

Pearson SC (ed.) 2010. *Supporting Asian Christianity's transition from mission to church: A history of the Foundation for theological education in south east Asia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xvi + 442 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-6622-6. Price \$34.00.

Here is a book that adds substantially to our knowledge of Protestant missions in south-east Asia and to the growth and development of theological education opportunities in particular, especially in the field of contextual theology. It is narrated in considerable detail and focuses on the broader issue of the shift in emphasis in American mission from mission to church aiming at a change in paradigm from traditional mission to 'partnership'. It encompasses the transformation of missions, churches and educational institutions from the Second World War and locates these developments in the context of revolution and colonisation as the Christian community struggled to form indigenous leaders within a complex context replete with a mix of cultural, political and religious agenda.

The larger part of the book is devoted to an examination of the history of the Board of Founders of Nanking Theological Seminary and its successor agency, the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA). This is done in seven chapters. During this period, the region underwent radical political change and this challenged these organisations to constantly evaluate their *modus operandi* in the light of changing circumstances, not least the growth and dynamism of the faith, and become more open to evolving more Asian forms of expression. This was a multi-denominational experience and a positive manifestation of common witness. This work is based on primary sources and personal recollections. Hence, it offers the first comprehensive account of the topic. It also moves beyond the organisational component to describe the contributions of significant individuals, not least the contribution of John Fleming, Kosuke Koyama, Emerito Nacpil and Choo Lak Yeow. Valuable though this part of the book is in terms of narrative, what is lacking is a comprehensive analysis of the events. In chapter one, the drawn out story regarding the Wendel family bequest to Nanking Seminary, which is vital to the development of theological education in south east Asia, is interesting though somewhat superfluous to the main thrust of the book. This may not

be surprising when we take account of the process of writing the history. Following an attempt by an academically gifted member of the FTESEA, the project was handed over to an experienced historian whose manuscript was found to unacceptable in this form to a number of the foundation's trustees. It was then revised by the editor, also connected to the foundation. All of this, however, is rectified by Michael Noon in his chapter on 'The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), 1959-2002: A Pilgrimage in Theological Education'. This is a more substantive contribution than what precedes it. Notwithstanding the above, this book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of developing trends within a particular field of the mission enterprise.

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