



REVIEWS

James C. M. Khoo *Art and Archaeology of Fu Nan—Pre-Khmer Kingdom of Lower Mekong Valley*. Bangkok Orchid Press, 2003, pp. 163, ill.

The ancient kingdom, or polity, known as Fu Nan is thought to have extended across part of present-day Vietnam and Cambodia and perhaps into parts of Thailand and Malaysia. It came to the attention of Western scholars through the research into Chinese historical records surviving from the early centuries of the Christian Era by the great French sinologist Paul Pelliot (1903). It was later given material form through the fieldwork of another distinguished French scholar, the archaeologist Louis Malleret (1959–62), who worked on behalf of l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in the western part of the Mekong Delta under difficult conditions during the Pacific War. Thereafter, war and civil turmoil made conditions for further field research impossible until the late 1970s, when Vietnamese archaeologists led by Le Xuan Diem Dao Linh Con and Vo Si Khai from the Centre of Archaeology, of the Institute of Social Sciences (CAISS), Ho Chi Minh City, started an active programme of research in the whole of the delta region. A little later, renewed interest in Vietnam by the EFEO led to a revival of archaeological research around Oc Eo in the trans-Bassac regions of the Mekong Delta, led

by Pierre-Yves Manguin (EFEO) and Vo Si Khai (CAISS), the second of whom contributes to this book.

With the return of relative stability in Cambodia in the 1990s a joint Cambodian–American archaeological team instigated a multi-disciplinary field programme (LOMAP) in southeastern Cambodia, in and around Angkor Borei, long thought to be *a*, or perhaps *the*, capital of Fu Nan in the early centuries of the Christian (or Common) Era. Miriam Stark contributes a preliminary summary of the results of this programme.

This is a timely and useful book: timely because few results of this renewed archaeological research are available other than in Vietnamese language or in scholarly journals and specialised conference papers which are difficult to find by the average reader interested in the background to what we might call the foundation culture of all the historic kingdoms of Southeast Asia. This well-illustrated book provides a reasonably comprehensive and up-to-date account of the pre-war research on Fu Nan and on some of these later programmes, and it is only to be regretted that Pierre-Yves Manguin was unable to provide an account of the important, and still unfinished, EFEO research at and around Oc Eo.

In Chapter 1, John Miksic provides an introduction to the history of research on Fu Nan, emphasizing the role of the

kingdom, and especially the locations around Oc Eo, in the development of long-distance trade between the Mediterranean, India, Southeast Asia and on to China. This is, in general, a well-informed and balanced account of often controversial and ambiguous data drawn from ancient Chinese historical records and field archaeology in many countries, and he points to some of the problems in explaining how such a large and apparently rich kingdom could have flourished over several hundred years in a difficult environment, rich, it seems only in water and rice. Clearly the role of Oc Eo as an entrepôt in external trade was significant, but not sufficient to my mind to support the size of populations and monumental religious structures which have been revealed by archaeologists. For the prehistoric background to Southeast Asian historical cultures, Miksic relies heavily on Higham's (1989) book, now to some extent replaced by his newer (Higham 2002) account. But when Miksic emphasizes the unique nature of Oc Eo as an early historical trading kingdom, he writes a little too soon to recognize the significance of the work now being undertaken by Manguin and his Indonesian colleagues at Batu Jaya on the north coast of Java, not so far from modern Jakarta, where a complex of over forty early Buddhist stupas scattered across an extensive area of present-day rice fields suggests the presence there of a major settlement. Some early dates and the presence of Indo-Roman rouletted ware sherds place the settlement in the early

centuries of the Christian Era (or Common Era).

Miksic dates the beginning of Southeast Asian trade with the West to around the 2nd century CE (page 2), but in this he is surely too conservative for, as Stark points out in Chapter 3 (p.99), there is evidence from Angkor Borei, as well as from several other sites from Thailand to Vietnam, to document trade with India to several hundred years earlier. The 2nd–3rd century of the CE marked a second and intensified stage of the trade, and adoption to some extent of Indic styles and ideology (Bellina 1998), cited here on p. 99 but missing from the bibliography.

Chapter 2 by Vo Si Khai presents a detailed but, to this reviewer, rather confusing summary of the mainly Vietnamese research in the Mekong Delta since unification of the country in 1975. There are no references to sources, although I assume that it is largely derived from the 1995 book *Oc Eo Culture—Recent Discoveries* (Le Xuan Diem *et al.* 1995), with some details from the joint EFEO/CISS research, although the last is not specifically acknowledged. The author starts with a summary of the discovery of the Fu Nan kingdom by Western scholars, followed by a historically uncritical summary of Chinese sources on Fu Nan, both of which are covered well enough in the brief, but more nuanced account, by Miksic in the first chapter.

In sections on pages 46–68, and especially on page 63, Vo Si Khai sets out the concept of an 'Oc Eo Culture'



based on the material culture found during surveys and excavations and which he distinguishes from the historian's concept of the Fu Nan kingdom as known from the Chinese sources. He then describes identified sites in a number of distinct ecological situations: marshy lowlands, slightly elevated areas, and sandy coastal regions. He also distinguishes between three types of site: settlements, religious centres, and burial sites. The confusion in the account comes mainly from the difficulty on relating the 90 groups of sites mentioned, of which 20 are said to have been excavated (page 52), with the 50 sites located on the map on p.39. On this, I could not find a number of the sites mentioned in the text, such as the 'Long Thanh-Nhon Trach Relics' and the 'Vinh Cuu-Thong Nhai sites' in Dong Nai Province (page 49), where only two sites in Dong Nai Province, numbers 43 Cay Gao and 44 Dong Bo are located. The 50 sites located on the map are numbered, but these numbers are not used in the text descriptions and more than one name for a site location seems to be used. This may represent differing uses in Vietnam, but it makes it very difficult for others to make use of the rich and rather new data presented. A firmer hand by the editor could have resolved these problems, as well as the often awkward English phraseology.

The chapter includes 34 photographs, as well as a number of plans and maps, and these make a significant contribution to its value—especially those of materials and structures found in situ,

such as the stone lintel at Go Binh Ta (page 46) and the discovery of stone Vishnu images at Dong Thap (pages 53–4). Others, however, are illustrations of material in museums, lacking contexts other than the province of their discovery, and are not well-integrated into the text.

Finally, Vo Si Khai attempts a chronology for the Oc Eo culture (pages 64–7) based on some 49 radiocarbon dates, correlates this with dates derived from Chinese historical texts, and finds that they fit together reasonably well. Source laboratories for the C14 dates are given, but too little information is provided on exactly the nature of the samples dated. Samples of wood from carved images, structural timbers, for example, are likely to suffer from an 'old wood' factor and date from some unknown time before the felling of the tree and its use in a structure. And dates for some stone architectural sites such as Nen Chua (page 64) are listed with no explanation of how this was done and how the, presumably organic, samples dated relate to the structures.

An Appendix on page 85 presents a list of these dates recalibrated, presumably against a dendrochronological curve—which one and by whom is not stated—and with age ranges given to a 68.2% probability rather than the 95% probability, which is usual for calibrated dates. These give a more reasonable estimate of the age of the dated samples, but are listed only by the laboratory reference number and not by site, and so it is not easy to check these against

the site descriptions given in the main text—and of course does nothing to overcome the problems by raised the inadequate specification of sample context and nature of the material dated.

Many of the critical comments made on this chapter—and many more could be offered—stem from the uncritical and rather unperceptive editing of this chapter, which does not do justice to the richness of the data presented.

In Chapter III Miriam Stark, a professional archaeologist based at the University of Hawai'i, presents a concise and well documented account of the LOMAP project at and around Angkor Borei in southeastern Cambodia. However, she goes over much of the same ground as other authors in discussing the historiography of Fu Nan and the work of earlier generations of mainly French scholars on the temples and images of the lower Mekong area. From page 93 onwards she describes what is known about the site of Angkor Borei, thought by many to be *a*, or perhaps *the* political capital of Fu Nan, if there ever was a single such location, and summarises the work there from three excavation seasons from 1996 to 1999 by the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (LOMAP) - a cooperative Cambodian-American field and training programme. One of the most significant outcomes of this research, which is still continuing, is to show that the occupational history of Angkor Borei extends at least as far back as the fourth century BCE - some 600–700 years before the Chinese

historical accounts mention Fu Nan—and this fits in quite well with the results from other recent excavation programmes in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam which are showing that trade and some cultural links between Southeast and South Asia had developed at least by the mid-1st millennium BCE.

In the final sections of the chapter, Stark summarises the occupational history of Angkor Borei and offers brief but useful observations about the regional environment and what can be deduced about the social organization, language(s), economic and ideological organization of the ancient populations of the Mekong Delta. As a short preliminary report on LOMAP—one of several by the same author, most of which are listed in the book's bibliography—this is a model of clarity and concision.

Chapter IV by Heidi Tan, 'Remarks on the pottery of Oc Eo', is a modest but still useful description of material found in An Giang and neighbouring provinces over the past two decades or so. It seems mainly to be based on Le et al. (1995) and the author does not seem to have had direct access to collections in Vietnamese museums nor to those from the most recent LOMAP and EFEO/CAISS fieldwork led by Stark and Manguin. Little of the material she illustrates comes from specific and dated contexts. This limits the long-term value of the chapter. However, she does present a clear and useful description of the main pottery forms, fabrics and finishes, and in figure IV-7 (page 112) illustrates an exquisitely



moulded image of two musicians, one playing something like the Burmese harp, or a lute—perhaps this was the ‘Fu Nan music’ played at the Wu capital at Nanjing in the 3rd century (Miksic, page 9 here).

Chapter V is by Kwa Chong Guan, not an archaeologist but an experienced historian now working for the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at Nanyang University. Kwa outlines the background to the recognition of the category of Pre-Angkorian art through the discovery of the Vishnu statuary at Phnom Da and other locations in south-eastern Cambodia. He summarises the debates surrounding its relationship, if any, with the later and much better-known works from the Angkor region. This is a thoughtful and elegant essay, well-written and documented, and is in this reviewer’s opinion by far the best thing in the book. Paul Dupont’s ‘method’, his dating and thesis regarding this material (Dupont 1955), is sensitively analysed, but in the end rejected, together with the historically-derived concept of a simple linear evolution of a single dominant polity in ancient Cambodia: the sequence usually summarized as Fu Nan - Zhenla - Sambor Prei Kuk - Angkor. Recent discoveries of mitred Vishnus in many different styles distributed from southern Thailand, the Sumatran island of Bangka and throughout the Mekong Delta, some of which may well be earlier than the ‘classic’ pieces of sculpture from around Angkor Borei, all go to support the ideas promoted by Claude

Jacques and Michael Vickery of numerous small competing polities in the Mekong Delta region, linked by networks of trade and ritual practice, but none conforming to the classic notion of a paramount state as understood by the Chinese visitors of the 3rd century CE, and with no single art style.

The final chapter, VI, is by the volume’s editor and the late Ha Du Canh, a well-known collector and enthusiast for the early art from present-day Vietnam. After going over some of the same historical ground as the earlier writers, they take a closer look at some of the numerous, mainly small, mitred Vishnu images from the greater Mekong Delta area and illustrate a few of them, as well as six well-preserved if eroded standing Buddhas from the waterlogged soils of the delta. Some pieces, such as a fine sandstone *linga* and *yoni*, a stone seated and a standing Ganesh (pages 136–8), all in Vietnamese provincial museums, are surely genuine ancient sculptures for which specific find contexts may be recorded. However, the six Vishnus, a Maitrea and an Avalokitesvara head which are illustrated and briefly described are attributed to private collections, probably those of one or other of the authors. They point to the rather crude execution of some of these, the Southeast Asian and lively nature of the facial expressions, and suggest that these images may have come from small domestic shrines rather than from major temples of ruling elites. This is plausible, but one might also wonder whether, considering the lack of provenance of these

pieces and the extensive trade in ancient antiquities and modern replicas in and from Vietnam and Cambodia in recent years, that some of these and others of the numerous mitred Vishnus which have flooded into the illicit art market in recent years may not be as old as they are represented to be. Certainly no substantial account of the art history of the region should be based on such dubious material.

In a Summary and Conclusion (page 145) the editor asserts that “The main significance of this book ... rests on Vo Si Khai’s [chapter] *The Kingdom of Fu Nan Archaeology*’ but this is, to the present reviewer, the weakest section of the book for the very reasons outlined above, useful though it is as a summary of some 20 years’ work by Vietnamese archaeologists.

To summarise, what should we make of this book, finely produced and well illustrated on a topic of great current interest to Southeast Asian archaeologists and historians? It certainly is timely; it will be useful both to specialists and to those with broad cultural interests in the region and will undoubtedly go onto the shelves of a lot of libraries and researchers. But it does suffer from highly uneven, sometimes downright poor editing. This is especially apparent in Chapter II by Vo Si Khai, which should have been taken in hand by the volume’s editor and extensively reshaped, both the structure of the chapter and the use of English. Referencing throughout the volume is erratic, non-existent in Chapter II, and

without making any systematic checks I noticed that the following text references were missing from the final list: Bellina 1998 and Trinh Thi Hoa 1996 (both on page 95); Fox and Ledgerwood 1999; Ng 1979 (both on page 100); the reference to Maxime Prodromidès (page 132, note 23) is not dated nor listed. I suspect that others could be found by a more diligent search, which a competent copy editor would have picked up and corrected. The illustrations are generally good in quality, if not always closely related to the discussion, and I wondered about Figure I.4 (page 3) of five small (but with no scale) silver coins with a cockerel image found at Ba The, Oc Eo area. Although not explicitly asserted, the implication is, from their placement in this chapter and book, that they are Fu Nan coins; but an identical one found at a late Cham site near Da Nang in central Vietnam has been identified by Joe Crib of the British Museum as being post-Angkor Cambodian, perhaps 15th century. There is no mention of such coins being in the comprehensive survey of early Southeast Asian coinage in Wicks (1992).

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Ian Glover

Hiram Woodward, Jr., *The Art and Architecture of Thailand: From Prehistoric Times through the Thirteenth Century*. Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp.xx+374, 96 ills, Euro 106.

The Art and Architecture of Thailand is a volume in the series *Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Three: South-East Asia*, which describes itself with justified immodesty as “a careful selection of scholarly reference works of lasting value.” The intended readers are specialists in the field of Southeast Asian studies, which allows the book to be written in a highly specialized and technical fashion.

Woodward started the work, which was originally based on his Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 1975), in 1979, but he put it aside and then came back to it many times until its completion in 2003. During this time Woodward published many articles on Thai and Cambodian art, as well as the excellent book *The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand: The Alexander B. Griswold Collection, The Walters Art Gallery Baltimore* (Baltimore, Walter Art Gallery, 1997).

The Art and Architecture of Thailand is an ambitious work. Woodward strives to analyze and connect the misty pictures of many different areas and ancient kingdoms in the region that became present-day Thailand and Cambodia. Its content actually concerns the “pre-Thai” periods, starting from prehistoric times and concluding before the Thais founded their first kingdoms in the central and northern regions in the fourteenth century.

Thus the title as it appears on the cover of the book, *The Art and Architecture of Thailand*, may not clearly indicate its content unless the reader notices the book’s subtitle on an inside page: *From Prehistoric Times through the Thirteenth Century*. Woodward uses stylistic and iconographic analysis and archeological remains (e.g., architecture, sculptures, and votive tablets) as the tools to connect and recreate the missing written histories and religious practices of these areas. As a result, significant links from various sites in India and Sri Lanka to Cambodia and Thailand are carefully and symmetrically identified and classified.

The book is substantial, and includes a variety of visual documents such as photographs, line drawings, plans, and maps. It is divided into four chapters: The Geographic, Prehistoric, and Ethnographic Setting; The First Millennium A.D.; The Cambodian Expansion; and Creating a New Order.

The first chapter covers the prehistoric periods, with a short introduction presenting the geographic and ethnic setting. Pottery shards are included among the examples in this chapter, which have yielded significant information for the understanding of early settlements and their decorative symbols. These are not commonly included in art history books, but rather are treated as archeological materials.

The period covered by the long second chapter stretches from the end of the first millennium B.C., when the Southeast Asian region had just been tied into



international trading networks and also adopted Indian religions (Buddhism and Hinduism), to around the tenth century. Woodward examines early remains from several sites in central Thailand, such as Chansen and U-Thong, and from Oc-eo and several early dynasties (e.g., Funan, P'an-p'an, and Lankasuka) in present-day Cambodia and Thailand. Thorough studies of Dvaravati (e.g., Chula Pathon Chedi, Kubua, and Si Thep) and Pre-Angkorian sites (e.g., Prakhon Chai, Ban Fai, and Ban Tanot), their religious practices, and art historical analyses are covered in extensive detail. Recent discoveries in these regions are described, thus making this volume a valuable source for the most up-to-date analyses of these sites.

Khmer art in Cambodia and the north-eastern plateau of Thailand, starting from the founding of Angkor in the tenth century to the end of the twelfth century, is covered in the third chapter. The emphasis is on the change of religions from Hinduism to Mahayana Buddhism. Woodward also points out that between 900 and 1300, enduring iconic and architectural forms were established. He credits Khmer art for three major elements from this period with lasting popularity: the image of the Buddha touching the earth, the crowned Buddha image, and the *prang* type of architectural tower. Important Khmer temples (e.g., Phnom Ruang, Muan Tam, and Phimai) and the late Dvaravati sites in the central and northeastern regions (e.g., Lopburi, Nakhon Sawan, and Fa Daed) shared iconographic and stylistic

appearances with Angkorian art. Woodward pays particular attention to the significant site of Phimai, which clearly shows the influence of Tantric Buddhism as well as connecting architecturally to the central plains via Si Thep.

Chapter Four covers the reign of King Jayavarman VII of Cambodia, which began in 1181, up to around the end of 1300. The focus is on Mahayana Buddhist iconography of the triad (the seated Buddha sheltered by Naga hoods and flanked by Lokeshvara and Prajnaparamita) and the so-called "Ariya Buddhist sect." Woodward claims that there was a type of Hinayana Buddhism that may have predated the reign of Jayavarman VII and was dominant in Siam in the thirteenth century. He states on p.168 that "In the absence of written documentation, it must be characterized entirely in terms of iconographical features, for which the contemporary names, in either Pali or the vernacular, are unknown: Buddha images in the earth-touching pose; images with pointed crowns; groups of three Buddhas; Buddhas holding a hand in front of the chest; and, in architecture, friezes of masks, and guardian masks at corners." He chose the term *Ariya* ("Noble"), which appeared in the Kalayani inscriptions of Pegu dated to the fifteenth century. He states that "Ariya ideology can be understood in various ways: as a reaction against Jayavarman VII's imperial pretensions; as a continuation of trends that can be detected in the decades before the monarch's ascension...; as a 'Mon' resurgence; and as an attempt to

create an order that would sound the death knell for such traditional Angkorian practices as the composition of royal Sanskrit inscriptions and the building of monumental stone temple-tombs." Woodward writes that evidence of Ariya sects can be seen on votive tablets from regions ranging from Haripunjaya to Lopburi.

Although it is conceivable that iconographic elements could indicate specific characteristics of a Buddhist lineage, the term *Ariya Buddhism* or *Ariya* sect is rather a problematic one. In the Kalyani inscription, *Ariya* refers to a monastic lineage claiming descent from Sona and Uttara, the two monks who were sent to "The Land of Gold," during the reign of King Asoka. The terms *ariya sangha* and *ariya bhikkhu* were used much earlier than the Kalayani inscription. An example can be found in an Ikshvaku inscription, written in *Prakrit*, dated to the second or third century CE that was recovered from Thotlakonda, which mentions that the *Ariya sangha* donated a *khambha* (pillar) and *chatra* (parasol) (*Studies in Indian Epigraphy*, Vol. XXVIII, 2002). Thus it could be misleading to use the term *Ariya* for these groups of iconographic imagery.

The Art and Architecture of Thailand stands as a very good reference book. It provides up-to-date references to works in English, French, and Thai. The book reflects years of careful research and shows a creative use of science and metal analysis in support of stylistic analysis. Because of its highly technical nature, *The Art and Architecture of*

Thailand is beneficial mostly for art historians and specialists in the fields of Thai and Cambodian studies. As a scholar of Thai art history, I appreciate the tremendous work that the author dedicated to the better understanding of the stylistic and iconographic development of Thai art. However, it would be difficult for a novice to use this book. In addition, the book would be more complete if it were to include materials such as the introduction of Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka in the early Thai periods. This information would help set the stage for what would later become a significant transformation of Buddhist art during the fourteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. I recommend using *The Art and Architecture of Thailand* together with the author's earlier book, *The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand*. The latter is less technical, and covers material from the sixth to the eighteenth century.

Pattaratorn Chirapravati



Carol Stratton, *The Buddhist Sculpture of North Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Silk-worm Books, 2003, pp.423, ills.

This is an ambitious work that seeks to survey, analyse, and present the entire range of the development of religious sculpture in the region that is now Northern Thailand. Other scholars have focused on either specific works of art or a limited period of time, but this book is the first attempt to systematically combine existing research, examine conflicting theories, and to fill in existing gaps. The book is the product of the collaboration of Carol Stratton and Mariam McNair Scott from 1976 until Mariam's untimely death in 1987. Carol Stratton resumed work on the project in 1995.

Careful thought has gone into the book's production. Relevant photographs are placed next to the appropriate text throughout the book; there is no need to turn pages while reading. The book has been written to be accessible to those who have no prior background in either Buddhism or Thai art history. At the same time, Stratton has striven to make it a relevant resource for Asian art historians. The book is divided into four major sections: 1. historical, religious, and cultural background; 2. the analysis of Northern Thai Buddha images—iconography, style, techniques and dating; 3. the types of Northern Thai Buddha images; and 4. associated Buddhist sculptures such as footprints and mythical creatures. In the preface Stratton states that parts one and two were writ-

ten specifically for the general reader and that parts three and four contain the research portions of the book and are written with the scholar in mind.

The Royal Institute of Thailand's method for transliteration into Western languages was chosen to make the text accessible to the broadest number of readers. Sanskrit language forms of words are used except in a few instances where the Pali form or Thai pronunciation is in common usage. The glossary is extensive, with the English, transliterated Thai, Thai, Sanskrit, and Pali versions of the terms given where appropriate. At the end of the book there is a clear and concise time chart giving dates and names of the rulers, the major religious and historical events, dated images and images whose dates are attributed, and the stage by stage evolution of the Northern Thai Buddha image according to the author. The text illustrations are documented in an extensive 22-page table, and a second table lists the objects illustrated by location, a very useful and welcome addition. The only major fault with the book's organization is that it inexplicably contains no index.

The first chapter provides a basic introduction to Theravada Buddhism and its role in the culture of Northern Thailand, and the second presents the royal history of Northern Thailand as derived from a mixture of first and second hand sources. The third chapter introduces the second section and covers the basic analytical tools used by the authors. Iconographic elements such as poses and hand

gestures, pedestals and plinths are clearly and concisely defined and illustrated on the same page by line drawings. The authors also introduce and define six “important” stylistic groupings of Northern Thai Buddha images. The chapter ends with a conclusion that summarizes each major point presented in the chapter.

Chapter Four is titled “Technical Analysis,” but would be better termed “aids to the identification of the various schools of sculpture and dating,” and is subdivided into subheadings beginning with sizes, materials and techniques. These sub-sections seem to be added as an afterthought; the same care in research and a sense of completion that is characteristic of most of the other sections of the book are not present. The chapter continues with an explanation of the different calendars and other dating systems used in Northern Thailand. A brief synopsis of inscribed dates on metal statues and stone stele follows; again it seems that this should also be developed more. A short discussion of the lack of inscribed Northern Thai images before 1465 is presented, as well as published sources documenting inscribed Buddha images. A section follows on the different types of scientific tests that can be used in the study of Thai sculpture. The most important historical sources are then introduced, along with the potential of dating un-inscribed images by comparison with contemporaneous schools of art. A thesis is then presented outlining the development of the Northern Thai Buddha image in

terms of the interplay of cross-cultural stylistic influences. The chapter concludes with an outline of the research methodology used and a summary of part two.

Part Three begins by introducing the four major periods in Northern Thai art, with the author carefully presenting evidence and developing a view of the evolution of the Northern Thai Buddha image. Each period and style is presented with supporting photographs that complement the text. This is the real core of the book; the author’s and Miriam McNair Scott’s years of documentation and research have been thoughtfully combined with a desire not only to state their thesis, but also to communicate it in a clear and easily understandable way. Many of the important images that they illustrate are either unpublished or not easily accessible. Historical and art historical sources are illustrated and woven together using these images to give the reader a rough overview of current scholarship and theories concerning each period and stylistic type, briefly discussing the pros and cons of each theory. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary of the art historical evidence and conclusions for each type.

Part Four presents a brief overview of other Buddhist sculpture in various media ranging from the footprints of the Buddha, votive tablets, sculptures illustrating Jataka stories, religious figures, devotees, and celestial beings, to animals, both real and imaginary, and Buddhist paraphernalia. While this section gives an introduction to the various



forms and briefly outlines the religious stories or legends behind each, it is not as thorough a study as the previous chapters there are omissions, and it does not attempt to place the images in either historical or regional perspective.

Despite the author's efforts, there are a few editing errors, such as improperly placed footnotes (chapter 6, footnote 23). There are also instances where text should be supported by a footnote and is not, such as the statement "similes from Sanskrit poetry were cited in thirty-five manuals for Indian sculptural workshops..." (p. 47). The source for the Sanskrit poetry and its relevance to the study of Northern Thai Buddhist sculpture should be given. These are minor, but pervasive, problems.

While the discussion of the images of the kingdom of Haripunchai and later Northern Thai images produced during and after the reign of Tilok (r. 1441–1487) is plausible, the arguments for the authors' theses concerning the development of Buddha images after Haripunchai and prior to the inscribed Phra Singh image of 1465 are much more problematic. The authors acknowledge this in their discussion of several key images, notably the reliefs of eight walking Buddhas on the *chedi* at Wat Phra That Haripunchai and the development of the Phra Singh images. A range of published opinions is first introduced and then they independently evaluate the works stylistically. Their openness and honesty in presenting how they arrived at their opinions, as well as the pros and cons inherent in them, is refreshing. In

the case of the reliefs of the walking Buddhas on the *chedi* of Wat Phra That Haripunchai, their own observations seem to indicate a date later than the 1320s or 1330s that they tentatively decide upon. Concluding that these reliefs are very closely related to the Jataka plaques at Wat Sri Chum (variously dated 1330s—fifteenth century) and the stucco deities at Wat Chedi Chet Yot (1476), they note "This raises the dizzying specter of a relatively contemporaneous date for the three (middle to last half of the fifteenth century)" and "this possibility is certainly worth further investigation...". By presenting in the text, albeit in the next chapter, the information that Hans Penth originally dated these reliefs to 1360–80 and was convinced to shift his dating earlier by Piriya Krairiksh and that Piriya subsequently has re-evaluated his research and now suggests a later date, the reader is able to judge how much the study of Northern Thai, and by extension Sukhothai sculpture during the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century, is still in the formative stages, and that further critical study is needed to understand more clearly this complex period. It is as if the authors had made a decision that they are not completely comfortable with, and though sticking by and defending it, are encouraging others to re-evaluate the evidence.

Despite some problem areas, there is a lot of good scholarship in the book and Stratton and Scott have made easily accessible a set of resources that others can evaluate and explore, and contribute

their own ideas and research. The authors have striven to provide to the best of their ability a very detailed overview of the development of Northern Thai Buddhist sculpture, with the goal of providing enough documentary evidence, both photographic and textual, both to facilitate and stimulate further scholarship in this neglected area of Thai studies. They have succeeded in doing this and it warrants serious reading, even if one disagrees with some of their conclusions.

John Listopad

Michael Smithies, translator and editor, *Three Military Accounts of the 1688 'Revolution' in Siam*. Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2002, pp.192, ill.20, US\$19.

Michael Smithies, translator and editor, *Witnesses to a Revolution: Siam 1688*. Bangkok, Siam Society, 2004, pp.vi + 214, 14 ills, Bt. 500 (members), Bt. 600 (non-members)

The subject of these two collections of papers, compiled and edited by Michael Smithies, is very familiar to historians of Thailand. The diplomatic exchanges between the courts of King Narai and King Louis XIV in the 1680s are documented in numerous books published more than 300 years ago by the French ambassadors themselves, members of their entourages and missionaries. These accounts have appeared in recent decades in new editions, and some have been translated into English. The volume of material relating to this brief interlude in Thai history is so large that this subject warrants a place of its own in the 400-year bibliography of Ayutthaya as a capital city.

After all these publications, could we expect anything new? Michael Smithies surprises us in these two volumes by providing 15 short texts, which he has translated from French to English. The books by the French ambassadors and their entourages describe the higher-level politics of the time. By contrast, most of the texts in the present volumes were written by the lesser players in Franco-Thai relations. Three of the texts are by French missionaries, one is by a

French merchant and one is by a Thai minister of foreign affairs—an extremely rare contemporary example of a Thai viewpoint. The rest are by French officers, including one by General Desfarges, who commanded the French troops stationed in Siam during 1687–8 and who died on his homeward voyage. Most of these texts will probably be known only at second hand by historians of Thailand, since copies are so difficult to obtain, and some appear here for the first time in print. Copies of the still-unpublished French originals have been donated to the archives of the Siam Society, to make them available to anyone who wishes to consult them.

The editor's introductions to Franco-Thai diplomatic relations in the 1680s are short and succinct. The individual writers take up the story in terms of the political events in early 1688, after the second and last French ambassador had departed, leaving behind the French garrison. What was its purpose? Judging from these short texts, the officers themselves did not have a clear idea of their role, other than providing support to King Narai. The military authors have not left us campaign journals. They do not tell us about the departure of the French troops from France, the voyage to Siam or the initial installation of the French garrison. The military force was relatively small: 636 officers and soldiers sailed from France, nearly a quarter died on the voyage and only 492 reached Paknam in October 1687.

The officers provide mostly views from inside the French garrison, which

was stationed in the two forts facing each other across the river at Thonburi and Bangkok. Another contingent was at Mergui, the most important Thai port on the Andaman Sea, and these texts include the only first-hand account of the Mergui contingent. Some French forces were deployed on two Thai frigates that patrolled the Gulf and apparently also the waters along the west coast of the Malay peninsula: we have no accounts by witnesses on board, but at least details of the ship movements are documented. Some French officers and men received temporary postings in Ayutthaya and Lopburi; their voices, too, are silent, but glimpses of their roles emerge from the texts by fellow officers.

This material describes at first hand what the writers heard and witnessed during the troubled period of King Narai's illness and death, and the accession of one of his ministers, Phet Racha, as king. In chronological terms, the texts can be divided into two basic parts. During March-May 1688 the question of the succession became an issue and was finally resolved by the minister's seizure of power. The next month, the French garrison at Mergui withdrew and went to India, but at Bangkok no large ship was available to carry the entire French garrison. From June to November 1688, the French remained entrenched in their Bangkok fort, resigned to withdraw from the country even before King Narai died in the second week of July, a virtual prisoner in his own palace.

These short works provide insiders'

impressions of the armed confrontation between the French and Phet Racha. According to one author, Phet Racha's main concern in June 1688 was to get the French soldiers to leave with as little conflict as possible and to provide them with an opening to do so. These accounts document the delays that intervened, Desfarges' violation of the withdrawal agreement and the resulting imprisonment of most of the French missionaries and the hapless soldiers who were stranded in Ayutthaya when three ships carrying the main garrison sailed for India in early November 1688. The missionaries were not fully released until two and a half years later, and some of the soldiers were in prison even longer. If the withdrawal had proceeded smoothly without complications, European opinions about Siam in ensuing years would have been far less negative.

Each document has to be judged partly from the motivations of the writer, since the French were divided among themselves by jealousies, rivalries and the objectives of serving in Thai territory. Anyone reading the account by Desfarges, for example, should be forewarned (as the editor carefully does) of the tactical and diplomatic blunders the commander made and should understand that his account of events is artfully crafted to justify his actions in the eyes of his superiors in France. The editor provides a thoughtful introduction to each document and writer, explains the attitudes of one Frenchman towards another and helps us to understand why major players in the political drama may



be depicted by two different authors in contradictory ways.

In essays by military officers about fellow officers and other Frenchmen, one can expect a continuous stream of unfamiliar references. The editor provides a wealth of editorial notes to identify the names of people, places and events mentioned by the writers. Helpful maps, fortress designs and portraits of individuals are also included.

Are we in the presence of chroniclers of French adventurers and their squabbles among themselves, with the Thai countryside merely as a backdrop? Or do these accounts contribute to our understanding of Thai actions and politics? Certainly the writers' depictions of Phet Racha and his political tactics during the first half of 1688, which brought him to the throne, deserve careful attention by scholars concerned with Thai politics. The division of the Thai élite into opposing factions is nowhere else documented in this type of detail. Some descriptions will be helpful to military historians, such as the Thai river defences during the confrontation and the construction work on the French-designed fort at Bangkok.

These volumes are welcome additions to the impressive contributions already made by Michael Smithies to our knowledge of this period of Thai history, and I hope that there is more to come.

Kennon Breazeale

Henry Ginsburg, *Thai Art and Culture: Historic Manuscripts from Western Collections*. London, British Library, 2000; Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2000; Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 2000, pp.138, ills.

Among the different fields of Thai art, Thai manuscripts have been little studied by either Thai or Western scholars. Henry Ginsburg is among the handful of Western specialists on these materials. *Thai Art and Culture* is the author's second book on Thai manuscripts, following *Thai Manuscript Painting* (London, British Library, 1989). The present volume is written in a catalogue format, and its emphases are on the analysis of stylistic development, the identification of themes, and the attribution of dates.

As the title suggests, the manuscripts presented in this book come from Western collections such as the British Library, the Royal Asiatic Society in London, the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, the New York Public Library, and some private collections. The manuscripts from Great Britain were exhibited in Thailand in 1996 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the reign of King Bhumiphol.

The present volume is broadly divided into two sections: one deals with maps, letters, and drawings and the other focuses on illustrated Thai manuscripts. Illustrated manuscripts were brought to the West by early travellers, traders, diplomats, scholars, and soldiers. They tended to survive better in Europe than

in Thailand, where the combined effects of tropical heat, humidity, insects, and neglect often damaged or destroyed them. Many of the manuscripts in Western collections contain inscriptions yielding the dates and names of commissioners. Hence, they provide important information concerning dates and related styles that can be used to formulate stylistic development. Included in the introduction is a short summary of the development of Thai manuscripts from the seventeenth century until their decline by the end of the nineteenth century following the introduction of modern book technology.

The first section of the book contains numerous fascinating historical documents and correspondence between Siam and the West. The documents are arranged roughly chronologically, thus guiding us through 400 years of Thai history (from the late sixteenth through the nineteenth century). They include a map of Southeast Asia dated to 1575, a translation from Thai into English of a 1622 speech by King Songtham of Ayutthaya, the first book in Thailand printed in Thai dated to 1837, and the first photographs taken at Angkor Wat by John Thomson in 1867. The items were written in many different scripts (Thai, Khmer, Roman, and Arabic) and languages (Thai, Pali, French, English, Dutch, and Persian). The author provides important historical background information for each document.

In the second part of the book, the illustrated manuscripts are grouped by subject: Buddhist themes (the life of the



Buddha, Buddhist sutras, and the monk Phra Malai), cosmology, and fortune-telling. It is important to note that the illustrations and the text in a Thai manuscript typically have no direct correspondence. The text was chanted during Buddhist ceremonies such as funerals and weddings, while the illustrations depicted themes such as the life of the Buddha and his previous lives. These served as reminders of his teachings and as exemplary models for practitioners. The donors or artists were thus free to choose the Buddhist themes they preferred. Dr Ginsburg notes that the increasing number of manuscripts with illustrations of the Buddhist monk Phra Malai marked the transition from the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. In terms of stylistic analysis, the different colour schemes of the background and the portrayal of forms can be used for the attribution of dates (e.g., pale backgrounds for the late eighteenth century and deeply coloured backgrounds for the late eighteenth century onwards). In addition, the dimensions of the manuscripts can help with date attribution (e.g., 13 cm high for the late-Ayutthaya period and 14 cm high for Bangkok period). Western-style landscapes began to appear between 1850 and 1860.

Thai Art and Culture: Historic Manuscripts from Western Collections is a very well-written catalogue and will serve as an excellent reference text. Since some important religious and historical information about the illustrated manuscripts is not included in this

volume, it should be read in conjunction with Ginsburg's earlier work. The two volumes complement each other: one focuses more on the religious content of the manuscripts and the other on the development of styles. A minor quibble is that the technical Buddhist terms need more explanation than the abbreviated version given in the glossary (e.g., *Abhidhamma*, *Mahabuddhaguna*).

Pattaratorn Chirapravati

Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to the Tai States in 1837*. Chiang Mai, Silk-worm Books, 2003, pp.xxvii+624.

It is seldom the case that a reviewer can summarize his reactions to a particular book without immediately introducing some measure of qualification. This, most assuredly, is not the case with this outstanding contribution to the history of European exploration of Southeast Asia in the first half of the nineteenth century. But the book is much more than that, for the authors/editors also provide a range of scholarly commentary in relation to the Thai/Tai and Burmese worlds of the period which will be of great interest to specialists. Not the least interesting aspect of this book is the manner in which it came to be written, involving as it did the best kind of scholarly cooperation. It is pleasing that the details of this cooperation are spelt out for the reader, with due recognition given to the part played by scholars in addition to Grabowski and Turton.

The book takes its main title from what the authors call a 'diplomatic cliché of long standing' in the regions of what are today parts of Burma, Laos and Thailand, through which McLeod and Richardson travelled. Both the explorers heard the phrase used as they pursued their travels, and there is clear evidence of its currency dating back to the previous century. What is striking, of course, is the fact that although there

were long-established patterns of political and economic intercourse in the regions explored by McLeod and Richardson, these two 'soldier diplomats' were the first to traverse regions that until the 1830s had lain outside the ken of the Western world. As modern-day readers of the journals written by the two explorers, we are introduced in detail to the politics of the Tai states, their ethnographic composition, the manner in which the Buddhist religion was practised and their flora and fauna. As is the case with other explorers from this era, McLeod and Richardson amaze us with the range of their interests and their multi-skilled capacities.

At the heart of this book are the journals kept by Captain William Couperus McLeod (1805–80) and Dr David Richardson (1796–1846) when, as servants of the Honourable East India Company, they were despatched, separately, into the northern Tai states in 1836/7. Although the two men's journals have been in existence in published form, as British Parliamentary Papers, there has been little general knowledge of their contents. The few references to the two soldier diplomats have been found in secondary sources, such as Sir Hugh Clifford's *Further India*, and in passing references to an abstracted version of McLeod's journal published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1837, where the author's initials are incorrectly given as T.E. rather than the correct W.C.

It is difficult not to be other than impressed with the energy and resolu-



tion shown by both McLeod and Richardson. In each expedition the two soldier diplomats travelled as the sole European member of the exploring party. Their accompanying escorts and servants undoubtedly smoothed their progress but, as the authors aptly suggest, any real challenge from the regions through which they passed could not have been readily repulsed. Moreover, all important decisions were McLeod's and Richardson's responsibilities. They overcame obstacles, both real and psychological, in a manner which leaves the impression of men secure in their conviction of their place in the world while, concurrently, having the capacity to describe and interpret social and political structures very different from their own. Indeed, of all the interesting aspects that are treated in the two journals the descriptions of the complex tributary relationships of the states through which Richardson and McLeod travelled are, for this reader, the most interesting feature. Consider, for example, McLeod's comments on the relationship between the ruler in Bangkok and the northern 'Yuan' principalities, which included Chiang Mai and Nan:

The court at Bangkok does not, it appears, place much faith in the attachment and fidelity of these distant provinces, for the oath of allegiance is administered to the chiefs, great and small, as often as they go to Bangkok, which they are obliged to do periodically. It rather courts them as much as possible

and, indeed, the tribute levied is very light. (p.175)

I can only fault the authors on one point of substance, where reference is made to the French Mekong expedition of 1866–68. Quoting from my *River Road to China*, the authors query (p.157) my assertion that the French explorers were pursuing commercial interests in addition to more strictly defined concerns about the geographic course of the Mekong. In fact, concern for the commercial possibilities of the Mekong was a central feature of the French expedition's *raison d'être*, as a result of Francis Garnier's promotion of the need for the Mekong to be explored and as outlined in the instructions given to the expedition by the Governor of Cochinchina, Admiral de la Grandière, on 25 May 1866. The hopes, first shattered when the expedition encountered the Khone Falls, that the Mekong could serve as a trade route to China became doubly disappointing as the French explorers found little along the river's course that could be exploited for commercial purposes.

The footnotes and bibliographic references are of the highest standard. On the other hand, the method adopted for citations in the index is confusing. Take, as an example, the citation for 'Chiang Mai', which first appears in the text on page 6. Although discussion of Chiang Mai on that page may be sensibly described as 'general', it is necessary to scan the index listing to the sub-heading 'first visits to' to find a

reference to the settlement.

Neither this comment nor my reference to the issue of the French Mekong expedition's commercial concerns should be regarded as detracting from the overall high merit of this very important book. With illustrations and maps adding to its value, it deserves a wide readership for all concerned with the history of mainland Southeast Asia, its exploration and the complex world that was so notably changed by the arrival of the European powers.

Milton Osborne



Michael Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *Le Siam*. Paris, Les Belles Lettres des Civilisations, 2004, pp. 254.

This compact book, by the recently-appointed professor of South and South-East Asian archaeology and art history at the Sorbonne, sets out to cover the complete background to the country, and deliberately concentrates on the reign of King Narai (1656–1688), in part, perhaps, because Western sources are most prolific at that period. Another obvious reason for choosing this period, considered by many Thais as a golden age, is that the author's research has often centred around this reign. This is not to say that Jacq-Hergoualc'h ignores what came before and after, far from it, but the focus is there.

On reading the volume, one feels that on many occasions Jacq-Hergoualc'h was constrained by the format into which the work was required to fit, being one of a collection comprising, among others, works on classical China, classical India, and the Khmers (thus providing a further reason for concentrating on the past rather than the present). The sections are laid out clearly: the physical land, history, political and social organization, economic life, the calendar, religion, literature, arts, leisure, and private life, with the usual scholarly apparatus of bibliography and indices, and biographies of more important characters.

Within each chapter there are specific subdivisions, so that the whole is very precisely defined. For example, the

chapter on political and social organization covers separately royalty, social classes, the administration of the kingdom, law and justice, finances, and the army. But the use of bold type for emphasis, something, one suspects, forced on the author by the framework into which the book had to fit, can be irritating, if only because it is unnecessary, as with, for example, "Le balancement des saisons joint à la grande stabilité thermique fut à l'origine de **l'énorme extension initiale des forêts au Siam**. A l'époque ancienne, elles couvraient tout le pays." [roughly translated: The equability of the seasons coupled with considerable stability in temperatures was the cause of **the huge extent at first of the forests in Siam**. In early times they covered the entire country.]

Jacq-Hergoualc'h packs an enormous amount of information into his different sections which is often difficult to locate in such standard texts as La Loubère, Gervaise or Choisy. He also gives a useful summary of the history of the peninsular Malay city-states, drawing on his 2002 publication with Brill, which most readers of the present volume could probably not afford. He rightly emphasizes the nature of war, to increase populations rather than kill or acquire territory (which led Choisy to say that the Siamese fight like angels), and the dependence of Ayutthaya on trade for its wealth. He takes a traditional view of the Ramkamhaeng inscription and on occasions makes his points emphatically, as when he dismisses out of hand a supposed artistic and cultural

influence of Srivichaya, “which never existed”.

The *sakdina* system, the *corvée* obligations, and the order of diminishing royal rank are all clearly explained, and the details of different forms of trial by ordeal gone over in agonizing detail. He covers too the different eras, cycles and calendars and how time was measured, something few commentators bother with. His coverage of Buddhism and its manifestations is generous, and he does not omit popular religion and the recourse to spirits. There is almost nothing on the Muslims, though, nor on the tribes on the periphery. The section on literature, drawing frequently on Schweisguth, is very clear. That on the arts, covering architecture, sculpture, painting, and decorative arts, profusely illustrated with line drawings, has the author in his element, and the section on leisure covers everything from kite-flying and elephant and tiger fights to different theatrical forms (however, the *nang talung* and *likay* do not get a mention, perhaps because these were not around in Ayutthaya in the golden age). Private life is just as thoroughly covered, considering divorce and inheritance, along with sexuality and other topics.

In all this wealth of compressed information this reviewer only spotted one slip: attributing to Prasat Thong in 1657 (when his son Narai was on the throne) the prohibition of interracial marriages for Thai women.

This little book then is a concise factual guide to old Siamese society. Some may regret that its history from

the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 to the present is covered in only one and half pages, but the emphasis is stated right at the beginning. It is most useful summary directed to a French audience of Siam in its classic period.

Michael Smithies



Doryane Kermel-Torrès. *Atlas of Thailand: Spatial Structures and Development*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2004, pp. 209. Includes photographs, maps & bibliography. Paperback. Bt 1,500.

As I sit here thinking about how to start this book review, I am reminded of how small the world has become. The previous occupier of my university office should have been the reviewer for this book, as he authored one of the very few other atlases of Thailand. The current *Atlas of Thailand* under review is one of only a few that explores the country so richly through a variety of maps, photos and text. One of the few similar atlases that has been produced is the 1975 volume by Larry Sternstein, of which I have a copy sitting on my bookshelf. I have a copy of Larry's book because I inherited his office when Larry suddenly passed away. Given Larry life-long interest in the history and maps of Thailand, he would have appreciated the current book and I am sure he would have accepted it as a worthwhile successor to his 1975 book: *Thailand: The Environment of Modernisation*.

The current book, the full title of which is: *Atlas of Thailand: Spatial Structures and Development*, has been produced by a team of 14 French and two Thai geographers working under the guidance of Doryane Kermel-Torrès from the French Institute of Research for Development and the French National Centre of Scientific Research. The book is A4 size and its 209 pages are divided

into nine chapters describing Thailand in its global and regional context, and its historical and current development. It also emphasises several different aspects, including population, industry, agriculture and the development of Bangkok. Each chapter's topic is introduced by a short text illustrated with photos. Chapters are then broken down into sub-themes that uniformly consist of one page of maps (right side) and one page of explanatory text (left side). A variety of mapping and statistical presentation techniques is used to provide a very colourful and usable atlas. The editor has also included a short methodology appendix and an extensive bibliography.

It is probable worthwhile here to provide a brief description of the nine chapters. If, however, the reader is more interested in the reviewer's assessment of the book, skip the next two paragraphs. All nine chapters have well-defined themes and are placed in a logical sequence. The first chapter situates Thailand in the region and shows its relationship with the rest of the world. While not comprehensive, it does provide a good overview, with references to specific topics such as foreign and Thai travellers. Chapter Two provides a traditional examination of the country's population and covers the issues of population growth, distribution and migration, as well as changing distribution patterns by ethnic and religious variables. Chapter Three covers the state and the construction of its territory. This chapter covers a mixture of topics, from

the expected—changing boundaries and administration—to the less expected—deforestation, schools and health facilities. This chapter is perhaps the least thematically cohesive.

Chapters Four to Six cover three sectors of the economy: agriculture, industry and tertiary, respectively. The chapters do so in great detail and with a variety of mapping techniques. In all, they provide a comprehensive if somewhat standard coverage of the Thai economy. Such maps and descriptions will have numerous uses as reference material for a range of readers. It is the last three chapters that are perhaps the most interesting. Chapter Seven covers Bangkok. No atlas can be complete without mentioning the primacy of Bangkok and analysing its characteristics, which this chapter does, but somewhat too briefly for my liking. I would have liked to have seen some of the material Larry Sternstein presented in his book 30 years ago incorporated into the current chapter. Chapter Eight discusses the peripheral regions of the North-East and South. These peripheral regions have long been focus points for those interested in Thailand and, of course, the recent recurrence of the unrest in the southern peripheral region of Thailand is very topical. While this is only covered in passing, the chapter does provide good background to understanding the region. Finally, Chapter Nine covers the important issue of social imbalances and spatial organization. Thailand's prosperity often covers up the significant imbalances that exist, and

thus, it is a good chapter to include and finish on.

Having visited and worked in Thailand for a period of more than two decades, I find this book an excellent reference for teaching and as a starting point for research. On several occasions in the past I could have done with maps and explanations from this atlas to enhance and illustrate my teaching. For research purposes, while the atlas provides a beginning, most of us will need to find further and more specialised resources, given the often-specialised nature of research topics. But certainly the atlas would provide an invaluable starting point. Overall, the atlas provides a good reference resource and is readily accessible to a range of non-specialised readers. The self-contained sub-themes, with one page of maps and one page of explanation, particularly lends itself to easy access.

The book does have some limitations. As has been noted by the editor, the book does not cover the period after 1997. For a 2004 reference book it might have been wise to include at least one sub-theme (2 pages) on the 1997 crisis faced by the region and started in Thailand. Also, the bibliography, while comprehensive, would have been more user-friendly if it had been done alphabetically rather than by chapter. It is also a pity that Larry Sternstein's name has been misspelled in the Introduction (page 9, paragraph 1). However, it does not seem that this minor, if somewhat obvious, mistake is symptomatic of the atlas as a whole.

The biggest disappointment for me is that this atlas does not take advantage of the significant progress made in the art of cartography. The style and cartography techniques remind me of many similar atlases produced in previous decades. In contrast, *The New Zealand Historical Atlas*, Malcolm McKinnon (ed.) 1997, published by David Bateman, Auckland, provides a wonderful illustration of what is possible in cartography. But, to be fair, *The New Zealand Historical Atlas* is also much more expensive, and thus less accessible. Still, it is interesting to compare, if not completely fair.

Despite the comments in the last paragraph, I would highly recommend the atlas for public, school and academic libraries. The atlas will also be of interest to academics and students of Thai and Southeast Asian studies. If you are in Thailand, particularly in Bangkok with its many bookstores, and have more than a passing interest in the country, it is well worth purchasing the book. At its current price it is a very good buy.

Peter van Dierman

David K. Wyatt, *Reading Thai Murals*, Chiang Mai, Silksworm Books, 2004, pp. 80., ills.

David K. Wyatt, until recently John Stambaugh Professor of History at Cornell University, has written extensively about Thailand, and is renowned as a historian of this country. Departing from his more formal historical researches, Professor Wyatt reveals his love for things Thai in his recently published *Reading Thai Murals*. This beautifully illustrated little book had its beginnings in Professor Wyatt's interest in and visits to several temples in the north and northeast of Thailand. There, like any other visitor, he recorded his enjoyment and pleasure at the wit and skill of the muralists in a handsome collection of photographic slides.

Most of the murals depicted in this book were photographed during a year-long stay in northern Thailand in 1987–88, and their vivid clarity reveals that Professor Wyatt's photographs from that time have become testaments to a sadly vanishing beauty, as such murals have been subject to decay and damage over succeeding years. Other illustrations come from a variety of sources.

The book is divided into twelve brief sections: Murals as Teaching; A Patron Decides; Finding An Artist; An Artist's Preparations; Puzzles and Conundrums; Murals as Religious Lessons; Double Entendre; Soldiers at War; Those on the Walls; Reading Social Dimensions; Intra-and-Inter-Cores, and Reading Thai Murals.

The purpose of murals in Thai temples is to portray religious stories most often, the life of the Buddha, and the *Tosachat Jatakas*, or tales of the Ten Final Rebirths or Former Lives of the being who becomes the Buddha in his last life. Forming the background to these are the *Traiphum* treatises, or the Three Worlds of Buddhist Cosmology, the earliest Thai version of which is attributed to the mid-fourteenth century. The cosmology outlined in these treatises provides the framework and conventions for murals in general.

Collectively, murals depict the many virtues to which all should aspire, be they monks or lay people. In effect, they are the visual scriptures of Thai Buddhism, serving to make moral lessons accessible to a society which, until the beginning of the twentieth century, was been largely illiterate. Thus, key elements in these stories, to enable immediate recognition by the devotee, are repeated in a variety of styles on temple walls all over the country. For this reason, the artist rarely departs from this basic framework; style may vary from era to era, but the key scenes are not arbitrary. The only areas where artists have taken the opportunity of "personal comment", to a greater or lesser extent, are the scenes at the peripheries of the main religious themes, or where they appear as background within the larger context of a religious story (see here figs 11 a, b). Essentially, these have no scriptural purpose, but depict daily life at the lower levels of Mount Meru, in "our world", the world of men.



It is this world, for the most part, that Professor Wyatt has chosen to illustrate in this book. In an informal and conversational style, he leads the reader on an armchair journey and shares his pleasure at the vignettes and conundrums on the walls of some of the prettiest temples in the country. In describing murals from Wat Phumin in Nan, and Wat Nong Bua in the same province, the author is able to introduce the reader, unusually, not only to patron but painter, Thit Buaphan, and thus to “humanize” the story. There is documentation of both, unlike the multitude of murals in other regions of Thailand. For the most part, as murals and temples themselves represented acts of merit, the names of painters and their assistants have not been recorded.

Tradition has it that Wat Nong Bua was built in 1862, and that a painter, Thit Buaphan, from east central Laos (then part of the principality of Nan) began his work there some five years later. He was to take 21 years to complete it. The illustrations in the book are evidence of his excellent draughtsmanship and aesthetically pleasing execution of even the most “trivial” scenes.

Nan’s strikingly handsome Wat Phumin, renovated in the mid-nineteenth century, is a cross-shaped structure with projecting doors at the cardinal directions. This unusual temple drew many foreign visitors from the mid-century on, including the British Consul from Chiang Mai. One such visitor in 1887 commented on the beautiful building without mentioning any murals. Given that the entire interior today is covered by murals (albeit in a damaged state),

Professor Wyatt points out that obviously they date from after that time, and may be attributed to the reign of Sulyapong, who became ruler in 1893.

1893 was a calamitous year for Siam and its tributary states, of which Nan was one. French gunboat diplomacy had forced a treaty on the central rule, wresting territory, including Nan’s further northern regions of Laos, and enlarging France’s growing power in Indo-China.

In this context, Professor Wyatt links a written document and the murals at Wat Phumin.

The new ruler, Sulyapong, commissioned the writing of a chronicle which portrays the principality as an orphan, abandoned by its larger and therefore “parent” states, including central rule from Bangkok. This chronicle, while not openly naming them, could be read as a criticism of their negligence. Furthermore, according to Professor Wyatt, that “betrayal” and theme of orphanhood may have been voiced in the choice of a non-canonical Jataka, *Khaddhana*, painted almost certainly by Thit Buaphan, and incorporating references to orphanhood, thus subtly criticizing central rule from Bangkok “in a way that could not be voiced aloud”.

While in actuality the overall layout of Wat Phumin murals adheres to the traditional conventions of the Three Worlds, most of the illustrations in this book feature the human world, at the “lower” levels, and portray scenes of contemporary life in the north in the late nineteenth century. There is ploughing, cooking and weaving to be done; men and women eye each other, puffing

cheroots, gossiping and flirting; there is even a transvestite pointedly involved near women doing “women’s work”. Village boys play traditional ball games; young novices practise their handwriting on slates, laughing at each other, depicted realistically even to the extent of missing teeth; lovers fondle and smirk, their lips puckered. Such depictions of emotions and facial expressions are unique to northern painting (figs 11a, 13, 29, 34, 53).

Other figures, much larger in scale, guard doorways or float high above as befits those nobly born: the former may even represent a self-portrait of the artist, Thit Buaphan, whispering to his smiling lady love; the latter seems likely to be the ruler of Nan, looking very pleased with himself, wearing a sprig of flowers in his ear. Less fortunate “outsiders”, such as hilltribe people and a Karen couple from Burma, lurk outside village walls (figs 12, 47, 48, 59).

Adding interest for the local congregation of the time (and for subsequent foreign visitors today), are scenes of soldiers marching in serried array. Many of these are foreigners (mercenaries?), kitted out in full uniform, helmets and a variety of lethal weapons, while the local conscripts, though armed, are bare-foot, with only their “tattoo trousers” to protect them. Notably, at Wat Phumin, other outsiders include groups of bearded foreign men and women, in nineteenth century frock-coats and dresses. These appear only partially completed as they are not fully coloured in. Even more surprising are groups of

what appear to be London bobbies, some bearded but all helmeted, seated in a sailing boat, while nearby, other foreigners crowd a paddle steamer (figs. 30–40). Professor Wyatt muses on these as perhaps being the result of the painter copying from foreign black and white illustrated magazines, imported some decades before by an old monk on his return from England to Wat Phumin, and mentioned by the British Consul in 1887.

Interestingly, the foreigners in Wat Phumin are mainly Europeans of the nineteenth century depicted reasonably realistically, perhaps for the reason above. However, other illustrations in this book from *wat* in Bangkok and Thonburi, feature crowds of Europeans, Persians and Chinese, all of them in lavish eighteenth century clothing, and all of them ugly. These clearly follow the early Bangkok period tradition of painting foreigners of the late Ayutthaya period as part of the Demon Army in the Buddha’s Victory over Mara (fig. 61).

Throughout Thai murals, whether as minor or peripheral parts of religious scenes, unexpected but true-to-life aspects are included. The section puzzlingly named “Intra-and Inter-Cores” features activities between same sex or heterosexual couples (including the odd foreigner), either privately or in crowd scenes, and even some monkey business between monkeys! All participants seem to be having a good time (figs 16,17, 32, 67–75).

However, the author does venture from this “real world” into the other planes of existence, as his eye was ob-

viously caught by scenes of hells in the lower regions of “our” world. These visions of torture and misery traditionally form part of the *Nimi Jataka*, the tale of a righteous ruler who visits Indra’s abode of bliss, the heavens, as well as the hells. At Wat Phumin, the appearance of Nimi, his charioteer and chariot, provides a rare example of classic metropolitan style set within the provincial northern style. The hell scenes are reminders of torments awaiting liars, cheats, and adulterers, not to mention women who eat before feeding their husbands, as Professor Wyatt points out from one of the many inscriptions in northern writing that accompany scenes (figs 24–28).

Further exploring the scriptural aspects of mural painting, Professor Wyatt illustrates the life story of the Buddha, as well as Jataka tales, from a variety of sources, mainly copies of murals in books available to him. This enables the reader to follow some of the main aspects of the stories and view differing artistic styles, from the classic to the naïve provincial. Providing an effective and startling contrast with the former is a scene from Lamphun province, the temptation of the Buddha by the demon Mara’s daughters. While in earlier times women were portrayed bare breasted, in this 1988 version, they are more “modestly” clad in bikinis (fig.18).

Other stylistic variations are evident in the illustrations of the *Vessantara Jataka* depicting the virtues of generosity and charity. Unlike traditional murals, the scene from a Chiang Mai temple is in Western perspective, with figures

fully humanized, as in a realistic photograph. This Westernized style became fashionable in the early twentieth century, pointing to the increasing numbers of foreigners in Siam, and the country’s growing interest in the “outside” world (figs 17–23).

Overall, the beautiful illustrations and relaxed and informal text make this book a pleasing peek into some of the traditions of Thai murals. Professor Wyatt reminds us that in the study and understanding of Thai history, in addition to written documents there are also voices from the past to be found in the lively and even puzzling murals that portray life at that time. “Reading” these “documents” is a fulfilling experience, allowing us a rewarding glimpse of societies other than ours. For those wishing to consult further texts on the two main temples mentioned here, there is, in the *Mural Paintings of Thailand Series*, a volume *Wat Phumin and Wat Nong Bua*, in English and Thai, published by Muang Boran, Bangkok, 1986, which gives an overall view of the layout of the main temple murals mentioned here.

A few editing problems could be corrected in the future. For example, occasionally what is described in the text is not visible in the illustration (figs 44,58); the text on page 22 mentioning the cover of the book actually describes a completely different scene, and fig. 24 is back to front.

Rita Ringis

Kamala Tiyavanich, *The Buddha in The Jungle*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2003, pp.406, Bt.495.

This work from Kamala Tiyavanich follows her excellent *Forest Recollection* published in 1997 (Chiang Mai). In her first work, the author offered a study of the history and the life of forest monks, giving a spirited defence of the various local forms of Buddhism and an affirmation of their importance. Kamala Tiyavanich took the opportunity to defend different people's religious practices, to note the dangers of not giving proper value to meditation or the monks' role as spiritual teachers, and also to remind us of the fundamental importance of the role of women. The forest, as the environment in which the monks lived and worked, played an essential role as the place where these traditions developed, grew stronger and were conserved. In this second book, the forest once again occupies a foremost role.

The Buddha in the Jungle is an ideal continuation from *Forest Recollection* and offers an even more vivid description of the lives of the monks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The narratives of the lives of these exceptional men clarifies unequivocally the importance of the monastic forest tradition. The lives of these monks, their meditation and mystical practices (*thudong*), and their relations with other monks and with ordinary people, seem in perfect harmony with the duties of a member of a monastic Buddhist

community. They also, in a certain way, accord with the formal teachings of the scriptures: if, for one monk, a certain emphasis was placed on a particular role or activity, this would correspond with his particular talents. Unfortunately, much of this tradition has risked being lost with the ensuing standardisation and nationalisation of Buddhism.

The Buddha in the Jungle is not an "academic" work, in as much as its content is not always based on official sources, but often comes from folk tradition. Yet this should not deter or discourage scholars of Thailand or Buddhism. The evidence and testimony springing from popular tradition help give clear insight into a culture; in this way one might go as far as to say that the accounts we find in this book bring life and warmth to studies in the more scholarly tradition.

Each of the 44 chapters ends with a brief bibliography and the thorough bibliography at the end of the text is extremely useful for those who would like to look further into the topics explored. There is also a helpful glossary of the more complex Buddhist terms. As the meanings of some of these are different from the usual ones, the glossary is a very important part of the text. The book is also beautifully illustrated, including maps taken from publications of the period and photographs of the most important monks as well as of local villagers.

The book explores a wide variety of topics. The third chapter, for example, talks of the peaceful co-existence



between various religious traditions; in particular between Muslims and Buddhists within the same monastery, the monastery which truly represented the centre of village society. The great teacher Somdet To, for instance, readily shared Buddhist teachings with people of the Islamic faith, all the while listening to their perspectives.

Somdet To features as the protagonist of other chapters, which narrate some of the events of his life and some of his particular characteristics: one example is his ability to recite the part of the Princess Matsī, during dramatisations of *Vessantarajātaka*. His portrayal of the suffering and spiritual strength of this woman who lost both her children, is reported to have been highly moving. The story of Prince Vessantara teaches the central importance of the concept of generosity (*dāna*) on the Buddhist spiritual path. A less extreme and more down-to-earth type of generosity is that found in traditional village life, like the tradition of offering cooked food to neighbours. This sharing of property is not just part of popular culture but is also underlined in the canonical Buddhist texts as part of the formal practice of the “Four bases of Assistance” (*sangahavatthu*).

Some chapters admirably describe the particularities of village life. These relate, for example, the problems caused by ravens in the rice fields, as well as typical work such as the construction of canoes, the domestication of elephants or the knowledge of medicinal herbs.

Yet the real leitmotif of the work can be traced to certain key concepts, first and foremost, the relationship of the monks with their natural surroundings.

Many monks were remembered for their great love and respect for the plants and animals around them. Even while these men had regularly to face extremely dangerous situations in the forest, they managed to survive living out an attitude of profound love (*mettā*) towards the animals, even in their encounters with those more dangerous ones, always seeking a harmonious rapport with nature.

Certain concepts present in Buddhist teachings make direct reference to the relationship between humans and other living beings. Among these, we may recall: non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), love or loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gratitude (*kataññū*), the offering of sanctuary (*abhaya-dāna*), or constant mindful awareness or heedfulness (*appamāda*). In *The Buddha in the Jungle*, the relationship with nature is based firmly on the practice of *mettā*, loving kindness, which seems to be the foundation on which the whole way of interacting with animals was built. The use of mantra is also mentioned, (the mantra *arāham*, for example), its function primarily being as defence against various dangers.

The co-existence of the monks with the animals of the forest is notable particularly for the complete absence of any kind of violence. One of the reasons for this is no doubt the fact that the taking of any form of life goes against the first

Buddhist precept, but perhaps this attitude was particularly cherished among the Thai population. Rather than placing importance on the detachment of oneself from the exterior world, the emphasis is placed rather on the similarities of different beings and all that unites the *micro* and the *macro*. This provides a firm base for the avoidance of any opposing of ourselves and the exterior world, and certainly the separation between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* which so characterises the Western world.

This relationship between interior and exterior worlds is close and strict and this is shown clearly in the monks' interaction with the plant and animal worlds. This attitude is also in keeping with the more scholarly Buddhist traditions, even if it is not always so evident. The question of the vision of plants and animals in early Buddhism has been examined in some detail in various studies, most notably in the work of Lambert Schmithausen, *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism* (Tokyo 1991). It is interesting to note here the traditional list of the meanings of the term *bhūta* in the canonical Pāli texts (for example, in *Papañcasūdanī* (PTS I, 31) *ad Majjhima Nikāya* 1.7 (PTS I, 2), and *Paramatthajotikā* II (PTS I, 278) *ad Suttanipāta* 222). In this list we find both the constituents of the exterior world (animal, vegetable and mineral) and the factors which compose the human psychological and moral dimension. In fact, *bhūta* is used to generically

indicate trees, plants and such, but at the same time also the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), non-human beings (*amanussa*), the material elements (*[mahā]bhūta*), all living beings (*satta*) and, ultimately, the reality of any element understood as being in existence (*vijjamāna*). The traditional meaning of *bhūta* does not only have grammatical value, but also demonstrates fairly clearly how the various forms of life (human, animal and vegetable) were considered in some way interconnected.

Closely associated to the relationship of the monks to nature, we find another principal element of the entire book: the meeting of Western points of view (of missionaries, explorers and such) and those of the Thai population, in considering and describing the world in which they found themselves.

In many cases, the standpoint of Western accounts regarding Siamese culture and spirituality were totally ill-informed. While there were some exceptions and some commentators of intellectual and moral standing, for the most part Western travellers of the past century failed to understand the heart of this people. To give an extreme example of the lack of understanding, in Chapter 28, we find the opinion of the wife of an American Presbyterian, a missionary who lived in Lampang in the early 1900s. She pronounced her judgement on the monks who practiced meditation, asserting unequivocally the idea that they were wasting their time, demonstrating a passive form of existence and a fundamental "laziness".



These judgements reveal not only the limited capacity for understanding of some of the Westerners present in the Siam of a century ago, but also their scant knowledge and awareness of their own culture. The missionary's wife, for example, seems to have been completely ignorant of the contemplative traditions of Western religions, in which certain meditative practices have so much in common with the world of Buddhist spirituality.

The differences, often very clear ones, between Westerners and Thais, give the reader the possibility of coming to know Thailand, its culture, its people and its religious traditions on a deeper level. The real aim of *The Buddha in the Jungle* appears to offer – thanks in no small part to its juxtaposition of diverse points of view – the description of a country in which the attitude of humans towards their environment is essentially different from that held by so many Westerners. This is one of the lessons that the Thailand of a century ago could offer to the West, and also perhaps, to the Thailand of the twenty-first century.

Claudio Cicuzza



Virginia McKeen Di Crocco. *Footprints of the Buddhas of this Era in Thailand and the Indian Subcontinent, Sri Lanka, Myanmar*. Bangkok, The Siam Society, 2004, pp.x + 259, ill., Bt.800 (members), Bt.990 (non-members).

Footprints of the Buddhas of This Era in Thailand is an important, informative, learned, and engaging publication. Virginia Di Crocco has recognized what few others have—that because of the existence of texts listing the 108 symbols, the study of footprints has the potential of unlocking many of the secrets of the history of Buddhism in Thailand. Di Crocco has obviously spent years of immersion in her subject. She discusses no fewer than 110 footprints, far more than most of us imagined existed, and many evidently of her own discovery. What a pleasure it would be to stand beside her as she studied an unknown footprint, admiring the ease with which she recognized all 108 symbols, immediately discerned how their order and configuration related to those in other footprints, and identified footprints in which the quirks and details of the depictions of the individual symbols found their closest resemblance.

Unfortunately, *Footprints* is also a deeply flawed book, handicapped by the author's ambition. Not only is she determined to go out on a limb in order to propose the narrowest possible dating for each footprint, she has also endeavored to write a revisionist art history, presenting dates that differ by centuries from those that appear in most books on

the art of Thailand. A publication that would have been welcomed with open arms had it attempted somewhat less is now a work that has to be read with caution.

Footprints of the Buddhas begins with an account of the footprint commissioned by the Siam Society in 1992 in honor of H. M. Queen Sirikit. Early footprints in India and Sri Lanka are the subject of Chapter II, which also attends to the question of what Buddha footprints might imply about the nature of the Buddha. Chapter III takes up natural footprints in Thailand (the one in Saraburi being the most important), a subject once addressed in a classic article in this journal (1935) by the poet Prince Bidyalankarana. Chapter IV introduces the textual evidence for the lists of 108 auspicious marks (a subject presented succinctly in a masterful article in the *JSS* by Peter Skilling in 1992) and introduces the footprints of Bodh Gaya and Pagan, Burma. The bulk of the remainder of the book (Chapters V–X) is a historical account of footprints in Thailand from the thirteenth century through the twentieth. Two final chapters provide additional information about the 1992 footprint.

It has not yet been established where the first lists of 108 marks were composed or where the first depictions of footprints with 108 marks were created, these two developments surely being roughly contemporary. Quite probably, Pagan, the site of the oldest known footprints with 108 marks, dating from the late eleventh century, was also the site



of the invention.¹ At Pagan, it was customary to paint pairs of prints on the ceiling of the vestibules of temples, the toes pointing toward the sanctuary. Therefore, the visitor is made to feel as if a giant Buddha were standing above him. The concept may be related to the vision of the Buddha (one that was borrowed from Sanskrit-language texts) that appears in King Kyanzittha's late-eleventh-century Shwezigon Pagoda inscription, according to which Shakyamuni Buddha emitted six-colored light rays from his mouth that penetrated earth and reached the highest heavens. Emitting light rays and leaving footprints both lie within the capacities of the historical Buddha.

The classic list of marks is the one in the *Jinālaṅkāra-tikā*, said to have been written by a Sri Lankan monk in the twelfth century. This list, which corresponds to the symbols seen on the Burmese footprints, ends in the uppermost reaches of the Buddhist cosmos, with the Brahma heavens. It does not begin, however, with either the lowermost part of the cosmos or its outermost part (the surrounding mountains and oceans), but with marks that have vaguely royal associations, a certain number of them with names found on earlier, brief lists of marks on the Buddha's soles. This

suggests that the marks were viewed as extensions of older canonically sanctioned lists of the thirty-two characteristics of the superman and the eighty-four lesser signs. These were present on the Buddha's body at birth and were an indication that he was to become either a Buddha or a World Emperor. Indeed, a traditional Pali chant in Thailand (the *Maṅgalacakravāḷa* section of the Seven Tamnān) includes the words:

tavattiṃsa mahāpurisalakkhaṇā-nubhāvane
asītyānubyañ janānubhāvane
aṭṭhuttrasata maṅgalānubhāvane
*chabbañṇaraṃsiyānubhāvane*²

By the power of the thirty-two characteristics of the Great Person

By the power of the eighty-four lesser signs

By the power of the 108 auspicious marks [on the Buddha's feet]

By the power of the six-colored light rays. . . .

Perhaps the number of the *maṅgala*, an auspicious 108, was chosen before there was a clear idea of what was to be included. The initial marks on the final list were ones appropriate for a World Emperor, and the more cosmological ones were placed at the end, as a kind of

¹ For the footprints of Pagan, Claudine Bautze-Picron, "Some Observations on the Cosmological Buddhapadas at Pagan," to appear in Kakali Roy (ed.), *Adhir Chakroborty Festschrift*, Calcutta. I thank Dr. Bautze-Picron for making available a copy of her article. See also, Emmanuel Guillon, "Les *Buddhapada* de Birmanie et de Thaïlande (Essai de mise en perspective)," *Péninsule* 11/12 (1985/1986), pp. 125–141.

² *Suat mon plae* (Bangkok: Suksa Thammada Press, 1926), pp. 126–127. I am grateful for the assistance of Peter Skilling, with the translation of this and the following text.

extension of the Buddha's powers, much as the light rays from his mouth reach to the ends of the universe.

The list of 108 could also be recited, and François Bizot recorded versions in Seam Reap less than fifty years ago. In Thailand, a metrical Pali text was inscribed on a sheet of silver in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.³ It starts with these words:

*sati ca sirivaccho ca
nandiyā ca suvatthiko
vaṭṭhamsako ca bhaddhamāno
pāde dissanti satthuno*

The spear (*satti*) and the goddess of prosperity (*sirivaccho*) and the rosette (*nandiyā*) and the neck ornament (*suvatthiko*),

The ear ornament (*vaṭṭhamsako*) and the food receptacle (*bhaddhamāno*) are seen on the foot of the Teacher.

The successful metrics of the succeeding stanzas depend on the judicious use of the word *ca* (and) and the addition of *tathā* (thus). The English equivalents given here are not the literal meanings of the terms, some of which were inherited from earlier lists, but identifications of the conventional symbols seen on the footprints.

The bulk of evidence suggests that the *Jinālaṅkāra-ṭīkā* list and the concept of making stone footprints were introduced to Sukhothai from Martaban, Burma, in the middle of the fourteenth century. The

Sukhothai inscription of Wat Traphang Chang Phuak (*JSS* January 1971) contains a list of 108 marks, which Di Crocco lists and briefly discusses. She also makes the very plausible proposal that a footprint in the Sukhothai museum (pl. 39), largely effaced, originally bore the marks as enumerated in the inscription. A second important document is Inscription III of 1357 (*JSS* January 1973), according to which King Mahadharmaraja I (Li Thai) established four footprints in the Sukhothai region. Two of these can be identified as the very similar footprints at Wat Traphang Thong Lang, Sukhothai (pl. 80) and on Frog Hill, Nakhon Sawan (pl. 82, still in situ). On these footprints, as on those in Pagan, the 108 symbols are arranged on a grid. Symbol no.1 appears in a corner beside the toes, and the entire linear sequence can be tracked in a narrowing spiral, either clockwise or counterclockwise (depending on whether the print is of the left or the right foot). The path can be imagined as an upward ascent. The symbols at the end of the list—for the Brahma heavens—cluster around the circle on the sole, which becomes, as a result, a kind of symbol for the cosmic mountain, Meru.

This type of footprint can be considered Type I. In Type II, relatively small in number, all the symbols are placed within the large circle (*cakka*); the classic instance is the double footprint created on April 1426 and now preserved at Wat Bowonniwet in Bangkok. The

³ *Chāriuk nai Prathēt Thai*, vol. 5 (Bangkok: National Library, 1986), pp. 120–130.



footprints in the third group superficially resemble those of the first, because of the geometric grid, but in fact they are conceptually quite different. The toes must be imagined as the top of the footprint, and the symbols are arranged as if we were looking at a diagram of the universe, its summit at the top, and its furthest extremities at the bottom. At the top, immediately below the toes, in two rows of eight, are the sixteen Brahma heavens (symbols 93–108 in a linear listing). On the third row are placed the six sensuous heavens, turned into a row of eight because Tavatimsa Heaven, the heaven at the summit of Mt. Meru, is shown three times, once with Indra, once with Brahma, and once with Gautama Buddha. All the remaining symbols are placed below, appearing row by row, beginning with symbol number one. Sometimes Tavatimsa Heaven is further emphasized by the depiction of a row of encircling mountains on the central axis (as on the back walls of Thai image halls). Di Crocco argues that this type of footprint responds to the interests of popular piety and to the goal of rebirth in Tavatimsa Heaven, as opposed to the more monastic path of the Type I footprints. A classic example (pl. 99 in the book) is a line drawing identified as the design sent by King Borommakot to Sri Lanka in 1758. In addition, there are certain footprints in which traits from the three groups are combined.

Many of the historical elements in the foregoing account represent the reviewer's opinion, not Di Crocco's. Let us see how she presents the early devel-

opments of footprints in Thailand, following the waning of Khmer power. Pl. 43, a crude stone carving found in Sakhon Nakhon province, is dated to ca. 1200 because four letters (composing a *mantra*) that appear inside the quadrupartite *cakka* were said by the epigraphist Term Meetem to be in "Pallava" script datable to ca. 1200, because the placement of symbols is like that found in Pagan (not apparent from the illustration), and because one of the symbols shown, a vase, has a Southern Song shape. Here—as in other instances in the book—the evidence is insufficient to support the conclusions, and we are anxious to be told that the epigraphical evidence is due to be published. Pl. 44 shows a footprint of the four past Buddhas (with overlapping outlines), with no symbols, in Chiang Rai; here the proposed date, based on what chronicles state about the activities of King Mengrai, is "ca. 1275/76." A second footprint in Chiang Rai (pl. 45) is said also to date from "ca. 1275/76." Pl. 46, a plain footprint carved upon a sandstone knoll in Lopburi province, is dated to the third quarter of the thirteenth century, on the basis of the style of nearby carvings of eight images of the seated Buddha (which have been published elsewhere and on the basis of the profiles of the radiances surmounting the Buddhas' heads would more cautiously be dated somewhat later). Next come three footprints in which a Pagan-type grid and all 108 symbols appear. Pl. 47 (Lopburi Museum, "4th quarter of the 13th century") and pl. 51 (Chantarakasem

Museum, Ayutthaya, “ca. 1351”) bear a stylistic and conceptual relationship, one to the other, and pl. 51 may eventually be datable (but not to this period) on the basis of the foliate designs that appear in a corner (not discussed by the author). Pl. 49, finally, is a curious footprint at Wat Khao Di Salak, Suphanburi, pl. 49, dated by Di Crocco to “ca. 2nd quarter of the 14th century.” On this footprint the 108 symbols appear in roundels (a unique instance), arranged in a system that combines characteristics of Type I and Type III footprints, with two rows of Brahma Heavens next to the toes. Little is visible in the illustration in *Footprints*, but good plates did appear in *Muang Boran Journal* (July-September 1991), following discovery of the footprint. At that time, the dating was considered so problematical that four experts were asked for their opinions, which ranged from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. To the discussion there, it might be added that the depiction of the Brahmas of the Brahma Heavens as flying figures rather than seated meditating ones is the product of a misunderstanding that could be attributable to the frequent appearance of the god Brahma airborne in eighteenth-nineteenth-century manuscripts.

This account makes it clear that little rests on firm ground when trying to understand the situation up to the middle of the fourteenth century. Some clarity, it might be expected, should surely emerge in the second half of the fourteenth century, with the evidence from Sukhothai inscriptions. Di Crocco ac-

cepts the evidence of Inscription III (1357) that King Mahadharmaraja I (Li Thai) established four footprints in the Sukhothai region. The identification of two of these as the footprints at Wat Traphang Thong Lang, Sukhothai (pl. 80) and still in situ on Frog Hill, Nakhon Sawan (pl. 82) is rejected, however. Instead, Di Crocco asks us to believe that King Narai (reigned 1656–1688) either destroyed or successfully hid away King Mahadharmaraja’s footprints and replaced them with ones of his own making (these being pls. 80 and 82). In addition, she attributes the construction of Wat Si Chum, with all of its engraved stones, including an imperfectly preserved footprint (pl. 75a), to Narai. Other footprints given to the same reign include the bronze footprint from Kamphaengphet, now in the National Museum, Bangkok (pls. 85 and 86), because the Brahma “palaces are of mondop design” (p. 122). In fact, because of the presence of disciples around the rim, among other reasons, this footprint is unlikely to long postdate the double footprint of 1426 (pl. 60).

The two footprints of 1357, in which there is Sri Lankan stylistic influence, display the symbols in the Burmese configuration. They might reasonably be understood as evidence for the important religious ties between Sukhothai and Martaban, Burma, in the fourteenth century. Another scholar might make a more compelling case than Di Crocco’s that some other 108-mark footprint is older than these (or, indeed, that these two footprints are not the 1357 originals), but



only time will tell.

Meanwhile, there are two other footprints that deserve discussion because they provide evidence for the existence of learned Buddhists belonging to other traditions. One footprint, illustrated by Di Crocco, is housed at Wat Chomphuwek, Nonthaburi (pl. 61). This footprint does not contain the 108 marks. Instead, the *cakka* has been explicitly transformed into a *dharmacakka*, a wheel of the law. (Despite what Di Crocco writes, traditionally the circle on the foot was just a circle, not a *dharmacakka*.) There are lengthy Pali inscriptions, in which the Four Noble Truths are said to have three aspects, just as in the inscriptions on the Dvaravati wheels of the law.⁴ The “Buddhist creed” (*ye dhammā. . .*) and a twelve-syllable mantra also appear. When the inscription was first published,⁵ the Khmer-style script was dated to ca. 1250; the second time around (1986), as cited by Di Crocco, the transcription appeared without change but the suggested date was ca. 1350–1450. Since the Khmer script used for writing Pali was fixed by convention, it may not be easy to narrow the time-span. Whether the footprint predates the introduction of the 108-marks footprints or was produced as a kind of response to them, it has to be seen as a document of the old-

school Buddhists, heirs to the teachings of Dvaravati monks. Perhaps it contains textual clues that might provide additional evidence of the doctrines espoused in the thirteenth century.

The second footprint, which Di Crocco apparently elected to omit, is kept in Wat Khirisuwannaram, Khirimat district, Sukhothai.⁶ The dating, as in the case with the other footprint, is largely dependent upon the epigraphy of Khmer-style letters (Cha-aem Kaeokhlai’s conclusion was ca. 1150–1250). Whereas the Wat Chomphuwek footprint contained only a single *mantra*, this one bears more. The saying *na mo bud dhā ya* (praise to the Buddha) appears, as well as the same initial consonants (*n m b d*), which are then interpreted as referring to the four elements. This footprint also contains the 108 marks (only a few of which are visible in the 1994 publication), but they are rather crudely incised and seem to be arranged in a slipshod way. Because two continents are shown in the form of masks (which are supposed to indicate the facial shapes of the inhabitants), as in the footprint at Wat Sadet, Kamphaengphet (pl. 68), the footprint may date from the fifteenth century. It could then be considered a precious document, suggesting that it was an older school of Buddhism that preserved the *mantras* (with both Pali

⁴ Robert L. Brown, *The Dvāravatī Wheels of the Law and the Indianization of South East Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 117.

⁵ *Prachum silā chārūk*, vol. 4 (Bangkok: Office of the Prime Minister, 1970), pp. 6–10 (no. 85).

⁶ Cha-em Kaeokhlai, “Chārūk rōi phra phutthabāt,” *Sinlapakon* 37, no. 3 (May–June 1994), pp. 45–58.

and Sanskrit spellings)—mantras that have survived to the present day.

Despite the large number of footprints assigned to the reign of King Narai that are surely older, Di Crocco's datings, in general, become more reliable and plausible as her chapters progress. She has a second flirtation with revisionist art history, asking us to believe that the objects deposited in the crypt at Wat Ratchaburana in Ayutthaya in the first half of the fifteenth century were really deposited by King Borommokot (reigned 1733–1758). Somehow this monarch managed to assemble a group of images that excluded all the image types art historians place in the period extending from the later fifteenth century through the eighteenth. Fortunately, her theory has less of an impact on her dating of individual footprints than do her opinions about the activities of King Narai.

Di Crocco appears to have a misunderstanding of one significant doctrinal matter. In all schools of Buddhism, the three realms are the sensuous realm (including hells, earth, and the six *deva* heavens), the realm of pure form (consisting of the sixteen Brahma heavens), and the formless realm. The formless realm, which has four main stages, is invisible. That is why it is not generally depicted on the Buddha footprints. Nevertheless, since it can be imagined as existing inside the head of a Brahma being (and is visited by humans in a trance), there is justification for indicating its existence. It is extremely unlikely that the absence of signs for the form-

less realm indicates an ignorance of Buddhist cosmology, or that inclusion had anything to do with the spread of a vernacular (as opposed to a Pali-language) cosmology, the so-called *Trai Phum Phra Ruang*.

We may wish for a different kind of book. I can imagine one with three sections. The first would consist of a rigorous typological catalogue, in which each footprint was assigned to a group according to the identity of the symbols and their configuration. The second would take two or three individual symbols, illustrating their appearance on as many footprints as possible, and trace the evolution of their depiction. The third would be an overall historical account. Virginia McKeen Di Crocco has, instead, produced the book she thought was needed. Her choices may be regretted. What cannot be regretted is the determination and energy that brought a book to fruition that alters the landscape of the history of Buddhism and of Buddhist art in Thailand.

Hiram W. Woodward



James David Fahn, *A Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asia Boom*. Chiang Mai, Silk-worm Books, 2003, pp.368, Bt. 595.

James Fahn spent about nine years in Thailand during the 1990s working for *The Nation*, first as science and technology editor and then as the environment editor. These were memorable years—his aggressive investigative reporting invigorated *The Nation* and made it the leading news outlet in Thailand, if not the region, on environmental issues.

A Land on Fire is a story-like chronicle of Fahn's experiences at the environment desk, as reporter and editor. It is fast-moving, informative, and exciting reading. Thailand was on fire during this time, both literally and figuratively. In the dry season haze from smoke fills the air, from fires started by farmers to burn off weeds and crop residues and to drive out wildlife. The fire of development has also ignited Thailand in the frenzied, selfish pursuit of wealth and short-term profits by businessmen and politicians. The environmental consequences have been immense.

Not much escaped Fahn's notice and analysis. He not only describes what happened, but analyzes the basic causes of environmental problems in a vivid, non-academic style, and attempts to put them into recent historical context and global perspective. Issues such as biodiversity conservation and use, trade agreements, and large development projects are discussed within the per-

spectives of both "North" and "South", and the schism often appearing between different shades of "greens", such as the "environmental democracy movement", which is more social and people-oriented, and the "preservationists", who are more concerned about the irreversible loss of species and ecosystems. He points out the differing concepts of conservation held by lower class farmers and fishermen, the more urban middle class people, and the conservation movements in the U.S and Europe. Generally, Fahn is fair to all sides in these arguments and manages to present their views without oversimplifying or taking sides.

Environmental issues are interwoven with social and political events, such as the 1991 coup in the last chapter ("Three Bloody Days in May"). Fahn is acutely aware of how much environmental problems have been consequences of Thailand's too-rapid economic development, which has outstripped its political development and the ability of Thai agencies to plan and manage the environment. Neighboring countries have had the same sorts of problems, but are at different stages of the development cycle. Fahn also points out how political crises and uprisings have often stemmed from environmental problems. The distinction between environmental and political crises is often difficult to make. Politicians need to realize how important environmental problems are to rural peasants and fishermen who live at the edge. The needs of the poor are now having increasing effects on national politics.

Nine chapters deal with the environmental problems in various sectors, and the last, mentioned above, deals with the political revolution of the last decade. The chapters deal with urban problems, land encroachment and tourism issues, large dams (especially the controversial Pak Mun), logging scandals, farmers in forests, coastal problems such as shrimp farming, the gas pipeline from Burma, toxic chemicals such as mercury in the Gulf of Thailand, and global (i.e., North vs. South) issues. These are the issues in which Fahn was reporting at the forefront. Some exciting experiences are related which sometimes turn the narrative into a Hardy Boys' style detective adventure. The attempts to get at the bottom of cross-border logging scandals in Mae Hong Son, or determine the fate of displaced Karen refugees near the Three Pagoda Pass, bring tense moments. There are too many issues in this book for me to cover in a brief review and I have little experience with some of them, but I will comment on a few that caught my attention.

Chapter 2, "Tourism: Money-changers in the Temple," is mostly about how unrestricted development of tourist resorts, etc. has encroached on public land—usually that belonging to the Royal Forest Department (RFD; the park and wildlife conservation divisions of the old RFD are now under the new Department of Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation). The most notorious cases include the congested development of hotels and bungalows on the Phi Phi Islands and other beaches in Krabi and

Phuket. Almost all tourist infrastructure developments seem to have problems with their title deeds, and if there was any problem about the ownership documents, the environment desk at *The Nation* did not give you the benefit of any doubt. The reader should also be aware, however, that the RFD has had a habit of establishing protected areas without prior on-the-ground surveys, and its maps are often vague and impossible to apply to the real terrain. The situation is improving with better survey technology, but most boundaries seem to have been left deliberately imprecise to allow on-site "negotiations" or challenges. I have some additional sympathy for developers because they know that the RFD is not capable of developing tourist facilities up to international standards. Park officials generally do not even know what international tourists like to do. Clearly, there is a need for better central planning with all interests in mind, but there is no agency with the full expertise and clout to do it. The result is a constant hassle between private and public agencies, and poor farmers with no power who are often displaced.

A section on "Golf wars and green deserts" discusses the devastation and misery wreaked on the land in the form of golf courses. Confrontations involving the establishment of these greed-inspired, festering sores of the landscape have sometimes turned bloody in Southeast Asia. The golf disease afflicts Thailand and is still spreading. A golf course "is actually a monoculture made up of delicate, non-indigenous grass species



kept alive through the extensive use of irrigation, fertilizers, and pesticides.” Such vegetation is not well suited to the tropical environment, and to a native, it represents a green desert. Golf courses cause many types of damage to the environment and to society: uprooting of local communities, forced emigration of poor farmers, theft and depletion of valuable water supplies, encroachment on forest areas, water pollution, loss of freshwater fish resources, corruption, speculation and economic instability, and prostitution. Have you ever wondered why golf caddies in Thailand are all attractive young ladies? In addition to promoting the sex trade, golf courses are favored meeting places for arranging deals by corrupt businessmen and politicians. Golf in Asia is not a sport. It is a form of real estate speculation and a money-making game for both developers and members who wish to make investments and seek social status. Is there any wonder why NGOs and crusaders in many countries now dedicate their lives to the fight against this scourge?

The famous incident concerning the filming of *The Beach* on Phi Phi Island is related at the end of this scandal-packed chapter. The fight over permission to change the beach and its vegetation for the filming of the movie caused outrage and all protagonists ended up losing. The main star, Leonardo DiCaprio, tarnished his reputation, the director-general of RFD made a poor and unpopular decision, the protestors lost their cause, and the movie bombed at the box office.

The debates over logging scandals and large dams are so familiar to Thai residents that they hardly bear repeating. They are still with us, however, and will be fought again and again. Thailand’s foreign policy toward Burma is controlled by logging interests. I suppose that should not surprise us—after all, U.S. foreign policy toward every country in the world is captive to commercial interests.

The Pak Mun Dam controversy is particularly noteworthy because it spawned a popular environment-based movement, the “Assembly of the Poor.” This grassroots movement, exerts its power mainly through protests. It has not become a political movement, and mainstream parties would shun its leftist leaders. But if it is still considered too leftist to help the poor keep their homes and livelihoods, then Thailand’s political system still has a long way to go before it can be considered to be a real democracy. It is a good sign, however, that open protests are (usually) allowed to be conducted peacefully. We still live in an age when village leaders who protest too much against environmental destruction or industrial pollution are assassinated each year.

For my part, I will never forgive the government for allowing the blasting of the rapids in the Mun River below the dam, which caused irreparable damage to the river and to Kaeng Tana National Park. This in my mind represented a clear failure of the environmental impact analysis (EIA) and decision-making processes. In fact, ecologically and

economically, the whole dam is a sorry disaster.

Chapter 5 on Forests and Farmers covers the complex issues concerning encroachment of landless people in the forest estate, and the problems of protected areas set aside for conservation (the “Man-and-Forest” debate). Fahn points out the differences between the grassroots activists and community development advocates, and the more professional ecologists, conservation planners and forestry officials. Social scientists tend to be community development advocates, the more radical of which oppose the setting aside of protected areas for conservation entirely. Unfortunately, communication between the social scientists and ecologists is so poor that they appear not to read each others’ literature, and do not cite each others’ work. Fahn does not present the views of the ecologists very well and, as we might expect, hears mostly the voices of the grassroots activists. It astonishes me as an ecologist to hear social scientists claim that local people can live in the forest and use it sustainably when the preponderance of evidence and past experience indicates that they cannot do this over the long term, unless they are primitive hunter-gatherers at very low density. As Fahn points out, however, this depends largely on what is meant by “forest.” A grove of trees producing useful products such as mushrooms, firewood, bamboo shoots, etc. may qualify as a “community forest.” Such man-modified “forests” should be promoted outside the

undisturbed protected areas, not inside. This is the major issue that has divided ecologists and social scientists.

Ambiguity about what “forest” means clouds some parts of Fahn’s discussion. He cites the estimate that 5 to 10 million people live in forest land in Thailand, but “forest land” here refers to the officially designated “reserved forests” occupied before 1989 by logging concessions. Most of this area was destroyed by loggers or degraded by ethnic Thais who came to occupy the lowlands of Thailand. Very little of this area now has any intact forest; those parts that do have now been converted to protected parks or wildlife sanctuaries. The people that have occupied this area are not “forest people”; the Thais are predominantly rice cultivators and fishermen who live outside the forest and usually clear it to plant cash crops. Most use non-timber forest resources to a limited extent, but they have been engaged in destroying the forest most of the time. Of course, this destruction has been spurred on by two major extrinsic factors: the government’s promotion of the export of upland cash crops, particularly cassava and maize, and the lack of a secure land tenure system which might have encouraged settlers to conserve their local resources better. These people might learn how to sustain community forests, but they have never lived within and depended on natural forests.

On the other hand, the half-million or so people said to occupy upland watershed areas or protected areas are mostly tribal peoples who have migrated south



into Thailand through the mountains. Most of these qualify as “forest people” although the areas they occupy are too small to allow their traditional swidden agriculture to be practiced within the forest on a sustainable basis any more.

The book does not point out that ecologists and international conservation groups are in wide disagreement with forestry and park agencies on how to manage protected areas. Most conservationists now believe that local residents and provincial officials should be much more involved in managing conservation areas for the benefit of local communities in non-exploitative ways. Park officials, however, generally see their job as only policing and guarding the areas and promoting some tourism (which too often does not benefit local villagers). I do not think that the situation is resolvable without fundamental changes in protected area legislation and policies.

The chapter on “Toxics: Mercury Rising” is noteworthy more for what it says about the young reporter than about mercury in the Gulf of Thailand. Jim Fahn was determined to get to the bottom of the apparently rising levels of mercury and set out to nail those responsible for it or for covering it up. His aggressive investigations turned off some of his sources, who I can imagine found the reporter obnoxious and too eager to get a sensational story. Others will decide whether getting at the truth justified the gleaning of documents off the desks of officials or copying them without their knowledge while they were out of the office. Some of the mercury

was leaking from oil rig drillings of large companies, and both Unocal and Total were aware of the problem and trying to do something about it. Unocal would have been a fine trophy on the shelf of a young reporter—a ticket to fame and further jobs! Fahn did not really land the big trophy, but his leading articles did make the big guys squirm and squeal a bit in their plush offices.

What is the real value of all this investigative reporting and story-writing? Is it just informative and entertaining, or does it have a constructive purpose? Fahn believes that a free press serves as a vital watchdog over government and society and helps to prevent many abuses, especially in a society like Thailand’s, with its corruption and weak enforcement. I completely agree (even though I more often read the *Bangkok Post*, which has also had excellent environment reporting). I have long believed that the best environmental conservation organization is a free and active press. Officials are usually not so interested in solving environmental problems until they read about them in the newspapers. The papers also influence public opinion. Of course, the press works at high speed and does not always get the facts right, and sometimes it passes judgment on people who do not really deserve it. Nevertheless, let us hope that *The Nation* and other papers will continue to maintain the high standards brought to the desk by Jim Fahn, and keep the stories coming.

Warren Y. Brockelman

Nicholas Tapp, Jean Michaud, Christian Culas and Gary Yia Lee, eds, *Hmong/Miao in Asia*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2004, pp.xx + 500.

Hmong studies are a flourishing academic industry in the United States and, to a smaller extent, in France, with hundreds of Ph.D., M.A. theses and books and articles examining every imaginable aspect of life of Hmong immigrants in the West. The Miao of China, of whom the Hmong are a branch, have also been subjected to intensive research in recent decades, predominantly by Han scholars. However, though the Hmong of South-East Asia have been among the first to be systematically studied by Western anthropologists, particularly during the period of the Second Vietnam War, they attracted relatively little scholarly attention in recent decades. The present volume, a collection of articles based on a conference held in Aix-en-Provence in 1998, is hence a welcome addition to the literature and a work which will stimulate further research.

Though, like most collections based on a conference, the articles differ widely in quality of scholarship and cover a variety of sometimes highly specialized topics, the book features several important and innovative contributions of interest to students, professionals and general readers concerned with mainland South-East Asian minorities.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part, devoted to issues of Hmong history, language and identity, opens with a comprehensive bibliographical essay by Nicholas Tapp on the state of Hmong studies, and Christian Postert on Hmong/Miao research by German and Austrian anthropologists. Discussing the subjective nature of writing (Hmong) history, Tapp makes the significant point that “in face of some postmodernist trends” there exists “a boundary between [historical] interpretation and fabrication” (p. 22) thus denying the validity of the fashionable radical relativism which grants the status of a “version” to any fancy narrative purporting to be Hmong history; this is an issue of wider significance, of which this reviewer is acutely aware from his own research.¹ In an effort at “real” as opposed to fancy history, Christian Culas and Jean Michaud attempt in their joint contribution to reconstruct carefully the causes and character of the series of Hmong migrations from southwest China into upper Indochina, from their early beginnings to the present day (p. 61). It emerges from their article that those migrations may have been at least as much, if not more, strongly influenced by political turmoil in the region, as by the Hmong’s quest for new swiddens, which is commonly taken as the main cause of their “semi-nomadism”.

In another contribution, Culas draws an important distinction between two

¹ e.g. E. Cohen, *The Chinese Vegetarian Festival in Phuket*. Bangkok, White Lotus, 2001.



manifestations of Hmong religion, messianism and shamanism, showing that each of these phenomena is predicated on different, and apparently mutually ill-integrated, Hmong cosmologies.

Kao-Ly Yang, a Hmong researcher, tackles the intricate problem of double terms for Hmong clan surnames; she offers several alternative explanations (“hypotheses”) of their nature, but abstains to commit herself to any of these.

Cheung Siu-Woo (Simon) examines the efforts of three early Miao intellectuals to forge a distinct Miao identity during the Republican period in China, in order to be granted a recognized status by the state, similar to that enjoyed by the *wuzu gonghe* (“five races”), namely, the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims and Tibetans. Of particular importance is the author’s discussion of an unpublished work by the Hmao Christian ethnologist Yang Hanxian, which he has rediscovered. In this work Yang sought to redefine “Miao identity in the indigenous terms of native oral history and cultural practices” which would constitute a “‘counter-representation’ to the hegemonic and nationalistic narrative of ethnic identities” (p.239) promulgated by the authorities of the Chinese state.

The concluding article of the first part of the book, Louisa Schein’s study of Hmong/Miao transnationalism, is, in the opinion of this reviewer, the most original contribution to this collection. Schein describes the efforts of the Laotian Hmong in the United States diaspora to

construct a shared identity with the Miao of China, despite the considerable disparities in the ethnic markers between the two groups. Especially interesting is her discussion of the various mechanisms, such as videos of Miao lifeways, the importation of Miao costumes to the United States, and the provision of language classes and cultural performances by local Miaos for diasporic Hmong visitors, which facilitate the formation of the new Hmong “transnational identity,” even as they serve as a welcome source of income for the impoverished Chinese Miao, derived from their newly prosperous diasporic co-ethnics.

The second part of the book is devoted to “current issues” facing the Hmong of Southeast Asia. Especially welcome are the studies of Hmong in the two “post-communist” states, Vietnam and Laos, on whom reliable information is relatively scarce in comparison to that on the third country, Thailand.

Claes Corlin shows in a culturally sensitive article the discrepancies between the Hmong relationship to land and that of the Vietnamese state authorities, and points out the inadequacies of the current land laws and of the national land policy for dealing with the needs for land of the Hmong. The latter often become “victims of progress” of planned national development projects, while themselves “having little voice in the national discourse” (p. 302). Vuong Duy Quang, a Vietnamese Hmong anthropologist, follows up Corlin’s argument by highlighting the severe survival difficulties experienced by the Hmong in North

Vietnam, and by advocating a possible alternative approach to the land problems faced by the Hmong, which would be based on Hmong traditions of land development and forest preservation.

Gar Yia Lee, a Laotian Hmong residing in Australia, documents the meager educational and economic “transnational adaptation” of the Hmong to the new regime in Laos; though their participation in governmental institutions is increasing, this is in fact mostly just a token, rather than substantial participation. In fact, the Hmong resist the government’s efforts at political integration. They remain predominantly swiddening subsistence farmers in the highlands, despite the authorities’ policy to resettle them in lowland villages.

Jan Oversen corroborates Lee’s argument, claiming that the commitment of the Laotian government to ethnic equality is merely nominal, while in practice Lao ethnic and political superiority prevails. The Hmong are still treated with suspicion, due to the participation of one of their major factions on the royalist and American side during the revolutionary struggle and the continued low-level Hmong insurgency in the Lao PDR. Insensitive to the Hmong’s social organization and culture, the authorities’ attempts to resettle them in the lowlands has mostly had problematic consequences. In the author’s estimate, the future of the Hmong of Laos appears to be bleak.

In contrast to the broad themes tackled by the authors on the Hmong in the “post-communist” countries, those deal-

ing with Thailand treat much narrower topics. Most innovative is Patricia V. Symonds’ article treating the “cultural pathways” through which information on HIV/AIDS flows, and the ethno-epidemiology (i.e. the cultural understanding of contagion) of the illness in Hmong society. The veteran researcher of South-East Asian ethnic groups, Peter Kunstadter, offers a comprehensive empirical study of the factors influencing changes in Hmong marriage patterns in Thailand, while Robert Cooper examines Hmong conceptions of “rape” on the basis of a study in the Chiang Kham refugee camp for Hmong from Laos.

The book’s epilogue consists of a comprehensive review of the challenges faced by the Laotian Hmong in recent history, from the French colonial period to their resettlement in the United States, by the doyen of ethnic Hmong researchers, Yang Dao. Recognizing the importance of global cooperation among the widely dispersed Hmong/Miao, Yang Dao proposes the establishment of a non-governmental organization which would facilitate communication between Hmong communities throughout the world, a proposal which is certainly worth serious consideration.

This volume reflects the wide-ranging and diverse interests of contemporary researchers of history, society and culture of the Asian Hmong. However, the studies relate predominantly to single local or national situations; comparative studies, which in view of the highly diverse conditions of life faced by the



dispersed Hmong communities ought to be an attractive topic, are notable missing, as are more transnational studies, such as Schein's exercise in "itinerant ethnography." The quality of the articles varies greatly: while many present well-defined problems, elaborate data and clear conclusions, others, like R.A. Lewis' examination of the diaries of the missionary Samuel Pollard, are still very much "work in progress." The uneven character of the articles is further accentuated by wide discrepancies in clarity and presentation; some convoluted passages are hardly comprehensible and some lengthy articles could be made more appealing by cutting repetitions. The technical editing of the volume unfortunately appears sloppy, with quite a few grammatical errors and typos, and at least one cut-off reference (first line, p. 57). Not all authors appear in the "Notes on Contributors" and one, Claes Corlin, is said to teach at Gutenberg (instead of Gothenburg) University. Correction of these annoyances would improve the quality of this valuable volume in a future edition.

Erik Cohen



Richard Totman, *The Third Sex: Kathoey —Thailand's Ladyboys*. London, Souvenir Press, 2003; Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2003, pp.213.

This book on Thailand's male-to-female transgender or *kathoey* culture is a series of anecdotal reflections based on interviews with *kathoey* informants and summaries of academic publications and newspaper articles. The book emerged from the author's fascination with the cultural prominence of *kathoey* in Thailand and the text is structured around case studies of *kathoey* who live and work in the tourist centres of Bangkok, Hua Hin, Pattaya, Hat Yai and Koh Samui. There is a dearth of solid research on *kathoey* and I very much hoped that this book would help fill the gap in the literature. However, I am afraid that Richard Totman's book has little to commend it and perpetuates misperceptions as much as it enlightens us about the place of *kathoey* in modern Thailand.

Before beginning my critique, let me state up front that the author has put me off by copying large sections from one of my articles, "Male Homosexuality and Transgenderism in the Thai Buddhist Tradition" (Jackson 1998). Apart from a few editorial asides, pages 51 to 60 of Totman's book (London edition; all page references given here are to this edition) are copied verbatim from this article. Totman mentions and cites my article in his bibliography, but he presents pages from my study as if they report his own research. Pages

174 and 175 even reproduce my footnotes and citations of Thai sources word-for-word, as if it was Totman who read and analyzed the original Thai-language texts. There is something of a fashion for Western authors writing on *kathoey* to plagiarize my research. The American philosopher Alfonso Lingis has admitted as much in reply to my review (Jackson 1999) of his aptly titled book *Abuses*, in which he used an uncited section of one of my books (Jackson 1995) to support the egregiously ethnocentric claim that every Thai man is a potential drag queen. I would be less angered about being plagiarized if visitors to Thailand like Totman and Lingis used my work to say something interesting and refrained from representing touristic observations gleaned from "in-depth ethnographic" visits to the Alcazar or Tiffany Revues at Pattaya as the "true situation" of the country's *kathoey*.

The eclectic mix of anecdotal and academic sources in this book is reflected in the idiosyncratic analysis, which often blends and fails to distinguish Thai stereotypes of *kathoey* from dated, mostly discredited Western sexological studies of hermaphroditism and transgenderism. Totman appears to be unaware of the rapidly growing academic literature on transgender and transsexual cultures in the West and Southeast Asia, for he fails to locate his study in terms of the issues and debates that concern professionals working in these fields.

The book is replete with pseudo-sci-



entific anecdotes presented as fact. I could only smile when I read that, “[i]t does not take a statistical survey to reveal that on average *kathoey* are taller than other Thai males and females” (p. 36), and Totman went on to proclaim, “[e]veryone I spoke to in Thailand acknowledges this fact but no one seems able to offer an explanation.” (p. 36). Leaving aside the off-hand dismissal of any attempt at a systematic approach to studying *kathoey*, it occurred to me when I learned of this mystery of the tall *kathoey* that Totman might have got an answer if he had asked whether his informants were wearing platform-soled high-heeled shoes. It does not take a statistical survey to reveal that these items are wardrobe essentials for every self-respecting *kathoey* show girl. However, on a less flippant note, the “unusual” height of *kathoey* compared to Thai woman is undoubtedly because they are biological males and, on average, males are taller than females in all societies, including Thailand.

The captions attached to reproductions of some nineteenth century Siamese photographs left me wondering whether Totman is able to distinguish *kathoey* from Thai women. He appears not to know of pre-modern Siam’s traditions of same-sex theatre, in which women played both male and female dramatic roles in the theatre of the inner court, while men played all the roles in the *lakhorn nork* theatrical genre. Mattani Rutnin (1996) has written an excellent historical study of Siam’s same-sex theatrical traditions. Totman

includes a photograph (following p. 86) of highly made-up Siamese performers from the nineteenth century and adds the caption, “*Kathoey* dancers in late 19th century Siars [sic]”. No evidence is provided to back up the claim that the unknown performers in the photograph were *kathoey*. Another photograph of a group of traditionally dressed women—to my eyes possibly a scene of noblewomen attended by a group of female servants—is labelled, “ ‘Actresses’ relaxing off-stage” Totman not only misinterprets a mixed group of noblewomen and servants as actors, but by placing the word ‘Actresses’ inside inverted commas suggests that the people in the photograph were not actually women but *kathoey*s.

In a recent study I have traced the long history of Western visitors’ confusion when confronted by pre-modern Siamese fashions and hairstyles that did not distinguish the masculine from the feminine as strongly as in the West (Jackson 2003). Totman’s book continues the tradition of British tourists’ memoirs of their Siamese sojourns, which in the nineteenth century typically included accounts of how “muscular” and “man-like” Siamese women looked beside their “effete” and “lazy” menfolk. In my study I suggest that the gender confusions of so many Western visitors to Siam, including Totman, suggest a topic of genuine academic interest. However, we need to turn the academic gaze back upon the West and ask why it is that ever since the early European contacts in the sixteenth century so many Westerners

have had difficulty distinguishing Thai men from Thai women.

Totman's journalistic account of Thailand's modern *kathoey* culture overlooks a fascinating transition that has taken place in Western visitors' narratives of Siam over the past century. While contemporary travel guides often make much of Thailand's *kathoey* culture, no Western account published before the early 1900s unambiguously refers to the existence of *kathoey* in the Siamese cultural area of Central Thailand. This suggests either that *kathoey* culture did not exist before 1900 or, if it did, that it was invisible to Western visitors. Instead of accounts of a prominently visible subculture of transgender *kathoey*, pre-twentieth century visitors wrote about the universal "androgyny" of the entire Siamese population, whose fashion, hair style, and comportment failed, in European eyes, to clearly differentiate men from women. In my readings of a wide range of both Thai and English-language sources, I have discovered that *kathoey* only began to be reported in significant numbers after World War II. Explaining this transition is one of the most important questions still to be answered by historians of Thai gender. The history of gender and fashion in Thailand may be much more closely related to the history of *kathoey* than anyone, including myself, previously suspected.

Has there been a major revolution in Thai gender culture since the beginning of the twentieth century, of which the emergence of the modern *kathoey* in

the post-war period is perhaps one indicator? Or is the appearance of a Thai "gender revolution" a superficial effect produced by the increasing visual differentiation of the sexes following the widespread adoption of Western fashions? As possible evidence for this second interpretation we should recall that it was only as a result of Phibun Songkhram's wartime cultural mandates that Western-styled gender-differentiated fashions were first forced upon the entire Siamese population. It was also only under Phibun that Thai given names were assigned a fixed masculine or feminine gendering, after a national committee appointed by "The Leader" was tasked with drawing up a list of all names and ascribing an often arbitrary gender to each. It is only after this period of fascist-inspired cultural "reform" that *kathoey* began to be reported in the local press. Was this because a man could only be seen to be dressing like a woman if men and women first dressed differently? If men's and women's fashions are much the same, then is cross-dressing simply not possible? Unfortunately, Totman's book does not help us with any of these questions and instead tends to add to the confusion that has marked Western accounts of Siamese gender for centuries. The quite beautiful tiara-adorned *kathoey* on the cover of this book may help it sell well in airport bookstores, but its contents do not advance our understanding of transgenderism in Thailand.

Peter A. Jackson

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Bruce D. Missingham, *The Assembly of the Poor in Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Silk-worm Books, 2003, pp.viii + 237.

This volume is a welcome addition to the study of Thai anthropology and politics. The Assembly of the Poor, a coalition of rural villagers and urban slum dwellers, is studied to explore the social processes through which collective action and protest are constructed. Specifically examined is the extent to which the Assembly of the Poor was able to effect social change and expand the presence and role of grassroots democracy in Thailand. The book explores and comprehensively analyzes the direct and indirect relationships between NGO activists with slum residents and rural villagers composing the Assembly. Noteworthy is the book's readability to both those within and outside academia and those unfamiliar with the struggles faced by people living in Third World countries. The book sheds light on how the Assembly came to deal with their country's development, which, among other things, includes unavoidable demands for advancement and growth at all strata of society. These demands ultimately result in the under-privileged or lower classes becoming victims of the desire to develop or improve economic and social standards.

The first chapter provides an introduction and general synopsis of the subject matter, citing various concepts and theories relating to the anthropological study of the research matter in an ethnographic perspective. Missingham

makes great effort to emphasize and utilize the individual men and women involved or participating in the movement, from its local origins to its national and global presence. In this introductory chapter, Missingham clearly states that he is not an "objective" or unbiased observer (p. 11), but rather a sympathetic empathizer who is expressing his support for the struggle of personal and civil liberties that provide a basis for the Assembly of the Poor, emphasizing his personal contacts and relationships with members of the movement.

Chapter 2 describes the background of the Assembly of the Poor in an historical and political context. This is done to provide a basis for understanding the ethnographic data collected and analyzed in the study. A key point mentioned in this chapter is how the villagers composing the Assembly organized themselves once they realized the connection between resource conflicts and environmental squalor, and the relationship these topics have with (Thai) governmental development policies. This led to understanding the underlying political processes involved in policy creation, organization and eventual permanency as law (p.32).

Chapter 3 is an overview of the membership, organization and structure of the Assembly of the Poor. The Assembly's activities are examined to overcome the unavoidable conflicts between local or personal issues and a national movement involved in the construction of a unified policy platform and political identity. Missingham stresses that the Assembly



of the Poor was created in order for villagers' organizations throughout Thailand to join in a public forum to discuss and exchange information and resources (p.43). The Assembly's initial activities, goals, strategies and overall organization are highlighted. Its ability to surmount a restrictive and sectioning force (the Thai government) by combining a large number of economically, ethnically and socially diverse local conflicts into a nation-wide movement is examined. The chapter demonstrates how the Assembly was able to canvass, lobby and negotiate on behalf of its members at local, national and global levels.

Chapter 4 begins the detailed ethnographic study of the Assembly, presenting excellent villagers' accounts as well as personal analysis and observation regarding other early democracy and grassroots political movements in Thailand. This chapter analyzes the relationship between development, environmental change and grassroots collective action through a case study of the creation of the Mun River Villagers' Committee and its fight against the construction of the Pak Mun Dam project in rural northeast Thailand. The chapter emphasizes the ineffectiveness of conventional methods of protest (in Thailand) due to the harsh nature and secretive attitude the Thai government holds concerning most domestic affairs and issues (p.80). The chapter explains that one of the reasons for forming the Assembly was the members' desire for the preservation of the *Isan*, or "country",

culture associated with rural northeast Thailand. The shared *Isan* identity of the Assembly's members was utilized as a basis for grounding their initial protests (p.86).

Chapter 5 covers the origins, activities and groups or individual members of the various NGOs that played a major role in promoting and supporting the Assembly from its early roots to the attention of those in the domestic and global realm. This chapter analyzes the motivations and meanings or symbolism that NGO activists utilized in their efforts to promote or support the Assembly (p.108). In addition, the chapter presents a detailed account of the Assembly's daily activities and affairs as well as the coalition's relationship with other grassroots political and social movements in Thailand, giving special attention to the initial leaders and organizers of the coalition.

The following chapter discusses an ethnographic account of the Assembly's historic 99-day protest in the streets outside Government House and Sanam Luang in Bangkok in 1997. Missingham specifically notes how the Assembly "mobilizes people and resources, the internal organization and constitution of a protest 'community' [and] the significance of space and place" (pp.125–6). He repeatedly emphasizes the impact of the 1997 protest in the context of "collective political action" (p.169) by the poor and underprivileged in Thailand, literally by bringing the village to the city, naming the protest the "Village of the Poor" (pp.139–42). The demonstra-

tion represented one of the most prolonged and properly organized demonstrations ever held in Thailand. The rally created national and global awareness of the Assembly of the Poor and its claims of injustice by the Thai government. In addition, the Bangkok protest offered a new framework for the expression of official criticism or public grievance in the country, as well as providing overall justification for the Assembly and its demands.

Chapter 7 analyzes the “social spaces and social networks” (p.173) that the Assembly established in order to create a democratic, albeit grassroots, civil society built upon various networks of collective action and power. This chapter describes the diverse notions incorporated by the numerous groups, networks and organizations that constitute the Assembly of the Poor.

The impact of the Asian financial crisis in mid-1997 and the adverse effects on the Thai government and society that followed are explained in chapter 8. The crisis greatly affected and changed the Assembly, causing it to alter its strategies and goals (p.201–4). Additionally, this chapter brings the Assembly’s story up to date (2001) with the newly elected Thaksin Shinawatra government and the coalition’s return to local rather than national organizational structures.

The concluding section, chapter 9, discusses the various results of the Assembly’s activities and affairs that were analyzed in previous chapters, and presents two key conclusions made by Missingham: (1) The active social

networks constituting the Assembly of the Poor represented new and powerful methods of communal social organization and group activism in Thailand that changed the character of politics concerning the poor or underprivileged; and (2) The Assembly paved the way for new types of individuality and resistance awareness in Thailand (p. 215).

Overall, Bruce D. Missingham has written a very comprehensive and well-researched ethnological account of the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand. He begins by describing the early events and motivations that sparked interest and intent in rural villagers to organize themselves properly and eventually form a collective organization to promote their shared voices to the Thai government, Thai society and the world. Missingham has used diverse and extensive resources, ranging from documented accounts, activities and official government reports to personal interviews and observation. If possible, further analysis or explanation of the effects of other dam sites and land projects in Thailand mentioned, as well as further identification and inclusion of the vast urban slum communities that are members of the Assembly, would add to the book’s overall content.

Yale M. Needel



William Warren, *The Siam Society: A Century* Bangkok, Siam Society, 2004, ill., pp. 182.

The well-known author of superior illustrated volumes dealing with aspects of Thai culture, who came to this country in the same year as this reviewer, 1960, and who stayed, lecturing in Chulalongkorn University, was faced with an almost impossible task when commissioned to write a history of the Siam Society. In the first instance, its history is not exceptional, like that of most scholarly societies, but above all because two histories of the Society already existed, the most recent published in 1989.

He has risen to the challenge well, choosing to concentrate on personalities who contributed to the work of the Society over the hundred years since its inception at a meeting held in the Oriental Hotel on 26 February 1904. Unlike the other histories, too, he delves further back in time, and begins his volume by citing W.H. Mundie, the editor of the *Bangkok Times*, who in 1892 threw down the gauntlet to his readers:

It is proposed for the purpose of historical research and to have at hand some reliable data with regard to the ancient history, folklore and literature of Siam, a scientific society should be organized and discussion invited. Such an institution would be most valuable anyone would admit, and yet we are willing to lay unlimited odds that

nobody here will be able to overcome the apathy of any four people to get the idea into practice.

Well, many people gathered together at that first inaugural meeting, and a hundred years later the Society is still going strong.

Warren gives due credit to the importance of royal patronage, and the support from its first royal patron, then Crown Prince Vajiravudh, later King Rama VI. This generous patronage has continued unabated to this day, as the large array of photographs in this volume shows. The author rightly deals extensively with the early work of Prince Damrong and of course Prince Dhani and Prince Wan and their connections with the Society's aims. The last two had the rare distinction of serving two periods each as president (respectively totalling 22 and 10 years), while Prince Damrong, though never serving as president, was the first Vice-Patron and a contributor to the *Journal*, and generously placed his library at the disposition of members.

Then there was a host of foreign worthies who are now largely forgotten, though some remain in memory through their writings, like the eminent scholar Frankfurter, a founding member, secretary and president from 1906 to 1918. Illustrious persons like Gerini, Francis Giles, Homan Van der Heide, Carrington, Coedès, Seidenfaden and many others all contributed a great deal to the well-being of the Society in its

early days. It is sad to learn that wars led to some being interned.

Indeed, the First and, more particularly, the Second World War (following so closely on the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932 and the international financial crisis of the 1930s) had a devastating effect on the Society, and Warren carefully skirts round some of the more tendentious moments between 1940 and 1944 when the Society was obliged to become the Thailand Research Society and its *Journal* changed its name as well.

As his chapter headings show, though, Warren does not always avoid thorny issues, and the last five sections are appropriately titled Controversy, Trying Times, Confronting Change, Facing the Future and In Search of an Identity. The affair of the Jim Thompson bequest is discussed in full. The controversial elections to the Council of 1969, 1988, and 2004 (this last in any case occurring too late for these pages) are, however, tactfully overlooked. The contrast, though, between the early itinerant days of the Society and its acquisition, thanks to the generosity of A.E. Nana, of its present site and the addition of the splendid new buildings more recently is marked.

The search for an identity theme is also telling, for things have changed considerably since 1904, universities have grown like mushrooms, and research centres abound. Each Council, to this reviewer's knowledge, since 1969 has aimed to bring in younger blood and involve Thai members more. But the Society still has, for some, the aura of a

rather exclusive club with a strong foreign input, and its integration into mainstream academe is not always self-evident.

There are a couple of factual errors noted. One Council member was said to be on the board in the 1970s when in fact it was the 1980s. This reviewer did not start the *Siam Society Newsletter*, but only edited eight issues of it from 1986-8; the honour for its inception should go, if memory is right, to Dr Kaset Pitakpaivan. The *bodhi* tree cutting brought by the Sri Lankan Embassy for the royal rededication of Wat Sra Bua Keo in Nong Song Hong came from Anuradhapura, not Amarapura in Burma. There is the usual dozen or so typos, but most people will not notice them, except perhaps for having one of the Mbri wearing an "old mother-eaten cardigan".

The author has not been well served by the pink cover to the volume with its faint red lettering, nor by the profusion of parentheses. This reviewer would have liked to have seen a bibliography and an index, but that is precisely the kind of book Warren probably wanted to avoid. One snippet remains intriguing: the fact that several marriages resulted from Siam Society organized study trips here and there. Now, that is a new aspect given to high-minded travel, and predates Singapore's love-boat jaunts.

Such minor deficiencies as there might be (and volumes of this nature have to be rather bland) are more than compensated by the profusion of photo-



graphs and illustrations, many in colour, that give flavour and feeling to the text, which flows smoothly and rounds out the different periods covered. Altogether a difficult job well done.

Michael Smithies

Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*. Singapore, National University of Singapore, 2004, pp.268.

Just one day after Mary Callahan received permission from the Burmese military regime to conduct research in Burma on the history of its armed forces, she was caught in the midst of a student demonstration at Rangoon University. She heard the sound of voices chanting “de-mo-ca-ra-cy” as she sat in the university library, and librarians were told to confine her to the manuscript room where the windows were opaque and she would not be able to witness the protest. A few hours later, as she was escorted out of the library, she saw the soldiers. They were armed, agitated and surprised to see a foreigner on campus. A colonel stepped forward and screamed at her to leave immediately. Outside, the main street was filled with troop and weapons trucks and blocked off with barbed-wire barricades. Such a massive armed response to a mere fifty unarmed students calling for democracy seems almost ridiculous. But through her book, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, Callahan is able to make sense of it.

Callahan’s central thesis is that the Burmese army must be viewed with knowledge of the particular chaotic circumstances during which it was created and came of age. The military regime in Burma is not comprised of politicians or even politically savvy military men. Rather, it is made up of

and formed by battle-hardened war fighters. Writes Callahan: “Unless seen in the light of its war-fighting focus, the Burmese *tatmadaw* [army] looks like an incomparably efficient team of power-hungry, illiterate, shameless, vicious lunatics.”

Callahan, who is Assistant Professor in the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, skilfully and comprehensively traces the history of Burma’s armed forces from the early colonial period in 1826 through the Second World War and up until 1962 when the *tatmadaw* seized control of the state and Burma became a military dictatorship. As a by-product of this history and analysis, the book attempts to explain how the army has maintained such a complete stranglehold on power in Burma for the past four decades – a tenure which makes it one of the most tenacious military regimes in the world. Callahan dismisses the over-simplified, though common, theses that the national Burmese psyche somehow lends itself to authoritarian rule or that it was the Machiavellian charisma of the late dictator Ne Win which imposed such cohesiveness and purpose on the *tatmadaw* and, in *Making Enemies*, she provides an infinitely more convincing argument.

In order to trace the complex and at times confusing history of Burma’s armed forces, Callahan uses a number of varied sources. In covering the British period and that of the Second World War, she relies predominately on materials from the India Office and Public Records

Office in London. She was also granted a visa which enabled her to conduct research in the *tatmadaw* archives in Rangoon and, as a result, *Making Enemies* offers much information that is unique and illuminating.

The central theme of *Making Enemies* is an exploration of how the Burmese armed forces came into being as both a military and state-building power against a background of tumultuous unrest.

The book begins with an overview of the British period from 1826 to 1941. Here, Callahan explores the ways in which the British set the mould for what was to come by creating, what in academic-speak is termed, a “coercive-intensive” state. The bulk of the book, however, focuses on the critical years between 1941 and 1962. Callahan argues that the Japanese invasion of Burma during the Second World War and the subsequent panicked British withdrawal led to two key events: firstly, the sudden and complete collapse of the colonial administration and infrastructure, and, secondly, the Japanese-backed formation of the Burma Independence Army (BIA). While the first event precipitated much of the chaos and internecine fighting which prevailed in the following decades, the second constituted the embryonic form of the *tatmadaw* as it exists today.

Callahan writes in detail of the chaotic expansion and following Japanese-enforced reduction of the BIA and charts the army’s rebirth – through extensive

negotiations and power struggles – under the British post-war reoccupation of Burma. At independence in January 1948 Britain handed back to Burma a country economically devastated but, more importantly, a nation in which both the state apparatus and the national army were riddled with factionalism; in effect, a time-bomb waiting to explode. A year after the British left, the state disintegrated completely as the loose alliances between various political and military organizations created during the war fell apart and internecine fighting erupted throughout the country.

Rather than providing a battle-by-battle blow of how the *tatmadaw* eventually brought relative calm to most of central Burma, Callahan delivers a broad analysis of the complex negotiations and power struggles through which the *tatmadaw* emerged as the sole power in Burma. The *tatmadaw* responded to the crises in Burma on an ad-hoc day-by-day basis but, when the Chinese Kuomintang were chased by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army over the borders of Yunnan and into northern Burma in 1949, the Burmese army had to rally itself to respond to the possibility of foreign invasion. Used to fighting disparate guerilla wars and roving bands of militia, it now needed to be able to fend off an outside invasion which threatened the sovereignty of the state.

It is at this point in her book that Callahan’s research in the *tatmadaw* archives comes to the fore as she explains how and why a ragtag, poorly-outfitted army which consisted of little

more than 2,000 men in the early 1940s managed to transform itself into a cohesive fighting force that would become one of the largest standing armies in Asia. Callahan gleans some fascinating details from the army archives, such as those about the overseas “shopping trips” and military missions made by the *tatmadaw* as it learned how to restructure and arm itself appropriately. (The Yugoslav and Israeli armies were considered role models for their similar histories of bringing together guerilla wartime skills and the capability of mobilizing a standing army against foreign aggressors.) The resulting autonomy of the *tatmadaw* in Burma was not, argues Callahan, a plot to take over the country, but a “by-product of the decades-long struggles over how power would be constituted, by whom, in whose name, and across what territory”.

Callahan concludes her research in 1962, the year the *tatmadaw* took control of the state – a move in which its members saw themselves as completing the heroic revolution that had begun with their Japanese-sponsored anti-colonial struggles against the British. In *Making Enemies*, Callahan provides a valuable resource for understanding the origins of this famously secretive regime and a comprehensive chronology of how an army that rose to power battling the state eventually became the state.

Emma Larkin



Gerry Abbott, *Back to Mandalay: An Inside View of Burma*. Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2004, pp.193.

Back to Mandalay is Abbott's memoir of his two-year assignment as an English language teacher at Mandalay University in the late 1980s. As a diary of his time in Mandalay, the book is similar to the currently popular personal memoirs of other British writers who write of their "year in Provence" or "summer in Tuscany". There is the familiar search for a suitable house, and the daily struggle with eccentric toilet facilities, and unfamiliar locals (both the friendly and the unwelcoming). In Abbott's case, the details of his sojourn abroad are somewhat more exotic: local transport woes come in the form of a horse-and-cart and there are scorpions in the bathroom. But what sets this book apart from the usual descriptions of setting-up a life in an unfamiliar place is the backdrop of Burmese politics. By pure chance, Abbott landed in Burma at a critical time in Burmese history and his memoir chronicles the last two years of the Burmese dictator Ne Win's absolute rule as well as the lead-up to the popular uprising of 1988 in which thousands of unarmed protestors were shot and killed by government soldiers.

Abbott lovingly recounts the Burmese pagodas he visits along with the country's colourful festivals and seasons, but it is the politics of the time which make his account unique. The daily frustrations of working as a foreigner within a xenophobic autho-

ritarian state, for instance, provide fascinating, and sometimes funny, anecdotes. Though Burma was mostly closed off from the rest of the world, foreign tourists were allowed in for a limited seven-day period. Burmese people were discouraged from fraternizing with these foreigners and Abbott witnesses various poignant examples of this such as the "apartheid" system which prohibited foreigners and Burmese from drinking in the same bars. When a Burmese associate accompanied Abbott to the Myamandala Hotel in Mandalay, he was not allowed to drink beer alongside Abbott in the tourist bar and Abbott was not allowed to sit with him in the separate bar reserved for Burmese drinkers.

The Burmese regime's reluctance to communicate with the rest of the world also had a severe effect on the country's educational system. The university at which Abbott taught had no formal syllabus and the students' grasp of the English language was eccentric, to say the least. In one exam paper Abbott marked he came across answers to a set of true/false questions which left him baffled. The student had written:

1. Flase
2. Ture
3. Flalse
4. Flure
5. Ture

Indeed, one of the themes of Abbott's memoir is the blurred line between truth and falsity in Burmese political life. Ne Win refused to acknowledge that the country's economy

was in shambles. Whenever he travelled around the country, roads were repaved, buildings repainted and decorative floral archways hung above his path. Abbott compares this phenomenon to the fable of *The Emperor's New Clothes*: "For a couple of decades people had watched things fall apart. Where they had been able to, they had mended; and where they hadn't, they had pretended. It was a way of life by now, and without a little boy to shout 'The emperor is naked!' things could go on like this till kingdom come."

Before Abbott's contract came to an end, however, he was able to witness the entire country stand up and effectively shout that the emperor was naked during the mass protests of August 1988.

While Abbot is no political scientist and *Back to Mandalay* does not claim to provide a comprehensive overview of the events of 1988, the book does offer a ground-level view of events as witnessed by one foreigner living among the increasingly politicized Burmese. Abbott watched resentment against the government grow when the 75-kyat, 35-kyat and 25-kyat notes of the Burmese currency were declared redundant and people's savings disappeared overnight. The notes were later replaced by new denominations linked to Ne Win's lucky numbers (90 and 45). Abbott, who has a good handle on local humour, writes that people jokingly predicted the 10-kyat note would soon be replaced by 7 1/2-kyat and 3 3/4-kyat notes.

The regime started to close the universities as rumbles of dissent spread

around the country and Abbott saw the number of students in his class dwindle. By the time severe unrest had broken out in August of 1988, he had only 16 students, and cows and pigs were wandering placidly around the emptied campus. The country's train and bus services were shut down and Mandalay became isolated; the only source of outside news coming from daily BBC broadcasts. Unsure what to do, Abbott retired to his house, taking temporary solace in his collection of butterfly photographs—his love of nature surfaces throughout the book in his enthusiastic descriptions of local flora and fauna. Abbott's ennui does not last long and he eventually finds himself embroiled in the politics seething around him.

As the military began violently suppressing protestors across the country, rumours rustled through Mandalay of a horrifying massacre in the nearby town of Sagaing. Though official reports stated that 31 people had been killed, Abbott heard that some 300 had died and that many more were critically injured and dying in poorly-equipped local hospitals. Driven into action, he convinced the British Embassy in Rangoon to send two trunks of medical supplies which he was able to smuggle to Sagaing via an abbot and local doctor. As daily protests grew in size and fervour, Abbott soon found himself marching alongside the burgeoning masses that were jubilantly filling the streets of Mandalay.



But the events of 1988 spiralled out of control. The regime released prisoners to create chaos and there were ominous troop and ammunition deployments within the major cities, precipitating the final crackdown that was to come. The British Embassy pressured Abbott to evacuate and he ended up making a hasty retreat. *Pyan-la-meh*, he assured his distraught Burmese friends, as he raced to the airport for one of the few flights leaving Mandalay: I will return.

Abbott clearly did return to Burma as he promised, if not in person than in mind, as his biography at the end of the book illustrates; he went on to write more specific studies of Burmese culture such as *The Traveller's History of Burma* and *The Folk-tales of Burma*.

Over 15 years have passed since Abbott's teaching stint in Burma and this edition of *Back to Mandalay* has, as a result, a somewhat dated feeling to it (it is a reprint of Abbott's original book which was first published in 1990). The dictator Ne Win is dead and Burma has opened its doors to foreign investment and tourism. But an authoritarian regime still holds sway in Burma and Abbott's book illustrates not only how much has changed but also, and perhaps more importantly, how much has stayed the same.

Emma Larkin



Goh Beng-lan, *Modern Dreams: An Inquiry into Power, Cultural Production, and the Cityscape in Contemporary Urban Penang, Malaysia*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2002, pp.225.

This is a meticulously researched and well written book based essentially on a doctoral dissertation submitted to Monash University. The case study of a “fourteen-year long battle against eviction by a community of Portuguese Eurasians living in Kampung Serani, in the city of Georgetown, Penang” (69) is framed by its location, geographically, historically and politically, within the context of urban transformation and changing cityscapes in a rapidly modernizing Malaysia.

Throughout the book, the author displays a fluent command of the discursive vocabulary required to pursue her dual objectives: analysing the contradictory forces at work in the unfolding of modernity in contemporary Malaysia at the macro-level, and reconstructing the diversity of cultural discourses and social practices that entered into the conflict over Kampung Serani to represent the subjective agency of the main actors at the micro-level.

There are in all nine chapters. A brief introductory chapter informs the reader immediately of the main concerns of the book, while revealing some “self-reflections” by the author on the process of knowledge production as a sojourning Malaysian, researching and writing about her home town. The concluding

chapter resumes succinctly the main arguments of the substantive chapters, relating them again to the main theoretical and methodological concerns laid out in the introduction.

In Chapter 2 theories about modernization are considered within a broader South-East Asian context before the author lays down her own theoretical perspective, which is to frame Malaysian modernity through the dynamics of cultural discourse and social practice. This becomes the framework for an eloquent explication of Malaysia’s experience of modernization since 1969, which is placed “within the context of the interaction between the particularities of its history, the cultural politics of nationalism, and process of economic modernization and globalization”. Readers not familiar with Malaysia, South-East Asia or modernization theories will find both chapters very useful but they would probably welcome the inclusion of an index as well as a bibliography to help in recalling or tracking down names, terms and references.

From Chapter 3 the reader is advised to jump forward to Chapter 7, which provides essential background information on the state of Penang—its early history, administrative structure, political economy and general development— before zooming in to a survey of the issues emerging from contemporary urban transformation, with the growth of a new cityscape in Georgetown in general and the suburb of Pulau Tikus (within which Kampung Serani is located) in particular. This outline of



“recent political, economic, cultural, and spatial dynamics” in the state of Penang offers a better transition to Chapter 4, which narrows the focus further to the specifics of the “geography of the *kampung* and the players involved in the conflict”, in addition to providing a chronology of the main events in the fourteen year conflict over Kampung Serani.

Chapters 5, 6 and 8 concentrate in turn on three main players in this conflict. Chapter 5 presents “the ethnographic narratives of the nine families who still lived in Kampung Serani” when Goh began her fieldwork, reconstructing their perspectives, uncertainties and emotions as they battled in vain against being evicted by the developers and the Catholic Church, a landowner from whom the residents mistakenly expected more sympathy. Chapter 6 investigates the preoccupations of the Penang Eurasian Association, which assumed the role of mediator in the conflict and in the end arguably gained more than the residents by entering into a conflict in which they seemingly had no vested interests. Last, but by no means least, Chapter 8 explores “the economic, political and cultural imperatives” of property developers in contemporary urban Penang and the ramifications of these imperatives on the Kampung Serani conflict.

For each of the substantive chapters, Goh has diligently gathered an impressive range of empirical data, whether in the form of ethnographic details about individuals and families (as in Chapter 5) or company profiles and regulations governing urban development (as in

Chapter 8). She has also succeeded in reconstructing the “complex articulations” of the major players on issues of ethnic identity, social orientation and economic interests, and in analysing the dialectical dynamics of cultural politics that emerged in the wake of rapid modernization and urbanization.

There is, however, a noticeable gap in Goh’s otherwise detailed reconstruction of the story of Kampung Serani. Apart from a brief half-page discussion on p. 168, the Catholic Church is not given the same attention, nor does it come under the same scrutiny, as the other major parties in the conflict. This is a pity as the Church, like many other religious and/or social bodies who are either landowners or holding prime urban land in trust for their respective organizations, is an important landowner in many of Malaysia’s major cities. Goh points out, for example, that residents on Muslim endowment or *wakaf* land have found themselves threatened by the possibility of being evicted in the name of urban development (167). A closer investigation of the Church’s position in relation to similar organizations, all of which are and should be expected not to act in pursuit of maximum material gains from their land, would have added an interesting dimension to the “cultural politics” of contestations over limited urban space.

Goh has written a highly readable book that locates a detailed micro-study within the broader issues of cultural politics, urban formations and the construction of identities in the many dimensions



required by living in a modern society. The story of Kampung Serani *does* illustrate that “modernity is analogous with the processes of domination and violence” and *does* demonstrate that “the experience of modernity in Malaysia begins with the everyday processes of urban eviction and the accompanying upheavals of social, political, and economic behaviour, which unfolds within a complex intertwining of local, national and global dynamics” (201). But, while these processes can provide “a space for the articulation of human agency and the reworking of cultural/identity politics” (202), some parties are clearly more empowered, while others are more limited by their location within power relationships.

In her concluding chapter, Goh reiterates her theoretical framework as one that seeks to “recognize the agency of local agents” and suggests that the “contrasting imaginaries of local actors” did combine to shape the politics and spatial consequences of the Kampung Serani conflict (199). But though she has shown that the residents were not “passive recipients of external initiatives” and did struggle against both the developers and the Catholic Church, she herself acknowledges that the Kampung Serani residents’ battle was “in vain”. The consequences of the Kampung Serani conflict were ultimately shaped not by the residents but by those with more power, limiting the viability of the losers’ “imaginaries”. Not all players have the same opportunities to translate their “imaginaries” into the production

of “a meaningful life in accordance with their own particular values and goals” (202).

Tan Liok Ee



Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Sumatran Sultanate and Colonial State: Jambi and the Rise of Dutch Imperialism, 1830–1907*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2003, pp. 332.

This is a well-researched and detailed study into how the Dutch gradually extended their control over Jambi in east Sumatra. The work is set against a discussion of the major theories on imperialism. The author uses the case of Jambi to revisit some of the debates such as motives in Western overseas expansion in the late nineteenth century, whether 1870 and 1880 marked a turning point or that the colonial process was a long and continuous one, and ascertaining the real sources of colonial initiatives. Within this discussion, the book addresses the question of Dutch imperialism as a special case, because of what some scholars contended was its late start, an expansion within its own frontiers in the Netherlands East Indies, and its ethical pretensions.

Jambi on the east coast of Sumatra, with a population of about 60,000 in the mid-nineteenth century, was probably one of the smallest sultanates in the Archipelago. In the period of this study, Jambi was no longer the prosperous sultanate it once was. There was a time when the sultanate controlled pepper-producing districts and had commercial and cultural links with Johor, Makasar and Banten. Falling pepper prices and rivalry with neighbouring Palembang led to its decline. In addition, the sultanate

suffered from internal unrest and from outside threats.

A troubling problem facing Jambi rulers was the division of the sultanate into upland and lowland regions. Barbara Andaya has shown that such a geographical and economic division forms a recurring pattern in many states of the Malay Archipelago. In Jambi the population was concentrated in the richer upland, which produced pepper and other export goods. It was largely settled by Minangkabau people who increasingly resisted downstream attempt at control, and this eventually led to a series of rebellions.

In 1833, Sultan Facharuddin of Jambi, facing upland problems as well as challenges to his power, entered into a contract with the Dutch. The Dutch saw the Jambi contract as congruent with the aim of expanding their influence in Sumatra. The author argues that the contract, however, came to be read differently by Jambi and the Dutch. Facharuddin saw the contract as a treaty of peace and friendship, and in exchange for Dutch support gave away few concessions. The Dutch, on the other hand, contended that the sultan had placed himself and his territory under the permanent authority of the colonial administration and that this therefore granted them sovereignty over Jambi. The divergent interpretations framed much of Jambi-Dutch relations later on.

To remove any further ambiguity, a new contract was imposed on Jambi in 1858. Taha Safiuddin, who succeeded in 1855 as the new ruler in Jambi, had ear-

lier tried to assert Jambi's independence. He wrote in 1857 to Turkey for support and he refused to accept some of the provisions in the proposed contract. A Dutch military force was thereupon sent to Jambi.

Taha was replaced as sultan by the Dutch, and for some forty years or more he and other members of the Jambi leadership refused to acknowledge Dutch sovereignty. Nonetheless, the deposed sultan avoided an overtly hostile stance that could provoke Dutch retaliation but simply evaded all direct dealings with the Dutch. Against the powerful Dutch this stance of avoidance is considered by the author as a weapon of the weak. Within Jambi, Taha continued to be more influential than the so-called contract-rulers approved by the Dutch.

In the period between the signing of the 1858 contract and the final Dutch military action against Jambi in 1901, the Dutch presence was mostly limited to Muara Kompeh. The author argues that the Dutch lacked the resources and the desire during this period to exercise fully the sovereignty they claimed. Still, the 1858 contract was of significance. This contract was one in a series made with indigenous rulers intended as a policy of preemption whereby the Dutch staked claims to territories in Indonesia in the early nineteenth century. Jambi, despite its weak economy and the financial burden it was likely to pose, was considered strategic to overall Dutch policy in Sumatra.

During this period, the Dutch followed what this book describes as a

policy of abstention. There was no compelling reason such as piracy or reluctant rulers for a showdown in Jambi. Sovereignty over Jambi had already been claimed. The Hague remained reluctant to incur heavy expenses in an expanded administration. The war in Aceh during this period also restrained Dutch willingness to pursue a more active and direct role in Jambi. In what the author describes as ritual dances, relations between the Dutch and Jambi were conducted in which both sides used symbols to represent what each saw as the real or hoped-for power relationships.

But ultimately, as the author argues, Dutch expansion into Jambi and elsewhere in Indonesia was driven by the demands of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the modern Western state. Towards the end of the nineteenth century economic motives became important in Dutch policy towards Jambi. The Dutch, in searching for a route to transport Ombilin coal to a harbour and also in realizing the oil potential in Jambi, offered the sultan a new contract. In exchange for ceding oil-mining rights, the Dutch offered the contract-sultan an increased annuity.

The author, however, contends that economic motives alone could not explain the Dutch imperialist drive. The author suggests that economic factors had first to be politicized or believed to jeopardize the national interest before they sparked off territorial expansion. While the oil factor was important, new thinking in The Hague and Batavia



explains the Dutch decision in 1901 to intervene directly in Jambi. Snouck Hurgronje, with his experience with the war in Aceh, became adviser on the Jambi issue. After a visit to the sultanate he advocated military subjugation, the introduction of direct Dutch rule, a rapprochement with local headmen, the prosecution of religious leaders, and improvement of economic conditions in Jambi. By this time, the government in The Hague accepted the argument that extension of Dutch rule would bring welfare and good government to areas suffering under what the Dutch considered oppressive rulers.

The author sees the extension of Dutch rule in Jambi as part of colonial state formation in Indonesia through establishing and reinforcing “true sovereignty over, and the actual administration of, a clearly defined territory by a foreign power.” The author, however, sees this process as taking place over a longer and more continuous period, rather than just attributing the years 1870 to 1880 as a crucial turning point. Events in Jambi suggest that before 1880, statesmen in Europe did not have a clear vision of an empire and that the extension of colonial influence was largely decided and acted upon by Dutch officials at nearby Palembang and at Batavia. Paying attention to the periphery is necessary to balance what has so far been an Eurocentric perspective of imperialism.

In 1903 Jambi was formally annexed and in 1906 it was made a Residency. Taha was killed in the course of the hostilities and leading supporters disap-

peared from the political scene through exile or natural death. Thus, the Jambi sultanate, unable to cope with the new Western industrial and political demands, came to an end.

Jambi has received relatively little academic attention, and so this book, first published in Dutch by the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde in 1994, is an invaluable addition to an understanding of the sultanate. The author has offered many useful insights into how those in Jambi viewed the world that was changing around them. She also refers to the ideal and the real power relations of the sultanate, even though there is a paucity of indigenous sources. From this study, Islam seems to be less significant as a political factor in Jambi than elsewhere, such as in Aceh, but this could be because of the nature of sources available to the author. Nonetheless, what is particularly impressive is the cogent and comprehensive analysis of the Jambi situation within the broad context of Dutch expansion in the region. Readers interested in this period of Indonesia’s history will certainly benefit from this book.

Lee Kam Hing
