

Reviews

Regions and National Integration in Thailand 1892–1992

Volker Grabowsky, ed.

(Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995)

This volume consists of papers presented at the sixth International Symposium on Southeast Asian Studies at Passau University. The editor, Volker Grabowsky, notes in the concise and informative introduction to the collection the importance of national integration in the newly independent Southeast Asian states; primarily the restructuring of centralized bureaucracies and the promotion of national cultures by the elites. After a brief allusion to a lack of successful “nation building” in Laos, Indonesia, and Burma, Thailand is then introduced as the focus of the conference. As the uniquely never colonized state in the region, the question is raised whether Thailand had experienced similar problems in its national integration and, if so, how solutions to them had been found.

The conference participants chose 1892 as the point of departure for their discussions. That year marked the introduction of a westernized, provincial administration in the country under the control of the Ministry of the Interior. Thailand’s three outer regions, Lān Nā or the North, Isan or the Northeast, and the Malay South were also chosen as the focus of the conference. The author notes that the usual focus of Thai history are the four Siamese (Central Thai) empires; Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok, but avers that by examining the uniqueness of the local traditions of the three outer regions, “the history of Thailand itself gains a more complete and balanced shape.”

Hans Penth’s historical overview opens the discussion of North Thailand with *A Brief History of Lān Nā*. The work is as brief as the title implies, but complete, and wisely avoids duplicating historical facts and details concerning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries developed by later authors.

Harald Uhlig’s erudite geographical overview of the North, *Northern Thailand: The Natural Region and the Cultural Landscape*, bristles with technical terms, but provides a clear explanation and useful contrast of landform, cultivation type, and ethnic diversity which have influenced the patterns of national integration in the North.

Notions of Equity in Lan Na: Insights from Literary Sources, by Harald Hundius, demonstrates convincingly the past existence of a more equitable social contract

between rulers and the ruled in Lān Nā than existed in Siam at the end of the nineteenth century, for examples of literature in the Northern Thai language and script argue for their use as convincing research sources in future scholarly investigations of Lān Nā.

M.R. Rujaya Abhakorn and David Wyatt's article, *Administrative Reforms and National Integration in Northern Thailand*, is a lucidly argued piece which clearly lays out the political, cultural, and economic implications of the loss of power and influence of the royal houses of the northern states with the imposition of the new national administrative system from the center in 1892. A good deal of historical ground is covered succinctly, with excellent discussions of the problems of the North sharing borders with two acquisitive colonial powers, the priorities of Bangkok in the process of administrative reform, and the ultimate integration of the North into a Thai nation-state.

Thanet Charoenmuang's article on the decline of the use of *Kam Müang*, or Northern Thai, in the North, *When the Young Cannot Speak Their Own Mother Tongue: Explaining a Legacy of Cultural Domination in Lan Na*, provides a somewhat uneven discussion of influential factors concerning the decline of the local language leading to some one-sided conclusions.

His historical discussion of the annexation of the North into the new administrative system of Siam after 1892, and the subsequent emphasis on the Central Thai language as the medium of instruction in schools and in regional administration, is straightforward. However, the conclusion that the influx of outsiders into the North resulting from increasing economic development since 1961, and the keen competition among students for entrance into desirable schools and universities which requires superior Central Thai fluency and literacy, has led to a generation of children ignorant of their mother tongue, might have some validity as an urban phenomenon. But this ignores the continued use of *Kam Müang* in the rural sector and the resurgence of interest in the local script and other factors.

The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand: Current Trends and Problems of Their Integration into the Modern Thai Nation, by Roland Mischung, which rounds out that regional discussion, is both cogent and informative. The author concisely describes the ethnic diversity of the various hill tribes in the North, their varying historical roles locally, and the contemporary problems of lowlanders' attitudes towards them; i.e. the problems of swiddening and land tenure, the provision of citizenship, and the integration of the hill tribes into the national polity.

Editor Grabowsky's contribution, *The Isan up to its Integration into the Siamese State*, as the historical introduction to Thailand's Northeast Region, or Isan, is a work of undeniable erudition which displays the author's deep, scholarly knowledge of the subject matter. Its academic denseness, and focused attention to certain specialized problems within the time frame covered, make it more suitable for specialists, rather than a general historical introduction to the problems of national integration of the Northeast.

The "Problem Region" Northeastern Thailand, Harald Uhlig's second geographic contribution to the proceedings, is as learned and informative as his article concerning the North, even if it suffers from a more uneven editing of the English. The discussion of climatic, geographic, and environmental factors which adversely affect agriculture, and contribute to deforestation, overpopulation, uneven rainfall, and saline ground water, is especially good and concise. The description of the prevailing rice culture in the Northeast, however, might be slightly confusing to the uninitiated reader.

The Administrative Reforms and National Integration: The Case of the Northeast, by Acharn Paitoon Mikusol, provides an interesting and detailed description of the Lao vassal state administrative system and the new Siamese administrative system which replaced it. However, the article suffers from a rather haphazard use and explanation of native terms, uneven English editing, and, most noticeably, the lack of a bibliography of sources used. The pat conclusion that the acceptance of the King, Country, and Religion concept by the northeastern people after the administrative change has led to the integration of Isan nationally seems somewhat at odds with the conclusions of the authors of papers which follow.

Dr. Charles Keys uses his long field research experience and scholarly interest in the Thai Northeast to good effect in his article, *Hegemony and Resistance in Northeastern Thailand*. The argument for the evolution of an Isan identity against the Siamese center, which looks down on the Isan population as backward, in a time frame ranging from the incorporation of Isan into the Interior Ministry administration system up to the Pak Mool Dam protest which continues still, is convincing.

Regional Identity versus National Integration — Contemporary Patterns of Modernization in Northeastern Thailand, by Hans U. Luther, concerns itself with many pressing contemporary issues such as political corruption, environmental degradation, uneven economic development, etc. facing northeastern Thai-

land, but could have done so more effectively. Issues are presented in a way which require considerable background knowledge concerning Thailand to understand the ramifications of the problems dealt with and their importance to the Northeast. This would make it difficult for such scholarship to appeal to a non-specialist readership. Much of the data and conclusions in the article would have benefited from more adequate references and there is no bibliography to help the reader.

Ahmad Idris' introductory article, *Tradition and Cultural Background of the Patani Region*, provides a clear and well laid-out discussion of the historical and socio-cultural background of the Malay South. Special emphasis is given to Patani as a center of Islamic importance in peninsular history, and the distinct persistence of an Islamic and Malay socio-cultural orientation within the majority population of the region. The discussion is succinct and provides an excellent introduction to the papers which follow.

Southern Thailand and its Border Provinces, Harald Uhlig's geographic overview of the South, provides the reader with a wealth of background information concerning the physical geography, climate, demography, cash and subsistence agriculture, and economic pursuits in the South. It lacks, however, the tight organization of the author's other two articles in this volume.

The presentation throughout the article of a recurring theme of the contrasts between the eastern and western coasts of the narrow peninsula, and how these influence climate, settlement patterns, agriculture, and other factors, is especially effective. The description of the economy of the region, including rubber cultivation, tin mining, the rise and decline of trawler fishing, and the rising importance of aquaculture, is detailed and informative.

The piece would have benefitted from closer editing of the English, as errors of both grammar and spelling can be found.

W.K. Che Man's contribution, *National Integration and Resistance Movement: The Case of Muslims in Southern Thailand*, not only provides a well-delineated overview of the Islamic resistance movements in South Thailand, but also makes cogent reference to larger social theory. The introduction provides a concise, clear definition of the variety of types of minority populations, making reference to the Moros of the Philippines, and Thai Malays as those "hitherto autonomous communities under foreign domination."

After examining arguments for the persistence of ethnicity among such minority populations which might give rise to resistance movements, the author provides a historical overview of Thai policy towards the integration of the South into the Thai nation-state, from the reign of King Chulalongkorn to the present. The phases of policy implemented, which the author argues, taken as a whole, can be characterized as "internal colonialization of the worst sort," range from the replacement of the Malay rajas with Thai governors and the abolition of Islamic law, to various customary and educational reforms which undermined the influence of traditional Malay culture and the Islamic faith.

After an examination of the history, ideology, and variety of the various Islamic insurgencies in the South, the author concludes that the process of national integration may bring some Southerners into the mainstream. However, while the government tries to redress problems and the separatist movement through socioeconomic means, the Thai Malays will still view it as an ethnic, religious and nationalist problem.

The volume concludes with two articles summarizing the national perspective of integration. *National Integration: Summary and Perspectives for the Future*, by Ekavidaya Nathalang, announces that the intention of the paper is to examine the positive and negative phenomena of integration and their effects on modern Thai society, both regionally and nationally. This intent is fulfilled clearly, effectively and honestly.

Among the positive issues examined are the ascendancy of the kings of the Chakri Dynasty as living national symbols, and the foundation of the Interior Ministry, the departure point for the articles in this volume. A concise argument is presented that the central administration of the Interior Ministry and other policies of King Chulalongkorn helped to insure the survival of Thailand as the only uncolonized state in mainland Southeast Asia.

Negative aspects examined include the 'top down' nature of the centralized administration and the domination of Bangkok as the metropolitan center of the nation. The effects of these, and other factors discussed, include the gravitation of the best and brightest in Thai society to Bangkok, the marginalization of regional cultures, the resentment toward centralized revenue collection, and the granting of foreign concessions for the exploitation of local natural resources.

The conclusion effectively ties up the various factors of national integration—with reference to issues raised in other papers in the collection—in the context of Thailand as a modern nation-state in both a regional and international context.

As with other papers in this work, more effective editing of the English would have improved this article.

The final article in the collection, *Thailand's Cultural Relations with Its Neighbors*, by Khien Theeravit, provides an interesting, if brief, discussion of many aspects of this specific side of Thailand's international relations with its immediate neighbors. Topics covered include cultural relations, information and art exchanges, religion, ethnic minorities and relations with their countries of origin, cultural relations, and trends for regional integration, and finally internal implications.

Externally, the author discusses the use of cultural relations as a "lubricant for trade," and the negative reactions of some neighboring countries to Thailand's "cultural imperialism" following in the wake of trade in the region. Internally, it is suggested that the Thai government has become more accepting of cultural pluralism, and has softened its stance on former programs designed to enforce cultural conformity. Examples are cited, such as the change in prevailing terminology from "Malay Muslims" to "Thai Muslims."

Taken overall, this volume succeeds in its two stated intentions. It provides a varied, but cohesive, discussion of the various patterns of national integration in Thailand's three outer regions since the implementation of administrative reform in 1892, and it succeeds also in the editor's stated goal of giving the history of Thailand "a more complete and balanced shape." The sixteen articles are all the result of a fairly consistent high standard of scholarly enquiry. The inclusion of summary articles concerning the human geography of the three regions is especially effective.

The volume includes a glossary of native terms included in the various articles in the collection. While informative to the non-Thai speaking reader, it is somewhat hit and miss in its inclusion of all terms included in the collection. The only noteworthy drawback to this excellent presentation of an interesting aspect of Thai history is the seemingly negligent editing of the English in some of the contributions.

Richard P. Lando,
Chiang Mai, September 1995.

Ombres Siamoises

Morgan Sportès

Paris: Editions Mobius/Hristo Botrev, n.d. [1994], pp. 166, 96 colour and b/w illustrations, ISBN 2-950-8681, FF. 249.

Morgan Sportès' latest book follows hard on the heels of his very successful novel *Pour la plus grande gloire de Dieu* ("For the greater glory of God"), which dealt with the fiasco of the French attempted takeover of Siam in 1688, and which was published by Seuil in 1993. The new publication is clearly meant to be a scholarly sequel to the novel, coming with 273 footnotes, a copious bibliography, and a wealth of supportive illustrations.

Sportès clearly subscribes to the conspiracy theory: there must have been other motives for this imbroglio other than those which appear obvious. With the Jesuits heavily involved in the affair, hints of collusion and cabal thicken the air. Sportès is not the first to have noted the Jesuit attempt, after the assassination of the Greek upstart Phaulkon, to portray him in numerous published works as a saint, a martyr to the cause of Catholicism, which he clearly was not.

He makes several good points along the line. The rivalries and hatreds are underlined between the French Missionary Catholics (that is, the *Société des Missions Etrangères*), headed by Monseigneur Laneau, appointed by the Pope Bishop of Metellopolis and Apostolic Vicar, and the French Jesuit Catholics, owing allegiance to their order in Rome which was opposed to the Missionaries and was supported by Louis XIV (who was frequently at loggerheads with Pope Innocent XI) through his confessor Father de la Chaise.

The hostility of the Portuguese to the Missionaries was another divisive element in the equation. Under the *Padroado*, Portugal had been given charge of the evangelization of Asia, a task the small (and by the mid-seventeenth century exhausted) country was incapable of performing. Not only did the French Jesuits refuse submission to the Pope's envoy, but so did the Jesuits of other nationalities (Italian, Flemish, etc.) and the Portuguese adherents of other orders (including the Dominicans).

The sending of six French Jesuit mathematicians to China, at the request of the Fleming Verbiest in Peking, in 1685, was done almost by subterfuge, and possibly without the express agreement of Charles de Noyelle, the Jesuit General in Rome. Whatever the case, one sent, Tachard, was never to go beyond Siam, and was to become a thorn in the side of the French Missionaries in the country, as well as an object of repugnance and even loathing to the French envoys in the 1687 mission of La Loubère and Céberet.

At the same time, one has to bear in mind the Catholic proselytizing fervour in France. Pressures to conform became ever stronger. In 1685, the very day the French ambassador, Chaumont, was in Ayutthaya publicly seeking the conversion of King Narai, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes giving Protestants freedom of worship in France, leading to the great Huguenot exodus to the detriment of the economy of the country.

One of the points made by Sportès is that Phaulkon was “catholique à sa naissance.” This is not so certain. He came from Argostolion on Cephalonia, one of the Ionian isles which, at the time, was under Venetian occupation, but he may well have been raised in the Greek Orthodox church before going to England, most likely as a cabin-boy, and joining the East India Company, in the employ of which he found it expedient to become an Anglican Protestant. He clearly regarded religion with the same expediency as Henri IV (“Paris is worth a mass”), and his cultivation of the Jesuits and conversion (or reversion) to Catholicism was another calculated move. An interesting one, since (though Sportès does not say this) he clearly saw power with the Jesuits; as a foreigner, at that time, he could not, or at least did not, consider a conversion to Buddhism a practical proposition.

A good point made by Sportès is that the religious agreement reached by the Chaumont–Choisy embassy of 1685 concerning Christians in Siam could not be published because King Narai was, at the time, attempting to curb the privileges of Buddhist monks, notably their exemption to the *corvée*; La Loubère noted the King had defrocked 6-7,000 monks, and Phaulkon said the King had removed 700 in one day, and 10,000 of their disciples.

Phaulkon’s plan, Sportès maintains, was to people Siam with ordinary Frenchmen, who would be given land, houses and cattle, to create small colonies and, in times of trouble, constitute a Christian army. At the same time, persons of rank and quality, including Jesuits in disguise, would be given, after learning the language, positions of importance as governors of provinces, generals in the army, etc., and would be directly responsible to Phaulkon, as their Catholicism could influence the nobility. Sportès cites the original of the plan, in Portuguese, addressed at the same time to the Pope, Louis XIV, Father de la Chaise, and Father de Noyelles, the Jesuit General in Rome, in the Archives Nationales in Paris.

Of course, King Narai in no way knew of Phaulkon’s plan. He certainly was aware of the power of the Dutch; they had seized control of—and ruined—Bantam (which Sportès throughout spells Bentam, and not the current Indonesian form, Bantem) in 1682, and had blockaded in the Chao Phraya in 1663, early in his reign, after the announcement of a royal monopoly on Siamese exports.

But it probably suited Phaulkon to play on this and exaggerate the Dutch menace. Narai had no sons to succeed him, had distanced his half-brothers from the throne, and raised Mom Pi, his favourite and widely regarded as his chosen successor, in the court. Sportès considers Narai too Macchiavellian and wily to be duped by Phaulkon, and that it suited the King to let the French believe he might consider conversion in order to have a counterweight to Dutch power in Batavia.

Tachard saw a wider perspective. Sportès cites a letter to Father Verjus, written in 1688: "The Indies will soon almost all be able to convert to Christianity when they have become French" (Sportès puts in bold the last phrase, without indicating that is his editing of the text rather than Tachard's emphasis). Siam was to be conquered, no doubt of that. Jacq-Hergoualc'h made this point clear in his notes in *Etude historique et critique du 'Journal du Voyage de Siam' de Claude Cèberet, Envoyé extraordinaire du Roi en 1687 et 1688*.

But Sportès has other texts up his sleeve. Among them, he notes the publication in 1699 of *Les amusements comiques et sérieux* of Charles-Rivière du Fresny, a novel concerning a Siamese mandarin who lands in Paris, and observes with surprise and curiosity the strange habits of the French; the book apparently went through several editions and inspired Montesquieu for his *Lettres Persanes*.

To return to the thread of Sportès' argument: colonization was, therefore, given priority over evangelization. The error of the French, he maintains, was to make a foreigner the linch-pin of the grand design, and not a native (as did the Dutch in Bantem). Phaulkon, though a minister, depended entirely on the good will of King Narai, who could remove him from power at any moment. Moreover, having foreigners in his employ and pliant to his will allowed the King to avoid the mandarin and his family members, who could always establish, if they thought fit, rival foci of power. The King ruled by encouraging court rivalries and pitching potential opponents against each other, whether Siamese or foreign; he also, as Forbin makes clear, ruled by fear.

Sportès, on several occasions, talks of "les pirates anglais" installed by Phaulkon in Mergui, but curiously never mentions these freebooter adventurers by name, Burnaby and White, whose activities have been carefully chronicled by Hutchinson. They were, moreover, licensed pirates, approved (when it suited him) by Phaulkon.

Bangkok was the key to the kingdom. Mergui was desired as a place to land goods from India and transport them overland to the entrepot of Ayutthaya, whence they would be carried in Chinese, Dutch or other bottoms to the Far East, and vice versa. The force sent under Desfarges in 1687 was to seize, if

necessary by force, those places. Colonization before conversion. Tachard followed this through. The fleet bringing the troops and the ambassadors was to be divided, Tachard was to go ahead, together with the French envoys on the *Oiseau*, to confer with Phaulkon, leaving behind, on one of the other four vessels in the fleet, the Siamese ambassadors headed by Kosa Pan, who had been kept in the dark on the secret negotiations conducted by Tachard in Paris but had begun to perceive the French plan.

The massacre of the English "pirates" in Mergui in 1687 was thought by some (including the directors of Fort St George in Madras) to be the work of Phaulkon. But in many ways, it was only a prelude to the attempted massacre of the French at the same place a year later. The Mergui incident, which followed the uprising of the Makassars in 1686, indicated that all was not well beneath the surface in Siam. The mandarinat was resentful of the foreigners, and the people were crushed between *corvée* labour, slavery and heavy taxation (these sources of the King's wealth are all detailed in *La Loubère*), and survived in misery under a "rapacious, unproductive, and corrupt bureaucracy." Many escaped to the forests, and *La Loubère* made the telling point that "The forest could not be so dangerous as was said since so many families sought refuge there from the authorities." The King and Phaulkon monopolized trade, foreign merchants found it no longer profitable to trade in Ayutthaya, and even the King's daughter, the Princess Queen Yothathep, complained of having her revenues reduced by the imposition of paternal monopoly and a reduction of personnel by the taking of her *phrai* to serve in the war with Cambodia.

Sportès rightly points to the contradictions between all the printed sources, and also between the unpublished letters and the printed texts. Among the relevant documents cited is a curious letter from Father Fontaney in numerical code to Father Verjus; Fontaney, although a Jesuit, was beginning to doubt the wisdom of Tachard's involvement in Siamese affairs. Sportès considers why Phaulkon, taken by surprise at the appearance of so many troops under Desfarges' command, allowed them to disembark. He concludes Phaulkon felt he could not do otherwise, but then proceeded slowly to dismember the force by sending some troops to Lopburi, some to Bangkok, retaining some in Mergui, having others as special guards, yet more on board the newly commissioned ships *Siam* and *Louvo*.

How did Phaulkon make Tachard so pliant to his will as to serve as his secretary and transmit orders to his cook, asks Sportès? Was it that he promised the ruin of the Missionaries?

A secret article was appended to the treaty signed by the French envoys in 1687 and Phaulkon: that, in the event of the death of the present minister of Siam,

a Frenchman, chosen by the French King, would replace him. In the first version of the treaty of 1687 in the Archives Nationales, the Jesuits were allowed a political role. This was suppressed when examined before ratification. Yet, it is interesting to note that the demands of the envoys, La Loubère and Céberet, were considered by Phaulkon excessive and liable to lead to a revolution which would result in his death (Jacq Herougalc'h's edition of Céberet, p. 72).

But Tachard overreached himself, even for the French. In an anonymous Missionary-inspired document, "Mémoire venu du Siam," in the Archives Nationales, it was decided at the time of the disembarkation of the French troops at Bangkok "to send Father Tachard back to Europe so as to separate him from my Lord Constance." Tachard was either considered embarrassing to the French cause at this stage or even dangerous to French success, Sportès remarks.

Whether Phaulkon decided to reduce the French troops in number on his own account or on the orders of the King or Petracha is unknown. But Sportès makes little of the point made by other commentators that Phaulkon's power was in decline from the beginning of 1688. His enemies were becoming stronger and he was having to accommodate them. Sportès then divides the texts into those non-French and French, and examines the contradictions in the turning point of the drama at the end of March 1688: Desfarges' disobeying Phaulkon's order, conveyed by two Jesuit priests serving as witnesses and interpreters, to go back to Bangkok and return to Lopburi with a hundred of his best soldiers.

The details of the outcome of his inaction are well known. Tachard lived to return to Siam, one of the few who did. In Siam all that remains of the costly adventure is a number of illustrations of French cavaliers of the seventeenth century, which are well illustrated in Jacq-Hergoualc'h's book *L'Europe et le Siam du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle: Apports culturels* (Paris, 1993), not mentioned in Sportès' bibliography, and are here still more profusely illustrated. A pity, though, about the cover having the same illustration as Van der Cruysse's book *Louis XIV et le Siam* of 1991, and a pity, too, that some of the more striking prints reproduced, like the capture by the Dutch of Singalese forts, are not relevant.

There are some very curious and apparently previously unpublished "Jesuit watercolours" from the Bibliothèque Nationale included in the book, including one showing the siege of the French fort at Bangkok. One though is incorrectly identified, or rather the word *tabanque* is erroneously interpreted. The subscription to the original illustration, reproduced by Sportès, is that a *tabanque* was a light structure built along the banks of the river and used as a temporary dwelling for the French ambassadors. This is not so. There were only two *Tabanque* marked on maps, one in Ayutthaya and one below Bangkok. The word came from the Portuguese *tabanaca*, which itself was a corruption of the Malay term for custom house, *pabean*. Both the Jesuits and Sportès are wrong in this regard.

There are many points where this text departs from the scholarly tradition it seeks to emulate. Mention had already been made of giving emphasis in a text not in the original, without making it clear. Occasionally, statements by the author are followed by up to three exclamation marks, months (even in French and on the same line) are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not, the quotations from English are invariably faulty in their capitalization, and even the word *malgré* is several times wrongly accented. These may seem small points, but one notes them all the same. The use of the initials "o.c." instead of the standard contraction *op. cit.* is an irritant, and to refer to "arch. nat." (without capitals) as an abbreviation for Archives Nationales (though it is sometimes given in full), is astonishing.

This is, though, a fascinating work, difficult to follow at times in the multi-layered deceptions being conducted by all involved. It does not necessarily throw new light on the events, and even omits some of the strands of evidence (like Challe's astonishing revelation that Desfarges' elder son expected to marry Princess Yothathep and become king). Nevertheless, it is an attractive and often intriguing addition to the wealth of material on the 1685-88 French adventure. As this work makes clear, many important documents, particularly on the Missionary side, remain still unpublished to this day (and it is only since 1992 that Céberet's text was made available). Next, one hopes, will come Vachet's memoirs in a complete edition; apart from being an actor in most of the events of the period, it was he, a Missionary, who first implanted into the Jesuit de la Chaise's mind the idea of converting the King of Siam.

Micheal Smithies

Bua Yai, January 1995.

Journal du Voyage de Siam

François-Timoléon de Choisy

Présenté et annoté par Dirk Van der Cruysse. Paris: Fayard, 1995, pp. 464, illus.

L'Abbé de Choisy, Androgyne et mandarin

Dirk Van der Cruysse.

Paris: Fayard, 1995, pp. 494.

The prolific Professor Van der Cruysse has followed up his massive *Louis XIV et le Siam* (JSS 80/1, 1992) with two volumes published simultaneously relating to the coadjutant ambassador of the first French mission to Siam in 685, the fascinating Abbé de Choisy.

The first volume is a new edition of that classic of travel literature in French, the Abbé's journal of his voyage to Siam, which has recently been translated into English (JSS 81/1 1993) and, in 1991, into Japanese. Considering that there have only been two editions since the early ones in Paris and Amsterdam in 1687 and 1690, the Trévoux editions of 1741 and the Duchartre and Van Buggenhoudt edition of 1930 with Maurice Garçon's inadequate introduction (if one overlooks what Van der Cruysse calls the "bastard facsimile edition" of Chalermnit of 1985), it would seem that this work is at last coming into its own. Van der Cruysse cites two partial editions, but his eagle eye has overlooked one other, produced by M. Dassé in 1976 by DK Books.

The new edition has a brief but helpful introduction, is quite generously, but not excessively, annotated (a few of the notes, like that for Samkok, deriving from the recent English translation; and why not?), and seven annexes. The first two of the annexes relate to Choisy's departure from France on his long journey to the unknown; the third and fourth are extremely important, being written on board the *Oiseau* after leaving Siam and describing the secret negotiations with Phaulkon concerning the treaties relating to religion and commerce respectively, (the latter document, in the Archives Nationales, has never been previously published). Annex five extracts the well-known section relating to Siam in Choisy's posthumous *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV*; and annex six is composed of very similar material taken from the much less well-known *Histoire de l'Eglise*, volume XI, written by Choisy 1723 at the end of his long life; while annex seven contains letters between Choisy and the disgraced Cardinal de Bouillon, for whom Choisy had brought back presents from Siam, to the fury of Louis XIV when he heard about it.

This new edition is graced with sixteen charmingly naive reproductions of watercolours produced by an unknown Jesuit who was probably part of the La Loubère-Céberet mission in 1687. Some of these watercolours first saw the light

of day in 1994 in Morgan Sportès' *Ombres Siamoises*. Number six in this edition is in fact cropped, and the original makes clear it is not simply the Bangkok fortress, but the fort being attacked during the siege of the French in 1688.

Dirk Van der Cruysse's substantial biography of Choisy deals with the complex character of the transvestite priest which was last analysed by Geneviève Reynes in 1983. The pernicious influence of his intriguing mother in both his feminine dress and his penchant for gambling is made clear. The periods as the Comtesse des Barres in Bourges and as Madame de Sancy in Paris are reasonably documented by Choisy himself (he delighted in dressing as a society lady and seducing young girls whom he dressed as men). Where this biography breaks new ground is in documenting the period as an actress in Bordeaux; in detailing Choisy's presence at the crossing of the Rhine in the war with Holland; his brief visit to England (which Van der Cruysse convincingly argues was probably in connection with a gambling debt due his friend the Marquis de Dangeau); his duties as secretary to the French cardinals at the papal conclave of 1676; in an examination of his massive losses at the gaming tables of Venice and Versailles. One always knew those losses were high, but here they have been carefully studied; to one person alone, Choisy owed the modern equivalent of two million dollars. To overcome these constraints, he borrowed at usurious rates without a thought of how to pay the money back. As a result, the inherited family château had to be sold off and he was constantly short of money throughout his life.

Fortunately, Choisy had friends in high places (not least, the king's younger brother, Monsieur) who protected him from scandal and the police. After taking orders in Lopburi in December 1685, his life became somewhat more settled though he continued to dress on occasions in women's clothes until the end of his life. He could never resist the attractions of the gaming tables (the court set a deplorable example in this respect, and Choisy was a good courtier).

Where Van der Cruysse also breaks new ground in this biography is his study of the massive literary outpourings from the time Choisy returned from Siam and entered the Académie Française to his death in 1724 (by which time, thanks to longevity, he was dean of that institution). Choisy wrote with ease, as he admitted in his journal of a voyage to Siam, and earlier biographers have tended to dismiss his later writings and concentrate instead on his colourful youthful escapades. Here this complex but rather lovable person (he managed to have almost no enemies apart from the Marquis de Louvois, no mean achievement for a courtier and an academician) is presented with balance, the different sections of his life seen in their material and temporal context.

Professor Vander Cruysse is to be congratulated on both these volumes, which make a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the period and the person of Choisy.

Michael Smithies
Bua Yai, April 1995.

The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia

Charles F. Keyes

Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995, pp. 370, no price given.

The author of this book, according to its cover, is currently professor of anthropology at the University of Washington, but it is astonishing that the University of Hawaii should choose to reprint unchanged a text first published in 1977 by Macmillan covering a region in which change has been enormous in the intervening period.

There is three-page preface to the present "reprint edition" in which Professor Keyes remarks: "It is gratifying, if also surprising, to find that there is still a demand for my text nearly two decades after it was written." Gratifying it may be, surprising it certainly is, for not a single reference is more recent than 1976 and, much importantly, one has only to consider all the changes that have taken place in the region in the last twenty years that make an assessment made in 1976 suspect if not downright wrong in 1996.

Even matters where one might expect continuity, such as, for example, the village backgrounds, change is everywhere apparent. In northeastern villages in Thailand, we are told, young men woo their damsels by playing the *khaen* to them. They might have done so in the past. In the village in which I live (a Lao-speaking one at that), not a single person can play the *khaen*, a few secondary schoolboys like to strum on guitars, no one appears to go courting and everyone at night is glued to the television.

The final chapter, 'Cities in changing societies in mainland Southeast Asia', is that where changes are most marked. The exponential expansion of Bangkok and, more recently, of provincial cities, coupled with economic expansion, hugely expanded inward migration and all the social changes occasioned by these phenomena are astonishing to an observer with a 1975 optic. True, the grains of these developments can be found in Keyes' text, but not the reality of today.

Keyes honestly admits in his preface: "I am acutely aware that *The Golden Peninsula* lacks attention not only to recent changes that have taken place in the region but also to new scholarship on mainland Southeast Asia that has been produced over the last two decades." He goes on to add that he has "begun to work... on a revised edition", and points to themes in need of development, like urbanization, industrialization, communications, new agricultural technologies, hydroelectricity, and deforestation.

One has only to think of the political changes in the region in the last twenty years and the impact they have had on societies to see how this book must inevitably appear dated. Cambodia has been turned upside down and is trying to regain its precarious balance; Vietnam, unified for two decades and now opening to the outside, is a very different place to that of 1975 (it seems very strange today to read here so many references to North and / or South Vietnam). True, things have only got worse in Burma, but the flicker of democracy in 1989 has still marked the country and the current regime's attempt to secure economic expansion by almost any means is doubtless having long-term effects on the populace. But, while the appearance of NGOs is mentioned in the preface, equally fundamental innovations, like AIDS and the widespread currency of television and video, to name but three, have had astonishing impacts. Perhaps too the regional groupings into ASEAN and the Pacific Rim development sphere will also have long-term effects on local cultures.

Reading the text written years ago also points to the limitation and constraint of considering only mainland Southeast Asia. The constraint is always that Vietnam does not fit at all into the general patterns of the four Theravada Buddhist states, and its history, ancient and modern, is for the most part radically different from the other countries in the region. The limitation is that, ignoring the three (four at a stretch) countries of the Malay world creates a lopsided view of the region as a whole. Clearly, though, one cannot fault a book for covering only what it set out to do.

It is a pity that this unrevised text has also come with several typos (including "Tibero-Burman", "retorms", "unts" and variations in the spelling of proper names) which a university press should have eliminated.

As a primer, one suspects for American college students, of mainland Southeast Asia as it appeared in 1975, this book is well-researched and presents a balanced picture, but so many changes have taken place since then that the picture today is inevitably different. Random examples: the average of six live births among rural females in Thailand, while possibly true for the early seventies, is certainly not true today, and though the abolition of the rice premium may have taxed Thai farmers less, recent figures show that only the top quintile has improved its economic position in the country, and all others have actually seen a decline in their share of the economic pie, notwithstanding all that much-heralded growth. Even the glue of Buddhism that united four mainland states seems to be becoming unstuck in the face of rampant materialistic get-rich-quickism.

In sum then, do not read this book to have an up-to-date viewpoint covering the mainland region as it is, but as it was. Wait, instead, for the revised edition, but perhaps do not hold your breath, since writing it only began in July 1994.

Michael Smithies

Bua Yai, December 1995.

*In the land of Lady White Blood:
Southern Thailand and the Meaning of History*

Lorraine M. Gesick

Ithaca NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1995, pp. 98, US \$ 12.00.

Lorraine Gesick starts this discursive narrative, after a summarizing introduction, with the visit of Prince Naris to Phattalung in 1902 and his examination of *khoi* manuscripts brought for him to see. That part of the story is then dropped. What did Prince Naris do with the manuscripts? Suspense, while the authoress takes us around the edges of the Lady White Blood legend (without at this stage giving the story), and lots of hoo-ha about personal research in the National Library, Phattalung's geography and the Sathing Phra peninsula (a somewhat improbable legend perhaps based on folk etymology and not mentioned is one bandied around in the 1960s, that the name was once Jating Phra, with all that is antisacerdotally implied). From there we go off into the framework of early twentieth-century Siamese historiography and fashioning of an accepted, centrally-based history.

She then comes down, in chapter three, to the nitty-gritty: the village of Bang Keo in Phattalung, which had held the some *tamra*, manuscripts of royal decrees, at the end of the nineteenth century. These related the despatch to Ayutthaya in 1698 by the abot of Wat Khien, head of Pa Kaeo ordination chapter of Phattalung, of an original manuscript of a decree by a king of Ayutthaya of nearly a century earlier granting lands to the monastery, ricefield taxes, and rights of tutelage over the persons living on them. The deputation petitioned that the king recopy the manuscript and affix new seals, which was done; the new copies, in Thai and Khmer, were returned to Phattalung. There they remained until removed to Bangkok at the end of the nineteenth century.

Precisely where they remained seems to be a little hard to determine, but two villages in particular are mentioned. Bang Kaeo, on the western shore of the Tale Sap, and Phra Kho on the opposite shore. Bang Kaeo is noted for two temples supposedly founded by Lady White Blood (white blood indicating divine descent: the full story of the southern Thai version of the legend, apparently dating from the early Ayutthaya period, appears in an appended translation) and her twin brother or husband Phraya Kuman.

Ms Gesick appears to be aware of the meandering nature of her account in that, after a long discussion on the nature and form of *tamra*, she writes: "Let us return to the pronouncement of the 1698 Pa Kaew royal *tamra*, examination of which we have only begun." What she comes up with is not surprising: the *tamra* in question is a text within a text, since it is a copy of an earlier decree. She then rather confuses the issue by introducing the Ban Kaeo *tamra* which were recopied in Nakhon Si Thammarat in 1688 in connection with a lawsuit, and how they were transported with much pomp, ceremony and regalia, including a white elephant.

Chapter four, dealing with the historiography of Southern Thailand, particularly the historiography of Phattalung as exemplified by these *tamra*, covers "locally written Thai histories kept as companions to the decrees", noting that "pre-modern Thai historical discourse outside the royal capital was multi-vocal, in which more than one version of a story could be 'true', depending on locale." She surmises, reasonably enough, that, through the *tamra*, and thus accounting for the respect with which they were held, "southern communities used the authority of the king to remove themselves from the day-to-day interference of the king's officials. This autonomy in turn perhaps fostered a strong sense of local identity."

Landscape and history, the subject of chapter five, is something dealt with in a somewhat different fashion (if memory is correct) in the authoress's *JSS* article of 1985, but for this reader is no less mystifying. Essentially it is dealing with the interrelationship of oral and written history, and the role of literacy. There is much about the manora here, though the connection between its different forms discussed, the "ghost paths" of southern Thai villages, and the textual world of the *tamra* seems tenuous at best.

The concluding chapter, on national history and local history, starts off: "This book is a story about stories, in particular, the intertwined stories of the Phattalung manuscript and my own journey in search of the 'historical sensibility' of the southern Thai communities that preserved them." We hear an anecdote how she had lunch at the Samila Hotel in Songkhla in 1977 with the director of the Institute of Southern Thai Studies at which an old map of Phattalung was discussed, and the work concludes with a personal reference to her made by the abbot of Wat Khian of Bang Kaeo at a ceremony honouring the former keepers of the *tamra*.

This relation is not by any means the easiest to follow, but in the concluding chapters one realizes that local history has become a rich field for Thai scholars, and that there is an important publication programme being pursued of old manuscripts.

No marks for clarity or succinctness of title, which no more than hints at the contents. This fuzziness continues in the text, which goes backwards and forwards in time, accompanied, as can be seen, by plenty of what are probably fashionable personal intrusions. It points to a wealth of mostly recently-published material in Thai concerning local history. But for this reader at least a straightforward account of the contents, significance and history of the different *tamra* discussed would at least have had the advantage of clarity of purpose.

The short book comes with a wealth of footnotes, an extensive bibliography, a useful index, and some appropriately rather fuzzy photographic illustrations.

Michael Smithies

Bua Yai, December 1995.

Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand

Dr. Peter A. Jackson

Bangkok: Floating Lotus Books & Bua Luang Books, 1995 ISBN 0-942777-11-5, pp. 310, price Bht. 395.00, US \$ 15.95.

If you know of Uncle Go or not, you will, should you decide to read this book. He is, in actuality, Khun Pratchaya Phanthathorn, editor and chief journalist of *Plaek*. Although he authors several articles and columns in that publication under a variety of pen names, the column here of interest was originally called, *Panha Hua-jai Phet Thi Sam* ("Problems of the Heart of the Third Sex"), then *Chiwit Sao Chao Gay* ("The Sad Life of Gays"), and now *Chiwit Sao* ("It's a Sad Life"). It is a "Dear Abby" type of column and has been running since 1975. It is this corpus of outpourings of the confused, tormented, or hurting hearts and souls of Thai male homosexuals that Dr. Jackson uses for his analysis of homoeroticism and homosexuals in Thailand. The letters to Uncle Go and his responses illuminate the points Dr. Jackson makes and serve to substantiate the hypotheses and analyses he puts forth.

The book is divided into eight chapters: "Male Homosexuality and Thai Culture," "Socio-Economic Background and Attitudes to Homosexuality," "Uncle Go's 'Liberal Conservatism,'" "Male Homosexuality," "Social Hierarchy and Traditional Thai Values," "Thailand's Non-Homophobic Male Sexual Culture," "Kathoey: The Thai Third Sex," "The Emergence of Thai Gay Identity, and HIV/AIDS and Homosexual Men in Thailand." There is a conclusion, bibliography, glossary of words and idioms used in the Thai homosexual culture and by members of the heterosexual community, and an index.

The writers of the thirty-eight letters used in the book span the socio-economic spectrum of Thai life. They are from admitted gays, casual gays, bi-sexuals, gay-kings, gay-queens, and heterosexual males who have had gay encounters. They all begin thanking Uncle Go for his listening ear, go on with descriptions of experiences about which they have questions and usually end with a request that Uncle Go help find them a good and true friend. Some of the descriptions of experiences are quite graphic, some are humorous, some are poignant and heart-rending.

This book needs to be read by Thais--Thais who live today and wonder what is happening to Thai society and how it has come about. A meaningful, critical review of this book can and should only be a Thai. Thai culture remains an enigma to most non-Thais and, although Dr. Jackson's hypotheses and analyses seem erudite, they must be put to the acid test of Thai thinking.

Dr. Howard C. Graves, Jr., Chiang Mai. Jan. '96.

