modern nation is a product of colonization; it has always been to some degree colonized or colonizing, and sometimes both at the same time" (p. 24). Such theoretical baggage only reinforces nationalist apologias for Japanese imperialism in Asia—and does not rest easily with Ivy’s purposes in this book.

There are extremely valuable insights on the ironic nature of attempts to escape from modern life throughout *Discourses of the Vanishing*. The ambivalent status of modern cultural representations is well summarized by Ivy’s accurate and valuable point that “the very search to find authentic survivals of premodern, prewestern (sic) Japanese authenticity is inescapably a modern endeavor, essentially enfolded within the historical condition that it would seek to escape” (p. 241). Yet Ivy is unwilling to deny the possibility of some cultural attempts to escape from modernity, and her later chapters on Mount Osore and popular theater draw from Walter Benjamin’s “dream of transformative modernity” (p. 246) to suggest (even tentatively) that such popular cultural forms might not be reducible to the kind of ethnic nationalism that Yanagita and others had imagined. But it is not entirely clear to me that Benjamin’s Marxism necessarily insulated him (or Ivy) from all traces of the anti-imperialist populism that provided the foundation for the kind of nationalism that many Marxists and non-Marxist ethnologists in the early 20th century embraced in their critiques of modernity. Rather, it appears that Ivy’s appreciative turn toward popular practices in chapters five and six as “tenuous lines of escape” (p. 243), along with a lessening of the theoretical intensity of the earlier chapters, dampens the promise of a critical approach to populist nationalism offered at the outset.

Yet, these remarks do not detract from the tremendous contribution Marilyn Ivy has made. *Discourses of the Vanishing* is a serious critique of the nationalist implications of ethnological anthropology, cultural studies, and various forms of populism. Ivy’s uncovering of the ethnic and cultural forms of Japanese nationalist discourse is extremely valuable, and all who are seriously interested in anthropology, modern Japan, or cultural issues will learn a great deal from this book.

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A.H. and Geeta Somjee have again produced a very useful book that centers on the subject of development. Their purpose this time is to explore the special and essentially unique features of select Pacific Rim countries, the majority of which are often cited as “economic miracles” in contemporary western literature. The Somjees are not content with simply describing the material accomplishments of the “tigers,” however; their central concern in this study is identifying why they are successful, and in one case, namely that of the Philippines, why it is not. Believing an understanding of their overall performance is only marginally a consequence of external factors, the authors have probed and analyzed their otherwise disparate and different social features, and notably their separate political cultures and traditions. Answers to the questions of development they argue are found in the domestic
conditions of each country, and it is those same highly individualized conditions that shape and influence their different courses of action. Thus mere surface awareness of their economic progress hardly explains the dynamics of the change process underway in Pacific Asia.

Of the six countries examined in this volume, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand are heralded as success stories. The Philippines as noted above is judged a failure and not likely to emulate its more materially aggressive neighbors. Brunei, the last country surveyed, is placed apart from the other five, and although the oil-rich kingdom projects a lavish lifestyle, its greater political and social backwardness (according to the Somjees) does not warrant its being grouped with the others. The authors are genuinely impressed by states that seem capable of assimilating diversity, that develop the necessary eclecticism to transcend narrow mindsets and evolve new patterns of behavior. The modernizing of tradition is judged the key to progress, and real development is deemed possible only when rational behavior replaces sentimental attachments and yearnings. The Somjees see something of this nature operating in each of the four “successful” states, but at the same time they are careful not to construe that democratic forces, associated with development in the western world, are responsible.

The Somjees do not ignore the authoritarian aspects of the life experience in Pacific Asia countries. They nevertheless see a definite utility in a stable order that is at the same time flexible in permitting entrepreneurial innovation and creativity. Maintaining control, holding to law and order requirements, are not the stultifying elements that deny the play of the free market. Indigenous merchants, commercially active individuals and groups, and financially able risktakers are encouraged to pursue their largely individualized activities. In other words, so long as private economic output accrues value to the state, its operations are seldom interfered with. Indeed, in such a climate, given the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997, there is good reason to believe that the crown colony’s commercial life will continue to function much as it has in the past.

The Somjees key on meritocracy in Singapore, on the dynamics of balancing ethnicity in Malaysia, on the absorptive qualities of traditional Javan Indonesia, and the adaptive features of Buddhism in Thailand. In each instance they observe a functioning pragmatism that permits enough private initiative to stimulate the investment of capital and labor, enough deviation from the norms of traditional society to honor nonconformity in workways and expression. Neither Taoist, nor Buddhist, nor Muslim, nor Animist strictures burden those intent on changing the physical conditions in their respective countries. By contrast, the Philippines is observed floundering, not because it is more reluctant to shed traditional values, but rather, according to the Somjees, because it has failed to acknowledge its Asianness, has sought to be something it is not, and thus has been wanting in arousing a leadership with its roots in the soil of the country. Unlike the other countries examined in this volume, the Somjees do not see the Filipinos rising from the quagmire of what they refer to as the “Marcos kleptocracy.” And whereas the other Pacific Rim nations cited in this volume are not without their own corrupt manipulators, the surge of social involvement and more general participation in development activities there, seems to promise sustained transformations.

What cannot be missed in examining the countries here under review is the role played by the overseas Chinese. Whether in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, or Thailand, there is reason to hypothesize that it is the presence of the Chinese in each of these societies that