo Center for Asian Studies conference dubbed “Asian Cooperation: Problems and Challenges in the New Century.” The papers seek to address the fundamental question: How can cooperation among states be pursued in order to tackle contemporary issues in the region? This overarching issue is appropriated in various local and international dimensions that involve social, political, and cultural implications. The chapters deal with diverse topics such as economic partnerships, particularly between the Philippines and Japan; regionalism, focusing on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the East Asian region; poverty; electoral participation; and Muslim culture.

The range of topics in the collection reflects the diversity found in Asian societies. While this may be promising—at least in the discourse of neoliberal, capitalist globalization—the papers carefully point out that this diversity, in fact, brings about nuanced outcomes. For one, the existence of differences seemed to have exacerbated certain problems and made finding viable solutions relatively difficult. The structures and forms of cooperation, therefore, need to be crucially examined, stripped of their preconceived idealist visions, in order to identify

concrete problems that may have germinated in the process of actualizing, as well as in the realization of established goals.

In Southeast Asia, economic disparities between members of the ASEAN help explain why ASEAN finds it difficult to fully promote economic “integration” among its members. Thus, what remains prevalent is the exercise of economic exchange between ASEAN and other East Asian states, rather than between ASEAN neighbors, despite the presence of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. With ASEAN members putting more emphasis on trading with non-ASEAN countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China, the Southeast Asian region remains a small market compared to other regions. This issue is explored in the chapters on “Asia in the Twenty-First Century” by Rodolfo Severino and “Toward an East Asian Economic Community” by Ellen Palanca.

In Northeast Asia, political differences and historical animosity among South Korea, Japan, and China make the idea of a united Northeast Asian region difficult, if not impossible, to realize. The rivalry between China and Japan continues to serve as a motivation for these states to expand economically and politically, and fuels their desire to individually serve as the core or hub of an East Asian community. This is apparently made evident by their continuous pursuit of trade agreements with members of the ASEAN. As Lydia Yu Jose explains in “Japan and the Philippines: The Politics of an Economic Partnership,” Japan’s forging of economic agreements is seen not only as an attempt to liberalize the economy, but also as a strategy to countervail the economic activities of China. With the prospects of a Northeast Asian community looming large, Japan looks to the ASEAN region as the necessary agent in promoting multilateral economic cooperation in East Asia, serving as the core of such economic agenda. In spite of ASEAN’s own internal economic constraints, it becomes the driving force of economic cooperation in the East Asian region. Thus, ASEAN + 3, representing the partnership of ten ASEAN member countries and the three economic giants of Northeast Asia, was born.

Besides the economic and political differences, there are a variety of religious beliefs found in many Asian societies. Considering the social conflicts in history fundamentally rooted in religious differences, it seems that religion tends to strain relationships among individuals and groups rather than foster peace. In the Philippines, despite the explicit, official pronouncements of the government that the fight

against terrorism is not an attack against the Islamic faith, the numerous terrorist attacks and bombings in the country motivated by a complex blend of religion, militarization, and politics are in part testaments to the unwavering popular belief that associates terrorism with believers of the Islamic faith. As Gerard Rixhon explains in "Muslim Voices: An Introduction to Islam's Oral Dimension," the prejudices of the Filipino layman against Muslims, show the deep divide between Christian Filipinos and Muslim Filipinos fundamentally rooted in religion. Drawing from this condition of intolerance, the author seeks to uncover truths that the authentic "Muslim voice" bears, in order to challenge the bigoted myths of Filipinos and inspire a renewed perspective.

The collection also includes essays that address equally compelling challenges to regional cooperation, such as poverty and weak political participation. Interestingly, these alternatives and responses have to be undertaken not only by states but by citizens themselves. The essay "Poverty Situation and NGO [nongovernment organization] Responses in Southeast Asia" by Fernando Aldaba and Ma. Josefa Petilla details and assesses the initiatives and strategies pursued by civil-society groups in the region. The paper shows that the role of civil society is a potent force that may complement, if not supersede, efforts of government toward genuine poverty alleviation.

Telibert Laoc's "Effective Citizen's Participation in Elections: Namfrel's Responsibility to Share with the Nations of the World" discusses in-depth the valuable role of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections in the Philippines in monitoring and ensuring clean, honest, and credible elections in the country. The author highlights Namfrel's strategy of providing consultancy services to other poll agencies, as well as their member organizations, and the organization's feat in having been part of several observer teams in many Asian states. Namfrel's efforts, it was suggested, may serve as model for other Asian states that are saddled by fraudulent, inauthentic elections.

By highlighting the role of nongovernment actors in addressing certain problems, the book provides a compelling argument that domestic and regional problems are better addressed through a synergy of efforts between the government and the people. After all, regional cooperation may be better promoted not only through state-state partnerships, but also through ties among civil-society groups that seek to represent the interests of the poor and disenfranchised.

Readers who expect a critical reading of cooperation between and among state and civil society may be disappointed, however. While the papers were able to examine regional diversity, and the problems and prospects of promoting cooperation among Asian states, what clearly resonates in these chapters is the humanist inclination to impute potentiality in the agency, whether government or civil-society groups. Apart from the substantive lapse, the volume also lacks the cohesiveness expected in a volume of essays. The chapter on Islam's oral tradition, for instance, seems to be out of place in a collection of studies that involved defined state and nonstate actors. Still and all, this is a worthwhile material for scholars, policymakers, and students of Asian regionalism.—**KAREN R. DOMINGO**, *RESEARCH ASSISTANT, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER AND MA PHILOSOPHY STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.*

* * * * *

Cristina Jayme T. Montiel and Susan Evangelista, eds. 2005. *Down from the Hill: Ateneo de Manila in the First Ten Years of Martial Law, 1972-1982*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 344 pp.

Down from the Hill: Ateneo de Manila in the First Ten Years of Martial Law, 1972-1982 captures Ateneo de Manila's brave moments of activism before and during Martial Law in such a way that it brings to the fore Ateneo's important part in the struggle for democracy. The book chronicles, quite meticulously, in individual essays and personal accounts, the varied stories of student and faculty rebellion in the Jesuit school. Moreover, it reveals how Ateneo activists forged a counter-culture against Marcosian fascism. In the process, it provides some balance to the more common perception that campus radicalism is something only the University of the Philippines and some of Manila's "University Belt" schools can be proud of as a tradition. The book demonstrates, in matter-of-fact candor, how the school's elite profile has been brought down from its perch on the social ladder—down from the hill on Katipunan Road—through strident yet creative activism, merged with Ateneo's guiding philosophy of "becoming one for others."

The most meaningful feature of the book may well be just that—narrating how Ateneo's radicalism flourished as a humanist and democratic counter-culture *contra* fascism, in conjunction with the