

SECTION VIII
REVIEWS

*Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns
(Chao Phraya Aphai Raja)
and the*

*Belgian Advisers in Siam
(1892-1902):*

*An Overview of Little-known
Documents Concerning the
Chakri Reformation Era*

WALTER E.J. TIPS

Bangkok: Published by the author,
1992. Available at selected bookstores
or from the author, P.O. Box #1,
Lan Luang, Bangkok 10102

I

Mr. Tips's remarkable book is nominally about the life of Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns. It really is about the genius of King Chulalongkorn. When you have completed the book, because you will read it cover to cover, you will have a better understanding of why so many Thais still worship King Chulalongkorn. You will see the reason why they keep photographs of him near their desks, why you so often see portraits of him in public premises and why elegant ladies wear diamond-studded enamel portraits of him when they dress up for official occasions. This book illustrates the boldness and the timeliness of his vision. He saw that Siam¹ needed urgent and drastic reforms. He understood it as the only way to preserve Siam's independence from the expanding colonial powers. He also wanted to bring his country on a path that would improve the welfare of all Siamese. But vision alone, without implementation, would have been futile.

Mr. Tips's book shows us how King Chulalongkorn succeeded. He chose and managed the people around him well. He had relied on small team of exceptionally talented men, many of them brothers and relatives. That group, which one would nowadays call an inner cabinet, included Prince Damrong Rajanuphab, his Minister of Interior, Prince Devawongse Voraprakar, Prince RMB of Rachburi, Minister of Justice, Phra Suriya Nuvate, Chargé d'Affaires

in Paris, and Phra Svasti, Ambassador to Britain and to many other European countries. And then there were a fairly large number of foreign advisors. These were recruited by the king and his brothers among the best talent available in Europe at the time. Mr. Rolin-Jaequemyns was definitely one of the most prominent advisers employed by King Chulalongkorn. His talents and background fit perfectly the needs of Siam at the time.

This is where the book leaves us wondering. It tells such a compelling story of the onset of the Chakri reformation, of the wrangle with France, and of the important auxiliary role of Mr. Rolin-Jaequemyns, that one is left with the sense that the whole story is not told. Or at least that the first act of the play is missing. This first act should have been the story of how King Chulalongkorn and his close aides found Rolin-Jaequemyns, or possibly of how Rolin-Jaequemyns came upon the idea of offering his services to Siam, and how the king realised that this man would serve his purposes so well.²

This should however not be construed as a major flaw of the book. We

yearn to know how Rolin-Jaequemyns ended up in Siam just because the book convinces us that his contribution was most fortuitous for that country.

Siam was under heavy pressure from France, which wanted to expand its Indo-Chinese possessions westward,



Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns in full regalia.



The three main actors in the Siamese Question: H.R.H. Prince Devawongse, Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.M. King Chulalongkorn and H.R.H. Prince Damrong, Minister of the Interior. Plate 5 of W. Tips: *Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns*.

into territories until then controlled by the Siamese king. Siam did not have the military power to fend off the French and their mercenary troops. It could only play off Britain's desire to preserve its economic interests in the region against the territorial ambitions of France. It was also aware that both Britain and France preferred keeping a buffer state between their two colonial realms. King Chulalongkorn was aware that even that left him vulnerable to French impetuosity. He knew that any incident might cause the belligerent Colonial Party to push the French government into annexing Siam. He knew that only diplomatic finesse could save his country. But for that he needed an adviser who knew the French well but who would be able to serve Thai interests with total loyalty.

And the king found just that man, among the elite of the French-speaking Flemish bourgeoisie. Flanders was for centuries a vassal state of the French kings. As a consequence there has always been a kind of love-hate relationship between the two countries. Although Flemish, a Germanic language, is the language of all, at the court of Flanders one spoke French, a Latin language. By emulation, the bourgeoisie also adopted French. Democratization and economic development has much eroded the power of the traditional French-speaking bourgeoisie. One would expect that by now, the Flemish, because they speak a Germanic language, to get their cues either from Germany or from the Anglo-Saxon countries, just like the Dutch or the Scandinavians. Surprisingly the old attachment remains and Flanders still looks up to Paris as a cultural beacon. If the old love remains so does defiance. The Flemish are still proud that they defeated the French King and decimated his richly caparisoned noblemen in 1302. Although Flanders was occupied by just about every country in Europe, it was able to avoid being annexed by France.

Rolin-Jaequemyns thus came from a culture which admired France and French culture, but which had a long tradition of resisting French territorial expansion. He brought with him other experiences which would serve Siam

well. Flemish independence from France had been assured in 1830 when it was included in Belgium, a buffer state created with the approval of the countries it kept apart: France, Britain and Germany. Rolin-Jaequemyns, who was born in 1835, was thus acutely aware that the independence of small states was most precarious at a time when the great powers were more than willing to use military power to satisfy territorial ambitions. He also knew from experience that militarily weak states could survive as long as they could convince the great powers that their existence as a buffer state could keep them from unnecessary friction. He saw that buffer states could only seek protection under international laws guaranteeing their existence. These laws were laid out in the treaties which created them as a buffer state. Long before coming to Siam he had written in an essay on "The Role and the Mission of Neutral States" about the need of neutral and weak states to rely on the protection of international law for their security.

Rolin-Jaequemyns was thus culturally fit to become a loyal servant of Siam. He was also perfectly prepared technically to be of service to King Chulalongkorn. After brilliant studies he had become one of Europe's most respected experts on international and comparative law. He was the editor and main driving force of the *International Law Review* and a convener of many international conferences on the same subject. Mr. Tips, the author, describes him as "a scholar who investigated and analysed before believing, before adopting or adapting to purposes he believed to be in line with his conscience and with the development at all levels of society and between all nations, small and large, on an equal basis".

Rolin-Jaequemyns was not only a scholar; he also knew about politics and government. He had been a Member of Parliament and a Minister of Interior of Belgium for six years. During that time he drafted many laws. When he was defeated at the elections he returned to being a scholar. He probably would have continued his research career had the loss of his fortune not forced Rolin-Jaequemyns to seek employment

abroad. During his career as a researcher and in his contacts with a great variety of legal innovators he had developed a philosophy of law. There is no doubt that he shared these views with King Chulalongkorn and his close advisors Princes Damrong and Devawongse during their long private meetings. The author characterises Rolin-Jaequemyns' philosophy as follows: "He thought that his times were marked by the rapidity with which various reforms which are required by reason and humanity were introduced all over the world. ...[he identified] three categories: those that have received a definite solution, those on which debate is going on but which are more or less settled, and those which are being studied. In the first category, Rolin-Jaequemyns places the abolition of slavery, and serfdom (such as the *corvée* system), liberty of establishment, a just proportion between crimes and punishment, abolishment of punishment for usury, the suppression of privileged corporations, the liberty of the exchange rate between gold and currencies, and the liberty to set up organisations. Those being debated for adoption in some countries are: the utility and legitimacy of capital punishment, equality between sexes in civil and political domains, human bondage for civil and commercial debts, and equality before the law of the words of master and servant. Finally, the third category, which still needs to be organised before it can be introduced, comprises: the organisation of the penitentiary system, preventive detention law of civil and commercial societies, social welfare, the supervision of legal entities, representative government and electoral laws, limits to state powers in regulating professional qualifications and the free professions, the organisation of education at all levels; and the organisation of judicial power." These reflections, which the author gleaned from some of his writings before going to Siam again, show how close Rolin-Jaequemyns's concerns were to those of King Chulalongkorn.

Rolin-Jaequemyns was an extremely prolific, hard-working man. He was of great integrity. This came to light

during his stay in Siam when he consistently refused to promote Belgian commercial interests because he felt that such activity would have been incompatible with his duties as adviser to the King of Siam. He even ignored requests for such assistance from his former boss, the King of the Belgians. He was an able diplomat and had been able to assemble a wide network of friends in many countries of Europe, including France and as far as Russia. While in the service of King Chulalongkorn he would put this network to use in gathering support for the defence of Siam as an independent state and to publicise the breaches of treaty accords by France. It is no doubt the combination of his good nature, his sharp intelligence, his excellent abilities to organise work, his technical abilities, his political experience and flair, his unswerving loyalty to his employer and his cultural background that endeared him so much to King Chulalongkorn and his entourage.

After a period of negotiation concerning the conditions of his employment,³ Rolin-Jaequemyns arrived in Siam in September 1892. Although he had been offered the post of Attorney General by the Khedive of Egypt, he turned it down in favour of becoming General Adviser to the King of Siam. The General Adviser was originally assigned to the Ministry of Justice and intended to embark immediately on the codification and revision of the civil and criminal laws of Siam. But French pressure was mounting and Rolin-Jaequemyns was called in to help. He drafted responses to the French claims and, using his network, publicised the French treaty violations to the world.

About six months after his arrival, in March 1893, the French claimed that all territories on the left bank of the Mekong, and which for hundreds of years had been ruled by Siam, were considered to be under the suzerainty of Annam, a French protectorate, and were thus part of the French colonial empire. In the months following, a few minor incidents occurred in the disputed territories which increased tensions and increased the virulence of demands for action against Siam by the French Co-

lonial Party.

Matters came to a stand-off when, on 13 July 1893, two French gunboats, the *Inconstant* and the *Comète*, sailed up the Chao Phraya River, exchanged fire with the Pak-Nam fortress, and rejoined a third French gunboat, the *Lutin*, already moored in front of Bangkok. They did so in violation of the 1856 Treaty on Navigation and Commerce, which specified that not more than one gunboat of any foreign power had the right to sail up the Chao Phraya. The French sent an ultimatum to Siam on 21 July 1893 demanding that Siam immediately withdraw from the left bank of the Mekong, that Siam withdraw all posts in a zone 50 km inside the right bank of the Mekong, that it return all territories of Cambodia, that it punish Siamese citizens guilty of causing damage to French citizens, and that it pay large compensations and indemnities for all damages inflicted on France during border incidents and during the gunboats' intrusion up the Chao Phraya river. The conditions of the ultimatum were accepted by King Chulalongkorn on 29 July 1893 because he feared the damage a prolonged French blockade would inflict on his country. He also wanted to avoid irritating France to the point of giving it an excuse for an outright invasion. Rolin-Jaequemyns had advised him to resist the French demands longer because he reckoned that the blockade was damaging mainly British commercial interests and that Britain would demand a lifting of the blockade.

On 30 July 1893 the French made still more demands. They occupied Chantaboon as well as Luang Prabang and forbade the Siamese to post troops in Siam Riep and Battambang. These events left the Siamese government in shock. The author even says that it left the Siamese government in lethargy until the Anglo-French Convention of 1897. However, it appears that gradually the government went back on the offensive. They sent Rolin-Jaequemyns to lobby in Europe, and especially with the British. Rolin-Jaequemyns went all the way to Lord Salisbury, the British Foreign Minister, to plead the case of Siam. He asked him to grant Siam

protection under the heading of being a free buffer state between the British and French colonial empires.

While Rolin was drumming up support for Siam he also advised the King to be tough in resisting French pressure. He advised him to send troops to Nan to resist French incursions. His argument was that any incident in the north would be noticed by the British because it would occur in an area close to Shan areas held by them.

Tensions reduced when the Anglo-French Treaty was signed in January 1896. It guaranteed the integrity of the Chao Phraya Valley as a Siamese buffer state. It was followed by a convention concerning the south of the Kingdom of Siam which made sure that the French did not appropriate the Kra isthmus to establish a land bridge. The British were eager to stop this new French infringement on Siamese sovereignty because it would have impinged on British interests in Singapore and Penang.

In the subsequent years Rolin-Jaequemyns was very active in gathering support for Siam with the other powers in Europe, especially with Germany, whose commercial interests in Siam were slowly supplanting those of Britain. He had talks in Berlin with Baron Von Richthofen, then the German Foreign Minister. He also paid much attention to Russia, because he feared that their potential clash with British interests in Asia could lead them form an alliance with France which would be detrimental to Siam. Rolin-Jaequemyns, through his extensive contacts in France, was able to provide Siam much intelligence about the increasing tensions inside the French Government as well as about the demise of the much dreaded Colonial Party. This information helped the Siamese adapt their negotiation stance to the strength and resolve of their French opponents.

Tough negotiations under instructions from Prince Devawongse, advised by Rolin-Jaequemyns, resulted in the Convention of 1902 which turned out rather advantageously for Siam. In fact it was seen as so disadvantageous for France that it was not ratified by the French Parliament. Ratification waited until a new convention, much more

favourable to France, was signed in 1904. The 1902 Convention had recognised that Siam Riep and Battambang were Siamese, had abolished the 25 km neutral zone along the Cambodian-Siamese border, gave back parts of Luang Prabang, and required the French to evacuate Chantaboon. The 1904 treaty left much more Cambodian territory to the French and maintained the 25 km neutral zone where the French could establish commercial stations. The author attributes the gains made by the French in the 1904 Treaty to the fact that they did not have to contend anymore with Rolin-Jaequemyns, who had died in the meantime.

The book does an excellent job of showing how appropriately timed Rolin-Jaequemyns' appointment was and how effectively he supported the Siamese government in fending off French onslaughts. The book also presents the contribution of Rolin-Jaequemyns to the Chakri Reformation. It shows how the direct defence against colonial aspirations of the great powers was backed up by internal reform. Indeed, the vision of King Chulalongkorn and his brothers was that Siam could only fend off the expansionist greed of the colonial powers if it could rob them of their usual excuse of taking a country under "protection" to bring to it "justice and civilisation". The colonial powers' concern with justice of course limited itself mostly to ensuring that their citizens could conduct business without encumbrances and that their commercial interests could expand without too much competition from the other powers.

The author summarises the situation succinctly: "Certainly, the signs of the times and the enlightened actions of King Chulalongkorn and his right hand man, Prince Damrong, were extremely conducive to large scale reforms—at the same time mowing the grass away before the approaching feet of French and British colonialists. The 'chance' recruitment of a catalyst [Rolin-Jaequemyns] sparked off the reforms that would preserve Siam's independence and modernise the country."

One of the thorns in the side of the Siamese government and a constant

opportunity for foreign powers to create incidents was the regime of extraterritoriality granted to foreign citizens. This meant that they would not be subject to Siamese laws which were considered inadequate or too harsh and to Siamese judges who were accused of being biased or incompetent. Rolin-Jaequemyns and the other Belgian advisers whom he later brought in to help, worked hard to set up all the laws which would pave the way to the abolition of extraterritoriality. Some of the laws which the General Adviser and his team helped draft were, for example, the Law of Evidence which led to the subsequent abolishment of the use of torture for confession, the Civil Procedure Act, the Harbour and Navigation Regulations, the Timber Mark Regulation, the Regency Act, Village and Ampoe Regulations, the Mining Law, the Police Act, the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, the Arms Act, etc. Rolin-Jaequemyns also helped bring about the abolishment of slavery because of debt. One of the laws on which he worked which might seem to us as insignificant was the Pawn Shop Act. At the time it was very important because the new act reduced yet another irritating interference by foreign legations, namely their right of inspecting pawn shops to retrieve goods stolen from their citizens.

Another small improvement promoted by Rolin-Jaequemyns which also reduced opportunities for foreign powers to interfere or to look for incidents was the introduction of closed envelope bids for government contracts. For the same reason of reducing foreign interference he consistently advised King Chulalongkorn against granting concessions to foreign companies. He argued that the process of granting concessions would become a focus for political rivalries and once granted they would invariably lead foreign powers to interfere to protect the interests of their investors.

Rolin-Jaequemyns considered that land rights should be properly organised. This again would be an improvement to the country as a whole but it would also remove yet another reason for foreign powers to demand extraterritoriality for their citizens.

Further in this vein, Rolin-Jaequemyns was able to make a breach in the solidarity of foreign powers in their insistence on extraterritorial rights. He convinced the Japanese government to include a clause in their convention with Siam to gradually abolish such rights as the Siamese legal regime approached international standards.

In keeping with his philosophy of law which we quoted earlier, Rolin-Jaequemyns fostered the introduction of punishments commensurate with the crime, and the abolition of corporal punishment in general. For the same reasons he and his assistants were active in prison reform. Teams of Belgian and Siamese judges were sent to the provinces to clear the enormous backlog of court cases. This caused a large number of citizens who had been held without trial to be released immediately since many had been held longer than their crime warranted. Also a large number of prisoners were liberated when it was discovered that they had been held in prison longer than their sentence had required. This clean-up operation alone and the improvement in prison conditions that followed, made the king and his Belgian legal advisers immensely popular.

As a sure sign of trust, Rolin-Jaequemyns was asked to help guide the education of the Crown Prince and his brothers. He was also asked to help King Chulalongkorn and his brothers recruit foreign expertise in a wide variety of fields.

King Chulalongkorn recognised Rolin-Jaequemyns's contribution to the welfare of Siam. He elevated him in 1896 to the rank of Chao Phraya Aphai Raja Sayammanakulkit and to his wife the title of Lady Aphai Raja. Rolin-Jaequemyns' title of Chao Phraya is still the highest honour ever bestowed on a foreigner, except for Constance Phaulkon, the Greek advisor and Minister of King Narai.

Still the book gives us the impression that some of Rolin-Jaequemyns's work did not last. His great contributions in helping Siam survive some of the most perilous years of its existence are remembered, but his careful work in surveying existing laws and in find-

ing in foreign laws the parts which were best adapted to Siamese circumstances, was swept away almost completely after his death. On the occasion of the 1902 and 1904 conventions with France, French legal experts took over from the Belgian team and drafted new laws according to the Napoleonic code. Here the book lets us down. It does not explain why King Chulalongkorn and his Ministers allowed the work of the Belgian team to be swept away so easily.

Rolin-Jaequemyns's contribution is best measured by his own definition of his successor's duties. They are also, in retrospect, a summary of his own duties. He described them thus: "The functions of General Adviser do not by themselves involve any parcel of executive power, and it is better that it be so, because the General Adviser has to consider himself a disinterested friend, who has to look everywhere, to the utmost of his ability, for what may promote justice and wealth, without any pretension to public power for himself personally. His functions are thus merely consultative but they are so in the broadest sense of the word, because he may give his advice about the suppression of abuses or introduction of desirable reforms, without expecting to be consulted either by His Majesty or by His Ministers."

Also, his last words give a glimpse of the kind of man Rolin-Jaequemyns was. The author relates that when, a few hours before his decease, his nurse wanted to give him some champagne to re-animate his forces, he replied: "Death arrives, I must preserve the full freedom of my mind."

Overall Mr. Walter Tips book is excellent. Not only does it contain a wealth of information about Rolin-Jaequemyns, it also gives a good impression of life in Bangkok around the

turn of the century. The author accomplishes this by giving us a free book-within-a-book; namely, Chapter Three is totally dedicated to an introduction and an English translation of a small book called *Croquis Siamois (Sketch of Siam)* by Charles Buls, the ebullient former mayor of Brussels. He had been the Belgian equivalent of France's Haussman and had beautified Brussels with wide boulevards, parks and public buildings. He had received King Chulalongkorn during his visit to the Brussels International Exposition of 1897. Buls left for Siam ten days after he left his position as mayor after a dispute with King Leopold II of the Belgians. He arrived at the mouth of the Menam Chao Phraya on 10 February, 1900 and left a little more than one month later, on March 15. Still in this short time he was able to meet a very large number of people and visit many places in and outside Bangkok. He must have had a very keen sense of observation because after such a short visit he was able to write a delightful little book which gives an interesting snapshot of the life in Siam at the time Rolin-Jaequemyns lived there.

Buls's book gives the impression that one is watching the beginning of the development of a great nation. He draws a vivid picture of how the Chinese immigrants are providing the commercial drive of the country, and how King Chulalongkorn, with a handful of well-educated countrymen and a few foreign advisors, is setting the foundations for a modern, prosperous state. Buls's sharp eye for details gives us much information about the material circumstances under which the king and his advisors started their crusade for reformation.

Mr. Walter Tips has produced a delightful book, scholarly, yet readable and enjoyable, full of little gems of

anecdotes and details. It is illustrated with copies of historic handwritten documents as well as with photographs of the time. The book is an essential companion for those interested in Thai history.

DR. PHILIPPE ANNEZ
Vice President, The Siam Society

¹ In keeping with the book we will use the name Siam when referring to Thailand at the time of King Chulalongkorn.

² But then one might also wonder how the Siam Society accidentally chose a reviewer whose ancestors new the Rolin and Jaequemyns families and who attended the same Athenaeum (high school) as Mr. Rolin-Jaequemyns, 111 years after him.

³ He was paid 3,000 pounds sterling per year, paid in local ticals, and given an unfurnished house.

II

The year 1992 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of what was surely one of the most critical decades in the survival of the kingdom which we know today as Thailand, but which was known then, and until 1939, as Siam. Regrettably, scholarship on this period has been quite limited, and, as a consequence, historical understanding of this decisive era has remained far from complete. Many of the most crucial events, and a number of the most important actors, in this drama remain obscure. It is, then, with considerable happiness that scholars of Thailand's modern history, and especially of those key events at the turn of the century which determined that Siam would not go the way of every other traditional state in Southeast Asia by becoming part of some European power's colonial empire, but would retain her own national integrity, will welcome this remarkable book by a consultant of the Prime Minister's Office of Thailand.

Tips has selected for his chief focus the extraordinary achievements, as they relate to Siam, of fellow Belgian, and from 1892 until 1902 General Adviser to the Government of Siam, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns. Jaequemyns's recruitment to Siamese service in mid-1892 came at a critical moment when Siam lay uneasily in the trough between two waves of French-sponsored crisis. The second wave, beginning its rise in March of 1893, and reaching its crest in July with the French naval assault on the Siamese forts at the entrance to the Chao Phraya River, followed by a blockade and the menacing of Bangkok itself, came close to submerging the kingdom under a French protectorate.

It seems clear that, although Siam's erstwhile Western mentor, Britain, hoped the Siamese would somehow muddle through with their sovereignty intact, she was unwilling to take any direct action to block the provocative actions of a French government temporarily under the sway of a highly aggressive *Parti Colonial* determined on

annexation. In this dark period, almost all of the British observers on the scene envisioned the ultimate denouement of these events to be either the establishment of a Western protectorate over Siam, or, what would be worse for the Siamese, her disappearance entirely through partition. A number of Britons in this period urged their own country, in vain, to take a more active role, in the hope that the expected protection would be in what they, and apparently more than a few Siamese leaders as well, considered to be the comparatively benevolent hands of England, rather than what was expected to be a harsher tutelage by France.

Only Rolin-Jaequemyns had, it would seem, the faith throughout that Siam would be able to escape all such European domination. He worked ardently and conscientiously to do everything he could to see her through, dying in 1902, still "in harness," engaged even from his deathbed in advising King Chulalongkorn and his chief princely advisers, Princes Devawongse and Damrong, on the negotiations with France for the upcoming Convention of 1902. Rarely has this record of service by a European in the interest of blunting Western colonial predations been matched.

Working closely with Prince Damrong in the Interior Ministry and with Prince Devawongse at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rolin-Jaequemyns managed to implement a wide-ranging series of reforms which, known subsequently as the Chakri Reformation, provided much of the administrative backbone for the modern Thai monarchy. Concentrating above all on the modernization and rationalization of the justice system, he was able to obviate French demands for expanding the pernicious system of extraterritoriality, the first step in eroding Siam's jurisdiction over its own population and territory.

By the time of his death, Siam, though not completely out of the woods, would appear clearly to have turned the critical corner in securing its national survival. In retrospect, much of this achievement would appear to have been impossible without the expert legal and

other advice of the General Adviser. Surely, Rolin-Jaequemyns lived up to the commitment he made to King Chulalongkorn upon receiving his appointment: "I will consecrate...the whole of my faculties, experience and energy, and consider their interests as I should consider the interests of my own country. I will...be as faithful and loyal a counselor to His Majesty the King of Siam as I was to His Majesty the King of the Belgians."

Tips divides his book into seven chapters. The first, second, and final chapters relate specifically to Rolin-Jaequemyns himself: how he came to be recruited for his work in Siam; his training and previous work and achievements in Europe; his principles, both personal and juridical; and the ultimate significance of what he achieved in Siam. In a very unusual and enlightening inclusion, Tips offers in Chapter Three, entitled, "Siam at the Turn of the Century: Croquis Siamois by Charles Buls," a translation from the French of the Mayor of Brussels's detailed and insightful account, together with numerous period illustrations, of what he saw, felt, and learned in a one-month stay in Siam in early 1900 as the guest of the King. His first-hand account serves to confirm much of what we see in other chapters, where Tips has presented Rolin-Jaequemyns's and Siamese government correspondence, as well as additional archival material from both Thai and Belgian sources.

But, it is the two central chapters, entitled respectively, "Siam, Its Neighbors and the Foreign Powers" and "The General Adviser and the Chakri Reformation" which will constitute the solid core of interest for the political historian of Siam in this critical period. Herein Tips treats, in some detail, the shifting political situation, with all its trials for the Siamese, over this decade, as well as the specific nature of the reforms which Rolin-Jaequemyns, together with his Siamese colleagues, engendered and cultivated. In addition, the policies of Germany, Russia, Denmark, Japan and Belgium are adduced in the context of these events.

An additional chapter deals with other Belgians in Siam, such as Robert

Kirkpatrick, Pierre Orts, Felicien Cattier, and Corneille Schlessler, all of whom worked closely with Rolin-Jaquemyns, and King Rama V's personal physician, Dr. Eugene Reytter. In addition to its analytical and descriptive contribution to a rather little-known period in Siamese history, this volume has at least one or two additional points of value. One is that it is beautifully and bountifully illustrated with period photographs, engravings, and maps, most of which will be encountered here for the first time. The other is its most reasonable price.

The book is not without a few flaws, as anything this ambitious is unlikely to avoid. It is very dense, and will require the reader's full attention. I suspect it will be read more by scholars than by laymen, though it is well worthy of the attention of the latter as well. There are a number of typographic errors or misspellings, and the punctuation usages are sometimes slightly unusual. In addition, the book lacks an index, whose presence will perhaps be missed by the serious researcher. But, these deficiencies are, I think, far outweighed by the great value of so much carefully unearthed and generally quite well presented material, which Dr. Tips, with his unusual command of a variety of languages, including English, French, German, and of course Thai, plus his considerable familiarity with Thai history, culture, and social institutions, has gone to such exemplary efforts to make available.

DEAN MEYERS

*Sophia University
Department of Comparative Culture
Tokyo*

*Palaces of the Gods
Khmer Art and Architecture
in Thailand*

SMITTHI SIRIBHADRA

and

ELIZABETH MOORE

Photography by

MICHAEL FREEMAN

Bangkok: Asia Books

A River Books Production

1992. 352 pp. illus. c. \$1,800

This visually splendid work is also an excellent introduction to a subject that has never been treated before in so comprehensive a manner. As its title indicates it is also blessedly free of coyness, using the term 'Khmer' unblushingly and eschewing nationalistic code-words like 'Lopburi'.

It begins with a double chapter on religion and history which tells the reader enough and no more of what he needs to know about Khmer Hinduism, Buddhism and chronology in order to appreciate the finer points of the art and architecture. The next chapter continues the theme of Khmer art in further detail, covering construction techniques and the development of decoration and sculpture in stone and bronze.

The authors then proceed to deal with a broad selection of important Khmer temples in Thailand, including some like Phimai and Phanom Rung that are well known and others like the fascinating and early Prasat Khao Noi in Prachinburi that was only recently discovered. Their treatment is thorough and covers construction techniques, religious orientation, decoration and dating. Notes on how additions and alterations accumulated at some sites are insightful. However, there is no mention of the peculiar situation pertaining at Phanom Wan where the construction of the present sandstone monument appears to have wiped out a series of small brick shrines such as one finds at temples in Kerala. The brick foundations of the earlier shrines are still visible, some partly obliterated by the later stonework. Furthermore, the stone Prakara stands on a brick foundation,

not an order one would expect. Something similar seems to have occurred at Phanom Rung, where the ruins of two small brick shrines still stand to the north of the Mandapa and the foundations of another are visible to the south. Presumably the present Vimana covers an earlier central brick shrine. The immense sanctity of that spot would help explain the architectural mistake of the Mandapa being built smack up against the eastern Gopura. Had the earlier brick shrine been less sacred, then the later stone Vimana might have been located further to the west (there was plenty of room on the hilltop), thus providing a dignified vista between the eastern Gopura and the Mandapa, such as we see at Phimai.

Some omissions from the selection of monuments are curious. No mention is made of Sithep, Lopburi or Phetburi, although Muang Sing in Kanchanaburi is given careful attention. The latter is of particular interest in that it had an extremely tall eastern Gopura, probably taller than the Vimana. Such a feature occurs at no other Khmer temple, but it was beginning to occur at that time (late 12th-early 13th c.) in South India towards the end of the Chola period. As Muang Sing seems to have been located so far west in order to guard and sanctify a trade route to the west coast, one might suspect some South Indian input here. The authors rightly deplore how the Gopura has been shortened and incorrectly reconstructed by the authorities.

The authors' perception of South Indian inspiration for the Dancing Shivas at Phimai and Phanom Rung is satisfying as earlier commentators seem to have supposed that those with more than two pairs of arms were strictly of northern origin, probably because the popularity of the four-armed Chidambaram Dancer tends to blind one to the existence of other forms of Dancing Shiva in the South. The presence of the skeletal Karaikkal Ammaiyyar in both pediments confirms the southern connection. One might also note that the Dancing Shivas have been localized to Southeast Asia in that they bear no attributes in their hands, but gesture like local dancers.

I feel that something more might have been made of South Indian inspiration, as the Khmer Prasada is, like its Dravidian counterpart, a stepped pyramid. Its apparently smooth outline is an illusion caused by the placement of antefixes which carry the eye up tier-by-tier without a visible break.

The photography is uniformly good. The temptation to print a spectacular picture right across two pages (so that the important bit gets lost in the binding) has been resisted except in a couple of trying instances. Some pictures are printed smaller than need be, which is a pity. For instance, the picture on p. 112 of the Svayambhu Linga in the Garbha Briha at Ta Muan Thom could have been nearly twice the size, as it deserves to be. All Khmer temples in Cambodia and Thailand were long ago vandalized, so no Linga has ever been found *in situ* until this instance, where the debris of the superstructure seem to have tumbled down in such a way as to obstruct entry to the inner chamber. The discovery in 1992 of a Linga *in situ*, and a Svayambhuva Linga at that, is thus dramatic.

Despite its coffee table size this work is an essential handbook to the Khmer ruins of Thailand, and it will not easily be surpassed.

MICHAEL WRIGHT

c/o The Siam Society

Modern Art in Thailand

APINAN POSHYANANDA

Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

259 pp. illus. S\$110

This handsome volume is the distillation in print of Apinan's doctoral thesis at Cornell, and provides a comprehensive survey of painting and sculpture in Thailand from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. It is

essentially concerned with the assimilation of western artistic influences and the crafting of a non-traditionalist response to these.

Thailand's undisputed artistic heritage from the past is evident in temple wall paintings and religious sculpture, both three dimensional and relief. Apinan carefully explores the modernizing influences on this past from the fourth reign, and is very detailed in his examination of the role of Italian painters, sculptors and architects in this respect. None were perhaps great artists, but their presence in Bangkok was seminal, well brought out by one photograph of Ferro painting a portrait of King Chulalongkorn in 1906 at the Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall, with a few feet away the Thai artist Mui (Luang Soralakikhit) also at work on a portrait of the king.

The presence of Corrado Feroci (Silpa Bhirasri) from 1923 until his death in 1962 was of major importance, as most people are aware. Apinan covers all the aspects of Feroci's work, and makes interesting comparisons between the monumental statuary required for commissions like the Democracy Monument and the Victory Monument reliefs and Fascist sculpture of the 1920s and 1930s. Perhaps because dwarfed by Feroci's standing, or the weight of past traditions, Thai sculptors, with a few exceptions, have not usually made much impact, though Chalood Nimsamer's recent 'Lokuttara' at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre has many admirers.

It may come as a surprise to some readers that the Department of Fine Arts and the Poh Chang (Arts and Crafts School) were founded as long ago as 1912 and 1913 respectively. Silapakorn University is the Cinderella, dating from 1942, but goes back to the founding of the School of Fine Arts in 1933. Annual art exhibitions (later, inevitably, the cause of some controversies) were instituted in 1937 but were not made into national exhibitions until 1949. Artists like Fua Haribhitak and Sawasdee Tantisuk went to Europe in the 1950s, absorbed current modes, and returned to inspire the rising generation, including Damrong Wong-Upparaj,

Anand Panin, Tawee Nandakwang, Praphan Srisouta and Pichai Nirand, who helped give rise to the great flowering of art exhibitions (and also art criticism) in the 1960s.

The influence of the United States on Thai art was to come rather late, towards the end of the 1960s. Apinan follows through the work of artists preferring abstract and non-figurative forms and devotes a chapter to what he terms thematic art, particularly the mythological and surrealistic. He gives very generous coverage to the forceful works of Thawan Duchanee in this section, though in plate 100 it is impossible from the illustration to detect a gorilla inside the ubosot, burglars and monks stealing religious objects or Buddha images inside a toad, all of which Apinan tells us are to be seen in Thawan's oil. His descriptions of Angkarn Kalayanapongsa's work owe much to Freudian interpretations, but one searches in vain in, for example, plate 99, for the fangs, animal's head, penis and "the meaning of erection and masturbation".

The upheavals of the 1970s left their mark, though not many of the politically inspired works could be considered great art. Pratuang Emjaroen's painting was considered leftist but he withstood the storm, and Thammasak Booncherd worked in cartoons. The consumerism and boom times (in Bangkok at least) of the 1980s were to produce a different artistic climate.

Apinan's Chapter 7, 'Taste, Value and Commodity', discusses the influence of corporate patronage of artists in this more affluent period. Such patronage and the Bua Luang exhibitions of traditional and contemporary paintings led to a revival of traditional Thai painting and even to the establishment of a Department of Thai Art at Silapakorn University. The leading protagonists, Chalermchai Kositpipat and Panya Vijinthanasarn, received their commission to decorate the London Buddhist temple, with astonishing results that showed "neo-conservatism reigned supreme, and a sense of revitalization and cultural change was pervasive". But Apinan at first offers only indirect comments on the artistic qualities of the

'new traditional style'. Mixing his metaphors, he finds the work of Preecha Thaothong and Surasit Saowakong escapist commodities and "serve as a psychological band-aid for corporate patrons and collectors who wish for an instant shot of religion and national identity". More tellingly labelled revivalist art, strongly supported by banks and hotels, it can be seen as a reaction to western influences which dominated until recently. Apinan finally shows he has little time for it; it has "the numbness of repetition" and its protagonists "fit snugly in the niche of institutional art".

Komol Tassanachalee and Prawat Laucharoen offer more recent modernist links with past themes, and Apinan's conclusion is upbeat: in 1991 the art scene "looks bright and promising", the synthesis of past and present, local and international, "characterizes the eclecticism which remains the trademark of modern art in Thailand."

This detailed overview of the art scene from the 1850s to 1991 is on the whole written without too much arty claptrap, though it would be interesting to know what exactly is meant by "cosmic interrelatedness" and "the tactile surface creates a liquid field". Apinan is no purist and relishes split infinitives, talks of "intersecting questions" and of a government "faced with an unstable political climate" (how does a government face a climate?), and of an exhibition being "curated" (a verb form of the curate's egg?). His French too can be wobbly (e.g. *chavalier*, *forêt*, *Sèvre*). But he also has some neat phrases, as when he notes "By creating 'high art' for the easy consumption of the *nouveau riche* and consumer culture, numerous Thai artists are forced through the motion of self-censorship to be part of the norm".

A few parts of the presentation could be improved. Using regal names, numbered reigns and Rama titles interchangeably will surely confuse non-specialist readers. Sawasdee Tantisuk was promoted to be director of the College of Fine Arts in 1960, we are informed, but we are not told what this college is and how it fits into the other art training establishments. It would

incidentally be useful to know exactly how many art schools there are now, where they are, and what is their current throughput of graduate artists. In the text, we are told "dignitaries" such as M.L. Pin Malakul, Pote Sarasin, Khuning Chongkol Kittikachorn, Tej Bunnag and Thana Poshyananda attended an exhibition of Piriya Krairiksh at the Siam Society in 1963, but only those familiar with Bangkok society are likely to know who they are, and none make the index. Although Prince Karawik Chakrabhandu is noted as attending an exhibition, he is not mentioned as an accomplished watercolourist in his own right. It would also be interesting to know why the project for the Taksin monument was postponed from 1937 to 1950; presumably the war years had something to do with it. Hopefully most of the captions to the illustrations are correct; that for Damrong, though, in the collection of your reviewer (plate 64) is on board, not canvas, and was painted in 1960, not 1956. The bibliography is comprehensive, and includes no less than 52 articles of the author, both using his own name and his *nom de guerre*, Nanipa, but there is no indication there that Corrado Feroci and Silpa Bhirasri are one and the same person.

Now that so many Thai artists have returned from studying abroad and have seen how the international art world functions, it is to be hoped that the problems pointed to by this reviewer in the mid-1960s and quoted in this book have by and large ceased to exist, and in the 1990s a thoroughly professional approach prevails. Apinan hints that fake Gucci bags and Cardin watches have their equivalent in the art world, "commodities that simulate the originals but which lack creative imagination", but he takes the point no further than a well-deserved swipe at the "pseudo-post-modern facades" found in contemporary Bangkok architecture.

Whether the state of modern art is as healthy as we are led to believe is doubtful, with the closure of the Silpa Bhirasri Foundation, which was so slow to get off the ground and which reached its apogee under the able direction of Chartvichai Promadhattavedi. The

cramped National Art Gallery in the old mint is no substitute, and the various institutions, Silapakorn included, do not by themselves have the ability to crossfertilize and interact with each other.

As a summary of the art scene from its beginnings in the last century, generously illustrated by 64 colour and 150 black and white illustrations, there is nothing to which to compare this book, and it is likely to be an indispensable work of reference to future researchers and art lovers.

MICHAEL SMITHIES
c/o The Siam Society

*A New Earth:
Covenanting for Justice, Peace
and the
Integrity of Creation*

DAVID GOSLING
London: CCBI, Inter-Church House
1992. 108 pp.

Buffeted by the chaos of the emerging world disorder and its attendant ethno-religious conflicts and cleansing, one cannot help but rejoice at the ethical and intellectual reflections of Dr. David Gosling as he describes and analyzes recent efforts, focused on environmental issues, to combat dissension, conflict and discrimination and achieve lasting peace and justice. In his new book, *A New Earth: Covenanting for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, Dr. Gosling uses, as his point of departure, the growing concern of the church with environmental issues as dramatically given voice in the covenant of more than three hundred mainly Protestant churches, in Vancouver, Canada in 1983, to "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation." As a nuclear scientist, cleric and Director of the Church and Society sub-unit of the World Council of Churches, the author is uniquely qualified to examine the challenges posed by the inter-linked issues of environment, justice and peace,

and the response on the part of the ecumenical Christian movement.

Dr. Gosling provides us with a clear exposition of an emerging Christian interpretation of nature and humanity as inexorably linked, interdependent, and interrelated; every creature in a communion and community of being, part of a totality, a single integrated whole with God as Creator and Peace-Maker. Only if man and nature are understood in this framework of unity, can one pursue the structural social, economic and political changes, so necessary to assure environmental well-being, justice and peace. It is in the context of the symbiotic linkage of environment, justice and peace that Dr. Gosling examines such issues as Third World debt; militarism; the armaments race; nuclear testing; health problems; work ethic; the unequal distribution of the world's wealth, etc.

For a Buddhist reader, Dr. Gosling's ruminations often sound a familiar chord. Buddhism has always stressed the concordant, interdependent relationship of humanity and nature, the intrinsic value of all transient beings. Man must not dominate or control nature but rather live in harmony with it. Dr. Gosling points up the insights of other religions, and even animism, in interpreting the relationships of humanity and nature.

The author has a commendable breadth of vision and perspective which enables him to profit from the insights of other faiths and cultures. He strongly advocates regional-based responses and solutions drawing on the local wisdom of indigenous religions and cultural beliefs.

In early chapters of his book, Dr. Gosling details environmental crises in such areas as Africa, Asia and Latin America and analyzes the responses of the Church to such diverse problem areas as deforestation; marine pollution; computer technology and the micro-electronic industry; the industrial disaster at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India; nuclear testing and fallout in the Marshall Islands; and aboriginal land rights. And he again focuses on the inevitable linkage of environmental damage and degradation to

the injustice done to disadvantaged groups and to the resulting state of hostility, conflict and tension.

While all religions are going through their own variations of *aggiornamento*, of change, reform and renewal, so as to be responsive to and maintain their relevance vis-a-vis fast-paced social, economic and political changes in today's world, the scope, extent, and vitality of the debate on issues of reform, responsiveness and relevance within the Christian church is quite remarkable.

One cannot help but be somewhat astounded by the myriad caucuses, consultations, symposia, conferences, convocations and assemblies, described with much sympathy and insight by Dr. Gosling, that the ecumenical movement has undertaken to confront problems and crises posed by various aspects of environmental degradation and related issues of injustice and conflict.

As I perused Dr. Gosling's *New Earth*, I was confronted by a new vocabulary with such terms as integrity of creation, panentheism, eco-justice, *shalom*, concilia, kenosis, foundational, healing community, theocentric ethics, etc. Dr. Gosling is to be complimented for not only making us familiar with but also carefully explaining and interpreting this new terminology so necessary to properly understand the debates now under way within the Christian ecumenical movement. However, there are other words, cropping up again and again in Dr. Gosling's expositions, which are more familiar to the Buddhist reader: sharing, caring, compassion, solidarity, consensus, community.

And Dr. Gosling's final plea, albeit couched in Christian phraseology, to become co-workers, co-creators with God in His creative activity, goes beyond any one religious framework as the author further exhorts us to move away from individualism and self-centered competition towards interdependence and solidarity. Only then will disparate communities, drawing on their own unique knowledge, values and experience, have the will to find common solutions, through concerted action, to the pressing problems they face, including those associated with the pres-

ervation and conservation of our environment.

Dr. Gosling, while possessing the intellectual attributes of the scientist, philosopher, theologian and scholar is not content with ivory tower reflections. At heart, he is an activist, motivated by his moral and ethical convictions and determined by his engagement to make the world we live in a more environmentally benign, just and peaceful place. Certainly, with the publication of "The New Earth", Dr. Gosling is making his own vibrant voice and that of the World Council of Churches ecumenical movement heard and hopefully listened to.

I would, without reservation, commend this book to all concerned with the vexing question of the relevance of religion to the environmental crises and concomitant issues of justice and peace confronting the world today.

WILLIAM J. KLAUSNER

Chulalongkorn University