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The Blue-Eyed Enemy, by Friend

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Book Reviews

THE BLUE-EYED ENEMY. JAPAN AGAINST THE WEST IN JAVA AND LUZON, 1942-1945. By Theodore Friend. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. xx, 325 pages.

This is not just another history of Japanese subjugation of the Western colonial empires in the Pacific; indeed it presupposes some knowledge of the narrative history of the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia and the Philippines, and rather looks to the interaction of the cultures of the three Asian countries involved. The responses of the Philippines and Indonesia to the Japanese effort to incorporate them into its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere diverged widely from each other; widely divergent too were the effects on their postwar decolonization. This, of course, is generally known; what Friend attempts to do is to relate this divergence not only to the political but the cultural background of the three countries.

In his earlier major work, *Between Two Empires*, Friend established himself as a historian of the Philippines, describing and analyzing the "ordeal of the Philippines" in its move toward independence between 1929 and 1946. Though the interaction with the two imperialist powers occupied an important part of the book, the center of attention was the Philippines itself. In the book under review he attempts something more ambitious: a comparative history of the Filipino and Indonesian experience of the Japanese and their respective responses. Moreover, in doing so, he focuses regularly on the Japanese viewpoint as well, not simply recording Japanese effort at conciliation or repression, but documenting from a multitude of Japanese sources, both archival and interviews, the Japanese cultural background which led many to view the war as a "holy war," which justified in their minds much that deeply rankled the objects of their supposed messianic mission. Finally, Friend deftly roots Filipino and Indonesian responses both in their respective cultures and in their colonial experiences under the Americans and the Dutch.

All this is documented from a truly impressive array of Japanese, Filipino, Indonesian, Dutch, and American sources, both published and unpublished, as well as extensive interviews, principally with Asians involved in the events. Notable in the interviews is the fact that though the majority were conducted between 1967 and 1972, some date from as early as 1957 and a good number are from as late as 1983. Since some of the persons were interviewed more

than once, and over a period of years, Friend has often, with the aid of sources published in the meantime, been able to get a much more accurate explanation of events than a single interview would have made possible. Some of the Japanese seemed to me much more forthcoming in later years when new perspectives had emerged, and the war issues had become less burning.

I am not an expert in Indonesian history, but the comparative analysis of the Philippines and Indonesia with regard to the respective degrees of colonial economic exploitation, the political liberty, and the level of education allowed by the colonial regimes says a great deal. In this situation, the Japanese occupation forces were able to demand much more of the Indonesians than of Filipinos—largely because of the refusal of Filipinos to accede to such measures as conscription and forced overseas labor, demands which were enforced in Indonesia on a wide scale. Important too was the firmness of Laurel and the relative compliancy of Sukarno, who had spent the previous twelve years in a Dutch prison before being released by the Japanese, and fundamentally looked to the Japanese to make possible Indonesian independence. To the extent they did so, it was involuntary and accidental on their part, and Sukarno was continually frustrated in spite of the numerous concessions he made to Japanese demands. Hatta quite clearly appears as more far-seeing and always fundamentally hostile to the Japanese, so much so that it was only the action of more moderate Japanese in sending him to Japan to meet the emperor, which saved him from elimination by the Kenpeitai.

The brutalities of the Kenpeitai are well enough known from many accounts. What Friend does is to illuminate the thinking behind their conviction that they were justified in their actions. What is even more striking, and thought-provoking, is the endurance even into the 1980s of the mentality which saw their work as the self-justifying promotion of Japan's "holy war" in which all the lesser peoples of Asia were to be freed from Western dominance to become Japanese satellites for the future.

In spite of their very different styles of imperialism, the Americans and the Dutch returned after the war with a common purpose of basically renewing prewar relationships. The Japanese interlude made this impossible in Indonesia; forces of nationalism had been unleashed which led to the total repudiation of the Dutch regime, and eventually a fiercely nationalistic independence. In the Philippines on the other hand, the warm welcome extended, and truly felt, by Filipinos to Americans made it possible for postindependence relationships to evolve into a continuing relationship of dependency, no less real for the fact that Filipinos had accepted it as binationalism.

Friend has written an interesting and provocative book. Not everyone will agree with all his reflections, but they are intelligent ones, and based on a depth of research in which personal knowledge and interviews provide the needed balance to written sources in all the relevant languages.

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