

# JSS

Volume 88, Parts 1 & 2

2000



*The Journal of the Siam Society*

# The Journal of the Siam Society

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Volume 88, Parts 1 & 2  
2000



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ISSN 0857-7099

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The *Journal of the Siam Society* is a forum for original research and analysis. Opinions expressed in the *Journal* are those of the authors. They do not represent the views or policies of the Siam Society.

Printed by Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited  
65/16 Chaiyapruk Road, Taling Chan; Bangkok 10170, Thailand.

Tel. (662) 882-1010. Fax (662) 433-2742, 434-1385

e-mail: [info@amarin.co.th](mailto:info@amarin.co.th)

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# The Journal of the Siam Society

Volume 88, Parts 1 & 2

2000

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## ABSTRACTS

### **Notes on the History of the Art of Mother-of-Pearl in Thailand with Particular Reference to the Doors on the *Ubōsot* of Wat Phra Chetuphon**

KLAUS WENK

Although mother-of-pearl has been used in Thailand as a decorative medium since the 3rd–6th centuries), little is known about its history or use over the years. Despite the gaps in our knowledge, it is possible to distinguish “late” from “earlier” objects. Among the most excellent late items are doors in this temple that can be dated to the reign of Rama 111 (1824–1851). The doors depict scenes from the old Thai classical story, the *Rāmakiēn*. Besides reviewing the subjects portrayed, an explanation of the manufacturing process including the tools, raw materials, and artistic technology needed is provided. Comparative information on mother-of-pearl manufacture in neighboring countries such as Vietnam and China and a discussion of the available literature on the topic is also given.

### **Love Poems in Modern Thai Nirat**

SUCHITRA CHONGSTITVATANA

*Department of Thai, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University*

The paper aims at considering love themes in modern Thai Nirat to see how they change and develop from the old convention. It focuses on the works of three contemporary Thai poets: *Lam Nam Phu Kradung* (Melody of Phu Kradung) by Angkhan Kalayanapong, *Khian Phandin* (To Write Homeland) by Naowarat Pongpaiboon, and *Ma Kan Kluai* (Banana Tree Horse) by Paiwarin Khongam.

The study reveals the changing poetical forms of Nirat as well as the diversity of content and style of the poets. Contemporary Thai poets have successfully developed the form of Nirat from the old convention to serve their various purposes.

Modern Thai Nirat has transcended the traditional form of love poem and lamentation of love-pain and has become an efficient form of love poem for society and mankind.

### ***Ayedawbon Kyan*, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events**

U THAW KAUNG

*Member, Myanmar Historical Commission, and former Chief Librarian, Universities Central Library (1969-1997)*

The *Ayedawbon kyan* is a genre of Myanmar historical writing second in importance only to the Royal Chronicles. *Ayedawbon* typically tell how men of prowess became kings, as well as how they stayed in power, suppressed rebellions, and waged wars of territorial expansion. Myanmar

authors are attempting to resolve problems regarding *Ayedawbon* written from the time of King Bayinnaung's reign (1551–1581) to 1823. Problems include authorship, the total number of texts, and obscure language, corrupted passages, and dating. Efforts are being made to find more recensions of the texts to provide the basis for solving the problems that will yield more useful information on Myanmar as well as its relations with Thailand.

### **Excavations of Kilns Near the Old City of Sisatchanalai, Thailand: Prompt Redevelopment of Pottery Production**

DR. KARREN RANDOLPH  
*Lubbock Christian University*

The excavation of 13th–16th century kilns along the Yom river in the area around the old city of Sisatchanalai stimulated interest and prompted the redevelopment of pottery production in the village of Ko Noi. The current pottery production in this area drastically affected the economic fabric of the village. This paper deals with the various types of kilns excavated, the construction of similar modern day kilns, the process of kiln modernization and some economic effects.

### **Phū Pra Bāt: A Remarkable Archaeological Site in Northeastern Thailand**

NANDANA CHUTIWONGS

Phū Pra Bāt, in the Phū Phān Mountains of Udon Thani, has an archaeological site over a sandstone cliff. The site's rock-shelters retain traces, such as rock paintings, of prehistoric human activities. The site was later occupied by Buddhist communities in the 8th to 10th centuries, showing examples of Dvāravatī art, and again in the 11th to 13th centuries as well as the 16th to 17th centuries. Phū Pra Bāt presents an example of the transformation of pre- and proto-historic sites into Buddhist ecclesiastical places. Although now a national reserve, Phū Pra Bāt remains a site of pilgrimage.

### **Historical Writings, Historical Novels and Period Movies and Dramas: An Observation Concerning Burma in Thai Perception and Understanding**

SUNAIT CHUTINTHARANON

In a review of the popular image of Burmese in Thai novels, plays, and movies, the author finds many stereotypes. For example, the drama, *Nai Khanom Tom*, tells of a Thai boxer captured and in Burma as a prisoner of war. In its telling of the great skill of this man, also dehumanizes the Burmese, depicting them as plunderers and murderers. The author traces the roots of such stereotypes through Thai novels, to writings in the reign of King Chulalongkorn such as *Thai Rop Phama* (Our Wars With Burma), to early-nineteenth century writings. At that time, Thai leaders saw the Burmese as enemies of Buddhism, the Thai people and the Thai kingdom. This stereotype has never changed although how it is portrayed has.

### **Changing Power and Position of *Mo Muang* in Northern Thailand Healing Rituals**

ANAN GANJANAPAN  
*Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University*

This paper examines changes in the power and moral position of *Mo Muang* (traditional healers in northern Thailand) as seen through case studies of healing rituals, in Nan, Phayao and Lampang provinces. The paper seeks to identify indigenous perspectives as seen through ideas of power, knowledge and morality. The paper examines the dialectical relationships between the reproduction of ritual knowledge and the transformation of power. In the changing social relationships that are occurring in Thailand, a strong bureaucratic system holds on to power while the enlarging middle class find itself with only limited power. *Mo Muang* play a role in helping members of this new and volatile middle class rationalize their distorted social position.

### **Intellectual Aspect of the Formation of Strong Kingship in Siam**

ATTACHAK SATTYANURAK

This paper reviews the background of strong kingship in Siam. Whereas most studies on this subject have described the emergence of strong kingship as largely a response to Western colonial incursions on Siam and its neighbors, this paper examines important intellectual forces that motivated the king of Siam's actions. Among the most significant forces was the development of a new historical consciousness starting in the reign of King Rama IV. This was based on a new conception of time which itself emerged inter-relatedly with other socio-economic changes including the commercialization of society, that gave importance to novelty and creation. Through this an entirely new worldview emerged in Siam, differing from the static society embodied in the cosmology of the centuries old *Traiphum Phraruang* (Three Worlds of Phra Ruang).

### **The Ancestral Spirit Forest (*Don Pu Ta*) and the Role Behavior of Elders (*Thao Cham*) in Northeastern Thailand**

BOONYONG KETTATE

The people of northeastern Thailand believe that *Don Pu Ta* (the ancestral spirit forest) is sacred space where their ancestral spirit can be found. The care they provide the forest and their own descendants living in communities with such forests provides for a tranquil life. Recent and incessant forest destruction has greatly altered the traditional role of the *Don Pu Ta* and the behavior of the *Thao Cham* (elders) ritual. This study assesses the present condition of *Don Pu Ta*, the role and behavior of the *Thao Cham*, rituals, attitudes and beliefs, the relationships in the community regarding *Don Pu Ta*, values, as well as the impact on the mental health of the people in the community.

*Don Pu Ta* were examined in nine provinces of the northeast. Data were collected through interviews with 385 community leaders and other appropriate individuals in the northeast. The findings of the study showed that, despite the changes, people in the northeast still maintain close links with the *Don Pu Ta* and interact with it every season of the year. The gather forest produce from the area as food, for sale, as medicine, or for use in handicraft or utensil manufacture. The *Don Pu Ta* have *Thao Cham* who are selected to serve to facilitate communication between the ancestral spirits and the members of the community. They preside over propitiation, divination, and other ceremonies before the ancestral spirits which the villagers continue to value, trust, and believe in. They regard the *Don Pu Ta* as sacred space and that those violate it will be punished by the ancestral spirits. The power of these spirits and the behavior of the *Thao Cham* continue to influence the community's way of life. This predisposes the villagers to conserve their ancestral spirit forests so as to maintain their force through the maintenance of their traditional culture that supports the villagers' agricultural activities.

### Madame Constance's Jewels

MICHAEL SMITHIES

Phaulkon, “Monsieur Constance” to the French, during his brief period in power from 1683 to 1688 at the end of King Narai’s reign amassed a considerable personal fortune, some of which was placed in the jewels nominally owned by his wife, Maria Guyomar de Pinha. After Phaulkon’s arrest on 18 May 1688 in the Lopburi coup d’état engineered by Phetracha, the Siamese made great efforts to lay hands on some of the Greek’s wealth, more particularly on his wife’s jewels. This article, using an anonymous unpublished manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, as well as the recently published (1998) testimony of Lieut. de La Touche, the engineer Volland des Verquains’ account of events and Major Beauchamp’s neglected manuscript, reveals the duplicity and cupidity of the French commander Desfarges and his chief-of-staff Beauchamp, as well as the suspect role of the Jesuits in the affair, in which only the junior officer de Fretteville emerges with dignity, and he appears to have been murdered for his probity. The Jewels themselves were either seized by the Dutch at the Cape or disappeared with the death of Desfarges, and the impoverished Mme Constance languished a slave in Phetracha’s palace for fifteen years.

### New Light on Early Cambodian Buddhism

NANCY DOWLING

This paper studies early Cambodian images of Buddha, mainly from Angkor Borei, from which a new chronology is established. It indicates that Buddhist imagery is a short-lived phenomenon in Angkor Borei with the earliest dated to the early seventh century and the latest to the sixth to the seventh decade of the seventh century. This terminal date supports the late seventh-century commentary written by the Chinese Buddhist monk I-ching that Buddhism had been expelled from Cambodia by a “wicked king” for which Jayavarman I, who reigned from AD. 657–681, was the likely candidate.

Of further importance is that the Angkor Borei images of Buddha tell us that after the late seventh century, there was a hiatus of nearly 400 years before Buddhist imagery re-appeared in the late twelfth to thirteenth century. Elsewhere in Cambodia this was not the case with inscriptions testifying to the practice of Buddhism in the eighth century. As to the type of Buddhism, these images offered us proof of at least two Theravādan schools in Angkor Borei: the Mūlasarvāstivāda-nikāya and the Sammitinikāya.

### Creative Engagement: *Sujavaṇṇa Wua Luang* and its Contribution to Buddhist Literature

JUSTIN MCDANIELS

The *Sujavaṇṇa Wua Luang* (SWL), an apocryphal Buddhist *Jātaka* story written in Khün, employs translocal literary practices to express local values, religious beliefs and practices. The SWL has a similar structure to canonical *Jātakas*: its main character is a bodhisatta and the story involves self-sacrifice, renunciation and the lives of royalty and the gods. However, the Khün writers inserted many new features into this known form, including: 1) an emphasis on monogamy; 2) a greater attention to the value of romantic love; 3) an acceptance of sibling marriage; 4) a focus on achieving the three joys; 5) frequent references to the practice of local and/or Brahmanistic magic; 6) meditative practices which include the *kammaṭṭhana* (specific objects of meditation); 7) an explicit importance placed on copying, honouring and listening to the text; 8) and a greater

emphasis on the perfection of knowledge and renunciation. Although there are many other important themes and values expressed in the SWL (like the emphasis placed on the connection between physical beauty, wealth and spiritual power, the importance of giving and the period of asceticism in the forest) these particular eight features are largely local innovations on the canonical *Jātaka* type. By focusing on them, Khün creative strategies for manipulating classical literature for their own purposes will emerge. The Khün composer(s) of the SWL found the complex narrative structure, compelling chain of events and prestigious classical language of the canonical *Jātaka* to be an excellent vehicle to comment upon local historical events, political and social concerns and cultural values and practices. Studying the SWL in this light will lay the basis for a new understanding of the relationship between canonical and vernacular literature in Southeast Asia.

### **Shanguo is not a Shan Kingdom: To Correct a Mistake Related to the Early History of Tai-speaking Peoples in China and Mainland Southeast Asia**

DR. HE PING

Shanguo is a kingdom, recorded in ancient Chinese annals, which sent its envoy to China during the 1st and the 2nd centuries. Most Chinese scholars think that it is a Shan kingdom in today's northern Myanmar and western part of Yunnan, China. Some scholars even think that it included parts of today's Laos and Thailand. So it has been written in articles and books about the history of Dai-Shan peoples and even the history of other ethnic Tai groups. This paper, however, proves that Shan-guo is neither in today's Myanmar and Yunnan nor in other mainland Southeast Asian countries; it is not a Shan Kingdom.

### **Persian Religious and Cultural Influences in Siam/Thailand and Maritime Southeast Asia in Historical Perspective: A Plea for a Concerted Interdisciplinary Approach**

DR. MUHAMMAD ISMAIL MARCINKOWSKI

*Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer, ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

This contribution by an Iranologist directs the attention to the historical significance of Iranian cultural influences in Southeast Asia, with special emphasis on Thailand. It indicates especially the role played by Iranians in the Ayutthayan Kingdom during the 17th century, which has yet not been investigated sufficiently. Iranian Twelver Shī'ite Muslims were entrusted with high-ranking offices by the Siamese monarchs as a reward for the various services rendered by them to the Crown. A striking feature was their loyalty and affection even in times of external threats to their Buddhist sovereign, which were reciprocated by the kings who even sponsored the Shī'ite festivals. Their descendants, many of them Buddhists, continued to enjoy royal favour during the Bangkok period.

### **Rules for Interpolation in the Thai Calendar: *Suriyayatra* versus the *Sasana***

DR. J. C. EADE

*The Australian National University*

As a way of determining which Thai lunar years require intercalation there is a supposed "*sasana*" rule which proves not to be entirely workable. The following piece demonstrates why; outlines the correct way of determining *adhikmas* and *adhikawan*; and considers the curious debate about *adhikamas* to be found in the Pa Daeng Chronicle.

## EDITORIAL

### Writing Thai History and Culture

Ronald D. Renard

Over the past three years, I have visited dozens of provincial cultural centers in Thailand. Almost all are producing books on local cultures, minority groups, languages, rituals, literature, and diverse aspects of life in those provinces. The local photographer's association in Satun<sup>1</sup> has produced a book on the province's cultural highlights. The Thai Language Department at Wachiraprakan School in Kamphaeng Phet has produced a magnificently illustrated and well-written book on a popular novel set in that city<sup>2</sup>. Many more examples could be cited.

Other groups and individuals are also writing. Local groups of Chiang Mai Karen together with representatives of the provincial primary education office are preparing a curriculum on Karen history and culture for use in primary schools in their villages<sup>3</sup>. Dictionaries on the most remote groups in the country are being compiled by professors at Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Mahidol and other universities, as well as by religious groups such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

"Cremation volumes", books distributed at funerals, provide much culturally important information. The practice of distributing books at cremations dates to 1881 and the use of this as a means for disseminating important literature was popularized by Prince Damrong Rajanubhap after he became the head of the Vajirañāna (National) Library in 1915. The overall growth of the Thai economy since the early 1980s has resulted in more cremation volumes being prepared with a consequent increase of significant literature found in them. To cite a few examples, quite a lot on Mon culture is found in the cremation volumes of monks from Pathum Thani where Mon traditions remain strong. In the royal cremation of M.R. Chakratong Tongyai, are notes of a trip in 1939 up Doi Inthanon in Chiang Mai

from a previously unpublished diary by Walter Zimmerman<sup>4</sup>. The six-volume set of books prepared for the funeral of Dr. Sanga Sabhasri<sup>5</sup> contains valuable information on forestry, botanical research, and related matters.

In 2000, with the backing of Siam Commercial Bank, the 63-volume Thai Cultural Encyclopedia<sup>6</sup> was published. Divided into four parts, one for each of the country's regions, the encyclopedia was compiled by teams of experts under the general editorship of Dr. Prasert Na Nagara. A grand array of information on cultural items and practices is presented in a richly-illustrated format. On a lesser scale, a team from Mahidol University under the leadership of Dr. Suriya Rattakul has produced a set of books on each of the country's ethnic minorities which she calls the *Saranukrom Klum Chatiphan* [Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups].

Both the golden jubilee of His Majesty, King Bhumibol's reign in 1996 and the celebration of the completion of his sixth cycle at age 72 were each marked with hundreds if not thousands of publications. These contribute not only to an understanding of King Bhumibol's work but to the culture of the country as well. Two such books are *Phrabat Somdet Phrachaoyuhua Nai Phraboromaracha Chakriwong Kap Nakhon Chiang Mai* [The Kings of the Chakri Dynasty and Chiang Mai on the relationship between the Kings of Lan Na and of the Chakri Dynasty by the National Historical Commission<sup>7</sup> and another, *Praphat Ton Bon Doi* [Royal Visits to the Hills] by the National Identity Board on His Majesty's work with the hill people of the north.<sup>8</sup>

Never has so much material on the country's culture and history been available. This confirms comments by Will Tuchrello, of the Library of Congress, made at a talk in Chiang Mai to the Informal Northern Thai Group in May 2000.

He noted that despite predictions of paperless offices and the use of the Internet to replace conventional printing, this era has seen rapid increases in publication on all subjects and on culture in particular.

Yet it is ironic that despite this upsurge of writing, rarely have popular books aroused so much indignation as in recent years. Consider the case of two books, William Stevenson's *The Revolutionary King*<sup>9</sup>, a biography of King Bhumibol, and *The Story of Anna and the King*, by Cecelia Holland<sup>10</sup>. *The Revolutionary King* did not go on sale in Thailand. Holland's *Anna and the King* was sold in Thailand despite the movie not being shown in Thai theaters.

What does *The Revolutionary King* tell about Thai history and culture? Although most of the book deals with the king's reign, the story in the book begins in with a synopsis of Bangkok's early history. Take for example the following passage:

This army general founded the Chakri dynasty, translated the ancient Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, which tells the original story of Lord Buddha's earlier incarnations. He called himself Rama the First, meaning he was Prince Rama who became Buddha.

The following points can be made. First, this man, General Chakri, did not himself translate the *Ramayana*. Second, it is a Hindu epic, not Buddhist, and tells nothing of the Buddha's earlier lives. Third, General Chakri did not call himself Rama the First; he called himself, as king, *Phaendin Ton*, "Founder of the Kingdom." The calling of kings in the Rattanakosin Dynasty as "Rama I, Rama II, and so on, was instituted over a century later by the sixth king of the dynasty (r. 1910–1924). That monarch's twelve years in England helped him conclude the existing naming system was too complicated for what only must have seemed to him as benighted Westerners.<sup>11</sup> Fourth, calling kings "Rama" does not imply that they have become Buddhas.

Another example is the reference to the death of Prince Mahidol:

Papa died in late September, 1929, in the season known as the Buddhist Lent when the people

wash away their sins by floating tiny candles in banana-leaf boats.

First, Buddhist "Lent" refers to what is called by the Pali term, *vassa*, meaning "the rains". This begins on the eighth full moon of the traditional Thai lunar year and lasts for three months, (usually July until October). Second, the floating of "banana-leaf boats" seems to be a mistaken reference to Loi Krathong, which occurs one month after the end of *vassa*, generally in November. Third, Loi Krathong, is a Brahmin and not a Buddhist ceremony. Fourth, the candles are floated on slices of the banana stalk (or more popularly this year in Bangkok, on styrofoam), not the banana leaf.

Fifth, calling Prince Mahidol "Papa" needs little discussion. But it should be noted that Stevenson's using such personal terms has, to say the least, stunned Thais and old Bangkok hands.

Without reviewing what is discussed in the rest of the book, these and other such lapses on easily verifiable points of Thai culture are disappointing. But this is common to much Western writing on the country.

In preparation for the movie, *Anna and the King*, the producers sponsored historical research. In this effort, Cecelia Holland, examined Thai history, results of her study being found in *The Story of Anna and the King*. [London HarperCollins Entertainment 2000] She has written some two dozen historical novels ranging from prehistory to the Middle Ages with several on the American West, especially California. Although several reviewers praise her "exhaustive research", quite likely it was her talents at "novelization" that attracted HarperCollins Entertainment more than her research skills.

What can one say about the notice on the book's back cover? "Here is the *real* story behind the woman who inspired a bestselling biography . . . Cecelia Holland weaves a beautiful narrative of the true histories behind Anna Leonowens and the Siamese royal family."

She clearly read the books by Anna Leonowens, Bristowe's biography of her son, *Louis and the King of Siam*, and other literature on nineteenth century Thailand. She knows that Anna was not who she claimed to be and



something about court life at the time. Still, however, problems remain.

Take the first paragraphs of her historical background entitled "Siam". [pp. 36–39] She mistakenly states that the region encompassing Thailand was where rice cultivation originated and that tin production here preceded it in the Fertile Crescent. She mistranslates the "Mae Nem Chao Phraya" as the "Great Mother River" and errs in saying that a group of the Tai coming to Sukhothai took the name "Thai", meaning "free." Her account jumbles the impact of the fall of Nanchao on the southward migration of the Tai from southern China. She overstates the power of the king of Sukhothai (probably never having read the Ramkamhaeng Inscription), and fails to mention that Sukhothai was but one of several Tai (once called "beachhead") states.

Similar critiques could be applied to other popular accounts of Thai history and culture. But the problem is not with William Stevenson, Cecelia Holland, or other such writers about Thailand; the problem is that the formal practice of Thai scholarship is not strong enough to dominate the study of Thai culture so that the Stevensons and Hollands of the world can get it right.

While Thai scholars of course know Thai history and culture, the present agenda for their discussion is mostly set in Australia, Europe, and North America. All these Thai scholars desiring doctorates in such fields must (at least until very recently) enroll at institutions outside of Thailand, such as at the Australian National University, Cornell, or the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. In addition to experts teaching at these institutions, their libraries include collections of materials on Thailand that are formidable even by Thai standards. Also a factor is the international prestige enjoyed by these institutions.

The major theoretical trends influencing Thai history and culture from at least the 1950s when scholars started examining "loose structure" have set the course for Thai studies. This often influences the choice of a dissertation topic for a Thai graduate student and then continues far beyond graduate school. In all areas of research, priorities in these other countries have generally determined what Thai scholars study, even after they have completed graduate school. Themes

such as the "moral economy", "imagined communities", "geobody", and "thick descriptions" set the international agenda for Thai studies far more than any indigenous ways of understanding Thai society.

Other reasons involved the relatively young Thai academic life. Beginning only in 1917 with the inauguration of Chulalongkorn University, institutions of higher education in Thailand did not in their early years include many of the country's most outstanding scholars or prolific authors. The "Father of Thai History," Prince Damrong Rajanubhab is but one example of an influential scholar serving as a government official not attached to an educational institution. Similarly, in the early years when universities were seen mainly as teaching institutions, obtaining higher academic rank (such as that of Professor) was not directly linked to scholarly writing. Without a "Publish or Perish" formula, university lecturers who often were quite able to write insightful studies, were not encouraged to do so.

Through the 1950s, university enrollment was small and many upwardly mobile young Thai studied overseas. Not until 1939 did Chulalongkorn University have to turn prospective students away. Libraries, public and private, were rare until after World War II. Factors such as these resulted in there being few academic journals in Thailand until the 1960s and thus few literary outlets for would-be authors.

The only scholarly association was the Siam Society which basically was an English (and secondarily, French) language organization. From its start in 1904, "for the investigation of arts, science, and literature in relation to Siam and neighbouring countries," it paid particular attention in the *Journal* to disciplines such as archaeology, ethnography, and material culture such as pottery and numismatics, which were more readily accessible to non-Thais than such fields as history, literature, and religion. There were exceptions in the early years. Prince Damrong assisted the Society continually and the French scholar George Cœdès contributed significantly to Thai epigraphical studies.

Experts in disciplines requiring advanced knowledge of the language remained Thai and largely outside the Society. In 1906, the Council

lamented “the almost complete absence of Siamese from its membership list.”<sup>12</sup> When they wished to manifest the knowledge of their subject they had few outlets.

One was cremation volumes. Prince Damrong while head of the Vajirañāna (National) Library in 1915 in cooperation with Cœdès, its curator two years, promoted the use of cremation volumes for publishing noteworthy Thai writings. Besides material on the deceased, cremation volumes often included chronicles, religious treatises and royal addresses.

Another outlet was the increasing number of newspapers or magazines being published in the twentieth century. The first major Thai history of northern Thailand researched by the investigation of original sources was published in serial form by *Vachirayan* (Journal of the National Library and the one early scholarly journal that did exist) from 1898–1899 as *Prawat Lao Chiang* (History of the Lao Chiang).<sup>13</sup> The *Bangkok Times* published articles on Thai culture from time to time as did an increasing number of other publications.

In such an environment where scholarly articles appeared in diverse places, insight or special knowledge was often exhibited in small groups of instructors or scholars chatting with each other. Just as traditional Thai musicians sometimes tried to confuse others playing in the same ensemble by varying the tempo, traditional Thai academics sometimes tried to outdo their associates by showing off awareness of arcane subjects or innovative ways to explain traditional lore.

An example of such special knowledge in mass media occurred on 16 October 2000 when the *Matichon* weekly magazine displayed a well-known politician on its cover with the caption, “Je cognois tout, fors que moy-mesme.” The phrase, in centuries-old French was once translated by King Rama VI and included in his *Pramuan Suphasit* (Collected Aphorisms). Even though only a handful of *Matichon*'s readers could understand this phrase, the editor published it, without a translation in the weekly magazine, leaving his uninformed readers in the dark for a couple of days until a translation appeared in a daily edition of *Matichon*.

Through this transfer of knowledge rooted in personal relationships rather than the written

word, Thai studies carried on. In this, the nature of the person was important often as much as the ideas or theories presented. Thai reviews of Thai scholarship generally pay attention to the individual making the presentation as much as the ideas themselves. From this standpoint, there are compellingly insightful “Thai” methods for studying the culture.

Using the Thai *Sam Kok* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) is one popular way in Thailand to understand Thai politics. The Thai story is based on *San Kuo Yen I* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) which was written by Luo Guan Zhong and then revised by Mao Zong Gang and his father just before 1650. This fictional account describes the tumultuous times in China after the collapse of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) when China was divided into three kingdoms. The story was translated into Thai during the reign of King Rama I by a man named Hon and entitled Chaophraya Phrakhleng who oversaw Bangkok's foreign relations. King Rama I ordered him to head a team that would write a Thai version.

As Malinee Dilokwanich notes, rather than wanting an exact translation, the king aimed to produce a work detailing aspects of military strategy that was also outstanding literature. To do this, although the story line was changed only a little, many alterations were required. The Chinese worldview, involving the mandate of heaven, was replaced by a Thai world involving merit and lack of merit. Place and personal names were written not in Mandarin but in the Fukien dialect, more prevalent in Thailand. Motifs and events, such as a fleet on the Yellow River being destroyed by the east wind were changed, in this case, for example, to the fleet being swamped by the southwest monsoon on the Chao Phraya River. The result notes Malinee was “a total adaptation to Thai literary conventions, to the Thai language and to the Thai world view” representing “a new genre of prose fiction.”<sup>14</sup> Since then new dramatic and prose versions were written from diverse viewpoints. The original Thai version is a standard school text.

The importance of *Sam Kok* is widely recognized. At Wat Bowonniwet, where before becoming king, Prince Mongkut served as the abbot, a Chinese style building, *Wihan Keng*

houses murals of the pivotal scene in *Sam Kok* where Cho Cho's fleet was swamped (known to Chinese as the Battle of the Red Cliffs). King Vajiravudh referred to *Sam Kok* as the best novel ever written in Thai. Thais commonly say that people who read *Sam Kok* three times knows so many tricks that they cannot be trusted.

The *Sam Kok* tradition exudes lively innovation, individuality, and creativity in much the same way as the best research in the provincial cultural centers. Yet just as little of that scholarship has been noticed by the outside world, most of the *Sam Kok* discussion has remained within the country. This is unfortunate because Thais routinely refer to *Sam Kok*, particularly regarding politics. In a cover story in the business monthly, *Manager*,<sup>15</sup> *Sam Kok* was used to analyze recent Thai politics including the events of May 1992. Perhaps the only serious "international" discussion of this phenomenon was by Craig Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords: Modern Thai Social Formations and Chinese Historical Romance".<sup>16</sup>

Despite the existence of such useful and intellectually challenging modes of analysis, the direction of Thai studies remains under the direction of non-Thais outside of Thailand. This is shown in two recent reviews of Southeast Asian studies. In the first, a 1995 "state-of-the-field essay" on the anthropology of Southeast Asia,<sup>17</sup> out 200 works mentioned, less than fifteen were by Southeast Asians. All of these were in English and none were by Thais.<sup>18</sup> The second was a reevaluation of the future of Southeast Asian studies at a colloquium of North American-based scholars in Washington held in early-2000.<sup>19</sup> Except for Professor Charles Keyes, who noted that those "seeking to become specialists in Thailand must today acquire an extensive knowledge of the . . . scholarship published in Thai if they are to make any significant contribution to knowledge", no one present made any serious reference to Thai scholarship.

The fact that such Thai scholarly publication was rare until the last two decades is a major reason why non-Thais have been able to set the agenda for much of Thai scholarship. As Keyes notes, though, the situation has changed. Besides the publications of the cultural centers, there is an increasingly active academic community

publishing Thai works at many universities. Changes in academic regulations now require applicants for academic rank (such as assistant professor) to conduct research and publish the results. The opening of master's degree programs throughout the country has resulted in hundreds of theses being written. The result of these changes has been a vastly increased body of literature in Thai on Thai studies.

New programs are opening that give the indication of continued innovation and expanded scholarly publication. Maha Sarakham University is planning a program emphasizing northeastern Thailand but also covering Tai and related groups throughout Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and other countries in the region. The Rajabhat Institute of Surin is organizing the Phanom Dongrek Studies Program covering the northeastern Thai-Lao-Cambodian triangle. In its local oral history project the Institute aims to produce hundreds of books.

The Siam Society is in a good position to support such studies. Members are found throughout the country and elsewhere in the world working in a variety of disciplines related to the study of Thai culture. The Society's library is one of the oldest in the country and possesses an excellent collection of rare books on the country. Recent improvements to this library promise to make it better able to serve its users. The Society's tour program visits both the famous as well as little-known centers of cultural activity. Lectures on all aspects of Thai culture at the Society supplement this program. Publications including monographs, the *Natural History Bulletin* and the *Journal* contribute as well. In the absence of active academic publishing in the countries surrounding Thailand, the *Journal* and the other publications serves as a medium for scholarly expression for the entire region.

This *Journal* issue brings articles and reviews looking at Thailand from the inside and from the outside. Articles cover the fields of archaeology, art, history, literature, ethnology, philately, and religion. These articles deal with all the regions of Thailand as well as three of its neighbors. In review section, approximately two dozen books are discussed. These articles also touch on a range of social groups: royalty, hill people, Muslims, residents of the ancient northeast, young lovers, scoundrels, the clergy,

and other French in Ayutthaya of the 1680s, performing artists, and potters. Members of the spirit world are also discussed.

Honorary member, Professor Klaus Wenk, has contributed what he says will be his last academic article. Studying the elegant mother-of-pearl doors of Wat Pho showing themes from the *Rāmakien* (Thai *Ramayana*), Professor Wenk reviews the history of mother-of-pearl making in Thailand as well as the story itself. Excellent photography some contributed by former Society President, Bangkok Chowkwanyun, complements the article.

From the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn, Suchitra Chongstitvatana discusses *nirat*, a form of Thai poetry conventionally written by a man to his beloved while away on a trip. Besides interpreting the genre, sensitive translations of modern *nirat* make it possible for people who do not read Thai to appreciate these characteristically Thai poems. A poem of quite another genre, and in northern Thai, by Phaithun Phromwichit complements the obituary to Thomas Kirsch.

Two articles and one note from the 7th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists (EurASEAA) held in Berlin in September 1998 were contributed through the kind assistance of Dr. Wibke Lobo from the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin and former editor, Dr. Ian Glover. Karen Randolph examines pottery production in Si Satchanalai and Nandana Chutiwongs assesses intriguing finds at Phū Phra Bāt in northeastern Thailand. Louis Cort and Leedom Lefferts examine the process by which earthenware is produced at present in Southeast Asia.

Thailand's Burma/Myanmar expert, Sunait Chutintharanon, assesses the Thai perception of Burma in Thai popular literature. Considerable work has been done in recent years by collaborating teams of Thai and Burmese experts to review the shared history of these two countries. Besides helping organize a well-attended symposium at the Siam Society on King Naresuan, the one Thai king who could defeat the Burmese, Dr. Sunait has been an advisor to the Thai historical movie on Queen Suriyothai that is about to be released. Experience from the academic and popular worlds inform Dr. Sunait's perceptive article.

From Yangon University comes U Thaw Kaung, a participant in the team collaborating to improve the state of Thai-Burmese studies and a frequent lecturer at the Society. His presentation on *Ayedawbon*, a particular type of historical account that resembles in some ways the *Chotmai* of Thailand provides a rich body of information. This deepens our knowledge of the means used for recording history in these two countries that many mistakenly assume to be the same.

Profound historical insights can be obtained from studying the article by Chiang Mai University's intellectual historian, Attachak Satayanurak. This is the first half of a longer paper prepared in Kyoto University. The second half of this paper is expected to appear in the next issue. Of considerable importance is the adoption and adaptation of Western ideas and concepts that changed the Thai way of life and the country's kingship.

Boonyong Kettate of Maha Sarakham University reviews the spirit world of the northeast in his paper. The *Pu Ta* (ancestral) forests is a popular indigenous method for propitiating spirits that also preserves woodlands and maintains social order. The fate of these forests in recent years is also discussed.

Also dealing with the spirit world is Anan Ganajanapan's discussion of northern Thai healing rituals. A multi-disciplinary anthropologist at Chiang Mai University, Dr. Anan uses his earlier degrees in political science and history to deal with changes in rituals holistically and comprehensively.

Also dealing with change but of a considerably different kind, Nancy Dowling innovatively examines changes in Buddhist images in early Cambodia. The University of Hawaii Professor tentatively links iconographic modifications with changes in the Buddhist sects in early-Cambodia.

Justin McDaniel from Harvard University examines a Tai Khun manuscript from Chiang Tung (also known as Jengtung, Kengtung, and Kyaington) in Shan State of Burma. He proposes ways by which this heretofore little-known text can contribute to our understanding of Buddhist literature.

Well-known to *JSS* readers in Michael Smithies. He has found yet another previously

unknown manuscript in the French archives. This one, not without some humorous touches regarding the interplay of high-ranking officials dealing with the horde of expensive jewelry left by Madame Constance Phaulkon, makes one think that there must be more such manuscripts. In a review Professor Smithies tells of just another such manuscript on 17th century Ayutthaya, the account of Monsieur Pierre Raymond.

Ever since the Nanchao Theory (telling that fall of Nanchao to the Mongols precipitated a mass migration of Tais south to found kingdoms such as Sukhothai, Chiang Mai, and Ayutthaya some 700 years ago) was found untenable, studies of Tais in China have grown more popular. Among the latest is He Ping, presently at Chulalongkorn University, who reviews the ethnicity of Shangua in southern China.

Looking to the future, Muhammad Ismail Marcinkowski, tells that much can be learned from examining Persian sources for studying the Ayutthayan era. He calls for interdisciplinary studies of Persian accounts now several centuries old. These accounts can be expected to yield new perspective to the accounts of the French for this period.

In these contributions one sees diversity almost to the point of disarray. But a theme

exists in that all explore new territory in their field. All provide new information and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. New documents, new poetic creations, new theoretical and historical interpretations, new archaeological discoveries, and either new scholars or scholars newly available to the English-speaking audience are found herein.

Traditional Thai music lacked the concept of perfect pitch. Different ensembles tuned their instruments to be internally harmonious. The pitch we have established for the *JSS* at present is innovative scholarship on this region. Although the Greater Mekong Region which the *JSS* is now serving is hardly new, the opportunity to conduct research in most areas within it, even imperfectly, is novel enough. At no time since before World War II would it have been possible for the *JSS* to present articles on the geographical areas studied in this issue.

As the Society moves towards its second century, the *JSS* aims to support the kind of research found in this issue and to spread the findings widely. This will correct the worst abuses of recent popular writing as well as encourage scholars in the region to publish more. In so doing the *JSS* will contribute to Thailand regaining control over the conduct of Thai studies.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Saturn Province Photography and Tourism Club. *Ruamruang Muang Satun: Thiraluk Khroprop 150 Pi*. Satun: Satun Province Photography and Tourism Club.

<sup>2</sup> *Thung Maharat Kap Prawatisat Muang Kamphaeng Phet* [Thung Maharat and the History of Kamphaeng Phet]. Kamphaeng Phet: Center for the Development of Thai Language Education, Wachiraprakan Secondary School, edited by Santi Aphairat and Suprane Saengthong, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> *Rang Khrongkan Phathana Laksut Thongthin Na Radap Prathom Suksa Chonphai Pakkoyo* [Draft Project to Develop a Local Primary School Curriculum on the Karen Ethnic Group]. Chiang Mai: Mae Wang Watershed Community Network Organization, et al. n.d. [ca. 1998].

<sup>4</sup> *In Memory of the Royal Cremation of Mom Rajawongse Chakratong Tongyai*. Bangkok: 23 November 23, 1998, pp. 138–152.

<sup>5</sup> English-language titles of the six volumes are: *Professor Dr. Sanga Sabhasri, Forest is Life, Building the Nation through Science and Technology, Trees in the Garden, Blissful Life in the Botanic Garden, and Life is Like the Mountains*. Bangkok, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> *Nangsu Saranukrom Wathanatham Thai* [Encyclopedia of Thai Culture]. 1999–2000. Bangkok: Foundation for the Encyclopedia of Thai Culture.

<sup>7</sup> *Phrabat Somdet Phrachaoyuhua Nai Phra-boromaracha Chakriwong Kap Nakhon Chiang Mai* [The Kings of the Chakri Dynasty and Chiang Mai]. Bangkok: Historical Commission, Secretariat of the Prime Minister, 1996. Edited by Wina Rochanaratha, et al.. Translated by Theera Nuchpiam and Winai Pongsripan.

<sup>8</sup> *Phrathat Ton Bon Doi* [Royal Visits to the Hills]. 1996. Bangkok: National Identity Board. Edited by Kanita Lekhakun.

<sup>9</sup> William Stevenson, 1999. *The Revolutionary*

*King: The True-Life Sequel to The King and I*. London: Constable.

<sup>10</sup> Cecelia Holland. 1999. *The Story of Anna and the King*. London: HarperCollins Entertainment.

<sup>11</sup> Who frequently failed to realize that Thai princes, such as Prince Mongkut or Prince Vajiravudh CHANGED their name when taking the throne such as to King Chom Klao or King Mongkut. Tired of being mistakenly referred to as his grandfather, the grandson who was the real KING Mongkut decided to list all the kings of the dynasty as Rama, from 1 to the then 6, as a convenience for non-Thais.

<sup>12</sup> "Report for 1906". *Journal of the Siam Society* 3:2, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> Phraya Prachakitkorachak wrote that Lao Chiang was an early Tai group whose descendants comprised part of the Tais who founded Chiang Mai. In 1907 the work became known as *Phongsawadan Yonok* when published with some emendations in book form.

<sup>14</sup> Malinee Dilokwanich. 1983. "*Sam Kok*": *A Study*

*of a Thai Adaptation of a Chinese Novel*. Seattle: University of Washington Ph.D. dissertation, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Hanuman. "General Disorder". 1992. *Manager*. (October), pp. 12–18.

<sup>16</sup> In Anthony Reid, ed. *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese in Honour of Jennifer Cushmen*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> John R. Bowen. 1995. "The Form Culture Takes: A State-of-the-Field Essay on the Anthropology of Southeast Asia". *Journal of the Association of Asian Studies* 54:4 [November] pp. 1047–1078.

<sup>18</sup> The author notes (p. 1047) that he is focussing on anthropologists in the United States and that the article is shaped by his interest in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the construction of the article and his selection of sources indicates a belief that little outside the United States is in this "Field".

<sup>19</sup> Southeast Asia Program: *Weighing the Balance Southeast Asian Studies Ten Years After*. Washington D.C. Social Science Research Council.

