concerned to find the word "radical" carrying inappropriate ideological baggage, in that it smacks too often of the "democratic, laudable, edifying, progressive and worthy" (p. 149). The linguistic problem is that radical, meaning getting to the root of things, is not exclusively a "matter of cutting things out from the root. . . [; it] was also deployed to focus on what was fundamentally important and thus worthy of conservation" (p. 156). Here again Condren would bring us back to the tradition-centered political culture of the seventeenth century, and again it seems a corrective worth making.

—Howard Nenner

POLITICS AND COLONIALISM

Anthony Milner: *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Space.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. viii, 328. $59.95.)

This insightful book builds on two areas of research that have attracted much debate in recent decades and links them to a third, that of colonial history. In so doing, it has also refreshed and added new dimensions to the study of Southeast Asian politics.

It follows up the work on indigenous societies that are in the process of modernization, in this case Malay society, notably the work of J. M. Gullick *(Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya,* 1965), W. R. Roff *(The Origins of Malay Nationalism,* 1967), and Khoo Kay Kim *(Malay Society,* 1991).

At the same time, it joins others in questioning the assumptions about the prevalence of "politics" in premodern societies which started with J. G. A. Pocock *(The Machiavellian Moment,* 1975) and includes the work of Benedict Anderson *(Imagined Communities,* 1983) and James C. Scott *(Weapons of the Weak,* 1985).

Finally, it shows how the shape of modern politics in Asia is directly connected to the colonial experience. It links up with the work of Ranajit Guha *(Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India,* 1983) and Partha Chatterjee *(Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World,* 1986) which has demonstrated the relevance of that experience in the responses to the dominance of Western political values.

The author has achieved this through careful readings of a select number of texts in Malay during the century of change up to the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. The approach, through exploring the key words adopted into the vocabulary of public discourse among the Malay elites, is pursued with great effect. As the author puts it, "It is necessary to pay attention not only to the arguments presented but also to the vocabulary, the rhetoric, the idioms and the conventions employed. We need to be especially alert to the presence of innovation in language and style, a concern which has received remarkably little attention in the study of Asian societies" (p. 5).

He begins with Munshi Abdullah's two books written in the middle of the nineteenth century. He examines Abdullah's use of *raja* (king) and *rakyat*

(subject), the *nama* (name) system, that is, a system of social control through the value given to an individual's reputation, and the importance of language, education and intelligence as the basis for rejuvenating the *bangsa* (race). Abdullah's influence on his own time was limited, but his consciousness of the political decay in the Malay world around him was already strong. This readiness to be critical of the sultanates on the Malay peninsula reflected the fact that he was an "outsider" who had benefited from his encounters with colonial administration.

The author then analyses an influential school textbook of geography (*Hikayat Dunia*, published in 1855), hitherto neglected by historians, which he suggests provided the preconditions for "a recognizably modern style of politics" (p. 84). This chapter is followed by a close reading of the writings of Mohd. Eunos Abdullah who was born in Singapore, the son of a Minangkabau merchant from Sumatra. Educated by the British, he worked closely with the administration. But he was also the first modern journalist to reach out to a new Malay middle class through his newspaper, the *Utusan Melayu*. Through him, concepts like *bangsa* (race) and citizenship began to take on fresh meaning. Of particular interest is the way Mohd. Eunos "explicitly treated *bangsa* as an intellectual construction", thus bringing out "the problematic character of Malay ethnicity" (p. 99).

The Muslim *umat* (community) posed a challenge to concepts like monarchy and race, but also gave them the support of a universal religion and a moral force. The two chapters on the Islamic journal, *Al Imam*, which was contemporary with *Utusan Melayu*, illuminate the tensions underlying the premodern political struggles. How both the courtiers of the sultanates and the secular advocates of race renewal resisted the lofty demands of the supporters of *shari'ah* law during the first half of the twentieth century is then explored through three kinds of texts which the author juxtaposes with great skill.

The first two kinds include Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi's *Islam and Reason* (1931) and two examples of the response of the sultanates to the pressure for modernization: the *Hikayat Johor* (1908) and the *Account of the Coronation*, on the installation of the Sultan of Perak in 1939. The third, representing the emerging nationalist "with a socialist perspective" (p. 258), is Ibrahim Yaacob's *Melihat Tanah Ayer (Surveying the Homeland*, 1941). The contrasts are subtly delineated to show the "limited and hesitant way" (p. 282) the debate was conducted. Yet there was a dynamic process, a continual reformulation over time, which led to the idea of nation-building through modern political forces. There is no doubt that there was an expansion of the public sphere, and that the approach adopted here would be fruitful if applied to the study of other Asian monarchical systems in transition.

There remain two points that need noting. The author himself is aware that, by speaking of "the invention of politics," he has defined politics as a modern phenomenon involving middle-class individuals exercising reason and intelligence. But we would still need the word "politics" to describe other actions pertaining to the acquisition of power, for example, those of kings, nobles, and "priests" in the court and the administration, and among aristocrats, oligarchs, and bureaucrats. For this more conventional kind of

politics, the Malays did not need to be taught. This would have been obvious if comparisons were made with the Malay polities of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, or with elite politics in the Dutch-dominated parts of the Malay archipelago. That heritage of politics needs to be further examined. It could be seen as an excellent starting-point for the new kind of politics invented under colonial tutelage.

The author also realizes that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial intervention in the Malay society "triangle" of *kerajaan, umat* and *bangsa* was already extensive. Not least of the significant changes were the consequences of in-migration of large numbers of Chinese and Indians which the author refers to in passing . Their impact, marking the beginnings of "a plural society" (p. 296, note 8), on Malay consciousness and the new politics was probably greater than has been allowed. That theme deserves fuller attention for the half century before 1941, if not earlier.

Both these comments have been stimulated by this sensitively written work and in no way diminishes the value of this original and penetrating study of Malay political transformation.

—Wang Gungwu

JUSTICE AS CIVILITY

Mark Kingwell: *A Civil Tongue: Justice, Dialogue and the Politics of Pluralism.* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Pp. x, 270. $37.50. $16.95, paper.)

Much of the most important work of recent political theory has been generated by protracted debates between universalists and contextualists. Given the state of these debates, it would appear that any convincing theory of justice will have to avoid two familiar sets of problems. First, it must not be so thinly procedural as to appear irrelevant to citizens who engage practically in political efforts to address concerns that really matter to them. Second, it must not be so thickly substantive as to be so controversial that it could only be supported by those who share one particular conception of the good. Mark Kingwell steers an interestingly original course through this theoretical terrain and emerges with an illuminating account of what he calls justice as civility.

Theories can be unconvincingly thin for a number of reasons. They may ruthlessly abstract individuals from their ethical contexts, or make sweepingly universalist claims to ground principles that are to be affirmed by rational actors in all times and places. Or again, they might rely on a purely rational and excessively idealized process of normative justification, or generate principles that are simply too general to be of any practical use.

On the other hand, theories can be unconvincingly thick for a similarly weighty set of reasons. They may, in the face of a plurality of conceptions of the good, give up altogether on the task of legitimating principles to all concerned parties, resolving instead to deal with matters of justice within