

REVIEWS

Pagan: Art and Architecture of Old Burma. PAUL STRACHAN. Whiting Bay, Arran: Kiscadale Publications, 1989, 159 pp., ill.

Books on Pagan with a scientific purpose are so rare that when one appears it is always an event in the field of Mon and Burmese archaeology. Paul Strachan, who spent a year in Burma in 1986, has written a very beautiful and useful book on the monuments of this old city, with no less than 136 black and white photographs and 36 in colour.

It is always difficult in a work on architecture and art history to write for scholars and at the same time for ordinary travellers. However, this is the ostensible aim of the author. And it may be the main reason why he has combined the study of all the temples, paintings, etc. of Pagan under a single set: "the Pagan Dynasty" (as he himself describes it, the book "*is in all senses an introduction to the art and architecture of the Pagan Dynasty*"). This of course is the term used by modern Burmese historians as an appellation for the entire span of the Pagan epoch. Nevertheless the notion is debatable in itself, for political and historical reasons; we are definitely unaware of the number of dynasties in the Pagan period. *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* mentions at least two dynasties (and the story of Anawrahta is, most probably, a myth: B.E.F.E.O. 1977, tome LXIV, p. 86-88). But such a presupposition (which is common now) implies that the art and architecture of Pagan must be considered practically without origin or descent, and be explained by the sole genius of a dynasty. Actually the blossoming of art at Pagan may be understood partly by the

arrival of Buddhist refugees from India (Bihar), partly by the influence of Pāla Schools (and of Paharpur), and also by the art of the Mon kingdom of Thailand and lower Burma, to say nothing of the Cham or Java. In other respects it has influenced the styles of Hariṇpūñjaya.

The introduction to Strachan's book is a brief history of the Western discovery of Pagan. I think that as far as Taw Sein Ko is concerned he is a little unfair to this scholar, who was a pioneer in different fields (epigraphy, for instance), even if he did not have the necessary knowledge in Indology. As for the UNDP/UNESCO Project on the Conservation of the Cultural Heritage of Burma (mentioned on p. 6), it was completed at the end of 1988. Due to the political situation in Burma since September of that year, the international community has delayed the next phase of the project; it is mentioned in the last *Pagan Newsletter* (1989), which contains the first almost complete map of the site for the 2038 old monuments (up to the 15th century A.D.) plus 192 for the later period (15th to 20th centuries). This precious work would truly be complete if some 30 more monuments (unexcavated brick mounds) could be added.

Part one of Strachan's book is divided into three chapters: "The Rise of a Dynasty at Pagan," "The Pagan Temple and Stupa," and "Images: Style and Iconography." The first of these chapters divides, as usual, the history of Pagan into three periods: Early (c. 850-1120), Middle (c. 1100-1170), and late (c. 1170-1300). This division – (one short period of 50 to 60 years between two much longer ones (270 and 130 years respectively) – implies 1) that all the monuments of the Early period, whatever their styles, belong to the

same set of inspirations, and 2) that the Middle Period should be of crucial importance for the history of religious art in Southeast Asia.

In fact, all the questions (of periods and of history) seem to be the result of a misinterpretation in methods and of an adherence to a national point of view. Regarding this last point, it is well known how difficult it is to build a non-national archaeology — all over the world, and here, too. As for the question of methods, the procedure — always to be followed for Pagan and for Burma in general — is to try to study the various styles meticulously, on the one hand (architecture, statues, etc.), and on the other, to place those monuments within the history of Buddhism, which is very involved for all Southeast Asia. For this purpose it is absolutely necessary to forsake the romantic stories of the chronicles, and psychology, at least in the first steps; unfortunately all of the second chapter of this part of the book here reviewed looks like psychological speculation — and not actual archaeology.

From another standpoint this work is unacceptable, because the author has denied the role of the Mons. One cannot seriously agree with him when he asserts (p. 8) that: "*It must be emphasized that Mon cultural influence on 11th century Pagan extended to literature only, not the visual arts as has been originally supposed.*" Iconography is, precisely, the study of rendering texts in stone or painting. And when the author adds (as argument?), n. 26 to Chapter One, p. 144, that Luce was "*the main promoter of the theory that the Early Period was dominated by Mon culture,*" it seems difficult to follow him; as early as Forchammer's works, to say nothing of E. Huber, Duroiselle or Blagden (and the Bohmu Ba Shin), all the scholars, and not only G.H. Luce, agree that:

1) The first appearance of Burmese writing dates back to 1198 A.D., which coincides with the beginning of Burmese influence on Pagan;

2) Pyu culture had disappeared before the 11th century;

3) The entire western side of mainland Southeast Asia was culturally dominated by the Mons up to the end of the 12th century with their different *Nikaya*: the different forms of religious monuments are representations of the texts of those sects (for instance, for Pagan, at the Ananda temple, the assault of Māra's army taken from one version of the *Lalitavistama* used by the *Sarvāstivādin*, or at the Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi temple, the representation of the cosmological part of the *Mahāvastu* used this time by the descendants of the *Lokotaravadin* in paintings — both clearly belonging to Mon culture of that period, as is shown by the carved or painted writings explaining the designs).

This is why, amongst other reasons, it seems difficult to accept such an assertion (p. 9) as: "*The main contribution of the Mons to Pagan was this Jātaka literature...*" A careful study of the Mon inscriptions of Pagan would easily show that the contributions of the Mons to Pagan were artistic, religious, judicial, etc.

In the second chapter of this first part the term *gu* "cave" is evoked at great length to designate the temples. The word is not of Burmese origin; it comes from Old Mon *guh* (with the idea of "heart"). The use of this word to name Buddhist monuments, temple or stūpa, can be found outside of Burma in various places where there were also Mon influences, as in the kingdom of Haripuñjaya. Immediately to the north of the city of Lamphun there are three ancient *gu*. And the fascination with caves (see note 23, p. 146), though universal, takes on a special meaning not only for Burma or the Burmese but also for all Southeast Asia if we connect it with the archaic cult of the Nāga.

The use of the term *bhakti* to define Buddhist devotion at the time of Pagan seems inaccurate. It is neither a

Buddhist term nor a Buddhist notion, and should be placed back where it belongs, in Brahmanical history and ways of belief — another world (p. 16 & 21, and notes 24 & 1, p. 146).

The third chapter of Part One begins by laying down as a principle that it is in the study of the images that the pattern of the culture and religion of the old city can be comprehended. One cannot disapprove such a principle. But it should be necessary to add: *inside* the frame of an evolution, and through the possible School (of style) and workshops.

These images are divided into three styles, corresponding to the three architectural periods. We have already said what we think of this division. May we add that in this site the purpose of such an iconography is not to tell a story (p. 21) but to enlighten the ordinary people in regard to the depth of the Way?

It should be interesting, in this prospect, to analyze in detail the shape of the images according to each material used. One must again insist on this fact. In contrast to Champa, Angkor, Borobudur, and even "Dvāravatī" or Haripuñjaya, there have not been effective and comprehensive stylistic studies of Pagan, if we except some miscellaneous works. It needs real background information; for example, stucco is *not* only a local tradition (p. 22); the art of stucco is well known, for instance, in Champa and in ancient Thailand.

To come back to the book here reviewed, the most interesting analysis of the images is in the study of the Ananda, pp. 69-70. We find a real beginning of description of forms of the face of the Buddha, although it is hard to admit, without arguments, that we can find in them a "Pagan physiognomy" (note 9, p. 146).

One fascinating problem is at last discussed (p. 27): the scenes of the votive tablets, their number and their distribution. We can dream about a complete and critical work (with references, texts and annotated iconography) on this delicate subject. The Pāla tradi-

tion is one, amongst others, to be exhibited at Pagan; I believe that there were also representations of the Sanskrit schools of non-Mahayanist Buddhism peculiar to Mon religious history.

As a matter of fact, the entire first part of the book, together with the introductory material to the second part, is polemical — as is usual for a scientific work.

The second part, the most important, makes up two thirds of the volume and describes 53 temples or stūpas. It is divided into three Periods and four chapters. We shall only make a brief commentary on the first Period (21 monuments covered in the first chapter), i.e. the "Early Period" (c. 850 - 1120), "the most problematic one of this work" (p. 37) — and, I would like to add, the most important.

It is supposed that this era of 270 years (?) covers a single Period of history, of religion, of religious art. This hypothesis is absolutely inadmissible and useless. I would suggest that one be much more modest and study the existing monuments without any chronological preconception, and also with the help of the *entire* corpus of contemporary inscriptions, mainly Mon. There is an almost complete lack of mention of these last inscriptions in this book. Then the main difficulty is to find a way of classification: through the evolution of the shapes (first, simple; second, more elaborate, up to the window style common to the Nagayon, the Nanpaya, the Kubyaukgyi etc; third, the development of the decoration, together with growth in volume). But at the same time we should verify the evolution ("like bushes") of the styles of the statues, and always try to find outside influences.

In brief, following this method I shall suggest for this Old Mon period (between c. 1050-1120) the following temporary classification: Nga-kywe-na-daung, Nat-hlaung-kyauung, Kyauk-kuohn-min, Myin-pya-gu (which must be analysed apart), then the Shwe-hsan-daw, then the "classical" group of Nan-

phaya, Nagayon, Myinkaba Kubyaugyi, Ananda, possibly the two Hpetleik, and the Pitaka-taik. A third group includes the Pa-hto-tha-mya and the Abeyadana. This is a possible nucleus. The question of dating seems to me of minor importance in the present state of our knowledge, except when we can make comparisons with other styles or sites in India or Southeast Asia.

If one follows this point of view, all the interesting details given regarding the monuments of Pagan by Paul Strachan in his beautiful book have to be arranged in other perspectives.

Yes, books on Pagan are so rare that when one appears, it is always an event for the lovers of that wonder. It is, therefore, always a source of frustration if a book does not live up to our hopes, and this frustration can render us unfair towards the work of the author. Indeed, the book by Paul Strachan on Pagan is a very handsome one.

EMMANUEL GUILLON

*Former Chargé de Conférence
École Pratique des Hautes Études
Section des sciences religieuses
Paris*

***Irrigation in the Heartland of
Burma: Foundations of the
Pre-Colonial Burmese State.***

MICHAEL AUNG-THWIN.

Occasional Paper No. 15, Center
for Southeast Asian Studies,
Northern Illinois University. De
Kalb, Illinois: 1990, 76 pp., maps,
chart, n.p.

In his important study, *Pagan* (1985), Dr. Aung-Thwin omitted a vital topic. Even though that volume's argument was based on an ecological assumption — that competition be-

tween state and Sangha for resources would periodically exceed supply and bring about a "crash" — he marshalled little ecological data to support it. Rather, he charted this competition and left it to the reader to assume that over-extensions were the result.

Irrigation in the Heartland of Burma is Dr. Aung-Thwin's compensation for this omission. This slim, concise and detailed volume is essential reading for those who wish to understand the ecological foundations of pre-colonial and perhaps modern Myanmar.

The logic of Dr. Aung-Thwin's presentation is clear. The "Introduction" outlines the problem of access to and utilization of rice resources grown in irrigation systems in Upper Burma. He makes it clear here and later that Upper Burma was the heartland for successive pre-colonial empires both in terms of sustainable agricultural resources and the locations of capitals. He also shows that historical and archaeological data demonstrate that many of these irrigation works existed before or were constructed during the florescence of Pagan. Thus, he describes a stable if not expanding ecological system for the perpetuation of the Burmese pre-colonial empires. "The Physical Environment" describes the geographical "bowl" in which Upper Burma is placed, dictating an arid to semi-arid regime with a number of rivers from the surrounding mountains that supply water throughout the year. "Rice" describes the Burmese variety of that unique crop that is so well adapted to tropical and semiarid tropical cultivation.

Having set the stage and the problem, the volume's core addresses each of Upper Burma's six irrigation complexes. Three major systems were of trunk and feeder canals; these provided for the irrigation of approximately 2,000 square kilometers (km²) of padi land. The "Tonplun" (Mandalay) District, with a combination of tank and canal systems, had an irrigated area of about 300 km². Finally, two smaller areas totalling 735 km² were primarily dependent on tank irrigation. Aung-Thwin estimates that "approximately 741,184.50 acres (3,000 km²) in Upper

Burma prior to British annexation were irrigated, of which at least 663,360.12 acres (2,684.5 km²) were probably under padi." Double cropping was the standard agricultural practice for this land, with some supporting three crops per year.

Having established the extensiveness of pre-colonial irrigation systems, Aung-Thwin provides a framework for "Estimates of Padi Production in Upper Burma." His major point is that padi production per unit of land can be remarkably stable for hundreds of years. Assumptions (often made by historians and development experts) that production increases as one nears the present are unwarranted. Aung-Thwin uses firm evidence to substantiate the claim that padi production observed just prior to annexation was essentially similar to that which took place in earlier times. He then calculates "Yields Per Unit of Land." This disentangles the actual production of a piece of land from two other oft-cited figures: those which stipulated "the rate at which padi was...donated, and the rate at which agricultural tax was levied" (39) (emphasis in original). An extensive analysis of inscriptions and other written materials leads to the deduction that approximately 1,043, 2,086, or 3,129 kilograms (kg) of padi could be grown per *pay* (.70 hectare) for one, two, or three crops per year, respectively. "Total Productive Capacity of the Upper Burma State" concludes that approximately 1,044,199.9 kg would be produced by the single, main crop per year; double-cropping would increase this to 1,460,965.2 kg annually.

Aung-Thwin then plots these numbers alongside the Burmese population estimated by Burney for the 18th Century, 2,279,628 inhabitants in the river valleys and 4,209,240 in "all the hill areas and coastal regions..., minus Arakan" (54). He estimates the consumption of padi by a farm family of five at 1,043.3 kg per year, leaving, after deduction of 208 kg for tax, a "surplus" of 834.6 kg. Thus, these six irrigated regions could have supported 3,980,160.5 Burmese per year. In noting that he has not calculated production from non-irrigated locales, Aung-

Thwin recognizes that his figures closely parallel those presented by Burney as well as Crawford's (1891) of 4,416,000. If the padi that could have been produced from non-irrigated areas is included, over 5,000,000 people could have been supported on Upper Burma's production.

In deriving these figures, Aung-Thwin shows that the Upper Burmese Dry Zone, marginal for rain-fed crops and certainly insufficient for padi, became, through canal and tank irrigation, an area easily supportive of a large population. A "typical" family would produce a surplus attributable to an irrigation scheme. Thus, that family would not only have ample provisions for itself, but also, through multiple cropping, produce a surplus which the state and/or Sangha could appropriate (or fight over). The author also poignantly shows how a dynasty's attention to agriculture in Upper Burma would pay greater dividends than trade with the external world or dependence on Lower Burma's resources, leading to that dynasty's relative isolation from the world and a continuing pervasive conservatism.

A second conclusion from this study is that Myanmar has a potential for rice production which the post-colonial governments have yet to tap. The British colonial regime brought about a revolution in Burmese ecology, focusing on the development of Lower Burma. The "heartland" of Burma is the Upper, "dry" basin. That the current government has recently seen fit to initiate a (re-)development of some of these irrigation works is a significant statement that recognizes the potential of Upper Burma for the nation's future.

This volume is important because "Virtually all studies of padi production in Burma begin with the colonial period of Lower Burma... 100 years of colonial history is given far more weight and attention than 1000 years of pre-colonial history" (4). Dr. Aung-Thwin has engaged in a careful study of an important aspect of Burmese history with significant contemporary implications. It is a pleasure to read

such a solidly constructed work that sets parameters for his larger study.

This reviewer has, however, negative comments concerning the book's format and the maps. The maps give the location of irrigated areas and canal alignments. The author refers to locations on these maps by number. Placing them at the back of the book makes for awkward understanding; their use would have been easier had they been located with their respective descriptions. None of the six maps depicting the irrigation works has a scale. The map of the Ye-U Canal Irrigation Works (taken from the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*) has been shrunk so that place names and distances are unreadable; moreover, its location is omitted from the base map, "Irrigated Regions of Upper Burma." A lack of attention was given to consistency in map titles, references on the base map, and spelling. That these maps were redrawn on computer is admirable, but care should be paid to design consistency. With these problems, however, this slim work has become essential to students of Burmese history and Southeast Asian cultural ecology.

H. LEEDOM LEFFERTS, JR.
*Research Institute for Isan Art and
Culture
Srinakharinwirot University,
Mahasarakham*

Śrīrāmakīrtīmahākāvyaṃ
*(A Sanskrit Mahākāvyaṃ on
the Thai Ramakien),*

มหากาพย์รามเกียรติ์,

SATYA VRAT SHASTRI. With
English and Thai translations.
Bangkok: Moolamall Sachdev
Foundation and Amarnath
Sachdeva Foundation, 1990, first
edition, xxvi + 530 pp.

Of the two great epics of India, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, ascribed to Vālmīki and Vyāsa respectively, the

former has long enjoyed popularity in South East Asia. It is well known in Bali, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. It describes the heroic adventures of the virtuous Rāma, son of King Daśaratha. Being a victim of his step-mother's intrigue, he had to relinquish his rightful throne and resigned himself to the forest, accompanied by his faithful wife Sītā and his devoted younger brother Lakṣmaṇa. In that wilderness Sītā was abducted and taken captive to the island of Lanḱā by Rāvaṇa, the demon king. Hanumān, the general of Rāma's simian army, constructed a bridge to the island and a great war ensued. Rāvaṇa was killed. Sītā was safely rescued and reunited with Rāma who finally regained his kingdom.

The story must have been current all over Thailand from at least 700 years ago. We have, in Sukhothai Inscription I of 1293 A.D., a reference to a "cave of Rāma." There is also in the vicinity a "cave of Sītā" as it is called by the local people. Our Lilit Yuan Pai (ลิลิตยวนพ่าย) compares the prowess of King Trailokanath with that of "Rāma the vanquisher of Rāvaṇa, who followed the demon to demolish the land of Lanḱā and save his beloved." Another old work, the Dvādaśamāsa (ทวารศมาส), mentions the "separation of Sītā from Daśaratha's son and their reunion in the end." The Kamsuan (กำศวน), thought to have been composed in the reign of King Narai, says, "Rāma, having the roadway built across the sea by the simian troops, defeated Rāvaṇa with his arrow." Numerous other examples may be cited.

There exist many short literary works and fragments dating back to the Ayutthaya period which deal with scattered episodes of the story, but no complete account of the story which may be dated back to that period has been found. Not long after the founding of Krungthep as the new capital of Thailand in 1782, when peace had been restored in the country, the work towards a standard version of the story of Rāma in Thai poetry was begun under royal patronage. In 1798, a Thai classical drama known as *Ramakien*,

King Rama I Version appeared and has been considered as the standard version of the story of Rāma since.

There are numerous episodes in the Thai Ramakien which are not in the Vālmikian Rāmāyaṇa. The question is whether *all*, or only *parts*, of the extraneous episodes are the production of Thai hands. If an episode was adopted from some other source, then from what source? The question is not easy to answer. In the first place, there exist in India several regional versions of the story of Rāma. Then, the study of the shadow play which prevails in the southern peninsula of Thailand suggests that the story of Rāma came into Thailand through the Srīvijaya Kingdom of the south. A few episodes, on the other hand, are based on a play of Thai words, a fact which makes it likely that they were created, at least in part, by Thai speakers. Again, the title of the work, which is spelled "รามเกียรติ์ (Rāmakīrti)", a close derivation from the Sanskrit word "Rāmakīrti", is pronounced "Rā-ma-kien", a fact which hints that there should be Khmer influence somewhere.

It is not possible to discuss in detail within this space how these additions crept into the Thai Ramakien and from where. What we know is that Rāma in the Ramakien is the same as in the Rāmāyaṇa, but many of the episodes are not.

This Thai Ramakien was retold in a small English book by Śrī Satyānanda Puri some five decades ago. The circulation was limited, and the book is hard to find, even in a library. It was retold in English again by M.L. Manich Chumsai, the well-know scholar and energetic writer of historical cum literary topics of the Chalermnit Publishing House, Bangkok.

Now the Thai story of Rāma has been given the form of a Sanskrit epic poem by no less a poet of renown than Śrī Satya Vrat Shastri, a Sanskrit scholar and poet from India. He was the Head of the Sanskrit Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Delhi when he agreed to come to Thailand as a Visiting Professor of Sanskrit in Chulalongkorn Uni-

versity. After that, he visited several universities in Germany, Belgium, and Canada. Then he went back to India, and served as the Vice Chancellor of Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University in Orissa. After that he was invited to Thailand again, and has been associated with Silpakorn University ever since.

Professor Shastri is from a family of true Sanskrit background. He received his first Sanskrit lessons from his own father, also a Sanskrit professor. He has written several Sanskrit works: three Mahākāvya, two Khaṇḍakāvya, one Prabandhakāvya and others. During his stay in this country the first time, he wrote a beautiful Khaṇḍakāvya on Thailand entitled Thaideśavilāsam — ไทยเทศวิลาสม, to mark the 200th anniversary of Bangkok or Krungthep. Professor Shastri's mind never stays idle; it is always active.

It was during his second stay in Thailand, when his knowledge and understanding of Thailand, of the temperament of the Thai people, its language, its tradition, its literature and other aspects of Thai life, had become broader and deeper, that he composed this Sanskrit Mahākāvya on the Thai Rāmakien.

According to Professor Shastri's own words, "The Ramakien has been for me just the thread to pick up the narrative...It is this which has enabled me to create a Kāvya out of it."

Nevertheless, his evaluation of the Thai Ramakien deserves further mention:

"As a story the Ramakien is of gripping interest. Told through a variety of incidents and episodes..., it has an appeal of its own. It is a good insight study of the human imagination at play in inventing chips of different hues and sizes, of possibles and impossibles and putting them together..."

"It is this mosaic that makes the Ramakien stand out as an independent entity and *not* a pale shadow of the pioneering work of Vālmīki, who might have been the first to tell the Rāma story, but as the Thai Ramakien... prove(s), was not the last. It is the Rāma story everywhere but not the same. And that is the beauty of it."

The Śrīrāmakirtimahākāvyaṃ is written in verse, with 15 meters (or varieties). There are altogether 1,209 stanzas, or 51,304 aksharas or syllables. The frequency of the meters employed is as follows:

Name of Meter		Number of stanzas	Number of Aksharas	Percent Aksharas
Sanskrit	Thai			
Indravajrā-Upajāti	อินทรวีเชียร-อุปชาติ	691	30,404	59.26
Anuṣṭubh / Śloka	ปัฐยาวัตร	277	8,864	17.28
Viyoginī	[วियอกินี]	63	2,646	5.16
Svāgatā	[สวาคตา]	56	2,464	4.80
Bhujāṅgaprayāta	ภุชงคประยาด	47	2,256	4.40
Mandākrāntā	[มันทากรานตา]	31	2,108	4.11
Śikharinī	[ศิขรินี]	16	1,088	2.12
Vasantatilakā	วสันตติลล	12	672	1.31
Toṭaka	โตฏก	6	288	0.56
Mālinī	มาลินี	3	180	0.35
Praharṣinī	[ประหรรษินี]	3	156	0.30
Drutavilambita	[ทรวดวิลัมพิต]	2	96	0.19
Puṣpitāgrā	[บุษปิตาครา]	1	50	0.10
Vidyunmālā	วิษณุมาลา	1	32	0.06
Total	1,211	51,304	100.00	

In the table above, the meters in square brackets are hardly met with, if at all, in Thai literary works.

An average Thai is familiar with *Indravajrā* and *Upajāti* meters, and they are very popular in Thai poetry. Now, as seen from the table, they are also the most often used (59%) by our author. Running up next is *Anuṣṭubh* or *Śloka* (17%), but this meter is never used in Thai poetry. The least used meter is *Vidyunmālā* (0.06%), a meter with four quarters of eight heavy or guru aksharas (syllables) each. No light or laghu syllables are permitted. This makes the meter rather difficult to employ in Sanskrit poetry. The meter is known in Thailand under its Pali name *วิจจุมมาลา* (*Vijjumālā*) and is fairly popular.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a long epic poem of approximately 24,000 stanzas or *ślokas* (โคลก). The meter is *Anuṣṭubh*, or *ปัฐยาวัตร* as it is called in Thailand. A *śloka* or stanza is made up of 32 aksharas which makes the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* about 770,000 aksharas long. The Ramakien, on the other hand, is written in a Thai meter called *klon bot lakhon* — *กลอนบทละคร* of approximately 25,000 stanzas. Each stanza incidentally contains about 32 syllables, just like the *śloka*. The total number of syllables in the Ramakien is therefore a little less than 800,000, a few percent longer than the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The *Śrīrāmākīrtimahākāvyaṃ* is divided into 25 sargas or cantos. The main plot follows the *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Vālmīki*, and is narrated in a straightforward manner. In fact, our author makes it clear that he has chosen to concentrate on the episodes of the Ramakien as are not to be met with in the *Vālmīkian Rāmāyaṇa* or other Indian *Rāmāyaṇas*. His work starts with a short Introduction in the first sarga giving general information about Thailand and the Thai Ramakien. From then on, for the convenience of readers, Professor Shastri has given to each sarga a name indicative or suggestive of the episodes to be emphasized. For those who would like to get a general idea or a brief sketch of each sarga, an outline is given in the table of contents.

Some of the episodes not found in the *Vālmīkian Rāmāyaṇa* are intriguing. Those who study the various versions of the story of *Rāma* will bear witness to this. The following few sargas in this *Mahākāvyaṃ* are examples:-

Canto IV, *Nandaka* (นนทก), *Rāvaṇa's* previous existence.

Canto VIII, *Darabhi* (ดาร์บิ), a patricidal buffalo killed by *Vālin*.

Canto X, *Beñjakayī* (เบญจกาย), a corpse floating against the current upstream.

Canto XII, *Suvarṇamatsyā* (สุวรรณมัจฉา), the bridge's destroyer.

It is not an easy task for any writer to incorporate all the extraneous episodes as found in the Thai Ramakien in a book in another language, with an effect which is felt by a native Thai speaker. Sometimes it is a play on words that counts, or a playful trick which is utilized for a serious purpose. For example, the Ramakien has a story of a grateful she-frog who sacrificed herself to save the life of her beneficent Rishi. With the supernatural power of the Rishi, she was brought back to life again, but this time as a beautiful woman. The Rishi named her *Nang Montho* on account of her former existence as a frog (Sanskrit *māṇḍūka*). She finally became the queen of *Rāvaṇa* (*Vālmīki* : *Mandodarī*).

Another story is the fight between *Rāmasūra* and *Arjuna*, in which *Rāmasūra* caught *Arjuna* by the ankles and smashed him against *Mount Kailāsa* with such a powerful force that it caused the *Mount* to lean to one side. *Nāgas* (large serpents) from the world ocean were used as ropes and all the gods exerted their strength in the attempt to pull the *mount* up, but of no avail. It was *Sugrīva* who suggested a trick. When the *nāgas* were fully stretched during the pull, they were all unexpectedly tickled at the navel at the same moment. A reflex by the *nāgas* caused a powerful jerk and *Mount Kailāsa* stood up straight as before.

In any case, the many episodes which are incorporated in the *Śrīrāmākīrtimahākāvyaṃ* are representative enough of the philosophy of life of the people, or peoples, whosoever they are, whose variegated contributions added up to make the Thai Ramakien the way it is at present.

The book is illustrated with 16 color plates on the Thai Ramakien, and if the picture on the front jacket is included, there are 17 plates in all. They are photographs of mural paintings from *Wat Phra Keo* located within the precinct of the Grand Palace. The reproduction of the plates is first class.

For those who prefer to read the work in English, there is a translation by *Dr. Jiya Lal Kamboj* of the Department of Sanskrit of the Hindu College of the University of Delhi (pp. 219-358). For Thai readers, a Thai translation by *Dr. Chamlong Sarapadnuke* of the Department of Oriental Languages of *Silpakorn University* follows (pp. 361-530). This makes the book directly valuable to scholars interested in comparative literature, folk-lore studies and in the expansion of Hindu culture in South East Asia.

Translating a work requires special skill; the translator must know exactly the meaning of key words intended in the original. Very often the expression in one language cannot be rendered into another language with the correct shade of meaning. Thus the Sanskrit "*kaścid*", which simply means "*a certain being, someone*", is translated "*some person*" in the English translation and "*บุรุษผู้หนึ่ง* - (a man)" (III. 16). In the Ramakien, this "*someone*" is a she-crow.

In Canto IX, the Sanskrit *śyena* in *Rāvaṇa's* dream is translated differently, as a *vulture* (แม้ง) in the English translation, but as a *เหยี่ยว* (hawk) in the Thai translation. In the Ramakien, it is the *แม้ง* (vulture), a scavenger bird, subsisting mainly on carrion, and always a bad omen. A hawk is a bird of prey, and may signify anything. In Canto XVII, the soul of *Rāvaṇa* is kept in a sealed casket or box made of stone. The Sanskrit word used in this case is

"*pañjara*" and is rendered the same in the translations (*a cage* and *कज्जल*.)

These minor points need not be much emphasized, because as a whole, the Śrīrāmakīrtimahākāvya serves its purpose far more than the present reviewer expected. It is a beautiful work of literary art. It is a valuable contribution to Modern Sanskrit poetry in the Mahākāvya style of Sanskrit literary tradition. It is a pioneering work which attempts to bring the growth, the colorful blooms and savory fruits of the Rāmāyaṇa from Śyāmadeśa back home to India in the language of the original. The work of the illustrious author Satya Vrat Shastri, while being a beautiful *objet d'art* in itself, is also a contribution to the academic pursuit on the expansion of the story of Rāma. Last, but not least, it should serve as a serene, subtle and sober element inwardly inherent in man to bring in closer cultural ties between Thailand and India.

VISUDH BUSYAKUL
Chulalongkorn University

Thai Manuscript Painting.

HENRY GINSBURG. London:
The British Library, 1989, 112 pp.,
ill.

The ornate, ethereal, and often whimsical world of Thai manuscript painting, previously accessible to the reader only in scattered monographs and book chapters, has at last come to the fore in Henry Ginsburg's *Thai Manuscript Painting*. This slim, 112-page volume, with its sumptuous color photographs and concise but highly informative text, is without doubt the most valuable contribution to the material published thus far on this engaging art form.

Dr. Ginsburg, curator of Thai and Cambodian material at the British Library for many years, is well qualified to author the book. Writing with authority, sensitivity, and an obvious love for his subject matter, he presents a clear, succinct understanding of the basics of Thai manuscript painting in the elegant language of the true connoisseur.

The book begins with an introductory chapter on the history, form, and content of illustrated manuscripts — both palm leaf volumes (*bai lan*) and folded paper books (*samut khoi*) — in Thailand. The subsequent five chapters delineate themes commonly depicted: cosmology, divination, elephants, ten lives of the Buddha, and Phra Malai. The final two chapters deal with genre scenes and stylistic development.

The five chapters dealing with content are perhaps the most valuable part of the book, for they shed light on a diverse body of pre-modern folklore and literature that is quickly becoming forgotten in many development-conscious segments of Thai society. For example, the chapter on Thai Buddhist cosmology as revealed in *Traiphum* treatises and illustrations brings sense and order to what at first glance seems to be a grab bag of motifs, tales, and mythological characters. Attributed to King Lithai who ruled Sukhothai in the 14th century, the *Traiphum* was compiled from more than 30 different Buddhist sources. It describes the three realms of existence, each of which is divided into various levels. The treatise begins with an account of the lowest level of existence — where the various hells are located — and continues through the realms of the animals, humans, thewada, and brahma to the highest level — where beings are completely free, not only of suffering, but of all material elements.

While the text focuses on the moral and physical aspects of life in each level, the illustrations give more prominence to the geographical features of the text and include labels identifying the places, structures, and personages depicted.

Although the *Traiphum* in modern published book form extends to more than 300 pages, Ginsburg boils it down to a nine-page chapter much of which is taken up by six half- or full-page photographs. For the scholarly reader, he provides references to various versions of the *Traiphum* itself, both in Thai and in translation, rather than attempting a detailed summary.

The second chapter is a valuable source of information about numerous indigenous types of divination. One such method, expounded in *Phrommachat* texts and used in Thai fortunetelling, is an eclectic blend of lore from both indigenous and foreign sources. It involves not only the Chinese 12-year animal cycle, but also specific trees that house the 'spirit' of persons born in particular years. In addition, each year has its particular element of either water, earth, wood, gold, fire, or iron. (Those who have visited the Jim Thompson House in Bangkok may have seen a facsimile of this type of divination manuscript available for sale at the giftshop.)

Another method of divination involves numerology and depends "solely on the numbers of the month of birth together with the day of birth, within the given birth year." Still other divination texts are based on a system of astronomy that interprets specific changes in the appearance of the heavenly bodies as good or bad omens. Ginsburg does not include any examples of illustrations from the third category of manuscripts, which, admittedly, are perhaps the least interesting visually of all the treatises. (The paintings consist of circles of different colors or combinations of colors representing the planets, sun, and moon.)

Various modes of divination, Ginsburg explains, were also used in diagnosing physical ailments. Illustrated manuscripts include diagrams of the human body, indicating points for pressure massage, and drawings of mascots for maladies of each month to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of growths and tumors. Here, again, we see an example of Thai eclecticism in the apparent blend of Chinese, Indian,

and Arabic systems of health care that made their way into medical manuscripts in old Siam.

Elephant treatises, along with texts dealing with the court and warfare, are the subject of the third chapter. The religious and courtly symbolism attached to elephants in Thailand is mentioned briefly, with examples suggesting that southern India provided the prototypes for the Thai illustrations. Ginsburg notes that although much of the Hindu mythology of India was adopted in Buddhist Thailand, as seen in treatises on mythological elephants such as Erawan (Sanskrit, *Airavana*), it was altered in the process. "The Hindu gods have become characters in fable and drama to the Thai," he explains, "but none the less potent characters of great renown."

Within Buddhism, however, notes the author, the Hindu gods "have no proper place at all." This point raises the question of why and by whom the manuscripts dealing with secular subjects (apart from elephants, others included the characteristics of cats, fighting cocks, and horses) were commissioned. In the case of Buddhist texts, the answer invariably is that sponsorship of a manuscript painting constituted an act of merit, the benefit of which would accrue to either the sponsor or someone designated by him/her — usually a deceased relative. In the case of non-Buddhist treatises such a compelling motivation is absent, and one wonders what there was to replace it.

The fourth chapter, on the ten lives of the Buddha, is rich in information not only on the depiction of the *Thotsachat*, or Ten Jatakas, but also on the changes in the format and content of manuscript painting that took place during the 18th century. As the author explains, two types of illustrated manuscripts apparently existed at this time: the cosmology or *Traiphum* manuscripts (which include the Ten Birth Tales among many other subjects) and manuscripts containing a series of extracts from Buddhist texts in the Pali language written in an ornate Cambodian script. Though Ginsburg doesn't mention this

fact, the *Traiphum* manuscripts were composed primarily of illustrations, many of which occupied several continuous pages, with the text confined to brief labels scattered throughout the illustrations, identifying and delineating the various realms, structures, and characters depicted.

The Buddhist scriptural extracts, on the other hand, are written straight across the page. Often they include pairs of decorative paintings, one at each side of the page with the text in between. The paintings depict mythical animals in a forest setting and/or scenes from the Ten Birth Tales, even though they contain no textual reference to these themes. By the early nineteenth century this type of manuscript appears to have been completely supplanted by a third, slightly larger, type, illustrating as well as narrating the story of Phra Malai, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

Dr. Ginsburg's summary of each of the Ten Birth Tales is a valuable shorthand to interpreting the key elements typically found in manuscript illustrations, where because of spatial limitations the story has become distilled into a few standardized key elements or essential motifs. In the Mahajanaka Jataka, for example, the key elements include a shipwreck and the rescue of the Buddha-to-be by a sea goddess. In the Sama Jataka, it is a figure representing the hero being shot with an arrow by a misguided king.

Finally, Chapter 5 deals with the theme of Phra Malai, the compassionate monk who travelled to hell to relieve the sufferings of the hell beings, and then to heaven, where he met the future Buddha, Maitreya. This tale was the most prevalent subject of illustrated Thai manuscripts from the early 19th to the early 20th century. As Dr. Ginsburg points out, the Phra Malai manuscripts that came into vogue at this time represented not only a new theme in manuscript painting, but a new format as well. Although the Cambodian alphabet was used in both formats, the old books were only 9-10 cm high, were written in the Pali language, and used a thick decorative

script. The new manuscripts, on the other hand, were 14 to 15 cm in height, were written in the Thai language, and employed a thin style of calligraphy.

The author notes that there are numerous Thai as well as Burmese, Lao, and Cambodian versions of the Phra Malai story, which derives from a Pali text that may have originated in Sri Lanka. The ultimate source of the story, however, is by no means certain. A careful examination of the various sections of the story suggests that, like the *Traiphum*, Phra Malai is a compilation of numerous earlier canonical and non-canonical Buddhist treatises.¹ At the same time, analyses of stylistic features of the oldest extant Pali versions of the text reveal linguistic idiosyncracies that suggest it was composed by someone whose native tongue was a Southeast Asian language, such as Burmese or perhaps northern Thai.²

One of the most famous Thai versions of Phra Malai is the *Kham Luang*, or "royal version," composed by Prince Thammathibet in the first half of the 18th century. In Ginsburg's view, "the high-flown poetry of Prince Thammathibet elaborates, and indeed rather obscures, the narrative by the stiff elegance of its verse." He notes that "the illustrated manuscripts all use another text,...set in a far simpler form of poetry."

Unfortunately, he does not identify this text, though he can only be referring to the *Kham Suat*, or chanted version of Phra Malai, which, in fact, is the version found in illustrated manuscripts. Yet this fact does not square with Ginsburg's assertion that "[t]he account of hell [in the popular version] is quite succinct." On the contrary, the section describing the suffering hell beings and preta comprises nearly one-fourth of the *Kham Suat* text, and is rich in colorful, graphic, and often grotesque descriptions of their torments.³

The *Kham Suat* text in fact, is unique in this respect, for most other versions of Phra Malai are remarkably similar to the *Kham Luang* text in the general flow of events and in the relatively short amount of space devoted

to Phra Malai's visit to hell.⁴

One who is familiar with Phra Malai texts may quibble with Ginsburg's identification of the figure in Plate 25, sitting with Indra and Phra Malai, as Brahma. (Unfortunately, Phra Malai manuscripts, unlike those of the *Traiphum*, lack identifying labels for personages and places. Thus, one can identify figures in the illustrations only on the basis of knowledge of the text). The Hindu god Brahma, typically depicted with three faces, is not one of the standard characters in the story of Phra Malai. Rather, it seems more reasonable to identify this figure as either one of the twelve *devaputra* who come to worship at the Culamani Chedi, or as the future Buddha Maitreya, who plays an integral part in the story.

Following a brief chapter on genre scenes, the book concludes with "Notes on Style." Here Dr. Ginsburg gives an accurate but cursory summary of the development of Thai manuscript painting. He notes, for example, a trend from the 17th century onward that "moves from free and open compositions with very lively details...towards more closed-in compositions embellished with details that are often tightly packed and sometimes fussy." Though he suggests that clues to dating manuscripts can be found in a study of both textiles and architectural elements, such as thrones, pavilions, and pulpits, Ginsburg makes no mention of significant stylistic connections with relevant mural painting (as found, for example, at Wat Yai Suwannaram, Wat Ko Kaew Suttharam, and Wat Chong Nonsi).

Finally, the author concludes his work with a most useful appendix listing Thai illustrated manuscripts in The British Library and other institutions in the West.

On the whole, then, *Thai Manuscript Painting* is a most praiseworthy work, having accomplished the admirable feat of demystifying the diverse and relatively obscure subject matter portrayed in Thai illustrated manuscripts. Moreover, it does so in a manner that conveys the social context

in which the various manuscripts were created and the spirit of playfulness that pervades many of the paintings. In the light of these accomplishments, any criticisms of the book are minor, indeed.

One criticism concerns the use of the words "virtue" and "merit" in the context of the Buddhist birth tales in Chapter 4. Each of the Ten Birth Tales epitomizes a specific Buddhist concept or ideal collectively known in Pali as *paramitta* and in Thai as *parami*. This term is generally translated into English as "virtue" (though "perfection" is sometimes used).⁵ Dr. Ginsburg, however, uses this term seemingly interchangeably with the word "merit."⁶

"Merit", however, is the English term generally used to translate the Pali "punnya"; (Thai: *boon*), as in the translation found in McFarland: "assets in the future life's balance sheet, resulting from good deeds; the antithesis of *kamma*; merit; happiness or reward (as laid up for the future state or condition)," p. 484. And, in fact, Dr. Ginsburg does use the word "merit" in this sense, as well.⁷ The terms are not interchangeable, however, and given Dr. Ginsburg's extensive background, one can only wonder why he chose to use them in this confusing way.

Another criticism is that the author, in categorizing the manuscripts by theme, fails to discuss the relationship between the various types of manuscripts. Were the elephant manuscripts, for example, painted by the same artists who illustrated the divination texts?

A more minor criticism is the fact that the vast majority of paintings featured in the book were taken from manuscripts in Western collections. It is hoped that in the future Dr. Ginsburg will write a sequel to the present volume filled with examples from the many fine manuscripts in Thai collections.

While the scholar of Buddhist studies or art history may wish for more exacting detail in the text, fuller documentation of source material, or more complete analysis of stylistic development, the book is highly recommended

as an inspiring, well written, and beautifully illustrated launching point for further study.

BONNIE BRERETON
Ann Arbor, Michigan

ENDNOTES

- 1) Supaporn Makchaeng, "Khvam Pen Ma Khong Phra Malai Sut," *Watthanatham 25 Somphot Krung Rattanakosin 200 Pi*, Sun Songserm lae Phatthana Watthanatham, Withiyalai Khru Thonburi, 2525, pp. 8-9.
- 2) Supaphan na Bangchang, *Wiwithanakan Ngankhian thi Pen Phasa Bali nai Prathet Thai*, Bangkok, 1986, pp. 312-314. For an historical analysis, see Supaporn Makchaeng, *Maleyyadevatheravatthu: Kantruat Somchamra lae Kan sukxa Choeng Wikhro*, Withiyaniphon Mahabandit Phanaek Wicha Phasa Tawanok, Banditwithiyalai Chulalongkorn Mahawithiyalai, 2518, pp. 27-36.
- 3) Up until about fifteen years ago this text was commonly chanted at funeral wakes in central and south Thailand; nowadays this practice occurs only in scattered spots around the country, including Ayutthaya, Chachoengsao, Bangkok, and Pattani. In fact, illustrated Phra Malai manuscripts frequently include depictions of funeral scenes on the opening pages of the text.
- 4) See, for example, the Northern Thai *Malai Ton-Malai Plai*, the Isan *Malai Moen-Malai Saen*, and the Central Thai *Phra Malai Sut Sam Thammat*.
- 5) *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, London, 1966, p. 464; see also George Bradley McFarland, *Thai-English Dictionary*, Stanford, California, 1944, p. 482.
- 6) He writes, "[T]he greatest virtue of all is Giving, the theme of the very last of the birth tales." p. 44). But later, he notes, "Prince Temiya...embodies the merit of renunciation," (p. 45), and [Prince Janaka's] life exemplifies the merit of perseverance." (p. 46).
- 7) "The renown of King Nimi and his merit are such that the very gods desire to meet him..." p. 47).

Hill Tribes Today: Problems in Change. JOHN MCKINNON and BERNARD VIENNE (eds.). Bangkok: White Lotus-Orstrom (TRI-ORSTROM Project), 1989, XXVII + 507 pp., 101 plates, hard cover. US\$ 39.50

The main aim of this collection of articles, a sequel to an earlier volume (McKinnon and Wanat, eds., 1983), is to show how national and international political interests and the cognitive orientations of researchers, enrouted research and policy on the so-called "hill tribes" of northern Thailand in a direction which, according to the editors and several contributors, was highly detrimental to the hill tribes themselves, and to propose a viable alternative to that direction.

Research on the hill tribes of Thailand has from the very outset been construed in terms of an "outside-in" perspective: The "problem" of the hill tribes has been defined from the perspective, and with a view to the interests, of the wider Thai society and especially of its political center, which in turn was influenced by international interests. The hill tribes, who until the end of the 1950's enjoyed relative freedom from governmental interference, became a subject of intensified scientific concern only as the Thai state began to penetrate the northern highlands militarily, administratively, economically and politically, and sought information and advice as to how to deal with them. These needs formed the background to the foundation of the Tribal Research Center (now Tribal Research Institute) in Chiang Mai in 1964 (Geddes, 1983: 5). The penetration itself, and the research it engendered, was motivated by the problems which the hill tribes allegedly created: destruction of the forest by their swiddening techniques, production of opium, and a threat to national security through insurgency (cf. McKinnon, 1987). The book puts into question this "outside-in" perspective, and the scien-

tific and popular images of the hill tribes which it generated. Indeed, the principal achievement of McKinnon and Vienne is that they succeeded to formulate an inverse perspective, one which looks at the hill tribes "inside out," and seeks to formulate their problems from their own perspective, and not from that of the authorities. Many of the contributors therefore examine the problems of the hill tribes, and the policies of the authorities towards them, especially those relating to the substitution of opium by cash crops and to resettlement, from this perspective. These concerns in turn lead to the critical examination of the place of the hill tribes in the wider contemporary Thai society.

The book resulted from a novel kind of cooperation in hill tribe research between Thai and foreign researchers and institutions. As the editors point out in their introduction, the book is "...a cooperative undertaking in institutional development and scientific research conducted by personnel from the Tribal Research Institute (TRI) and the French Institute of Scientific Research for Development through Cooperation (ORSTROM)" (p. XXII-XXIII). Significantly, however, there are no contributions by members of the hill tribes themselves.

Most of the authors work in the TRI or were associated with the ORSTROM project; their contributions are supplemented by invited papers by a few other foreign researchers. The authors come from highly varied backgrounds; among them are anthropologists, geographers, nutritionists, agricultural scientists, political scientists, administrators and even a primatologist. The heterogeneous origins and disciplinary backgrounds of the authors endow the volume with some lack of cohesiveness and with considerable variability in the quality of the contributions and of their relevance to its principal intellectual concerns.

The major themes of the book are stated by the editors in their introduction, and by Wanat Bhruksasri, the director of TRI since its inception. In his two contributions, Khun Wanat

outlines the current governmental policy towards the hill tribes, and presents a liberal and humane interpretation of that policy, which seeks to overcome its harsher implications, while preserving its central goal: the integration of the hill people into Thai society. In Wanat's considered opinion, this can be achieved without their complete cultural assimilation; permanent settlement of the hill people, which is advocated as a solution to their alleged destruction of the forest and of other natural resources through shifting agriculture, can, according to Wanat, be achieved by cooperation and without the use of compulsion. Ironically, his moderate and humane approach contrasts harshly with reality as demonstrated, e.g., by Ardith Eudey's article — an eye-witness account of the manner in which the authorities evicted a group of Hmongs (Meos) from a village in a wildlife sanctuary in Uthai Thani province in 1986.

However sympathetic he may be to the hill tribes, Wanat's perspective is still one of "outside-in;" it could indeed hardly be otherwise, considering that he is an official of the Thai government. The opposite, sharply contrasting position is represented in an article by Bernard Vienne, a French anthropologist and senior researcher of ORSTROM. Vienne sharply criticizes the basic assumptions of policy-makers and researchers regarding the hill tribes, and the manner in which hill tribe problems are defined and development policies implemented. Vienne argues that policy makers entertain a stereotypical image of the hill tribes, that their development policies are primarily of a merely technical nature (such as the introduction of agricultural innovations to prevent opium growing and forest destruction by swiddening), and that their priorities are set according to the interests of external factors, rather than those of the hill tribes themselves; indeed, the latter are excluded from the whole policy-making process. The consequences of current policies of opium eradication and introduction of cash crops into the tribal economy have, in Vienne's opinion, been disastrous — they led to increased depend-

ence of the hill tribes upon the wider society, to increased precariousness of their existence, and to pauperization and disillusionment.

Chupinit Kesmanee and Chantaboon Sutthi, senior researchers at TRI, present detailed analyses of the difficulties and failures resulting from the agricultural extension and crop-substitution policies of the authorities, and further substantiate Vienne's principal arguments. Chupinit especially points out the ecological imbalances caused by these policies and stresses the need for a balanced social and economic development approach, which would pay attention to the needs of the hill tribes, and introduce an alternative subsistence-crop policy, instead of the current cash-crop policy.

These contributions are followed by several interesting papers, which, however, are not always related to the principal concerns of the volume.

The nutritionist Ralana Maneeprasert reviews the nutritional problems found among hill tribe people, and points out the social factors which aggravate these problems among women and children. Sanit Wongsprasert of the TRI presents a case study of Lahu opium addiction; he finds that addiction remained relatively high, despite the recent decline in opium production.

Two papers on the Lisu (Prasert Chaipigisit and Yves Conrad) and one on the Akha (Cornelia A. Kammerer) constitute the more specifically anthropological contributions to the volume. They relate primarily to commonly held stereotypes and beliefs regarding the hill tribes, such as Lisu "anarchism" (Prasert), and to the problems involved in defining tribal ethnic identity by means of "objective" criteria (Conrad and Kammerer). In the last section of her paper, Kammerer discusses at length the current problems of resettlement of tribal people and their integration in the Thai nation. She finds that there is a difference between the governmental policies towards the Karen and the other hill tribes; but otherwise her analysis is very much in tune with

the general approach of the editors of the volume.

The last section of the book consists of a motley collection of "fragments and reflections", among which Jean Baffie's article on the portrayal of the hill tribes in Thai penny-horribles (cartoons) is the most interesting. However, that section is preceded by a thoughtful paper by John McKinnon, which in fact constitutes the concluding statement of the book. According to McKinnon there is a consensus between researchers and policy-makers, wrong in his eyes, regarding the nature of the hill tribes and of their place in Thai society. This consensus forms the basis of current policies towards the highlands; these policies, in McKinnon's view, need rethinking. McKinnon claims that there exists an agreed "paradigm" which "places highlanders in a marginalized and subordinate position in relation to the mainstream of Thai society" (p. 305). This paradigm is related to a body of widely shared opinions (the "consensus") and images, mainly negative ones, regarding the hill people, many of which are open to question, even if they have been presented as "facts" by social scientists.

In so far as such "facts" served as a basis of policy towards the hill tribes, the social scientists who have provided them rendered a disservice to the tribes. McKinnon calls on them to challenge the prevailing consensus, and to examine critically their scientific understanding of the hill tribes and of their place in Thai society.

However, more than by faulty information, policy formation was, according to McKinnon, shaped by powerful foreign intervention, which "emphasized the structural opposition between lowlanders and highlanders in a manner which suited the former but worked to the disadvantage of the latter" (pp. 333-4). Foreign assistance, motivated primarily by the desire to eliminate opium production, sought to help to integrate the hill tribes into the nation. However, McKinnon argues, since the interests of the hill tribes were not taken account of, rather than integration the process led to a mere struc-

tural assimilation and cultural homogenization of the tribes. Foreign donors thus in fact contributed to the process of state formation in the highlands; but the effects of the governmental penetration of their areas on the tribes themselves "has largely been ignored: increased socioeconomic participation and integration has not been accompanied by positive political incorporation into the state structure" (p. 341). The tribals failed, on the whole, to secure tenure on the land which they have illegally occupied; and close to half the tribal population has not yet been given Thai citizenship (at the time of writing).

This is an iconoclastic book, which puts into question many of the accepted truisms about the hill tribes and offers an alternative perspective which, even if not always wholly convincing or clearly stated, is certainly thought-provoking and intriguing. The book makes a strong moral point, namely, that the approach and policy towards the hill tribes has to recognize their own interests and to foster their participation in the process of their development and integration into the national society.

While this message forms the "backbone" of the book, there are quite a few contributions which, though they in themselves may be valuable, relate to it only marginally or not at all. Particularly the last section of "Reflections: Fragments and Impressions" is poorly integrated with the principal thrust of the book. But this is a minor quibble in view of the fact that this is one of the more thoughtful books, accessible to laymen, as against the present flurry of tourist-oriented picture-books and guide-books, presenting the hill-tribes in a superficial, idealized and unrealistic light. Indeed, it is ironic that during the very period through which the hill tribes have suffered a growing economic, social and cultural crisis, tourism into the highlands, in quest of the "primitive and remote" (Cohen, 1989) hill tribes, has become increasingly popular.

The volume is beautifully illustrated with about a hundred color

photographs, most of them taken by the authors of the various papers. However, the editing of the volume leaves much to be desired. There are too many typos, misspellings of names, and lists of references none of which were cited in the text (e.g. in the articles by Sutthis and Ralana). It is a pity that such negligence should mar an otherwise significant, beautiful and timely book.

ERIK COHEN

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

REFERENCES

- COHEN, E., 1989: "Primitive and Remote"; Hill Tribe Trekking in Thailand, *Annals of Tourism Research* 16 (1): 30-61.
- GEDDES, W.R., 1983: "Research and the Tribal Research Center," in: McKinnon and Wanat (eds.), pp. 3-12.
- MCKINNON, J. AND WANAT BHRUKSASRI (eds.), 1983: *Highlanders of Thailand*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford Univ. Pr.
- MCKINNON, J., 1987: "Resettlement and the Three Ugly Step Sisters, Security, Opium and Land Degradation: A Question of Survival for the Highlanders of Thailand." Paper, International Conference on Thai Studies, Australian National Univ., Canberra, July 3-6, 1987.

Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in the Contemporary World. SULAK SIVARAKSA et al., Bangkok: The Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 1990, 558 pp.

The Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, the joint publishers of "Radical Conservatism," are to be commended for their efforts in drawing together such a varied, provocative and enlightening collection of articles analyzing Buddhism's role in contemporary society. This publication is of critical importance at this juncture in Thai history as Buddhism's relevance is increasingly questioned, and the status and prestige of the Sangha and its institutional hierarchy has been compromised and weakened. Well publicized infractions of both the vinaya and state law by renowned monks and perceived inaction and weakness on the part of responsible Sangha authorities to take remedial action have resulted in a crisis of faith on the part of the educated citizenry, particularly the younger generation. "Radical Conservatism" provides a much needed tonic; a faith restorative fostering a deeper understanding and awareness of basic truths as expressed through the Dharma in all its varied manifestations.

This volume of articles is dedicated to Buddhadasa and in honor of his seventh cycle. His prodigious labours in interpreting Buddhism to assure its continuing relevance in modern day society are now legendary.

It is not surprising that in a book of thirty-eight articles on such varied subjects as Buddhism and Psychotherapy; Buddhism and the Environment; Buddhist Monasticism in European Culture; Buddhist-Christian Approach to Social Liberalism; and Women and Buddhism in Thailand, the Reader, depending on his or her background

and proclivities, would meditate only on a selected few, peruse others and glance cursorily at the rest. However, each article, in its own unique way, provides new insights and perspectives which enrich our minds and contribute to our individual search for serenity, equilibrium and wisdom.

The first section, entitled "Buddhist Thought in the Contemporary World," contains two gem-like sermons, searing in their brilliance, as one comes to realize how it is possible to both be a good Buddhist and create a workable Buddhist society despite the violence, chaos and materialism so prevalent in contemporary society. Interestingly enough, the two authors, Bhikkhu Sumedho and Bhikkhu Khantipalo, are western monks. This volume presents clear evidence that whether a monk or layman, one's nationality does not determine or limit one's ability to comprehend the intricacies of Buddhist thought and philosophy. Asian and Western academics, teachers and philosophers are all equally contributing to the burgeoning worldwide Buddhist scholarship so evident in the volume under review.

I have always been an admirer of Thich Nhat Hanh's exceptional ability to communicate the vital importance of Buddhist awareness and how it can impact on every aspect of our daily life. I was, thus, quite predictably, enthralled with his expositions on anger, non-self and suchness and their meaning in our lives in his article on Buddhism and Psychotherapy. One of the favored way stations of the Middle Path must certainly be Plum Village where Thich Nhat Hanh resides. Other articles in this section deal with Buddhist approaches and means to cope with money and death. The article on Buddhist Education by the respected Buddhist scholar, Phra Debvedi, while erudite and informative as might be expected, somehow seemed a bit misplaced in this section.

One would have hoped for the inclusion of one of Phra Debvedi's trenchant treatises on the community service role of the Sangha, and specifically the work of the Phra Patana

(Development Monks) in the North and Northeast, which could have blended in perfectly with the cluster of articles in the next section on "Socially Engaged Buddhism." Herein, several interrelated articles focus on the role Buddhism can play in sensitizing the world community to a new approach to perceiving nature; to one of the interdependence of man and nature. Such a Buddhist inspired "world view" has very practical implications for solving the environmental crisis in which the world finds itself. At the same time, the various articles indicate how this Buddhist insight into the interdependence of all living things has implications for developing new systems of agriculture, e.g., integrated farming; new approaches to combating disease; and new paradigms of development replacing the increasingly discredited economic growth model. The authors in this section include such well known "engaged" Thai Buddhists as Dr. Prawase Wasi and Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa as well as their farang counterparts in the United States and Europe.

The third section of this volume deals with Buddhadasa's thought as interpreted by both Thai and Western scholars who have pored and pondered over the entire corpus of Buddhadasa's writings and sermons. Each of the articles focuses on one or more aspects of Buddhist thought, history, or lore that has come under the critical eye of Buddhadasa and which consequently has been re-interpreted. Whether it is a question of the life of the Buddha or the core concepts of dharma, karma, merit, sin, nirvana, Buddhadasa's interpretations are inevitably cast in a modernized, demythologized, rationalist vein. The exposition of Buddhadasa's thought by the authors in this section make the reader realize how easily Buddhadasa's thinking could be viewed by traditional Buddhists as radical and subversive. Despite the disclaimer of the two-language thesis, *phasa khon* (everyday language) and *phasa dharma* (dharma language), used for different audiences, the fact remains that Buddhadasa's predilection for the dramatic statement eradicating widely held literal and mythical beliefs, and

for seeking identity of symbols and concepts with other religions, has led to both misconception and mistrust. It is also clear from these authors' expositions that Buddhadasa's teachings are especially relevant for an educated urban clientele. They would appear to have less meaning for rural villagers and would more than likely cause confusion and be destabilizing. It is almost too facile to denigrate spirit worship and Brahmanic ritual, as well as popular forms of Buddhism, unless alternative forms of both social control and spiritual sustenance, meaningful within the villagers' mind-set and world view, are provided. Buddhadasa's thought is not geared to or focused on such a rural constituency. The authors in this section include such established scholars as Louis Gabaude, Donald Swearer and Grant Olson who have exhaustively translated and studied Buddhadasa's writings. It is somewhat surprising that one of the most provocative analysts of Buddhadasa's thought, Peter Jackson, was not given the opportunity to offer his critique herein.

The fourth section of this volume describes the national imprimatur that has been put on Buddhism given the different social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it has flowered or declined. The vital role Buddhism has played in inculcating a sense of worth and dignity for India's untouchables is outlined. The Sri Lankan Sangha's concept of a "dharmacracy" is analyzed in terms of the negative effect it could have on the desirata of ethnic reconciliation. The flowering, destruction and partial recovery of Buddhism in Kampuchea is outlined in detail. Less attention is given to the unfortunate and counter-productive efforts of all Khmer groups and factions to use Buddhism for their own political purposes. Other articles concern Buddhist ethics and the issue of ethnic minorities in Ladakh; survival of Siamese Buddhism in a Malay State; Buddhist music as a response to evangelist Christian practices; Buddhist monasticism in European culture; and the relevance and appeal of Buddhism to contemporary Western society.

In line with Buddhadasa's interest

in other religions and the influence of non-Theravada doctrine and thought on his religious model, the last section deals with interreligious dialogues leading to human development and enrichment. The writers in this section caution Buddhists against self-satisfaction and a concomitant lack of interest in religious pluralism. They point up similarities and parallels among different religions as well as the critical entry points to best pursue reconciliation and mutual understanding. This section includes a rather provocative discussion of Christian liberation theology and a possible Buddhist variation on this theme.

In addition to the intellectually stimulating, provocative and informative articles in this book under review, the reader is further rewarded with a comprehensive bibliography of Buddhadasa's translated works in such diverse languages as Chinese, French and Tagalog. As if this was not a sufficient bonus, a bibliography of studies in English, French and German concerning Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkh is provided. Both of these extensive bibliographies were prepared by Louis Gabaude of L'École Française d'Extrême Orient.

Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa and his fellow editors have done an immense service not only to academicians but to the general reading public in publishing "Radical Conservatism". This immensely readable volume has enough pearls of wisdom to both entice and enchant the most recondite of scholars, the most jaded of urban cognoscenti or iconoclasts. It is also a book of rare import for those of whatever religious persuasion searching for truth and meaning in an increasingly chaotic world. To the Kennedy Foundation for its financial support, to the editors for their arduous task of selection, cajoling and compiling and to the writers for their wisdom, a word of praise for a job well done.

WILLIAM J. KLAUSNER
Chulalongkorn University

The King of the White Elephant. PRIDI BANOMYONG.
Los Angeles: Thammasat Association. Second edition, 1990.
US\$10. Available at Kled Thai Co., Ltd., and Song Sayam Co., Ltd., Bangkok

Pridi Banomyong was a Senior Statesman with experience in different fields — as the Finance Minister in 1940, the first Rector of the University of Moral and Political Sciences, the Regent of His Majesty King Ananda Mahidol — a very busy person with many affairs of great responsibility to the nation; yet he found time to write this novel from his historical imagination. The purpose of this publication was to propagate his anti-war and anti-violence concepts during the pre-World War II period, thus encouraging the loving-kindness principle of religion to be used effectively in problem-solving, instead of violence among human beings, and that "*Right is always victorious over Might.*"

In his giving an account of the glories of the old capital, Ayodhya, we find that the lives and the ways of living of its people were indeed very interesting. Although the king himself was still very young when he came to the throne, he felt the ceremonies and splendours of the court were disagreeable to him. He stuck to his own simple ways and severe tasks. He loved the peace and welfare of his nation more than anything else. He defended his country in single combat, risking his own life against the king of the neighbouring country, and won everlasting peace. In this way, the incessant sufferings of the people were relieved.

Historical views in this novel are very obvious. The morals are for people to live in peace, love, and understanding, which will, eventually, bring about unity to people and the society in which we live.

The book was first published half a century ago, together with a black-and-white film directed and produced

by the late Senior Statesman himself. It was reprinted in August 1990 to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Thai Peace Day celebration. Without his direct involvement in the Free Thai Movement carried out clandestinely against the Japanese occupation of Thailand, the allies would not have agreed with him that the Thai declaration of war against Great Britain and U.S.A. was null and void. Hence the Kingdom managed to maintain its independence all through. Yet, some in Thailand still ignore his valuable contribution which started with bringing democracy to Siam in 1932.

Hopefully, this new edition of *The King of the White Elephant* will remind the readers that, besides being a Statesman, Mr. P. Banomyong was also a good prose writer, and his vision of Buddhist socialism was a little too far ahead of his contemporaries.

S. SOBHANA
c/o The Santi Pracha Dhamma
Institute, Bangkok

Dr. Ambedkar: The Liberator
BHADANT ANAND KAUSALYAYAN Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 1991, 50 pp.

Upon Dr. Ambedkar's appointment by Jawaharlal Nehru to help draw up a new Indian Constitution, he said at the presentation of its draft, "Why did I join the Constituent Assembly? Solely to safeguard the interests of the Untouchables. No more than this." He might have also added, "And nothing less."

Dr. Bhimaro Ambedkar was born of a Mahar family of the Untouchable caste. He spent his entire life challenging the injustice and cruelty of a social system that relegated millions of Indi-

ans to a "sub-human" level. He also became, through his conversion and spiritual example, one of India's greatest advocates of the Buddhist religion.

In his short book (actually more of a booklet), Mr. Kausalyayan gives us a concise, readable introduction to a man whose life, in some ways, can be compared to Mahatma Gandhi. Both men were deeply involved in the political issues which rocked India at the end of its colonial period. Both men were motivated by a deep spiritual life, although, in Dr. Ambedkar's case, it was the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha which was the source of his great engagement in the struggle to bring liberation to the Untouchables.

Ironically enough, we are told how, over the issue of a separate electorate for the Untouchable caste, both men found themselves in strong disagreement. Dr. Ambedkar believed that a separate electorate was essential to recognize the rights of the Untouchables. Gandhi began a fast to the death to oppose a separate electorate for any group. Eventually, a compromise was established.

The most stirring episode in the book is the account of Dr. Ambedkar's march on the Chowdar water tank. This public water tank was legally open to members of the Untouchable caste. However, higher caste Hindus were vehemently opposed to this and thus the Untouchable minority did not dare draw their water there. After several mass marches (one including over 10,000 Untouchables) and a prolonged court case, the tank was finally opened to the lowest caste, a tank from which even animals had always been allowed to drink.

Apart from some "hagiographic" tendencies on the part of the author, this short work is a needed introduction to Dr. Ambedkar's life and work. One hopes that the future might bring us a more comprehensive study of this pioneer "engaged Buddhist."

CRAIG BARCAL
Maryknoll Missioners