The Glimpses of Early Indo-Indonesian Culture, the Collected Papers of Himansu Bhusan Sarkar, gives very valuable knowledge of early Indonesian culture as well as South-East Asian culture in general. From this book, South-East Asian scholars may probe further into various aspects of cultural links between South-East Asian countries and India. Dr. Bachchan Kumar of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts has done an admirable task of editing. We are grateful to him for bringing to attention a great volume of scholarly papers by the late Professor H.B. Sarkar who is one of the few eminent Indian scholars researching on the classical period of South-East Asia.

Professor Emeritus Srisurang Poolthupya

National Library, Department of Fine Arts: *Tamrā Bhāb Devarūp lae Devatā Nabagrah*, Bangkok, 1992

During the nineteenth century, the Bangkok elite produced a number of illustrated manuscripts that might be termed 'Compendia of Hindu Iconography', several of which were acquired by the National Library and are available for study. In 1992 the Library published five of them (nos. 31, 32, 33, 69 and 70), for which we are in its debt, but without any attempt at analysis or explanation. This was perhaps wise, as it leaves open important questions as to the meaning and purpose of the manuscripts, the relationships between them, and the sources from which they were composed.

Like many old Thai manuscripts, these bear no dates, no definitive titles, and no prefaces or colophons that would tell us who produced them, for whom, why and from what sources.

However, these manuscripts are of great cultural importance because they come down to us from a time when a culture (i.e. Siamese Hinduism) was being forgotten, and a few dedicated souls were trying to remember, to record this culture, so that all should not be lost. In some cases information had already been lost, and the recorders got their 'facts' wrong; in others they succeeded in preserving a correct image together with its correct story.

Of course, words like 'correct' and 'wrong' do not apply to myth and symbolism, but I use these words because the authors of our manuscripts were obviously trying to recapture the classical Epics and Puranas. When their memories served them well, they were recording; when their memories failed, they were creating new myths to explain old images.

When King Rama VI discovered English translations of the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas and translated them into Thai, the space for mythic creativity in Siam shrank. From then on there could only be one correct *Ramayana* (Valmiki's), and one correct list of Vishnu's incarnations.

The manuscripts under review seem to have come down to us from a broader age, when people were still able to interpret myths in terms of their own, sometimes orthodox, sometimes unorthodox, perspective.

Looking at the visual content of our manuscripts, I cannot help feel that their ultimate source was an Indian 'Artist's Compendium of Iconography' for the use of architects, sculptors and painters. In India and Nepal there are a number of such compendia illustrating the Guardians of the Directions, the Planetary Gods of the Days of the Week, and the various forms of Ganesha, Shiva and Vishnu. An Indian architect could, in fact, use any of our manuscripts as a handbook.

Our manuscripts seem to have been designed, at least in part, to provide a Puranic background to *Ramakirti*, the Thai version of *Ramayana*, and the inspiration seems to have come from Tamil (or Malayalam) sources, rather than from northern Indian literature.

The Tamil input in *Ramakirti* was recognized as long ago as the 1930's by Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, who was also known as Sathian Koset, (see Sathian Koset: *Upakarana Ramakirti*, Bangkok, 1932) and more recently by S. Singaravelu (see *JSS* vol. 74, p. 21). Yet more recently, A. Niyada Laosunthorn pointed out how many of the illustrations in our iconographic manuscripts, while by no means forming anything like a *Ramayana*, may have been employed to form a Puranic background to the pre-*Ramayana* story as we have it in *Ramakirti*

(see Niyada Laosunthorn: *Narayana 20 Pang: Ton Ruang Ramakirti*, Faculty of Anthropology, Kasetsart University, B.E. 2529).

There is some circumstantial evidence that Siam's King Narai may have sent scholars to examine reliefs at Cambodian ruins and collect stories. In the process, they may have gathered some folk tales created to explain scenes of which the classical tales had been forgotten (see Olivier de Bernon: *Le Trai Bhet: Une Autre Version de la Legend de Rama?* BEFEO occasional publication, 1995).

In addition to this background, it is abundantly clear from artistic evidence that the authors of our manuscripts were working from multiple sources: of two reclining Vishnus on p. 49, that on the viewer's left is what most people would describe as "Thai art", whereas that on the right, with its lion bed and reduced Naga, might have come from a Cambodian lintel, for instance the one at Phanom Rung; and the reclining Vishnu on p. 81 looks much more "Indian" in every respect, very like the famous one in Kathmandu. Though they are all clearly by the same Thai hand, three very different reclining Vishnus in one manuscript surely indicated at least three sources.

Then there are variations in crowns and costumes: Vishnu's North Indian 'pile-of-pots' crown (p.25), Brahma's Persian/Moghul crown (p.26) and Ganapati's South Indian crown (p.27). There are also the tall, slim Thai crowns (pp.134–151) and the squat "Cambodian" crowns (pp.50–53).

Nether garments are similarly varied, for instance the short Cambodian mini-*dhoties* that end above the knee (pp.184–214), the Thai *dhotis* over *jodhpurs* (p.118 and many others), and the loose, long Indian *dhotis* with no *jodhpurs* (pp.9, 11, 16, 24 etc.).

There are some items with fairly obvious sources. Brahma and Vishnu on p. 113 were copied directly from Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* (first published 1810) and Kali (p.107) and Sarasvati (p.108 right) probably come from nineteenth century South Indian prints.

Less obvious are the sources for the anatomically correct rhinoceros (p.8), and the galloping, cantering and walking horses (pp.12, 13 and 16) that seem to have leapt out of eighteenth century European hunting prints.

If we are to place our surviving manuscripts in some sort of order, we may use a number of criteria, including orthography, mythological knowledge and artistic excellence, in descending order of reliability.

It is interesting to note that the National Library, without attempting analysis, has placed manuscript no.31 first and no.70 last, just as I do after years of thought.

In brief, I would suggest that no.31 is the earliest of our surviving manuscripts and no.70 the last, the others falling in between.

No.30 contains the finest drawing. It may reflect the fine drawing of Ayutthaya as reflected in Karl Wenk's *Thailandische Miniaturmalereien* (Wiesbaden, 1965). Furthermore the mythology is most conservative but, most important, the orthography is internally consistent.

Briefly, the orthography of the late Ayutthaya Period was 'odd' from the modern point of view because it sought to accommodate Sanskrit with Cambodian and Thai. But by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had established a systematic orthography that is reflected in manuscript no.31.

On page 28 of no.31 there is an enigmatic marginal note: "This is as far as I could get. For the rest, copy from the big book." We do not know what "the big book" was, but it was presumably a manuscript surviving from the old capital, annotated in the standardized Ayutthayan orthography. Thus no.31 may, perhaps, be dated to the reign of King Rama I, when fine old manuscripts were most likely to have survived. However, it might equally well be dated to the reign of King Rama III who had a passion for recording things that seemed in danger of being lost.

During the nineteenth century, the old standard orthography broke down, so that many manuscripts of that century seem 'illiterate'. Thai spelling gradually stabilized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thanks to the efforts of Kings Rama IV, V, and VI to set standards, as well as the writing of dictionaries, and the increasing influence of the printed word.

The process was by no means instantaneous however, and it is possible that writers of manuscripts continued with their idiomatic usage

well into the sixth reign. Thus while no.31 seems to reflect the old standard of Ayutthaya, the others (no.32, 33, 69 and 70) reflect the orthographic anarchy that followed.

No.70, artistically the finest of our manuscripts is mythologically the most debased and orthographically among the most corrupt. Furthermore, it included the most 'improved' pictures of Vishnu and Shiva (p.207) that were first 'improved' in no.32 (p.77) from the direct copies made from Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, in no.33 (p.113).

Thus we may propose that of these manuscripts (after the early and masterful no.31), no.33 came first followed by no.32, and that no.70 probably came last in the series. (No.69 is an inferior, partial copy of no.33, that hardly deserved publication.)

It is interesting to note how memory and forgetfulness work in this particular iconographic tradition. It is as though those responsible for our manuscripts, while striving intensely to record certain myths and get them right, were also determined that other myths should be forgotten or covered up.

In the realm of comfortable memory we find the Rama story, some of the exploits of Shiva, Ganapati and Vishnu and many of the latter's exploits including his Ten Incarnations. But there occurs a certain selectiveness.

While most of the incarnations of Vishnu are rigorously orthodox and treated in a scholarly manner, including that of Sramana or Buddha Avatava which is offensive to Buddhists, the Krishna story is suppressed. Krishna's image is there (pp.46, 123, 200) but it is removed from the Ten Incarnations series. The drawings are obviously of Krishna as Venugopala, standing like a herdsman and playing his flute, but the label is variously 'Krishnu' (sic), or 'Narayana Playing His Flute' Though the Krishna story occurs abundantly in Cambodian sculpture and is preserved in fragments in Thai literature, it seems to have been unwelcome to the Bangkok elite of the nineteenth century, along with *Mahabharata* and its internecine rivalries. The highly polygamous society of elite nineteenth century Bangkok can hardly have had puritanical objections to Krishna's amours.

Equally interesting is the suppression of the Great Goddess so important in Hindu mythology, except as a tame consort of Vishnu or Shiva. The image of the Great Goddess occurs in the illustrations of our manuscripts, but she is always disguised.

Durga (Mahishasuramardini) on p.75 is labeled 'Narayana (Vishnu) overcoming the Buffalo Demon'; Kali (p.107) is labeled 'Ishvara (Shiva) overcoming Bhasiyaksha . . .'; Sarasvati (p.108) is labeled 'Pancashikara Playing a Vina'.

At least four orthodox bronzes of Chidambara Natttharaja are extent in Thailand (three in Bangkok and one in Nakhon Si Thammarat, and he occurs four times in our manuscripts [pp.29, 40, 114 and 185]). In each instance a nonsense story is given to explain what he is doing; his conquest of Tillai Kali Amman is forgotten.

This reviewer feels that a further study of the selectiveness of the mythologists who produced the images in our manuscripts might tell us more about Siamese society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, perhaps, earlier.

Issues include:

- Why did the Siamese accept *Ramayana* with such enthusiasm as to make it a national myth, while studiously forgetting *Mahabharata*? Thai peasants (and even the Yaowarat Chinese) seem to have absorbed *Ramayana* with their mother's milk, to the extent that *Ramayana* provides many of the idioms of everyday speech. In contrast, only the intelligentsia have any knowledge of *Mahabharata*, and that probably through English translations. This is in contrast to the situation in Indonesia where *Mahabharata* is a living institution in which all classes share.
- The Thai rejection of the role of the Great Goddess is similarly mysterious. Thai women have long enjoyed freedom and power that Hindu society denied to its womenfolk. So why did the Thai mythologists reject the myths of female power?

  One might argue that the Hindu myths of female power (Durga and Kali) grew from the repression of female power in Hindu society, and

that Thai society had no need for such myths as Thai women had real social power. But I am not happy with this explanation as it is obvious that Thai women, for all their 'liberation', have been exploited in every way possible.

- Thai literature is full of bawdy humour, such as the amorous exploits of Hanuman in *Ramakien*. One therefore wonders why Krishna Lila never found a place in Thai hearts.

The answer may be a simple historical accident, namely that Siam was never in close contact with centres of Krishna worship in India. But I suspect that there must have been an ideological problem:

- The *Ramayana* is a success story, like most of the Ten Incarnations of Vishnu.

Similarly the Shiva myths tell of successful outcomes in the conflict between patriarchal society (Shiva) and the dark matriarchal society of the indigenes (Kali).

- In contrast, the *Mahabharata* and the Krishna story are both in the tradition of Greek tragedy, in which heroes and kingdoms embrace their fate that leads to ruin and death.

That the Siamese chose the success stories and rejected the tragedies remains mysterious, as they have tragedies of their own, for instance *Phra Lo* and *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*. The selectivity might most easily be understood if the Siamese perceived the Hindu myths as somehow underpinning the state and perhaps magically determining its fate. If that were the case then the reason for the choice of myths with happy outcomes would be abundantly clear.

The following are some preliminary remarks on illustrations that seem to call for commentary. The numbers refer to pages in the book under review.

Volume 31

(Finest drawing, pre-modern but internally consistent orthography, conservative iconography, incomplete [only 25 pages], perhaps our earliest survivor).

P.8. Note anatomically correct rhinoceros. Source?

Pp.12, 13, and 16. The anatomically correct horses are respectively galloping, cantering and walking. Source?

P.21. The god carries what seems to be a 'fixed' bayonet that became obsolete in the late seventeenth century after Louis XIV introduced the newly invented 'sleeve' bayonet that remains in use today.

P.25. Vishnu wears a pile-of-pots crown in the North Indian manner, while his consorts wear the southern type.

P.26. Brahma wears a Moghul-type crown. His Hamsa mount has been rendered as a realistic goose. Might a source be found in Moghul miniatures?

P.27. Ganapati, riding a realistic rat, wears a South Indian crown with spikes which may derive from a flaming aura such as we see on p. 107. The caption calls his mount 'Kasinām', a word I have not been able to trace.

P.29. This dancing Shiva is 'backwards' in relation to Chidambaram Natharaja who dances on his right leg and raises his left. Shiva dancing on his left leg and raising his right is consistent with the miraculous 'reversed' Shiva of Madurai. Our picture is not due to the accidental reversal of a perforated pattern, as the drum and fire remain correctly in the right and left hand respectively.

P.30. "Vishnu overcomes Ekadanta". I cannot trace the myth. The god's weapons seem un-canonical, and Ekadanta ('Single Tooth') should refer to Ganapati with his broken tusk.

P.31. Spirits that preside over the capture of elephants. They sit upon (or leap out of) what look like books, suggesting that they are Gurus of Gajashastra (elephant science), while their coarse features and the vegetation (or feathers) in their hair might indicate indigenous spirits. I have failed to find an Indian source for them.

P.32. Caption: "The spook of Rāmarāja City". This seems to be a realistic portrait of a Shiva ascetic with Rudraksha beads and triple Vilva leaf about his neck, unkempt hair and beard, and long fingernails growing from a withered left hand. "Spook" (Preta) suggests that he was disliked. "*Ramaraja*" may be a

clerical 'correction' for Rāmanād, a region in South India from which some of the Brahmins of Bangkok may originally have come.

There seems to be a story here. Can it be retrieved?

Volume 32

(An apparently complete manuscript of 53 pages, quality of drawing mixed, orthography far from literate either by pre-modern or modern standards, might be dated to somewhere in the mid-nineteenth century)

P.39. A Caturamukha Linga that must be of particular significance. Can it be identified? The caption has "Brah Sahyaṃphūvaṇnāt" which probably indicates "Svayambhūvanātha".

P.40. On the reader's left a conventionally oriented dancing Shiva, right foot down left foot up, suggesting that it was not copied from p.29 in Vol.31, but had another source. In his upper right hand he holds not a drum but a crocodile; breakdown in iconographic knowledge?

On the right is Shiva overcoming Andaka (Vishnu's doorkeeper), a correct Puranic memory which Thai tradition usually mistakes as Vishnu (as Mohini) overcoming Nanduka (Shiva's doorkeeper).

P.41. On the reader's left, a wholly conventional South Indian picture of Shiva and Paravati on Nandi (this masterful depiction of Nandi owes nothing to the funny looking bull of p.24 in Vol.31).

On the right, the god and goddess, bearing ears of rice, ride a fish of a species that is of no economic significance as it is too bony. A Thai folk tale has it that Shiva blessed this fish with many sharp bones so that it would not be eaten. Can we find a similar story in India?

P.46. Reader's left: this is obviously Krishna Venugopala. The caption has 'Narayana playing a flute'.

P.47. Reader's left, the caption says 'Narayana going to Chidambaram'. Can we find the story?

On the right, the caption says "Uma going to Kailasa, elephants offer their tusks to the Mother of the World". Can we find the story?

P.48. Right. Here is Vishnu as Mohini, ready to overcome Nanduka according to indigenous myth.

P.49. Left, a conventional Thai depiction of Vishnu asleep on the ocean.

Right, the same with lion bed and reduced Naga, that seems to owe something to Cambodian art, for instance the famous lintel at Phanom Rung.

P.58. Right, the caption has "Brahā Amae with six fingers on each hand". Can some background be found for this deity?

P.64. Left, apparently a form of Ganapati, but the caption has 'Koṇcanāneshvara' (for Krauncasomething?). Krauncа was the demon speared by Karttikeya (Khanda Kumara) whom a local myth identifies with Ganapati, claiming that Khanda Kumara was beheaded and turned into Ganapati when the head was replaced. This story makes mythic sense, as it would prevent Khanda Kumara from playing Zeus to Shiva's Chronos.

P.65. Right, Khanda Kumara on his peacock. In Thailand he has no myth other than the above story.

P.66. Story unrecognized.

P.67. The caption has "Shiva creating the great bow Moli", but the picture probably comes from a print of Virabhadra. The object like a looking-glass in his lower left hand was originally a shield. There is an example in Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*.

Pp.68–73. A conventional series of Vishnu's ten incarnations in correct order. The bearded Shiva on p. 72 is copied from Moor.

P.75. The caption has "Vishnu overcoming Mahisasura", but it appears to be Durga with breast-cloth, the buffalo demon conflated with her lion. Source?

P.76. Vishnu and Brahma copied and 'improved' (i.e. made to look more Thai) from p.113.

P.78. The caption has "Shiva practising austerities". It may be a misunderstanding of Krishna Kaliyadamana.

P.79. Shiva destroying Tripuram, whom the Thai conceived as a single demon instead of the three cities of demons. Shiva is peering at the demon through a spy-glass. When Shiva opens his fiery third eye, some Thai stories have it that he "peers through his lenses". This idea may date from long ago, when Thais first heard tales of a new form of warfare that involved the use of the spy-glass followed by the devastating effect of cannon. The confusion of spy-glass with cannon must have found its

way into literature before Thais learnt to distinguish them.

P.80. A conventional, very 'Indian' depiction of the sleeping Vishnu. One would like to find a source.

P.82. See p.30, of which this appears to be a copy.

P.83. The caption has "Devaring binding Asuras with his noose". Shiva overcoming the proud Rishis of the Pine Forest?

P.84. Baladeva (Balarama?) and Devi, as gods of the First Roughing.

P.85. Brahā Pahāgondap and Brahā Maha Mesho. Can anyone identify?

P.86. Unidentified.

P.87. "Madyāvā Maharishi"?

P.88. "Uden Anuraja"?

P.91. Copied from p. 31?

Volume 33

(An apparently complete manuscript of 53 pages, quality of drawing very mixed, much of it weak, some of it almost childish, others masterful, as though several hands were involved. The orthography is almost modern. Very difficult to date, but it is obviously closely related to vol. 32 in complicated ways. For instance the Lingam on p.99 appears to be a debased copy of the Lingam on p.39, whereas the Brahma and Vishnu on p.113 must be earlier than the 'tidied up' version on p.77. Iconographically vol.33 contains little that differs from vol 32, except for a few items.)

P.107. The caption claims that this is Shiva, but with its breast-cloth it is almost certainly a form of Kali, perhaps Mariamman. It is certainly of South Indian provenance: note the skirt, the crown, the flaming aura and the disposition of the garland. The sprues at the bottom of the throne suggest that this picture may derive from a bronze image, or from a print of a particular bronze image. A possible source for this picture might be the Shri Mariamman Temple on Silom Road, which dates from the 19th century, but I have failed to find the date of its foundation.

P.108. Right, the caption has "Pancha-shikhara playing his Vina", but this is undoubtably Sarasvathy from a South Indian source: note the breast-cloth, the Yali head of Vina, the crown and the pig-tail.

P.113. Brahma and Vishnu are copied exactly from Moor's *Hindu pantheon* (first published 1810).

Volume 69

(19 pages of weak drawing, some of it pretty, orthography poor, no new iconographic input. No need for comment.)

Points of interest include a preponderance of the short *dhoti* (ending above the knee in the Cambodian manner) and stern, unsmiling faces. The artist appears to have aimed for an antique effect, with admirable success.

Volume 70

(An apparently complete document of 41 pages, this is our most opulent production that might prompt the student to suppose that it was the most authoritative. However, careful analysis suggests that it is a late copy of vol.32, iconographically and mythologically inferior. The orthography tends towards the modern, except when earlier illiteracies are copied).

Vol.70, an ancient though it looks, can be dated with some confidence to the reign of King Rama VI in the early twentieth century. This is because the Musee Guimet possesses a copy, obviously by the same hand, which bears a date in the early twentieth century.

P.185. The Dancing Shiva, but iconography has broken down (conch instead of drum).

P.196. Reclining Vishnu, copied from p.49, but Brahma is shown fleeing from the flames spat out by the Naga, another example of iconographic breakdown.

P.207. Vishnu and Shiva here derive from pp.72 and 77 that derive from p.113 that in turn came from Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, but they have come a long way.

P.208. Narasimha, seems to have been copied from Moor, or similar.

Pp.215–219. The ten incarnations of Vishnu, out of order: Rama, Dwarf, Krishna, Kaliki, Boar, Parasurama, Fish, Turtle, Narasingha has been displaced to p.208, and the Buddha has been forgotten or suppressed. The misunderstood nether garments suggest that this scene was taken from another western source (not Moor). A case in point is the Boar (centre p.218) which is dressed exactly like the illustration for 'avatar' in *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 1979, which gives no source for this picture.

Conclusion

The book under review, despite its lack of analysis, deserves scholarly attention. Like many official publications, it is neither advertised nor professionally distributed. The Siam Society library does not have a copy, and I doubt if university libraries have either.

This book is of great cultural interest as it reproduces several illustrated manuscripts of Hindu mythology as understood in Siam during a time when traditional culture was being forgotten and only a few were struggling to recall it.

During, and since, the reign of King Rama VI there have been revivals of interest in Hindu mythology, but they were all based on English translations of the standard Sanskrit texts. As a result, the traditional Siamese Hindu mythology, as it appears in the *Ramakien* of King Rama I, may be interpreted either as 'uniquely Thai' or 'hopelessly corrupt'.

These four manuscripts provide a unique chance to study Hindu mythology as it was received in Siam via South India, Cambodia and elsewhere in earlier centuries.

Furthermore they allow us to examine a culture in decline, how it was ravaged and how it strove to maintain itself, at least in memory.

Though this seem eccentric, I should like to propose that one cannot really understand modern Thailand without a study of these documents that tell us what Thais have chosen to remember and forget.

Michael Wright

Dan F. Bradley.
Simo: The Story of a boy of Siam.
Chicago: Ram's Horn, 1899, 80pp.

It is unusual for the *JSS* to review a book five years older than the Siam Society itself. However, when such a book, written by a son of the pioneer American missionary, Dan Beach Bradley, is one of the oldest English-language novels ever written on Thailand (and is a source for references to Anna Leonowens and King Mongkut) turns up seemingly out of nowhere, a review is appropriate. With experts such as the head of the Church of Christ in Thailand's Office of Church History, Herbert Swanson, unaware of the book, and major American libraries such as Cornell, the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard, and Yale not having it, a review of this book is equivalent to reporting a new archaeological find. The lost has been found, in this case offered on eBay.

The author of *Simo*, president of Iowa College, lived in Thailand, where his father worked as a missionary for about five decades in the mid-nineteenth century. Dan Freeman Bradley was born in 1857, the youngest son of Bradley and his second wife.

Bradley most likely took the name of the novel's young hero, Simo, from a Chiang Mai man actually named Simo who was the first person from northern Thailand known to have gone to the United States. A convert to Christianity, in 1889 he was sent to Oakland, California, to study theology for about a year. On returning he became pastor of the Thai First Church in Chiang Mai. It is likely Bradley and the real Simo knew each other.

Bradley's story begins with Simo in Phetchaburi. For Simo's first ten years, he followed an ordinary country boy's life in a rice farming community. Then following a meeting between his father and an American missionary, Simo found himself studying in a mission school in Phetchaburi. Here Simo attracted the attention of the local governor, known in the book as "Phya Pet". He took Simo back to Bangkok when he was transferred by the king to be the country's foreign minister. "Phya Pet" was not directly related to the king, and was given the position due to his ability. After a while in Bangkok, where Simo attended the Loi Krathong festival, he managed to rescue the beautiful "Soot-chei" from the river after her boat had accidentally been rammed. When Simo offered to take "Soot-chei" home, he realized that he was attracted to her and discovered that she was the daughter (by a minor wife) of Nai Chin, one of Bangkok's richest merchants. As it turned out, "Soot-chei" was attracted to Simo as well. "Phya Pet", learning of the incident, visited Nai Chin to arrange a betrothal. He was frustrated

by Nai Chin who desired to give the girl to the king and thus gain influence at court. Nai Chin then launched a campaign to discredit "Phya Phet" at court, where some of the king's relatives were jealous of his ability and the trust the king had in him. Nai Chin, now able to present "Soot-chei" to the king as a member of the harem, gained a considerable amount of prestige and financial advantages. Seeing he had fallen from power, "Phya Pet" arranged for Simo and "Soot-chei" to be smuggled out of Bangkok with a check for $50,000 on an English ship where the captain married them. "Phya Pet" met his fate the next day.

Phya Pet (behind table) p. 39

PHRA PETR PINAI SRI SAWADDI (KHUN CHAI II) AS GOVERNOR OF PHETCHABURI PROVINCE

As governor of Phetchaburi in the 1850s, taken from Oudaya Bhanuwongse, *A Genealogical Narrative of Sheikh Ahmad Qomi Chao Phya Bawoorn Rajanayok. The Persian Who Became the Most Distinguished Statesman of Siam of His Time and Heads One Lineal Line of Distinguished Descendants of the Bunnag Family*, Bangkok 1987, p. 26

The character of "Phya Pet" was based on a real person, Thuam Bunnag, referred to by Daniel McGilvary in *A Half Century among the Laos* as "Pra Palat" (translated by him as "lieutenant governor"). He later acquired the noble title of Chaophraya Phanuwong Maha-kosathibodi. In his youth he had studied under Emilie Royce Bradley (the first wife of the Dan F. Bradley's father) before becoming lieutenant governor in the Bunnag stronghold of Phetchaburi. Here he met Dan F. Bradley's older brother, Cornelius and in 1859 invited the recently-arrived McGilvary to live and work in the city (after a brief stay there he went to work in Chiang Mai where he lived for more than 50 years). Eventually, in 1869 he went to work as the Phra Khlang (foreign minister) for King Chulalongkorn in Bangkok.

This is where the similarity between fiction and fact ends for the Bunnag family was far too strong to allow one of its senior members to be executed. Instead, he became one of the most powerful people in the country as Phra Khlang until his retirement in 1885.

The novel also reflects some attitudes of the Americans in Thailand at the time. No Thai would have written a story of a woman in the court who managed to escape with her commoner lover to England dressed as Eurasians and registered as Mr. & Mrs. Robinson Smith. No Thai would have written about a nobleman who appeared to be morally superior to the king. No Thai would have written that a girl would receive the news that she was to be given to the king as one of his wives as being like a dagger through her heart. No Thai would have written about a young Thai man and woman running away from the court to seek refuge from persecution in Europe. But this is the sort of thing an American raised in Thailand and

fluent in the language could well have written. The work is representative of American liberal philosophies of a century ago. Some attitudes in the book regarding what was seen as backwardness in Thai society and the injustices of the royal harem were adopted by Margaret Landon in her 1944 book.

Simo represents an example of a rarely expressed fictional point of view of Thai life in late-nineteenth century Thailand and the ways of the people. Although not one of the classics of Western literature, or even of Western novels on Thailand, *Simo: the Story of a Boy of Siam* does express the values with which the West regarded Thailand. Indeed, later some of these values were later adopted by the Thai government. The author, on intimate terms with the Thai and avoiding much of the racist rhetoric of his time, subscribed to these values and encouraged their adoption in Thailand.

Ronald D. Renard

Burmese Manuscripts. Part 4. Catalogue Numbers 736–900. Compiled by Anne Peters, edited by Heinz Bechert.
Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart 2000.
Xxii + 274 pages. Hardcover.

Several institutions in Germany hold important collections of Burmese manuscripts. These are being catalogued in the series *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, Band XXIII, of which this is Part 4. (For a review of Part 3, see *JSS* 85, pp. 205–206.) The present volume describes 105 Burmese codices kept in the Bavarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) in Munich. This does not exhaust the holdings of that library, which will be further described in Part 5. Of the 105 manuscripts, 75 contain only one title; the remaining manuscripts contain more than one title, yielding a total of 165 catalogue numbers in the volume.

Of the 165 catalogue numbers, 98 have a copying date at the end of the text. Most of the manuscripts were copied in the second half of the 19th century, as is typical with Burmese manuscript collections. The oldest manuscript, out of seven copies in the second half of the 18th century, dates to CE 1767.

Two thirds of the texts are written on palm-leaf. The collection contains 46 lacquered *Kammavācā* (collections of monastic formula) on palm leaf, stiffened textiles, metal, and ivory. It includes one white paper accordion book (*parabaik*) and one black paper accordion book. A paper manuscript in "double European binding" (Cat.No.736) contains coloured drawings of nats, nāgas, dignitaries, and monks. For Cat.No.778, 779, 783–784, 786, etc., the author transcribes the text of the accompanying woven ribbons which record the aspirations of the donors. This is laudable because such ribbons are historical, social, and religious documents in their own right.

The manuscripts catalogued are in both Burmese and Pāli, or 'Pāli-Burmese', that is *nissaya* or word-by-word Burmese translations. A list given in the introductions shows that the collection includes a number of rare texts. One of the interesting texts is the *Bṛhajjātaka* (cat.No.884, accompanied by Burmese gloss *nissaya*, Cat.No.885), an astrological text which is one of the rare examples of a Sanskrit text translated into Pāli. Cat.No.782, is the *Mālālaṅkāravatthu*, a Burmese language life of the Buddha.

Cat.No.823, the *Paramattharatanāvali*, which was composed by Mahādhammsankram, the first Monthon Sayadaw, in BE 1190 (CE 1828/1829), opens with the verse (given here with a few corrections)

Munindavadanambhoja,
-gabbhasambhavasundarī
saraṇaṁ pāṇinaṁ vāṇī
mayhaṁ pinayatam manaṁ.

As the author notes, the verse also occurs in Part 3, Cat.Nos.502 and 521: the colophons of a *Yamaka* manuscript dated Sakkarāji 1246–1247 (CE1885) and a *Parivāra* manuscript dated Sakkarāji 1225 (CE 1893), respectively. This interesting verse, which has something of an independent existence in Siam is in fact the first verse of the *Subodhālaṅkāra* (see Padmanabh S. Jaini [de.], *Subodhālaṅkāra, Porāṇaṭīkā (Mūlasāmi-ṭīkā)* by *Saṅgharakkhita Mahāsāmi* and *Abhinava-ṭīkā (Nissaya)* (Anonymous), The Pali Text Society, Oxford, 2000, p. 2.)

Like previous catalogues, *Burmese Manuscripts Part 4* offers a detailed physical description followed by transcriptions of the opening and closing passages of the text. The compiler discusses the title, nature of the work, identity and biographical details of the author, etc., as appropriate, and gives valuable cross-references to other catalogued manuscripts or printed editions. The list of abbreviations at the beginning amounts to a bibliography of Burmese manuscript studies. This is followed by Addenda et Corrigenda for Parts 1 to 3. The volume closes with indexes of A. Works, B. Authors, C. Scribes, Donors and Former Owners, D. Geographical Names, E. Dates of Manuscripts, F. List of Manuscripts.

Like its predecessors, Burmese Manuscripts Part 4 maintains the highest standards and is a valuable resource for the study of Burmese and Pāli literature.

Peter Skilling

Martin Stuart-Fox
Historical Dictionary of Laos (2nd edition)
Lanham, Maryland, and London: Scarecrow Press, 2001, 527pp.

The second edition of this historical dictionary of Laos, part of a series of Asian/Oceanian Historical Dictionaries, is updated and enlarged from the 1992 edition. The second edition is almost double the size of the earlier edition with twice the entries. Emphasis in this edition includes more on the early history of Laos, more on the social, cultural and economic context of Lao history and changes since the inception of the communist regime. With the complexity of the recent history of Laos, it has been necessary to include information on the history of relations between Laos and other states, including neighbors and donors.

In addition to the dictionary entries, from "administration, colonial" to "Zhenla (Chenla)", the book contains important information on Lao spelling, 9 pages of maps, 27 pages of chronology from 500,000 BCE to 2000CE, a 14 page introduction to the country and its history, and 24 appendices listing the names of kings of the various Lao kingdoms, past and present leaders of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and population statistics. A bibliographic essay introduces a comprehensive and well-structured bibliography of 123 pages. All entries are in English and French.

The material is fascinating, whether the reader is checking facts obtained from other sources or browsing to gain a feel for this little known country. There is little point commenting on dictionary entries, but to give readers a flavour of the material, under "drugs and narcotics" we learn that the grass in local markets really is cannabis, an ingredient in Lao soups; under "rice" that the International Rice Gene Bank has stored 14,000 varieties of rice from Lao PDR, a number second only to India; and under "Meuang Sing" that this principality was claimed by both Britain and France in the late 1800s. Entries are relatively short and easy to follow.

Reviewers should have little to quibble with in a dictionary; however, entries are not without problems. Stating that "Almost any man (or woman; there is an order of nuns) can become a Buddhist monk . . ." is not an accurate representation of the ordination status of women in Buddhism. Throughout it would have been useful to have Lao transcriptions for terms such as "benzoin". And there is little critical commentary on the political context in which some publications emerged. Steering clear of political polemic will be welcome to some readers, a distortion to others. But all readers will benefit from access to the biographical sketches of the key figures who have shaped or are shaping the current history of Lao PDR.

Penny Van Esterik

Sid Brown
The Journey of One Buddhist Nun: Even Against the Wind.
Albany: State University of New York, 2001, 180pp.

This book is based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation in religious studies. But because the author is both fluent in Thai and knowledgeable about the texts and practice of

Theravada Buddhism, she has produced an engaging analysis of the life of one Thai Buddhist nun or *maechi*. *Maechi* Wabi's life becomes a "foundation, lens, and tool" for examining Thai *maechi* in general, and a number of issues related to women and Buddhism in Thailand.

Following the introduction to Dhammacarini Samnak, a nunnery in Ratchaburi (southwest of Bangkok), ten chapters develop the life story of Wabi from the experiences at home that lead her to go forth to the homeless life, through the various obstacles she faced during her search for a religious life. These obstacles include poverty (money was needed to become a nun), difficult interpersonal relationships, crises in faith, accidents and poor health, and the daily challenges of seeing herself and her faith through meditation. The tenth and eleventh chapters explore in more detail, *maechi* Wabi's current position at Dhammacarini Samnak in relation to the work of women religious leaders who are becoming "contemplative activists" in support of Thai women. The final two chapters document the author's departure from Dhammacarini and the *maechi* she has come to know, and concludes with an ineffective analogy between the development of Thai *maechi* and the *Jataka* tale of Prince Vessantara. The book includes an appendix on issues related to translation, chapter notes, a glossary of relevant Thai and Pali terms, a bibliography and an index: information that make this a particularly valuable book for students.

The narrative is rich in the details of rural Thai family life where elderly parents are sometimes cared for at the *samnaks* of their daughters who have gone forth; where husbands and fathers are likely to leave families in poverty to fend for themselves; where young girls may grow up to fear and dislike men; and where the heat of human relations can drive even very young children to appreciate the peace derived from calm meditation (*samatha*). The author provides a sensitive treatment of the resulting situation where *maechi* like Wabi become literally "afraid to have a family" and long for the world of women where they can feel safe.

The author is particularly effective in the chapters documenting the key role meditation plays in the lives of Thai *maechi*. Because the author is able to use her personal experiences with meditation practice, readers are able to understand the differences between *samatha* and insight meditation (*vipassana*), and how each helps practitioners deal with lust, greed, anger and other conditions that cause personal suffering. Wabi's crisis of faith becomes more understandable and we can identify with her even across vast cultural and religious differences. Through Wabi's life, readers can see how even faith changes through time.

This book is both readable and enjoyable while conveying important messages about religion and gender in Thailand. However, more critical analysis would have provided a better context for readers who know little about Thailand. Quotes about farmers' having no knowledge (p. 118) or traditional flower arrangements and sewing triangular pillows preserving Thai culture (p. 129) pass with no commentary. Overall, this is a wonderful, insightful contribution to understanding the asymmetry of Thai men and women's lives as they follow the Buddhist path.

Penny Van Esterik

John Girling
Interpreting Development: Capitalism, Democracy and the Middle Class in Thailand
Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publication, Cornell University, 1997, 95 pp.

Girling's monograph on Thailand's political development remains a useful review of Thai development. Published in 1996, its writing preceded the 1997 promulgation of a new Constitution and Thailand's economic and financial crises, and subsequent elections that brought in Thailand's first elected Senate and the current Taksin government. Nonetheless, the 95-page volume is a brief but important contribution, synthesizing the work of a number of Thai authors and discussions with Thai scholars and capturing the essence of political undercurrents which continue to have an impact on today's politics.

Girling rates the rise of the middle class and civil society among the most fundamental recent

shifts in Thai society. Drawing on the work of a number of others, he concludes that the middle class (with its values of pragmatism, materialism, and individualism) drives not only the economy, but also society and politics. Three decades of economic development have fostered the emergence of the middle class as a force of virtual equality (if not superiority) with the military and civil bureaucracy in power and esteem. This unprecedented importance of Thailand's middle class derives from (and contributes to) its economic position, occupying a vacuum left as 1) the military discredited itself through its divisive role in the events culminating in May 1992; 2) a civilian bureaucracy in disarray loses ground to businessmen; 3) labor unions (greatly limited by the Anand government) struggle for focus; 4) neither the political left nor right presents a credible alternative vision; and 5) rural movements focus on limited, specific objectives (blocking dam construction, pressing for higher commodity prices) rather than for fundamental change.

Does this translate into class-based politics? Not so. Girling argues that "previously autonomous elements—from mid-level peasants to authoritarian bureaucrats—are losing their separate identities as they succumb to the economic attraction (and the values) of the middle class," but a middle class pulled in many directions by its heterogeneity. The diversity of the middle class and its perspectives, has, in turn, provided impetus for the competing forces of money politics, and for the emergence of civil society. Civil society (in Girling's formulation, it includes professionals, managers, academics and students, the media, non-government organizations, religious and civic associations, labor, peasant organizers and activists) focuses on goals of justice, the rule of law, protection of human rights, and the preservation of the environment.

Middle class humanist values (to some extent in apposition to the achievement orientation characterizing the middle class more broadly), having given rise to civil society, seems the one bright spot on Girling's political map of Thailand. His discussion of civil society and the NGO movement is somewhat limited, although the diversity within the movement is admittedly difficult to capture in a single chapter of a brief review. No mention is made, for example, of the early 1990's resettlement program (*koh cho goh*), of the rights movement, or of the role of NGOs in shaping the agenda of government. This agenda-shaping role became especially prominent in the development of Thailand's [illegible] more Pius and the [illegible] Orientation, does their exclusion from Girling's work is understandable. The weaknesses of NGOs (lack of coordination, factionalism, top-down attitudes, limited capacity, and lack of general public support) continue to hamstring the civil society movement, in a post-1997 era of both declining local and international contributions. He maintains that "only through the linkage in civil society of the defense (of human rights, grass-roots politics, and people's participation) that independent and self-reliant communities can emerge." Quite a tall order for an emergent, factionalized sector in the face of the forces of social inertia and vested interests.

The sub-theme that the transformation of society has fundamentally disrupted presumably benign arrangements of the past carries undertones of a historical utopia which never existed. Girling argues that capitalist transformation brought a change to a market orientation, thereby eroding the traditional belief in the obligations of propertied individuals. His case that propertied individuals no longer carry out their historical obligations to protect the poor is based partly on the aftermath of the 1993 Kader toy factory fire, which killed nearly 200 workers. The deleterious impact of business on the environment is also discussed. While such actions indicate that business aggressively pursues short-term interests, I would argue that a pattern of exploitation of the public interest (including but not limited to its human and natural resources) reflects continuity with traditional practices, not all of which have been benign.

However, many businessmen in the North carry out "traditional obligations" by paying medical and family expenses of workers infected by the HIV virus, despite the absence of government tax incentives for such actions.[1] Both historically and today, the well-to-do undertake multiple roles and behaviors, from benign patron to unscrupulous exploiter.

The crucial point is that despite taking on (some of) the trappings of a modern state, Thai-

shifts in Thai society. Drawing on the work of a number of others, he concludes that the middle class (with its values of pragmatism, materialism, and individualism) drives not only the economy, but also society and politics. Three decades of economic development facilitated the emergence of the middle class as a force of virtual equality (if not superiority) with the military and civil bureaucracy in power and esteem. This unprecedented importance of Thailand's middle class derives from (and contributes to) its economic position, occupying a vacuum left as 1) the military discredited itself through its divisive role in the events culminating in May 1992; 2) a civilian bureaucracy in disarray loses ground to businessmen; 3) labor unions (greatly limited by the Anand government) struggle for focus; 4) neither the political left nor right presents a credible alternative vision; and 5) rural movements focus on limited, specific objectives (blocking dam construction, pressing for higher commodity prices) rather than for fundamental change.

Does this translate into class-based politics? Not so. Girling argues that "previously autonomous elements – from mid-level peasants to authoritarian bureaucrats – are losing their separate identities as they succumb to the economic attraction (and the values) of the middle class," but a middle class pulled in many directions by its heterogeneity. The diversity of the middle class and its perspectives, has, in turn, provided impetus for the competing forces of money politics, and for the emergence of civil society. Civil society (in Girling's formulation, it includes professionals, managers, academics and students, the media, non-government organizations, religious and civic associations, labor, peasant organizers and activists) focuses on goals of justice, the rule of law, protection of human rights, and the preservation of the environment.

Middle class humanist values (to some extent in opposition to the achievement orientation characterizing the middle class more broadly), having given rise to civil society, seems the one bright spot on Girling's political map of Thailand. His discussion of civil society and the NGO movement is somewhat limited, although the diversity within the movement is admittedly difficult to capture in a single chapter of a brief review. No mention is made, for example, of the early 1990's resettlement program (*koh cha goh*), of the rights movement, or of the role of NGOs in shaping the agenda of government. This agenda-shaping role became especially prominent in the development of Thailand's Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan and the drafting of the 1997 Constitution, thus their exclusion from Girling's work is understandable. The weaknesses of NGOs (lack of coordination, factionalism, top-down attitudes, limited capacity, and lack of general public support) continue to hamstring the civil society movement, in a post-1997 era of both declining local and international contributions. He maintains that "only through the linkage in civil society of the defense (of human rights, grass-roots politics, and people's participation) that independent and self-reliant communities can emerge." Quite a tall order for an emergent, factionalized sector in the face of the forces of social inertia and vested interests.

The sub-theme that the transformation of society has fundamentally disrupted presumably benign arrangements of the past carries undertones of a historical utopia which never existed. Girling argues that capitalist transformation brought a change to a market orientation, thereby eroding the traditional belief in the obligations of propertied individuals. His case that propertied individuals no longer carry out their historical obligations to protect the poor is based partly on the aftermath of the 1993 Kader toy factory fire, which killed nearly 200 workers. The deleterious impact of business on the environment is also discussed. While such actions indicate that business aggressively pursues short-term interests, I would argue that a pattern of exploitation of the public interest (including but not limited to its human and natural resources) reflects continuity with traditional practices, not all of which have been benign.

However, many businessmen in the North carry out "traditional obligations" by paying medical and family expenses of workers infected by the HIV virus, despite the absence of government tax incentives for such actions.[1] Both historically and today, the well-to-do undertake multiple roles and behaviors, from benign patron to unscrupulous exploiter.

The crucial point is that despite taking on (some of) the trappings of a modern state, Thai-

land still tolerates what might be otherwise characterized as feudal behavior. Growing public concern with human rights and the environment (and appropriate legislation notwithstanding) has not prevented abuses of the public interest. These appear to continue through bureaucratic incompetence and hidden (and well-greased) handshakes between business and government. Girling notes that numerous factories were found in violation of safety codes, a situation which continued well into the late 1990s.[2] The pro-business attitude of the present Taksin government gives one little reason to believe that this has fundamentally changed.

The middle class, he argues, has appropriated the role of patron from the declining aristocracy and bureaucracy. Most of the literature on patron-client relations in Thailand suggests that the middle class has long performed the patron role. What has changed most dramatically is the direct involvement of middle-class businessmen in local and national politics. While earlier generations of (usually Chinese) businessmen often played a behind-the scenes hand in politics, their offspring (who more thoroughly identify themselves as Thai, although Thailand has recently begun to deal more openly with the extent of Chinese roots and roles in society) face no legal or other constraints in playing politics quite openly.

Girling discusses the range of business-political relations succinctly. His discussion of the trading of power for wealth-as bureaucrats accept positions on the boards of private companies-and trading wealth for power captures the challenge of money politics, both of which continue unabated. Perhaps he could have stressed what some commentators' view as the deleterious impact of vacating the Joint Public-Private Sector Consultative Committee. The result is a fallback to individual contacts and lobbying favoring specific firms, rather than development of policies that level the playing field for all businesses in a sector.

The discussion of the intertwining of business and government reminds me of the response to a question regarding the distinction between government, business and drug traffickers in Thailand. A government investigator replied, "They are the same individuals." This tangled web of interests æbusiness and government, legal and illegal æpresents a continuing challenge to Thailand. The 1997 Constitution aimed to address this challenge through conflict of interest provisions and strengthening of counter-corruption measures æprovisions which are under threat of undoing at the hands of the Thai Rak Thai parliamentary majority.

Girling's use of quotes in characterizing Thailand's fiscal and monetary policies as "responsible" seems prescient æhis usage relates, however, to his concern that technocratic guidance has promoted exports, but not democracy. In hindsight, perhaps the world should have been more cautious in applauding the economic policy technocrats on technical grounds as well.

Treatment of the legal system is limited to brief comments on a lawsuit against former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun. This is regrettable, given his extensive treatment of a number of other players, and the importance of strengthening the rule of law and ensuring that the court system delivers just and expeditious decisions.

The importance of improving education and skills training is even more relevant today than when Girling wrote; sadly, Thailand's efforts to reform education appear to be foundering.

Thailand's development, Girling concludes, faces the twin shadows of the social cost of rapid industrialization, and the paradox that an enlightened technocracy may be more capable of social reform than an elected government. Half a decade on, those shadows remain. Despite the economic crisis, the 1997 Constitution, several political firsts (first elected Senate, first overwhelming majority support for a single party in parliament), Girling's analysis of the dynamics influencing Thailand's development remains relevant; a useful overview of events up to mid-decade, and of larger, continuing social dynamics. Newcomers to the field of Thai politics may wish for greater explanation at some points, as the monograph appears to be written for those familiar with the events and personalities. The liberal use of references, many in English, provides a guide to other works for those interested in developing a deeper understanding of the nation's political and development.

Gary Suwannarat

surrendered or made a ceasefire agreement with the military regime.

In the historical section, Hinton puts the total Karen population at 2.5 million, but a more accurate figure would be as much as a million higher. Historian Martin Smith states in Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (Zed Books, 1999) that most neutral observers estimate the number of Karen in Burma to be between three and four million. According to Thai government statistics from 1997, there are about 350,000 Karen in Thailand, excluding Karen refugees and migrant workers who have recently come from Burma.

In conclusion, *Oldest Brother's Story* provides a much appreciated addition to the literature in English on the Karen, as it brings Karen voices to life and offers a window into the Karen worldview. This book will surely be enjoyed by academics, students, and general readers alike and is one that I think most Karen themselves would feel represents them with affection and accuracy.

Christina Fink

Kasian Tejapira
Commodifying Marxism: The Formation of Modern Thai Radical Culture, 1927-1958
Kyoto: Kyoto University Press and Melbourne Trans Pacific Press, 2001

I fear for the future of this little red book. Marxism-Communism has been derided by Thai elites, ethno-nationalists, and governments of all stripe as alien and unsuitable to the country's history and traditions. For these reasons it has received insufficient attention as a topic of serious research in Thai studies. Throughout the period covered in this book other matters have captured the attention of social scientists. These include the end of the absolute monarchy, the rise of militarism, World War II and the Japanese Occupation, and the rough-and-ready politics of the post-war era until Field Marshal Sarit routed his rivals and took control in 1958.

What interests could possibly be served by revisiting the 1920s when Marxism-Communism was dominated by the *lookjin*, Thais of Chinese ancestry, and their Vietnamese and Chinese comrades who were preoccupied with anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggles elsewhere in the region? What is so compelling about the feuds and factions as the People's Party struggled with its internal tensions between Pridi Phanomyong's social democracy and Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's rightist authoritarianism? Why should one care about the politics and finances of three periodicals from the late 1940s and early 1950s, *Aksornsarn*, *Karnmuang*, and *Mahachon*, the weekly newspaper of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT)? If, from the outset, Marxism-Communism could claim few adherents and was distinctive for its failure rather than its achievements, why, to use one of the author's typically crisp formulations, so much ado about no socialists?

The short answer to these complex questions, argues Dr. Kasian Tejapira of Thammasat University's Faculty of Political Science, is that the Spectre of Communism is still haunting us and that we must continue to read and study this post-communist ghost story if we are to understand ourselves. Marxism-Communism put an indelible mark on Thailand's modern history for nearly five decades by forcing mainstream political culture to confront it in a myriad of ways. Some of the most creative minds of their generation bent their intellects to importing Marxism-Communism, adapting it for the local market, and then reproducing, distributing, and promoting it as a Thai commodity. Rather than simply narrating the history of the Communist Party of Thailand, Dr. Kasian looks at the cultural realm where Marxist-Communist thinkers promoted their wares as they engaged in a bruising and sometimes deadly war of position within ruling elites.

While other scholars have ventured to tell parts of this story before, Dr. Kasian has exceeded these earlier efforts with his empathy, and resourcefulness. He has ransacked archives and libraries to track down little-known publications, including defunct political magazines which enjoyed only a brief life in print before being closed down by the authorities or the gritty realities of the marketplace. For insights into the politics behind Field Marshal Phibun's coup in 1947 he has used the fortnightly

summary of political events prepared by the American Embassy in Bangkok. For the business details of publications from the 1940s and '50s he has consulted documents in the Thai Ministry of Commerce, and he has read unpublished doctoral theses in Thai and English. For his excursions into "rhyming Marxism," a medium exploited by the artful activists of the period, he has ventured into poetry and song. He has interviewed key figures of the period himself or made use of interviews by other students of the topic.

Familiar stories are invested with new meaning in this book, as Dr. Kasian demythologizes historical actors across the political spectrum. In "Uttarakuru: An Asiatic Wonderland," a satirical denunciation of socialism likening it to the utopian world of the Metteya Buddha, "Phra Sri Arya," the sixth Bangkok king in 1912 inadvertently helped to Thai-ify and naturalize the alien ideology by clothing it in Thai idiom. The fifth and sixth kings both hurried to proscribe communism before it had actually entered the country. Even Pridi Phanomyong and his supporters do not escape the author's scrutiny. After World War II Pridi and the Free Thai politicians were altogether too casual in their treatment of the army, keeping to themselves modern weapons given to them by the Americans, while the National Army made do with old and obsolete arms, thus humiliating the institution and encouraging it to take revenge. Imbued with what Dr. Kasian calls "ethnic interstate nationalism," a variety of people after the war, including Thai communists, political innocents, opportunistic mercenaries, and pan-Thaists, were inspired to go to the aid of Indochinese nationalists fighting against the French and American imperialists. In 1946, just before the onset of the Cold War which soon push Thai governments into a very different posture, covert Thai military cooperation and supplies were extended to the nationalist movements in Cambodia and Laos. And in the tradition of "politics makes strange bedfellows," most Thai leftists and one influential wing of the Thai communist movement were taken in by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat as a patriotic and democratic military commander, even though he would put many of these people in jail following his second coup in 1958.

Such a good book inevitably stimulates topics for further study, and after reading this one I see several projects that a new generation of researchers might pursue. The *Santiban* (Special Branch), whose literal translation "Peace Force" belies its role as the political policeman of the post-war period, deserves to be better understood. The priorities, training, and tactics of surveillance employed by the Santiban would be difficult to research, but some hints of what to look for and where to look may be found in Dr. Kasian's study. Another topic worthy of fresh research is the relationship between Marxism and Buddhism. In addition to Samak Burawas, a British-trained mining engineer who taught Buddhist philosophy and contributed to Supha and Chinda Sirimandond's monthly magazine, *Aksornsan*, many other writers and essayists, some wearing the yellow robe and some not, were intrigued by the relationship and set about trying to understand it. In existing studies the topic of Marxism and Buddhism is almost reduced to a simple match-up of ideologies and a long list of reasons why Marxism could never 'fit' the Thai case, which hardly does justice to what Thai writers actually said.

It is quite clear from Dr. Kasian's study, and on this point it does not differ from previous scholarship, that Marxism-communism was an urban phenomenon, studied and propagated by urban intellectuals who exploited its powers of analysis to confront authoritarian rule in the period 1947–1957. But what about rural Thailand? The secure bases established by the Communist Party of Thailand in the countryside following its declaration of revolution in 1965 and especially following the flight of people from the cities after the coup of 6 October 1976 deserve a new interpretation that might change the conventional picture of Marxism in Thailand as only an urban phenomenon.

Finally, more could be said about the thought-world of the *laokjin* communists and their intellectual heirs. Dr. Kasian's book relates the international affiliations of the culture brokers, the financial dilemmas that plagued the magazine editors as they published critiques of capitalism in a capitalist marketplace, and the political conditions of existence they confronted as the ruling groups struggled for supremacy. There is,

by contrast, not quite enough here about what the culture brokers actually thought and aspired to. Modern Thai radical culture was a worldview underpinned by logic, reasons and the imagining of a better world. It was not only a domain of political action. Perhaps now that we understand better how that domain was created and sustained, as well as dominated and constrained, we can look again at the prolific works the culture brokers created.

What is left? This multi-dimensional question that heads the last chapter operates on several levels. Of particular interest is what it meant to be leftist in the country's cultural wars. Early in the period the *lookjin* communist brokered the ideas and aspirations of Chinese, Russian and European thinkers aspiring to world revolution. Late in the period "left" meant defying the military repression supported by American policy in the region. Throughout the period the leftists were beset by dilemmas distilled in Dr. Kasian's book as legality versus militancy, business versus ideology, community versus conflict, and plurality versus monopoly.

There is also the question of what remains today, what is left of the movement since the CPT formally disbanded twenty years ago. The fact that the revolution in Thailand never triumphed should not mislead us into thinking that the impact of Marxism-Communism on Thailand ended with the amnesty of 1980 and the final neutralization of the Party in 1984. Here Dr. Kasian is unequivocal, arguing that the radical mass movements of the 1970s and the role of public intellectuals in Thailand today are unimaginable and incomprehensive without an understanding of the history he unfolds in this volume.

The book is beautifully written with verve and a playful wit that brings to life the ironies and dilemmas in which the *lookjin* communists and the Marxist intellectuals often found themselves. The inventiveness of Dr. Kasian's writing may stem from the fact that he is not a native speaker of English and has thus been freed from the genres and styles in which native speakers in English-speaking educational culture are drilled. Publication a decade after he completed the doctoral dissertation at Cornell University under the supervision of Benedict Anderson and Susan Buck-Morss reminds us that excellent scholarship does not come quickly, or cheaply. This complex research project had many patrons, among them Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, which must be congratulated not only for publishing *Commodifying Marxism* but also for providing generous writing spells to enable the author to craft this gem of a book.

Craig J. Reynolds

Pinkaew Laungaramsri
Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm. Chennai, India: Earthworm Books, for the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development, Chiangmai University, 2001.

In recent years, regulation concerning land use and nature conservation has brought Thailand's ethnic minority highlanders into the national media spotlight. Campaigns to eliminate swidden (*rai*) farming in the name of watershed protection have justified the resettlement of many villages. At the same time, sympathetic activists have attempted to lend their support to villagers facing eviction and organizations such as the Northern Farmers Network have tried to counter the official classification of upland terrain in ways that might benefit the increasingly jeopardized farming populations. Among the issues at stake are the official recognition of ethnic minority highland farmers and the larger one of whether nature can only be sustained if it is cordoned off from habitation and livelihood.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri's book is a bold attempt to clear some of the layers of confusion and misinformation from the questions surrounding the future of highland farming populations in northern Thailand. A significant portion of her work concerns analyzing the key concepts that influence the way these issues are understood, discussed, and acted upon in Thai society. The basic concepts revolve around understandings of nature, conservation, and highlander identity. In everyday discourse, the notion of

chao khao ("mountain people") is entrenched in images of national problems, in particular the idea that highlanders' farming practices are inherently destructive of the environment. Confronting this issue, the author offers a set of histories that show how the dominant image of *chao khao* and prevalent understandings of the environment share roots in a nation building project that systemically underprivileged and delegitimized ethnic minority practices of livelihood. Some of this history concerns the professionalization of the Forestry Department and their American-borrowed idea of national parks as devoid of people making a living in the area. Equally pertinent, the idea of *chao khao* as a problem and the negative view of upland dry rice farming are rather recent notions. Into the twentieth century, Karen peoples often had relations with lowland authorities, and highlander farming practices were not viewed as a threat to the environment. The previous notions of *chao pa* ("forest people") and of the forested highlands as *pa theuan* ("forested wilderness") not only differ from the contemporary notions of *chao khao* and *thammachat* ("nature"), they were embedded in a very different set of ideas about social life, ethnic identity, and relations with the environment. The strength of the book lies in the author's ability to spell out the political implications of particular concepts. The generally unquestioned terms used for ethnic minority highlanders and the forest that they have long been in association with are not only politically charged, they are also historically specific and entrenched in particular regimes of truth.

Questioning such regimes of truth-production, the author was also involved in collaborating with Karen people on a mapping project that turned the tables on the authorities whose maps justified the eviction of upland farming villages. The book does not engage in the romantic simplification of Karen farmers as defenders of the forest. Rather, the author provides a detailed account of plant use and local relations with forest land that underscore the complexity of highland farmers' environmental knowledge and situates this knowledge in local social relations. The author provides a valuable discussion of rotational shifting cultivation (*rai mun wian*), and how this notion of sustainable farming practices has gained currency in the context of the near-uniform condemnation of migratory shifting cultivation (*rai luan loy*). While Karen villagers may have used rotational shifting cultivation as a mode of livelihood for a considerable time, they began to brand the concept about only after public rhetoric had settled on migratory shifting cultivation as an index of national problems with *chao khao*.

The author's ability to provide a historical context to concepts, debates, and changing highland-lowland relations makes this a very valuable book, not simply in terms of understanding highland peoples and their changing place within Thailand, but more generally for understanding Thailand's national reality. The nation has been formed through particular understandings of space, history, social relations, nature, and ethnic identity, and one of the book's major contributions lies in showing how such understandings have crystallized in particular regimes of truth production. But hegemonic truths are never absolute, and while they set the terms of debate in important ways they also invite contestation and counterarguments. Local knowledge among Karen peoples is reproduced in this context of dominant outsiders' understandings of identity, land use, and conservation, and by situating local knowledge in this way the author has precluded the sense that Karen culture and identity are of the past. While Karen history and culture are informed by a shifting and complex past, their local reality is very much that of national and global understandings and structures regarding farming, conservation, and nature. It is in this context that Karen local knowledge offers multiple challenges to the prevailing conservation paradigm of nature as devoid of people making a living.

The book is a revised Ph.D. dissertation, and the text shows various signs of the previous incarnation. Because the author shows how official Thai notions of national parks were modeled on American ones, a discussion of the place of Native Americans (Indians) in relation to nature and society might have added a comparative dimension to the Thai case. Also, a discussion of how the northern Thai setting compares with ethnic and environmental situations in neighboring countries would have been informative. But these are minor quibbles with an important book that demonstrates the

relevance of exploring the many dimensions that inform the local realities of northern Thailand's farming populations.

Hjorleifur Jonsson

Challenging the Intellectual and Political Limitations of Essentialist and Racist Thinking. Review of *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States* ed. Andrew Turton, Curzon Press, London, 2000; pp. xxii, 376

The contributions to this book commenced their slow journey towards publication at the Fifth International Conference on Thai Studies held in London in the last century. Apart from a few editorial indiscretions it is definitely worth the wait. Over the intervening years contributors have had time to think about their papers and that most excellent of editors, Andrew Turton—with the help of Nicholas Tapp—has taken the time and initiative to engage worthy authors not at the Conference to have their say. As a consequence of careful deliberation we have not just a fine set of essays that are a pleasure to read but also a tastefully illustrated volume with old maps and woodcuts printed on first class glossy paper, hardbound no doubt with a proud sterling price to match.

So long in the making and so expensive. Is it worth it? Should we look for surprises in such a volume? I was surprised. Let's get the details out of the way first so we can concentrate on the text. The list of Plates in Appendix: Illustrations: sources and notes (pp. 360–368) is fundamentally flawed. The helpful notes on only 14 of the 25 Plates are in the same order in which they are listed in the Appendix. Then again Ryoko Nishii's uniform good sense in a nicely constructed chapter on the Sam Sam is slightly thrown off balance when her Kubang Pasu categories which must have originally been labelled by capital letters (p. 188) were arbitrarily changed to numbers without any consideration for the impact this might have on the text. High profile errors diminish the authority of the text. When we strike headings in which we are informed that Grant Evans will discuss Cultural Diacritica and Ehos (p. 271) what are we to conclude? Sabotage at the heart of a Curzon publication printed on no ordinary paper?

It is no surprise that in terms of content this is a fine publication. Long awaited, most welcome. A wide collection of valuable papers edited with a feeling and tolerance for the accommodating scope of post modern if not post structural discourse. Something to feed us all combined with a brave attempt to "overcome some of the intellectual and political limitations of essentialist, and in the end often racialising consequences of some—arguably the predominant style of—previous scholarship and its influence on public policies and attitudes" (p. vii). There is nothing trivial about this challenge. How to bring professional good sense to the task of calling to account the on-going habit of essentialising ethnicity and its attendant racism? The job has profound political implications.

In the spirit of irrepressible professors the editors provide a guided tour through six Parts. In Part I Andrew Turton leads with a 30 page introduction to the volume as a whole, and each of the four parts that follow the reader is provided with yet another two or three pages of considered comment. Only the Postscript, Part VI deviates from this pattern. The last word is left to Nicholas Tapp.

What do we learn? Each of the contributors extends our "thinking about the Tai speaking region" (p. vii) but to what extent do they successfully address the issue of "the intellectual and political limitations of essentialist" thinking?

The profoundly urbane Thongchai Winichakul provides us with an understanding of the genesis of ethnography in Thailand and the 'Others Within'. A complete rejection of essentialist thinking is to be expected from a scholar for whom anthropology is allegory. In focusing on the reign of King Chulalongkorn and the self indulgence of aristocratic privilege he is spared the challenge of dealing with hard feelings that emerge when stories get out of hand. Dr Thongchai always has something interesting to say. His brief account of how the court provided a home for a Senoi orphan boy and what fun the royal entourage had in the course of their up-country travels is well worth the read. We should be grateful to Dr Thongchai for highlighting the contribution to Thai

ethnography provided by Praya Prachakitkorachak (1886), Chaophraya Surasakmontri (1889) and Khun Sommotamornphan (1890).

In the period prior to the introduction of ethnographic notions of naming as part of "the colonial project to formulate and control the Others of the West" (Thongchai p. 41), Tai, along with other dominant groups in Southeast Asia had their own ways of affirming their assumed superiority which is reflected in the title of this volume: the binary opposition of civility and savagery (*Tai* [free]: *Kha* [slave]; *muang* [town]: *pa* [forest] dichotomies).

This widely shared epistemology which need not be explained here forms the central challenge of the text but when was the world so simple? How to discuss the historic ethno-linguistic complexity of Southeast Asia without this sort of simplification? Bangkok like Ayutthaya before it was home to a multiplicity of peoples. How were these differences configured and negotiated? What role did ethnicity play in an arena in which hierarchy was determined by knowledge of, access to and control over critical resources? When did the right to use violence and impose ones will on others not rest in the hands of the most civilised and powerful? Long before Europeans appeared in any number, ports provided homes for sojourners and settlers from places as far to the west as the Arabian Sea and to the east, the Sea of Japan.

We should not be surprised that a colonising Bangkok elite with a complex ethnic background of their own, should give so little attention to such matters bearing on the identity of those whom they treated as their imperial subordinates in the interior, who these people were "did not matter, as long as they were 'subjects'" (p. 49). Dr Thongchai's configuration of "geo-spatial categories" of the hinterland is equally unsurprising. As he observes, he "does not discover any unknown knowledge at all". He concludes with the observation "The Orientalizing discourse has been deeply implicated in the making of historical knowledge in Siam . . . (and finishes by posing the question) . . . how did ethnography help give birth to Thai history?" To a large extent many of the subsequent chapters address this question but I personally look forward to the next exciting episode of Dr Thongchai's exploration.

Ronald Renard's discussion follows on nicely from Dr Thongchai and provides us with a case study within the theme of how ethnography gave birth to modern Thai history. He tells us how drastically the position of the Karen changed for the worst following the death of King Chulalongkorn and the accession of King Vajiravudh. Dr Renard argues that the inclusive policies of King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong under which the Karen of Central Thailand were welcomed into the geo-body of the state changed not only as the threat of imperial invasion diminished but went from bad to worse when the English educated King Vajiravudh assumed the throne. According to Dr Renard, King Vajiravudh adapted the jingoistic British slogan of 'God, King and Country' (literally *sasana, mahakasat, chat* [Thai race]), "believed in the primacy of ethnicity . . . (and) . . . saw the people of Chiang Mai and Lampun as not quite Thai, but as people who had to be 'tamed' (*chuang*) . . . His acceptance of the nationalistic outlook led him to believe that ethnic groups had immutable cultural traits" (p. 78). This clearly places King Vajiravudh in the essentialists camp. As a consequence of the events which followed Karen became aliens in their own homeland and placed them in a position which invited withdrawal, opposition and resistance, a position which many continued to maintain right into the 1980s.

Once transplanted essentialist epistemology generates its own justification. Followers must simplify and stereotype those to whom it applies, create a materiality which precludes consideration of a more complex reality.

In his contribution Nicholas Tapp takes up the subject of the 'complex reality' that is often obscured in the "process of the construction of national identity and the role . . . ritual (plays) in these constructions . . . (to highlight) the tangled skein of local identities interacting with one another in the context of the formation of the nation-state." (p. 85) His observations on the nature of the extended research project includes some apposite and delightful observations. I particularly enjoyed his reference to how Tambiah's work on Buddhist 'saints of the forest' "in both representing and subduing an amoral contingent sphere of erratic spirits, dangerous beasts, and subversive ethnic minorities,

is shown in the current appeal of movements such as the Dhamanaat Foundation precisely to these images" (p. 86). One cannot deny the power of such stories. In Chiang Mai there really are people who believe that a tree cut down on a ridge in North Thailand is not only going to diminish the amount of rain that will fall and by some magical transformation that its absence will also contribute to flooding in Bangkok. There is a semiotic connection here not too different from the relationship fairy stories have with reality.

The reader needs to remain awake. This is an ambitious paper in which Nicholas Tapp is not just discussing millenarian movements and Hmong messianism but gauging the distance he has covered between his earlier PhD structuralist work with all its propensity for essentialist cultural and ethnic continuity, and his present state of mind. He does this by (re)representing Leach in a passing manner that I find remarkable. Leach, he implies, in post modern terms, primarily occupied with the anthropological discourse of his day may have "succeeded in removing the cultural essentialism and hypothetical holism of functionalist analysis to the level of an ideal realm of structural models from which it has been difficult to detach them" and furthermore that cultural essentialism can only finally be abandoned if we adopt for instance "a general theory of manners" (p. 97) which can account for "the creation, maintenance, and adoption of distinctions of taste and manners".

Is this necessary to make this change? I wonder if Dr Tapp still holds to this view or was it a passing fantasy? I am constantly surprised by my colleagues willingness to relinquish the hard won knowledge that comes with fieldwork to indulge themselves with the literature of the academic salon but this description does not match Nicholas Tapp. Is it true that Nicholas Tapp is saying that he extracted from Sir Edmund Leach's work an ideal structural model that essentialises ethnicity and that the only way out of this is to adopt "a general theory of manners"? This seems too much like essentialist thinking, that there has to be a resolution? Is it not enough to demystify the labels? Keep them for convenience and only for as long as they are useful? Have we forgotten play? Does anybody remember the fun Edmund Leach and Levi Strauss had with each other? It was as though they were trying to essentialise each other: the consummate Englishman and the enlightened Frenchman. I digress but the point is not entirely irrelevant. If I wanted to risk being obscure I could say that Nicholas Tapp places Edmund Leach in the Levi Strauss position and plays Leach with him but I won't do that. What I want, but for decencies sake hardly dare ask, is, if we are to adopt "a general theory of manners" (p. 97) which can account for "the creation, maintenance, and adoption of distinctions of taste and manners" to finally free ourselves of essentialism where will it take us? Will we finally be able to access the leading anthropological web site in the sky, (re)assess our diminishing experience in tune with the latest intellectual fashion, play to the academic salon for all that it is worth, and work towards closure, bridge the gap between top and bottom, and place our discourse if not our heads in the final and most appropriate place?

Tapp's elaborate and sometimes extremely dense discussion of millenarian movements and Hmong messianism for all its intellectual skill attains an overwhelming obscurity. His approach to some fascinating material has an undertow which seems to be the result of a refusal to deal with the issue that most preoccupies his mind. It is as if he does not want to say, "Before I thought like a structuralist and now I think thus . . ." Is it just an intellectual game? Tapp's studied rejection of the distinction between myth as play, and ritual as order announces a departure from a matrix that is relatively easily identified as intervention and exchanged for an approach in which he wishes to locate "ritual at the nexus of order, play, and chaos . . . as part of a wider cultural discourse" (p. 89). "While not tending towards any Grand Theory" (p. 97) I (Nicholas Tapp) wish to place my analysis within "a general theory of manners" (p. 97) is fine with me but when I can no longer see, read or hear the people from whom the cultural assembly has been taken do we know those people any longer? I'm sure Nicholas Tapp would never advocate cultural appropriation in increasing mystification but what to call it?

Leo Alting von Geusau's very readable chapter on "Akha Internal History: Marginalisation

and the Ethnic Alliance System" poses an interesting counterpoint to Nicholas Tapp's contribution. He argues that the Akha along with the closely related Hani form a broad ethnic group whose shared oral history has enabled them "...in spite of being interspersed with other ethnic groups, and having many sub-groups, separated geographically for centuries, to maintain a remarkable unity in their *zang, yang*, or *yaw-ti* (customary law) . . . (and that this is further strengthened by) the Akha genealogical network—their strongest unifying device—and the 'ethnic alliance system' which results from it . . . (to mediate relations) with various Tai peoples" (p. 123).

Here the presence of an ethnic group is presented in a manner that should please me. If my criticism of Tapp is that he compromises my ability to "see, read or hear the people from whom the cultural assembly has been taken", that he somehow disembodies the Hmong for the sake of intellectual discourse then here with Leo Alting von Geusau am I being given "a detailed Akha perspective (Turton, p. 15) or is there a problem: am I only allowed to hear the voice of Leo Alting von Geusau speaking for the Akha? Should Leo Alting von Geusau's representation of the Akha be read as Turton would have it: not as "any essence but paradox and dialectic" (Turton, p. 36) or an attempt to construct an ethnic essence that outflanks and confounds the critics by demonstrating a continuity, depth and range whose authority overwhelms us and can only be contested by also risking outright rejection? Does not Leo Alting do what Tapp later describes as an attempt "to exaggerate and reinforce the distinctiveness of the people they have studied . . . (and underplay) the extent of their historical, cultural, political, ecological, linkages with the peoples . . . who have dominated them" (p. 356).

Why should we reject this analysis? For a start it is a marvellous story. The paper meets the expectation his work raised more than 20 years ago with the article "Dialectics of Akha Zang: The Interiorizations of a Perennial Minority Group" (1983a and 1983b). The paper is interesting from many points of view. Few scholars have dedicated so much of their lives to their research: Leo Alting von Geusau has made a profession of his vocation. He has spent more time in the field than most of us would in several academic lifetimes.

The insights gained in such an engagement are invaluable but it is also equally important to question your position. Where does our personal world end and that of others begin? Knowledge and imagination weave a reality of their own. The whole post modern questioning of empiricism, structuralism, the objectivity of science; the influence of personal projection and bias, our growing understanding of the seductive nature of discourse cautions us to take extra care on the road to finding out how societies work, what they have been, how they change and where they are headed.

I am sceptical. I do not doubt that the beliefs Leo Alting von Geusau credits to the Hani-Akha cultural diaspora are true, it is just that the Hani with whom I worked in Luchun County, Honghe Prefecture between the Black and Red Rivers close to "the Akha's real homeland" (p. 133) were not gifted with the same vocabulary, the same depth of knowledge as the Akha of Thailand, did not use paradox and dialectic with the same flair. The Hani of Luchun County found it difficult to trace their ancestry back more then three generations. They were still attempting to reinvent shamanistic medical treatments lost in the course of periodic suppression campaigns conducted over the past 50 years and they were not too fussy about whether their teachers were Yi or Tai, or for that matter Han. If the situation to which I was exposed was not so far from the ordinary what does this have to say about the resilience of a distinct and Hani-Akha culture? I did note that few of the participants at the International Hani Akha Conference I attended in Chiang Mai a few years ago or more recently in Honghe would have been able to construct the overview provided by Leo Alting von Geusau so we have all the more reason to be thankful for his contribution or do we have to go along with it as appropriation?.

There are a host of informative chapters. Claes Corlin's Politics of Cosmology provides a workmanlike treatment of millenarianism and ethnicity in the highlands of Thailand. Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian presents a relatively straightforward discussion of the historical development of the Sam Sam, the Thai speaking Islam communities of South Thailand which fits in

well with Ryoko Nishii's piece mentioned above for the arbitrary editorial surgery carried out in the production process.

Ryoko Nishii's history of the Sam Sam big man To Nai Sim provides helpful insights into the nature of leadership and governance on the periphery of both the Malay and Thai worlds at the turn of the last century as well as an interesting commentary on how people, pragmatists all, dress their identity to best fit the political fashions of the day.

The reader gains a better idea of how this might come about in Charles F. Keyes chapter in Part IV *Laos: a Poly-Ethnic State*. Charles Keyes challenges the essentialist proposition in a very concrete and unpretentious way. He basically argues that if the Lao of Northeast Thailand belong to a 'primeordial community' they should be seeking "incorporation into Laos ... (and the other) ... half of the population ... who are not ethnic Lao ... (should be) seeking realization of their national aspirations (elsewhere)." He "maintain(s) that the process (of connection and identification) depends on situating memories of power contested within the framework of narratives by those who hold compelling authority". In pursuit of this argument he provides a brief history of Thai—Lao relations and makes a preliminary analysis of the record of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's visit to Lao P.D.R. Like a lot of contemporary textual analysis provides an engaging and transparent story that makes both good reading and good sense.

Igor Kossikov provides a chapter on nationalities policy in D.P.R.Lao that just goes to show how many ethno-linguistic sciences are asserted in this part of the world. Apart from the idiosyncrasies of Russian linguistics we are presented with the nationalist, modernising, homogenising, ideological trinomial classification of a D.P.R. Lao peopled by Lao lowland, Lao upland, and Lao highland, a classification which retains a currency that is surprisingly strong. Although Andrew Turton tells us that "Kossikov problematises various classifications" (p. 202) I had the distinct feeling that Kossikov was a large part of the problem. His work appears to be uninformed by western linguistic scholarship and his references to any English literature restricted to the Far Eastern Economic Review. The one pleasing aspect of this was that these references predate the Dow Jones take over of what used to be a lively, politically informed weekly.

The feminist perspective provided by the distinguished scholar Mayoury Ngaosyvathn centered on the issues of modernisation, nation building, representation, legal status and participation, food health and schooling does not seriously question the idea of primordial identity. Her concern for how to "combine forty-seven ethnic groups in one 'new' Lao identity and nation" (p. 257) indicates that at least in an anthropological sense she prefers a relatively conservative point of view.

Grant Evans attempts much more. By placing Leach's rejection of essentialist ideas of ethnicity in the empirical context of "ethnic change among a group called Black Tai and a non Tai group, Sing Moon (in a) broader context" (p. 265) without heading off into the grand structuralist debate of "oscillation between *gumsa*/hierarchical and *gumlao*/egalitarian forms of social organisation" (pp. 263–4), Evans is able to remind us of both what Leach achieved as well as extend our understanding of the complexity of the interrelationships between the peoples of the Central Massif of mainland Southeast Asia by exploring two historical and one contemporary factor:

- 'Tai-ization' to which he adds reference to the work of Georges Condominas, the process by which Tai, especially the Tai *muang*, as political outposts of Tai culture colonised their neighbours;
- the underlying factors that either promote or inhibit ethnic transformation as a part of the power play involved in acquiring control over a critical aspect of the means of production such as control of trade, how this impacted on the formation of highland aristocratic traditions, for example the terms under which intermarriage took place and so forth; and,
- the impact of the modern state which has largely undermined the authority and identity of those holding local privileges by drawing them into "The aspiration, or fantasy, of modern nationalism" which in some situations

becomes dangerous because of its intolerance "towards semi-autonomous, intermediate social and cultural spaces" (p. 284) and in others results in a detachment from historical and cultural relationships.

I particularly liked the way fieldwork was used to explore broader generalisations and the nicely grounded emphasis that in this matter we are talking about "an ever-evolving historical situation" (p. 286).

Part 5 on Lanna and Neighbours provides a fascinating set of three historical studies by Shigeharu Tanabe on the genesis and transformation of the Inthakhin Cult of Chiang Mai, Ratanaporn Sethakul on the Tai Lue, and Katharine Bowie on Ethnic Heterogeneity and Elephants in Nineteenth-Century Lanna Statecraft.

In the simplist of terms Professor Tanabe's empirical and structuralist certainties enable him to reconstruct a remarkably rich and satisfying story of how rites focused on "a kind of *lak mūang* pillar common to most Tai political domains" (p. 313) was used to mediate the subordination of ethnic minorities. His thoroughly well documented and fascinating account provides a microscopic picture of a complex legacy that provides a wealth of good sense. If only in a general way many of the observations he makes are independently verified by Dr Ratanaporn Sethakul's in her introductory history of Nan, how the Tai Lue and Tai Yong got there and their relationship with the ruling Tai Yuan.

Katharine Bowie provides a finale for the collection that is well worth the wait. Her chapter on Ethic Heterogeneity and Elephants in Nineteenth-Century Lanna Statecraft is like Tanabe's piece, something of a gem. Instead of the *lak mūang* pillar and associate rites linked to the performance and reification of primordial sovereignty she uses elephants to "reconstruct the (significance of) ethnic identity of those who cared for the royal lords' elephants . . . because of (the) importance (of elephants in) . . . the political economy of these northern Tai states, and . . . their association with . . . Karen and Khamu" (p. 331). The opening review of early English travellers boldly establishes "the considerable mixing of people of different heritages in the Tai kingdoms" which even without reference to available linguistic evidence establishes a certainty has been overlooked for much too long. The subsequent discussion of the importance of elephants in nineteenth-century Lanna is both succinct and comprehensive. She observes that although specific minority groups were charged with the care of privately owned elephants ethnic diversity remained a characteristic of the care of royal elephants. Bowie extends the significance of this observation by offering evidence which suggests that those who looked after the royal elephants can be used as a metaphor "to argue that traditional statecraft was ethnic-blind . . . state efforts to minimize the salience of ethnicity were deliberate . . . (that by) exploiting all subalterns more or less equally and granting favours to none . . . (was part of) a policy of 'ethnic egalitarianism'" (p. 343–4).

In a didactic Postscript Nicholas Tapp presents *Civility and Savagery* as an important step in reaching "a new stage in sub-regional studies" (p. 351), how "the traditional 'incorporation' of non-Tai peoples into Tai political systems (Tanabe) and the transformation of these relations under the impact of the nation-state" is deconstructed which compels the "centralising discourse of Thai modernism, towards a recognition of the cultural and ethnic diversity and richness of modern Thailand . . . a general abandonment of the kind of essentialism on which past philosophies of cultural relativism have been based (p. 355) . . . a "time for the ethnic minority specialists themselves to wake up to the interactionalist, rather than primeordial, models of ethnic identity" (p. 356).

This all makes good sense and Tapp's gentle inclusiveness and honesty is to be welcomed. He provides us with a timely reminder to remain aware what modern scholarship has done to exaggerate the importance of ethnic and cultural continuity, downplay or ignore the impact groups living in close proximity have on one another, how "the conventions of western academic reporting" (p. 356) have added weight to divisive misunderstandings and how it may now be possible to escape some of these constraints.

This is a book well worth reading and returning to again and again. Readers might like to consider buying it as much for its idiosyncrasies as its content, like a stamp that didn't quite make it through the approved

process. This book was neither written nor put together to forge a path to a new stage in sub-regional studies. If that is where it got to it can claim no victory for being first. However, anybody with an interest in the complex cultural geography of the Tai world will find plenty to enjoy in this stimulating collection of essays.

Note

[1] Much to the mounting frustration of Akha from Burma, China and Thailand Leo Alting von Geusau presented himself as an Akha leader at the the Fourth International Hani/Akha Conference (2–9 December, 2002) something which, in keeping with his complex personality he, in the course of the gathering both acknowledged as a pragmatic strategy and rejected as inappropriate if it displaced the voices of those born Akha. His death in Chiang Mai, 26 December 2002 was mourned by both *farang* and Akha as the passing of a friend and advocate.

John Mckinnon