

■ Jacobsen, Michael & Ole Bruun, eds, 2000. *Human Rights and Asian Values: Contesting National Identities and Cultural Representation in Asia*. Richmond: Curzon (Nordic Institute of Asia Studies: Democracy in Asia series, no. 6). 330 pp. ISBN 0700712135.

*Human Rights and Asian Values* consists of 14 contributions to a workshop, with the same title, held in Copenhagen in May 1997. The chapters deal with various aspects of human rights, culture, values, politics and modernity in contemporary Asia, all within the tradition of critical social science. The main purpose of the book is to investigate how the Asian argument has been established in international politics, and to analyse the similarities and differences in the current controversies over human rights and national cultures in Asian societies. The authors question who has the power to define culture and values, and what the power relations are in a society when such cultural axioms are applied to the practice of human rights. 'Asian values' with regard to human rights discourse were initially launched by politicians and intellectuals in Asia both as an argument for authoritarian leadership, mainly during the times of rapid economic development, and as a way of demonstrating a non-Western approach to capitalism and liberal economy. This volume goes beyond the economic crises in 1997 and critically discusses the continuous local and global use of the Asian values argument after the economic crackdown. The last decade's debates on human rights have been dominated by the opposing approaches of universalism and cultural relativism, the latter including the Asian values argument, and these debates have to a large extent been published. The book presents interesting new perspectives on the human rights questions, first and foremost by bringing the discussion down to the participants in Asian societies and focusing on how these so-called coherent values are developed and defined locally. Nevertheless, the book would have benefited from a more rapid publication process, as it has lost some of its value in the years since the workshop.

HF

■ Keeley, Lawrence H., 1996. *War Before Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 245 pp. ISBN 0195091124.

Anyone watching the news media will from time to time despair: will war never stop? It is perhaps

understandable that some hark back to a more innocent and pastoral past before civilization. But was the past more peaceful? According to Keeley, war was an everyday affair before civilization, too. But unlike our virtual and distant wars, war in the past was real and close. Most old men would have known war personally. The probability of dying from war or war-related incidents grows the further back in time, and the less 'civilized' the cultures are. Documented yearly war-related death rates vary from 1.45% among the Kato Indians in California during the 1840s to zero in Sweden, 1900–90. The state with the highest death rate per year sustained for a long time is Mexico, 1419–1519, with 0.25%. Keeley's aim is to demonstrate that romantics who look back to a 'peaceful' past are wrong. He finds that modern 'civilized' war is less effective than the 'primitive' war of pre-civilized societies. According to Keeley, civilized societies win wars against primitive societies because they have more people and therefore more soldiers, they have a better economy and transport system and hence a better supply of war material, and they are willing to adopt the methods of 'primitive' warfare in hitting back. The economies of civilizations make war less profitable, but also make rapid population growth possible. It is often suggested that living closely together makes for more conflicts and a higher probability of war. But here it is necessary to distinguish between size, density and growth rate of a population. Keeley does not find that increasing densities are associated with more wars. Rapid population growth, however, has often been part of war history.

EB

■ Krasner, Stephen D., 1999. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 264 pp. ISBN 0691007020 (hardback); 069100711X (paperback).

The 350th anniversary of the Treaties of Westphalia of 1648 saw a voluminous literature on sovereignty emerge, much of it arguing in diverse ways that sovereignty is sick, dying, dead or buried. Among the few voices arguing otherwise and insisting that, in any case, Westphalia was not such a decisive landmark in the history of sovereignty was that of Stephen Krasner. Here he sets out his arguments in full, emerging as less of an unreconstructed IR realist than he looked during