

While an investigation was one thing, a mass execution was quite another. To explain it, Clulow points to a last-minute change in leadership. The governor, Herman Van Speult, was a veteran administrator. Yet Shichizo's testimony so dismayed him that he left the investigation and trial to Isaaq de Bruyn, the chief legal officer. In the most chilling chapter of the book, Clulow follows de Bruyn in his daily round of tortures. Although De Bruyn projected confidence, he soon proved shockingly ignorant of Dutch law and VOC regulations. He ignored both the checks against wholesale torture and the standard procedure of preparing written questions and recording the prisoners' answers. Above all, his prisoners were denied a chance to validate their confessions after recovering from waterboarding. Poignant indeed were the statements from two Englishmen who used a book and on the back of a letter to protest their cruel treatment and innocence. In the end, the Dutch officials hesitated to execute the Englishmen, knowing full well that the news would strain and possibly rupture the Anglo-Dutch alliance. Van Speult toyed with sending the prisoners to Batavia, where the case could be reviewed. But in the end, mounting anxieties about these interconnected uprisings overcame his reservations, and the prisoners were beheaded.

The most appalling part of the story is not these executions. Rather, it is the Dutch decision that only harsh measures would ensure control of the island and the all-important close trade. Consequently, Van Speult and his successors decimated the Ambonese population.

Clulow won a number of prizes for his first book. He likely will do so again with his second, which emphasizes the polyglot world on Ambon, populated with African and Gujarati laborers, drunken "Hollander women," "Lusified" Asians, free Dutchmen with mixed-race families, "Javans, Macasars and Portingalls or Spaniards," Japanese warriors, and a stray Scotsman. *Ambona, 1623* deserves the widest possible readership. The story is compelling. So, too, is Clulow's argument about the corrosive effect of fears and anxieties on colonial officials without enough back-up and effectively marooned "on the edge of Empire."

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Television in Post-Reform Vietnam: Nation, Media, Market. By GIANG NGUYEN-THU. New York: Routledge, 2019. xii, 152 pp. ISBN: 9781138069022 (cloth).
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Giang Nguyen-Thu has written the deepest study about television in postwar Vietnam. True, the book is limited by a focus on programming in northern Vietnam at the expense of programming in the south. True, too, that it examines five case studies without giving enough contextualization to other programs. Allowing for these and other limitations, *Television in Post-Reform Vietnam* offers a rich theoretical analysis of a significant yet understudied development in postwar Vietnam. There have been some studies, notably from Lisa Drummond, on television in the post-Reform era. This monograph not only surpasses the quality of earlier scholarship but also opens a large door for further research in media studies, the social sciences, and history.

Central to its analysis is the Vietnamese nation, which is discussed at length in the introduction. Following partially from the works of Shawn McHale and Philip Taylor,

Nguyen-Thu argues for a more diffuse, ambivalent, and localized notion of the Vietnamese nation: an “everyday nationhood” that moves beyond the “politicized nation” associated with revolution and politics. Without gainsaying the policing power of the state, she points out its constraints while emphasizing the roles of television producers, directors, actors, participants, and audience. It is not a matter of “whether the party state or television possesses more power in the bargaining between structural censorship and media freedom.” Rather, it is “how television enables plural networks, both statist and nonstatist, of media genres, techniques, producers, and viewers in ways that actualize different forms of national membership” (p. 9).

The subject of national membership appears in the rest of the book. Three main sections follow the introduction, each one engaging a theoretical framework alongside one or two case studies. The first section comprises the first two chapters. Chapter 1 describes the arrival of television dramas: initially imports from Spanish-language telenovelas such as *The Rich Also Cry*, then homegrown dramas. Chapter 2 further analyzes the Vietnamese dramas *Hanoian* and *The City Stories*. The imported and homegrown products were a complete game-changer from the dominance of socialist movies before the Reform era. Nguyen-Thu applies the concept “memory *dispositive*” by Laura Basu to interpret these dramas as a transition from the socialist past to participation in the globalized present. Crucial to this transition was nostalgia, albeit in different shades and for different purposes. If *Hanoian* illustrates the failure of socialist past, *The City Stories* invents a new past to ease the pursuit of material success among citizens.

The next two chapters make up the second section. Chapter 3 engages Frances Bonner’s concept of “ordinary television” and other works to emphasize the agency of ordinary Vietnamese over state control. Chapter 4 analyzes the talk show *Contemporaries* that welcomed more than four hundred guests. Nguyen-Thu estimates that four-fifths of the guests were professionals, businesspeople, and philanthropists: strong evidence that “the personal reigned, the market prevailed, and the politics retreated” (p. 80). The show, however, did not celebrate individualism but promoted a “national community” made up of “self-governing members” (p. 83). If nostalgia for a newly invented past had eased the transition of Vietnamese to the market, engagement in this market created a new linkage between the personal and the national, not separation between them.

Chapter 5 makes up the last main section of the book. It utilizes the works of Michel Foucault and more recent theorists such as Lauren Berlant to examine the reality television show *As if We Never Parted*. With the goal of finding missing people and reuniting Vietnamese families, the show received more than seventy thousand requests and led to almost eight hundred reunions by 2017. Nguyen-Thu emphasizes personal affect, especially personal trauma, in the contents of the show. She contends that affect and trauma bypass state sovereignty to advance a form of privatized nationhood among the participants in the show. The trauma of the participants embodied the “weary nation,” among other characteristics of post-Reform Vietnam (p. 106). Yet the success of the show confirms the potency of the neoliberal market that enabled the search for missing people in the first place. As exemplified by the occasional searches for missing boat people, the show further suggests the prospect of national reconciliation achieved not through political terms but familial ones.

Alone and together, these three sections offer a compelling analysis of the remaking of the Vietnamese nation through the medium of television. There are, as noted earlier, limitations to the book. I also wish to know more about the background and genealogy of ideas behind each of the four Vietnamese programs. These complaints, however, are minor, because Nguyen-Thu does a lot within the confines of a relatively short book.

Her employment of an impressive, if somewhat eclectic, amalgam of theories indicates the complexities of Vietnamese nationhood that should not be reduced to a singular thesis. This reviewer heartily recommends this book to scholars of contemporary nationalism, Vietnamese media, and related fields.

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TRANSNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE

Frontier Encounters and State Formation in Northeast Asia

Making Borders in Modern East Asia: The Tumen River Demarcation. By NIANSHEN SONG. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 324 pp. ISBN: 9781316626290 (paper).

Beyond the Steppe Frontier: A History of the Sino-Russian Border. By SÖREN URBANSKY. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2020. 392 pp. ISBN: 9780691181684 (cloth).
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If frontiers could have life stories of their own and historians could write their biographies, Nianshen Song's *Making Borders in Modern East Asia: The Tumen River Demarcation, 1881–1919* and Sören Urbansky's *Beyond the Steppe Frontier: A History of the Sino-Russian Border* would be part of this genre. Both books examine the history of the formation of national borders in two river basins at the intersection of three states in Northeast Asia, raising questions about the significance of border regions in the making of modern nation-states. They both decenter conventional narratives by bringing out the voices of farmers, herders, intellectuals, activists, and officials living in border areas, with a focus on interactions between different groups. However, the approaches they take in terms of source bases and analytical frameworks are notably different.

Song's book focuses on the Tumen River region located in the southeastern part of modern-day Jilin Province in China, historically at the intersection of Korea, China, colonial Japan, and Russia. Combining Qing and Chosŏn institutional histories; officials' writings; unpublished archives held at Japanese, Korean, and Japanese institutions; and published provincial archival collections, maps, and other primary sources, Song demonstrates how nationalist narratives in Korea, Japan, and China were mutually constituted at the intersection of expansive empires and states, where local communities interacted and ideas collided. These frontier interactions were tied to international politics, group identities, and the formation of national myths rooted in the Tumen River