



REVIEWS

Forrest McGill, ed. *The Kingdom of Siam: The Art of Central Thailand, 1350–1800*. San Francisco, Asian Art Museum - Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture, 2005, pp.200.

This is the catalogue published to accompany the exhibition by the same name first held at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and then at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, in 2005. The exhibition brought together 89 of the finest examples of the arts of the Ayutthaya period of Siamese history (1351–1767), together with a few from the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods loaned by museums around the world, especially national museums in Thailand.

A catalogue, by its very nature, is designed to accompany a visual experience. Its introductory essays sketch the historical, social and artistic context essential to an understanding of the art, and its notes on individual items give viewers information about what confronts them. But catalogues are also collectors' items, to be treasured as aids to memory, to be dipped back into as a means of recall for those lucky enough to have seen the exhibition.

For those not so lucky, a catalogue must have an additional purpose. Many readers of this review will, like the reviewer, not have seen the exhibition, but they may well have seen several of the items illustrated, in the National Museum in Bangkok, or in museums

elsewhere, and will recall other items similar to those in this exhibition. For others this catalogue will provide an introduction to Siamese art, and its peculiar forms and expressions. How successfully does it perform this role?

To begin with, the production is excellent. There are striking full-page photographs of the architectural remains of Ayutthaya, Buddha images, painting and inlay work, and smaller, but still adequate, illustrations of the exhibition items. A strength of the book is its comprehensive bibliography, which provides interested readers with all the necessary leads for further study. There is also a useful list of Siamese kings, and a good index, but no glossary.

Roughly half the book is devoted to the items of the exhibition, and half to the introductory essays. These cover a variety of themes. Forrest McGill provides a cautious introduction to the history and culture of Siam over these four and a half centuries - cautious because the historical destruction of Ayutthaya makes it almost impossible for the art historian to provide a connected account or stylistic flowchart for Siamese art.

For what we have left of the art of Ayutthaya are mere fragments preserved by the accidents of time. The sacking of the city in 1767 was so thorough that almost nothing survived. The ruins of temples provide stark reminders of what was lost, for so much fine art was religious. Of palaces nothing remains. The murals and painted banners, sculpture and wood carving that adorned the great royal temples have irretrievably gone.

McGill outlines what we might call the material religious context, the component elements of Buddhist temples and the place of image, stupa (or *chedi*), and narrative relief or mural painting. This is essential, but so too is an understanding of the worldview that this art expresses and communicates - and this is not well covered, in any of the essays. There is no outline of Buddhist cosmology, no discussion of the legitimation of power provided by royal donations to the Sangha and the construction and beautification of Buddhist temples, and passing reference only to the purpose of making merit. An understanding of Buddhism is assumed, but this is surely an unwarranted assumption for many Americans who viewed the exhibition, and even for readers of the catalogue.

The second essay is by Dhiravat na Pombejra on foreign contacts and trade with Ayutthaya in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This makes the very important point that Ayutthaya was a remarkably cosmopolitan city, and key hub in a trading network that connected Siam with China to the east and both the Indian sub-continent and the Muslim world to the west. The addition of Europeans to this mix further stimulated trade, but only over time. From an artistic point of view, the influence of India and China was always more important, at least until the nineteenth century.

The importance of Ayutthaya in the network of trade lay not in its strategic location (as in the case of Malacca or Batavia), but in its goods on offer. Dhiravat makes the point that it was lucky for the Siamese that these did not

include spices, for that would have attracted occupation, as it did in the spice islands. Siamese trade goods were mostly drawn from an extensive hinterland, which included the inland kingdoms of Lan Na and Lan Xang. It was control of this trade that gave Ayutthaya the edge in the Tai world, but never enough to unify it in the face of the threat from Burma.

In artistic terms, to the earlier Cambodian influence, always strong, were added influences from the north (Lan Na) and west (Sri Lanka, either directly or via Burma). What the Europeans brought were luxury items for the amusement of the nobility and, most importantly, new technology and knowledge, mainly military, but in medicine, too. They affected the construction of fortifications, not temples.

The next four essays focus on architecture and art. Hiram Woodward provides an informed discussion of the Buddha images of Ayutthaya. Then follow Santi Leksukhum's study of the evolution of memorial towers and M. L. Pattaratorn Chirapravati's interesting account of the treasures discovered in the crypt of the main tower of Wat Rachaburana. Finally there is a fine study of Ayutthayan painting by Henry Ginsburg.

There is something a little illogical about the order here, which derives, I surmise, from the failure to provide an account of the growth of Ayutthaya, both as an urban centre, and more importantly in terms of the symbolism expressed in urban relationships (of palaces and temples and administrative and com-



mercial areas). Provided with such a context, Santi's more narrowly architectural study of the various forms of *prang* and *chedi* would make better sense (always supposing that this is sufficiently germane to the focus of the exhibition.) Then would follow naturally chapters on the Buddha image, the artefacts discovered in Wat Rachaburana, and Ayutthayan painting.

Because Ayutthayan art is so overwhelmingly religious, and because Buddha images are the focus of worship, some sense must be made for the non-Buddhist reader of the plethora of forms and postures that confronts anyone visiting the exhibition or reading the book. Woodward does this well, categorizing images in terms both of the four postures (*iriyapatha*) - standing, sitting, walking and reclining - and of hand gesture (*mudra*). He also devotes attention to peculiarly Siamese forms, such as the Buddha in royal attire and the Sihing type of seated Buddha with the right hand resting on the right knee. Woodward indicates the significance of famous Buddha images, and notes how very few survived the sack of Ayutthaya.

Santi's detailed exposition does have the benefit of drawing attention to architecture (and by extension, art) outside the capital, and to the eclecticism of Siamese borrowing of architectural forms (the *prang* from Cambodia, the bell-shaped stupa from Burma via Sri Lanka, the octagonal stupa from Mon Haripunjaya). What the Siamese did was to elaborate upon these forms, particularly in the Baroque decoration of the later stupas.

The crypt of Wat Rachaburana was rather hurriedly excavated by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand in 1957, after looters got away with some twenty bags of gold objects, so Pattaratorn reminds us. But how do we know there were twenty bags? How big were the bags? Was any of this loot recovered? Fascinating questions, which Pattaratorn leaves us wondering about. What escaped the thieves still made up an extraordinary collection, without which our knowledge of Ayutthayan art would be very much the poorer.

What is particularly significant was that we know precisely when the votive plaques, small Buddha images, and finely wrought gold objects were deposited in the crypt (in 1424). This assists enormously in dating not only these objects, but in establishing dating criteria for a whole range of Siamese arts and crafts. Two points are particularly of note about this collection, both of which reinforce our understanding of the importance of international relations at this time, both for trade and for religious contacts within the Buddhist world: one is the evident Chinese influence (well before the arrival of Europeans); the other is the number of artefacts of foreign Buddhist provenance.

Painting, as Ginsburg reminds us, is particularly subject to damage through war, weather, and neglect. What must have been wonderful mural paintings in the great temples have disappeared almost completely. The best that remain are in Phetchaburi and Bangkok, not in the ruins of Ayutthaya. Banner paintings are almost as poorly represented. Our

knowledge of Ayutthayan painting derives overwhelmingly from miniature panels flanking the text in folded paper manuscripts - and few enough of these remain. Ginsburg's contribution strikes just the right note: comprehensive, informative, and expert.

Most of the notes on exhibition items are provided by Forrest McGill, with additional notes by other contributors on the walking Buddha, votive plaques, the wonderful statue of Uma (?), and early books on Siam. McGill also provides useful longer notes on categories of artefacts, including images of Maitreya, crowned Buddha images, and manuscript cabinets. These latter are worth special mention for the fineness of their decoration in gold leaf against a black lacquer background. One is decorated with two figures, one European, the other Indian, said to be King Louis XIV of France and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

All exhibition items are illustrated, thus providing a complete record. Some, such as stone and bronze statues of Hindu gods (Shiva, Vishnu), are shown from different angles, or in detail. Such statues remind us of the continuing Brahmanical influence at the Siamese court, and bring home yet again the remarkable extent to which Siamese artists were in contact with, and prepared to adopt, foreign influences and made of them something uniquely Siamese.

Martin Stuart-Fox



Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani* (Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani), translated by Conner Bailey and John N. Miksic. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2005, pp.xx+115, Bt 395.

Michel Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*, translated by Michael Smithies. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2005, pp.164, ill., Bt 595.

The raging violence in Thailand's Deep South which began in early 2004 has taken many people by surprise. The region had been relatively calm and away from the media for quite some time. Many have analyzed the situation in terms of poverty, power abuse, violations of human rights, and ethnic chauvinism, and a minority of academics ascribe it to "jihadist foreign intervention".

The two timely books under review give us an historical dimension, and a socio-anthropological context of the Patani uprising. Both combine to shed some analytical light on the ongoing conflicts in the southern border areas.

Ibrahim Syukri provides us with a political history, nay, a political pamphlet, aimed at inspiring "succeeding generations....(to be) aware of the circumstances concerning their kingdom in ancient times....(and) to learn a little of the life and circumstances of their ancestors...and then to inspire them to study and compile more detailed books such as this." (p. 2).

Syukri does not mean his book to be a definitive work on "the history of

Patani." He merely wants to arouse the "Patani Malays," as he calls them, to be "conscious of their fate, agree to struggle until the end for democracy." (p. 101). The fact that he chose to write in the Jawi script (Malay with the Arabic letters), testifies to the fact that, according to David K. Wyatt, a foremost authority on the subject, Syukri intended to communicate with his Patani or Southern Thai audience, without "attempting to mobilize a wider Malay (or Indonesian) opinion, for which he would have employed the Roman script, nor did he express himself in Thai or English, both of which languages he apparently knew."

Thus, the real objective of Ibrahim Syukri was not the historical accuracy of his work, but rather a "political action" to be stirred by emotional appeals to Patani's past glory. He did not really want his audience, the succeeding generations of Patanis, to be aware only of their past, but to "act politically" as a result of that awareness. Little wonder that the book has never appeared in Thai since its first publication in Kelantan in the late 1940s.

The language used by Syukri is both stirring and sarcastic, bitter and foreboding, despairing and inspiring, all at the same time. Wyatt, in the foreword to the edition under review, describes it as giving "voice to the pained historical consciousness of Patani....[during a time] when a full force of Thailand's policies of national integration began to bear upon the Malays of the Peninsula." (p. ix).

The book is divided into four chapters portraying Patani's ancient history, the genealogy and the height of Patani's power, the period of decline and, finally with Syukri's passionate call for the "reawakening" of the people of Patani. It is a story of humiliation and defeat retold for the purpose of agitation for a political movement at a time when Thailand was under authoritarian rule and the Malay states further south were being prepared for independence in a form of federation.

While readers should not look for "rational facts and history" in Syukri's book, as Wyatt warns in the foreword, we should at least appreciate his aspiration for a concise record of the rise and fall of the Patani kingdom. It is obvious that the author entertains a fervent desire to make use of that "history" to breathe life into a dormant movement for Patani independence after the Second World War, a time of fluidity in state formation in Southeast Asia.

Syukri's chronology of wars and defeats on the part of the Patani people under their "rajas" also gives us a better understanding of the emotional quotients behind the Patani independence movement. The current uprising and ongoing turmoil in the Deep South could be seen as a "centennial" of the "ultimate fall of the country of Patani" to Thai rule of 1902. According to Syukri,

...A.D. 1902 was the year of the ultimate fall of the country of Patani, the loss of the sovereignty of its rajas, the destruction of the

right of suzerainty of the Malays in the country of Patani, and the pawning of all rights to liberty and independence to the Raja of Siam-Thai. This was the last and most unfortunate year in the history of the fall of the Malay Kingdom of Patani (p. 81).

Seen in this light, Syukri is right in assuming that "memories" of historical events could serve as a powerful tool of inspiration for the people under "the yoke of subjugation." (p. 79) He brings "the pained historical consciousness" to life. And, since 2002, the violent situation in the south seems to go from bad to worse and has no end in sight.

If Syurki gives us a passionate account of the history of Patani, Michel Gilquin's *The Muslims of Thailand*, translated by Michael Smithies, provides us with a wider perspective of the Muslim community in Thailand. Being a sociologist with an interest in Muslim societies and their experiences in socio-economic and political integration, Gilquin brings a fresh approach to the study of the Muslims in Thailand. The book is an excellent background for the understanding of the current violent conflict in the three border provinces of the south.

Gilquin begins his book by analyzing "the origins of Islam in Thailand." But his is not a typical historical perspective—he digs deep into the social transformation of "the Chao Phraya basin." Gilquin's description of the waves of migrants and foreign cultures,



i.e., the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Persians, the French and the Greeks, the Indians and Bengalis and the Chams of the Khmer empire, gives the readers a glimpse into the process of the “melting” of various cultures into a rather heterogeneous Siam of yore.

Islam and the Muslims came to Siam’s “melting pot” of cultures from various directions. The Chinese Muslims came to the north with the migration of the Hui, or Chinese Muslims (p.15), the Arabs, Indians and Persians entered Ayutthaya early in the seventeenth century (p. 18), and Patani was converted to Islam as early as 1457 (p.11). All came to a kingdom loosely strung together by Theravada Buddhism, which makes it more interesting to sociologists and historians. Siam, with a tolerant form of Buddhism as the state religion, gave support and respect with high tolerance to the foreign Muslim communities within its realm. The author describes with insight this unique symbiotic relationship between the Buddhist kings and the Muslims:

There was some ambiguity on both sides [about the Muslims submitting to the “ungodly” authority].For Thais, in their accepted version of history, allegiance implied ipso facto recognition of the nation, religion, and the sacred nature of the Siamese monarchy, whereas for the Muslims this submission only had a tactical dimension and did not imply the recognition of an “ungodly” authority, particularly in

matters of legislation. (p.13)

The “ambiguity” that is mentioned above continues to plague the relations between Bangkok and the Muslim South to this day. But more than in matters of legislation, the conflicts now center on matters of policy espoused in and from Bangkok. What used to be described as “tactical” and “distant” has become immediate and close. The extension of power and control of the “ungodly” authority down to the Muslims in the south has made it impossible to live in isolation and to be shielded from impact of policy initiatives. Muslims in the South deem certain policies to be threats to their identity and cultural heritage. This ambiguity also explains the stiff resistance to the trend of centralization of power and policy formulation perpetuated by the Thaksin Shinawatra government in the past five years.

Gilquin’s analysis of a Thai Muslim identity is fascinating as well as illuminating. Islam in Thailand finds itself “in a society which is impregnated with religiosity but which is not coercive about its observance.” (p. 25). The Theravada Buddhist Thai culture is soft, accommodating, open and tolerant, making it secure and comfortable for religious minorities of all denominations. The monarch is regarded as “the Supreme Patron of All Religions.” (p.43). The king’s solicitude for his Muslim subjects is praised as an “example [which] encourages Buddhists to show goodwill to Muslims. It gives a concrete form to the national principle



of tolerance. It suggests acceptance of cultural and religious diversity.” (p.109). In this environment, the Muslim identity is protected and the Muslim community sustained.

Michel Gilquin tries to explain “Thai Muslim structures and demographic importance” in detail. Overall the author does a good job in providing information about the spread of the Muslim community throughout Thailand. Some of his facts appear to be misleading, however. The fault lies not with the author alone, however, since figures and statistics on the Muslim demography are not very well collected and analyzed. For example, Gilquin shows his frustration with the “numerical counts,” quoting different numbers from different sources. In the end, there is no consensus as to the real number of Muslims in Thailand. It ranges from 2.1 to 3 to 7.3 million people. (p. 38).

The description of the power structure of Thai Muslim society is very informative. It explains how the leadership of Muslim society has been determined from the time of Sheikh Ahmad of Qum during the Ayutthaya period down to the present time. Still, some facts cited should be rechecked for accuracy. For example, the author claims that “By tradition the king is the spiritual head of national Islam, and article 7 of the 1997 constitution gives this legal force by designating the monarch as the patron of all religions in the country (*sasanu-pathamphok*).” (p.43). And the author confuses the National Council for Islamic Affairs

with the Islamic Centre of Thailand and states wrongly that the present nomination of the Chularajamontri (a Thai version of *Sheikh ul Islam*) is brought before the Parliament. In fact, there is no tradition claiming that the king is the spiritual head of national Islam, like the monarch of the United Kingdom being the spiritual head of the Church of England. While the position of the king as the patron of all religions is stipulated in the constitution, although not in Article 7, the Parliament has no role in the nomination of the Sheikh ul Islam or the Chularajamontri. But, all in all, the general treatment by the author of the Thai Muslim society is helpful in better understanding the current state of Muslim social structures in Thailand.

Part II of the book discusses the issue of “The Muslims of the Deep South,” their history and their integration into the Thai state. It gives a clear picture of how the central authority tried to appropriate the remnants of the old sultanate of Patani and the pervasive resistance among its people. The readers could find some useful information about the organized resistance under the leadership of the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the National Liberation Front of Patani (Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani, BNPP), the Barisan Bersatu Mujahiddin Pattani (United Mujahiddin Front of Patani, BBMP), and the Gerakan Mujahiddin Islam Pattani (GMIP). All these organizations and their subsidiaries have been claiming responsibility for the current



violence rampaging in the Deep South.

A real contribution to the study of Muslims in Thailand comes in the last part of the book when the author takes up the issue of “Islam and the Thai Nation.” It paints a picture of a maturing community struggling to play an active role in the democratization process of the country. It describes a wave of awakening or renewal among the Muslim intellectuals at the national level. It also sheds some light into the efforts on the part of Muslims to find representation in parliament and in the cabinet, the highest decision-making body of the State.

The two books under review are particularly to be welcomed by general readers and specialists in Thai Muslim studies during this time of insecurity and instability in the Deep South. While Ibrahim Syukri provides an historical backdrop of a frustrated people of Patani negotiating the pressures of change and transformation to maintain their identity and culture, Michel Gilquin gives us a larger picture of a minority Muslim society in a Theravada Buddhist kingdom, also trying to protect its unique religious and cultural heritage in a time of high fluidity in national political and economic transformation. Both books are valuable additions to the growing volume of works on the Muslims in Thailand.

Surin Pitsuwan

Scot Barmé, *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex, and Popular Culture in Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2006, pp. 273.

Students of Thai history are usually obsessed by the subjects of the monarchy and the royal elite. A series of theoretically-informed approaches have been crafted *in and around* these long-lasting, hegemonic institutions. Scot Barmé's book, first published in 2002 and now reissued by Silkworm for a Southeast Asian edition, can be viewed within the monarchy-focused academic tradition, even though Barmé clearly wishes to distance himself from the dominant "Great Man" theory of history (p.3). He takes a look at the breakdown of the absolute monarchy from the popular stance. He definitely does not intend to write about the monarchs and the nobles and their civilizing missions, but their shadow still looms large throughout the book. From the popular perspective, he seeks to recapture the cultural life of the critical political transition at the beginning of the twentieth century. Barmé's research materials and sources are extraordinarily rich. He writes a vibrant social history of Bangkok cosmopolitanism by reliving and retelling fascinating accounts of public debate, emerging progressive ideas, complaints, satirical protests, and other intellectual social commentaries retrieved from the archives of newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, film booklets, and cartoons. He believes that "the development of modern technologies of

mechanized print media and film during the early decades of the twentieth century marked the beginning of a new era in Siam's history" (p.2).

The transformation from absolute to constitutional monarchy in Siam, marked by the 1932 coup, has occupied a prominent place in recent Thai historiography. Barmé argues that understanding how Siam embraced Western-style modernity and carried on its nation-building process, particularly after the collapse of the absolute monarchy, through the lense of the elite is far from adequate. The monarchs and the nobles turned the wheel of the national history, but it is at least intellectually incomplete not "to say [something substantial] about commoners being the harbingers of political and social change and renewal" (p. 3). For Barmé, a major way to perceive what the commoners actually thought and how they reacted to the flush of new ideas and technologies in their time is through a careful reconstruction of the early "modern Thai life" displayed in the print media and film records. He discovers that contemporary issues, such as class, gender, lifestyle and taste, popular nationalism, the position of women and their rights, commercial popular/hybrid culture and consumption, which have been branded by many as postmodern phenomena, have much deeper historical roots in urban Bangkok (p. 257). The growing middle class and the ever-expanding cosmopolitanism in Siam's capital constitute key factors in understanding the country's nation building, economic



and political upheavals, as well as its dynamic cultural life.

There are a number of ways to appreciate Barmé's contributions to the growing body of scholarship on Thai studies. First, this book introduces the 'from below' approach to the Thai historiography. Its analytical focus establishes the approach that the city, the nation, and thus, the historical significance, are formed by the people. It brings back the agency of commoners to the place they deservedly belong - the center stage of Thai history. Of course, it is always debatable whether the commoners, the people, or the masses in early twentieth century Bangkok are proportionately represented in the print media and film. How representative were the educated and the members of the middle class in Bangkok, and to what extent did Bangkok dominate Siam's popular culture at that time? Are the media accounts popular enough to be considered as manifestations of popular culture? Are their media-saturated voices sufficiently well captured to be discussed as something equivalent to Raymond Williams' "structure of feeling", expounded in his *Marxism and Literature* (1977)? Second, Barmé's work belongs to a growing body of scholarship challenging the dominant paradigm in Thai historiography that Thongchai Winichakul calls the "royal nationalist history" (*prawatsat racha chatniyom*). Some leading figures in the challenging paradigm include Craig Reynolds, Nidhi Aeusrivongse, Thongchai Winichakul himself, Thanet

Aphonsuwan, and Tamara Loos, among others. Barmé's lively accounts of protofeminism, women's education, sexual intimacy, and love and romance in many ways show continued interest in taking a critical look at the intellectual as well as the private life of the emerging urban middle class featured in many works by his colleagues. Finally, Barmé's work provides scholarly contributions in multiple fields of Thai studies beyond its historical base. Disciplines like cultural studies, historical anthropology, gender studies, media studies, political science, and urban studies focusing on modern Thailand and beyond will benefit from the breadth and depth of this book. Its historical focus on Bangkok's middle class and its urban life should well complement Marc Askew's *Bangkok: Place, Practice and Representation* (2002). Although this book is not as deep or as intriguing as James Francis Warren's two masterpieces about people's history in colonial Singapore (*Ah Ku and Karayuki-San* of 1993 and *Rickshaw Coolie* of 1986), it can easily claim ground-breaking status in its own right.

The book contains some minor drawbacks. It is perhaps beyond its scope, but Buddhism deserves more substantial attention or even a major chapter. It is one of the major persistent cultural forces and values determining the social life in the country. It would be interesting to trace how the middle class and ordinary people of urban Bangkok made sense of their modernizing world through their traditional popular Bud-

dhist Weltanschauung. It is rather surprising that Buddhist ideas were not extensively featured in the Bangkok media during that time. On the technical side, the book lacks a glossary of key Thai terms, maps, and images, which would help the reader better enjoy Bangkok's recent past. Images or pictures of the early twentieth century Bangkok are definitely lacking; as we all know, a photograph is worth a thousand words. The camera was available long before the period under study. There are also some transliteration errors, as on p. 107, where *than phu saksi* becomes *than phu saksit*. The reference to Warren's book in note 38 (p. 91) is wrong. The correct one is found in the bibliography.

Woman, Man, Bangkok is highly recommended for scholars and students of Thai studies and those whose interests are concerned with comparative fields of humanities and social sciences in Southeast Asia and beyond. It is also intellectually stimulating for general readers, as it is written in an entertaining and accessible fashion. It is virtually free of technical/theoretical jargon. Its thesis concerning early modern life from the popular perspective and its well-crafted coverage of multiple contemporary issues will certainly be well received by scholars involved in the subaltern/postcolonial and post-modernist debates. This anthropologically oriented reviewer treasures Barmé's book as an historically-

grounded gem in the expanding field of cultural studies in Thailand.

Pattana Kitiarsa



Wattana Sugunnasil, ed., *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*. Pattani, Prince of Songkhla University, and Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2005, pp.x + 333, Bt.795.

In 2002, representatives of communities in seven southern provinces, volunteers, and academicians convened in the city of Pattani to present results of their recent fact-finding. Called the *First Inter-Dialogue Conference on Southern Thailand*, the event was co-hosted by the Pattani Campus, Prince of Songkhla University, and the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, and financially supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Toyota Foundation, as well as the Asia Center and the Department of Anthropology, both of Harvard University.

The diversity of Southern Thailand is not the gist of this book. Rather, it contains eleven contributions on diverse facets in selected areas of Southern Thailand, supplemented by one on a community abroad. It would have been helpful to have had an introduction - at best an essay on diversity and related dynamics - as well as subject and geographical indexes.

Southern Thailand being large in size and diverse in the extreme, the necessity of topographical differentiation is not only obvious but also mentioned in some contributions, as in Duncan McCargo's paper.

The collection of papers contains a wealth of information that is grouped by this reviewer into the categories of

'roots', 'transition', 'current affairs', and 'wider context'.

In her study on *Spirit Mediumship in Southern Thailand: The Feminization of Nora Ancestral Possession*, falling into the category of 'roots', Marlane Guelden reports on her field work conducted in Pattani, Songkhla and Phatthalung provinces, from October 2000 to December 2004. Her research highlights the ritual side of *nora*, which involves few people and is limited to village life, compared to the public entertainment side. There are an estimated one hundred or more traditional *nora* groups. With a focus on gender transition from male to female prominence in the *nora* performance, four central findings are presented. Firstly, women among *nora* active participants have increased to 70-80 percent, and among *nora* troop leaders to 10-30 percent; secondly, flexibility in ancestral beliefs is warranted by a melange of elements of Buddhism, Brahmanism, Taoism, Islam, and animism; thirdly, female *nora* performers are joined by mostly female mediums; and, lastly, *nora* rituals are seen as particularly valuable to women clients. A tendency toward empowering women seems to have gained strength. This study of spirit mediumship is deemed a fine methodical example of gender analysis - as well as a most informative research on the authentic, ritual *nora*.

The paper on *Popular Culture and Traditional Performance: Conflicts and Challenges in Contemporary 'Nang Talung'* by Paul Dowsey-Magog covers

the sacred as well as the profane, studied in Songkhla, Phatthalung, Trang, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani provinces. Previously an important village ritual practice, *nang talung* has become widespread in southern towns as professional entertainment. The authentic performance of *nang talung* still serves the original, ritual purpose of communicating messages focused on adverse conditions. *Nang talung* juxtaposes the *nai*, the master, and the *phrai*, the lowly commoner, with a clown, *tua talok*, representing the genius of rural people. Inherent is *saksit*, meaning sacrosanct, even sacred items and practices, embedded in ritual knowledge and believed to exert magical power over oppressors. As reported, the significance of clowns and older ritual practices is connected to the shared southern identity.

Reading this in-depth study is like glimpsing behind the screen, gaining insight into cultural and social facets. It fosters the understanding of socio-cultural dynamics, in their complexity and diversity.

The adage ‘the grass on the other side of the fence is always greener’ comes to mind in reading the paper entitled *Paradise at Your Doorstep: International Border Fluidity and Cultural Construction amongst Kelantan’s Thai Community*, the third contribution placed in the category of “roots”. The author, Irving Chan Johnson, conducted fieldwork in Ban Bo On, situated opposite Amphoe Sukhirin of Thailand’s Narathiwat Province, during August

2001-December 2002. He distinguishes between how the Thai community has upheld its ethnic identity, while identifying itself as Malaysian, reminiscing about a ‘golden past’, remaining devout to Buddhist institutions in Thailand, maintaining kin relationships, expressing positive sentiments, and yet perceiving a corruption of moral values across the border—in short, “an ambiguous locale of contradictory meanings”.

The Kelantanese Thai villagers’ glimpse across the “southern fence” could perhaps be likened to a reverse mirror image of current affairs, an ideal in a magic mirror. It likely exemplifies mutual respect among different ethnic and religious groups.

Among immigrants of various ethnic origins, the Chinese put down their roots rather recently. They formed ever more nodes of expanding networks. This is described by Suleemarn N. Wongsuphap in her paper entitled *The Social Network Construction of the Baba Chinese Businesses in Phuket*. As highlighted, the identity requires five major conditions to establish itself and to expand business, as exemplified by the Ganthawee family’s “cultural capital”. They are: assimilation through the network of the women’s families; brotherhood; relatives and bonds; friends, associates, and connections; as well as patronage and networks.

The findings are based on a study of the Ganthawee clan, whose founder settled in Phuket in 1897. Examined are their business patterns, deemed characteristic of how Chinese tin-mine man-



ager-owners established themselves and represented the driving force of the southern capital group in Phuket. The evolution up to the year 1984 is one of Baba Chinese male and Yonya female Chinese actors' own historical experience, rather than the experience of Chinese either on the mainland or elsewhere. Ultimately, their Chinese-ness is a product of Thailand's nationalizing process, which has resulted in creating the "Phuket Chinese". Given the significance of the Chinese element in the pot-pourri of ethnic groups not originally intended to form one group, this case study conveys essential information.

One of the two contributions focused on 'transition' relates *Voices from the Grassroots: Southerners Tell Stories about Victims of Development*. Based on 44 studies of 55 cases, including 41 studies by 42 identified authors, as well as one each by the Pak Phanang River Basin Community, by students from Prince of Songkhla University, and by a Pattani Bay Network, adverse impacts are reported on natural resources as a means of livelihood, as well as on essentials of sustenance, caused by 'development' project planning, implementation, or management.

Cases of natural resources jeopardized in the course of development refer to forests, agro-forests or forest gardens, fresh water resources, wetlands, and coastal aquatic resources. Sources of livelihood compromised or threatened are community forest conservation, farmland exposed to degradation, declining field crop yields, degradation

caused by counter-productive irrigation, inland fisheries, coastal fisheries and aquaculture, water-borne transportation, communities in orchards and forests threatened by eviction from areas demarcated as national parks, maritime commons of littoral communities, cultural heritage, environmental pollution, narcotics, and pipeline construction.

Initiatives for alternative strategies are geared to build productive communities, and to foster self-reliance, environmental conservation, 'green market networks', formal education, occupational training, advancement of women, sustainable ecosystems, sustainable natural resource management, off-season rice cropping, and preservation of traditional crafts.

Thirty-eight of the 44 studies were conducted in the provinces of Chumphon, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun, Songkhla, Trang and Yala. At least ten authors bear Malay names. This lends credibility to heralding 'voices from the grassroots'.

Considering the significance of diversity and its inherent dynamics, these voices from the grassroots are deemed of core importance. The underlying action research, exploring and reflecting on conditions and stimulating change for the better by employing rapid rural appraisals is, in itself, proof of the ongoing transition from reactive adjustment to pro-active assertiveness, from blind protest to alternative proposal.

Given the vast scope and sheer magnitude of development ventures

gone awry, the reader should have been offered the whole load of information. That opportunity was missed. Rapporteurs compressed it into a far too brief summary report.

Paths to a Possible South: The Dhamma Walk for Songkhla Lake, a paper authored by Theodore W. Mayer, relates to action research. By 2003, eight *Dhammayatra* had been conducted. The lake walk reflects a unique encounter between a highly intellectual, socially critical, activist Buddhist movement and the problems surrounding an important identifying feature of the southern Thai landscape - Songkhla Lake. A small group of Buddhist monks, members of the *Sekhiyadhamma*, an organization dedicated to the appropriate training in *dhamma*, travelled to *Tambon Khun Khut* in Sathing Phra District of Songkhla Province in 1994. Its president, Phra Kittisak, felt inspired by the activist role of Muslim leaders at the Khun Khut mosque.

The printed announcement of the first Dhamma Walk described its objectives as conserving natural resources, the formation of an ecumenical network, coordination anchored in religious centres, and adherence to shared religious principles, *satsanatham*. It became evident that these hopes were highly unrealistic. With a view to grasping the scope of the conflict, understanding its dynamics, and working towards a non-violent solution, this meticulous 'travelogue' offers more than just insight. It diagnoses social ills and prescribes remedies.

'Current affairs' are addressed in four

contributions. The one entitled *Consuming Modernity in a Border Community* by Wattana Sugunnasil introduces Buddhist villagers in an old, fictitious Thai settlement, which seems to be located in Phron or Khosit sub-districts of Tak Bai District and, hence, is not "remotely" situated. How the villagers have fared over the past decades is related through bits of information scattered across the paper. As a result, there is repetition. Most irritating are inconsistent statements.

Against the background of radical changes since 1971, evident from comparative official statistics and household data regarding use of appliances and other durable goods, as well as employment, it does not come as a surprise that drastic changes have continued to occur. After all, the village is within easy reach of Sungai Kolok, one of the busiest hubs. In short, the village is not situated at the periphery of modernity either.

Apart from inconsistencies, tedious repetitions, and redundant generalizations, the author's portrayal of a community is informative, in many of its facets. The drawing of contradictory inferences can be traced to the author's fusion of well researched and documented village society dynamics with ideological prescriptions of harmony.

'Current affairs' at the regional level and of trans-boundary significance are addressed in Phil King's contribution entitled *The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle: How the South Was Won ... and Then Lost Again*. The



southern provinces of Thailand, north-western Malaysia, and the Indonesian provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra were identified as components of a distinct subregional territory. This was deemed a boon for Thailand's southern provinces. Also, the potential role for ethnic Malays was considered an opportunity, not a constraint, for economic development. Malay identity was presented as a form of "social capital". The blueprint prepared by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) did not seriously address issues of Malay participation or the complexities driving poverty cycles.

Based on a document published by Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), the Seamless Songkhla Penang Medan corridor (SSPM) was created. The most virulent opposition came from the Malay fishing villages most directly affected by the proposed pipeline and gas separation plant. In an ironic twist, the folksy symbolism that had long been part of the promotional material developed into a potent force of its own. In effect, the forms of "social capital" that were considered irrelevant to the development of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle are fully capable of bringing core dimensions of the project to a halt.

Given the recent emergence of a novel trans-boundary culture, also subsumed under 'current affairs' is the study by Jovan Maud of *The Nine Emperor Gods at the Border: Transnational Culture, Alternate Modes of Practice, and*

the Expansion of the Vegetarian Festival in Hat Yai. The field study, conducted in 2001, focuses on Chinese ethnicity in the context of the local tourist industry for which Chinese-ness is mobilized as a resource.

Vegetarianism, coupled with 'moderate asceticism' and worship of the Nine Emperor Gods, are distinguished. Both are mediums through which connections are made between southern Thai Chinese and people in Malaysia and Singapore, who participate to experience an exotic yet familiar Chinese-ness conditioned by another national context. The host state's cultural rather than racial definition of "Thai-ness" implies that "nation-ness" is defined by practice and allows the Chinese to maintain the public veneer of "Thai-ness" while creatively combining Chinese practices with the prescribed Thai behaviour. The author's vivid description of the festival's dynamics keeps the reader engrossed.

Aspects of the 'wider context' of dynamic diversity are covered by three sections of varied scopes. The broadest scope is addressed by Omar Farouk Bajunid in his paper on *Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State*. Undoubtedly, it conveys relevant information, yet the paper sheds little light on the theme of the book. Solely of relevance are the Malay Muslims who have fought for their community space and the sustaining of their native Jawi language. Muslim parliamentarians in the southern provinces established an inter-party political faction called *Al-Wahdah* in 1986

to promote and safeguard collective interests through democratic means.

The concluding paragraph reads like a set of research hypotheses, as follows: democracy seems to be the best guarantee for the Malay Muslim communities' survival; in the democratic Thai state, the Muslims will be able to harness their potential fully as equal and loyal citizens; the compatibility of Islam with Thai nationalism is a time-tested fact; and Muslims can be expected to assume a commitment to the ideals of Thai nationhood. The reader is left with the impression that the challenge to conduct research conducive to conflict resolution continues.

Another feature of relevance with a sharp regional focus is the paper by Duncan McCargo on *Southern Thai Politics: A Preliminary Overview*. It does not deal with Thailand's government policy in regard to the South, but with the dynamics of southern politics. The author's summary of points may serve as orientation: southern Thai politics are shaped by a distinctive history; troubled politics of the southern border have overshadowed the politics of the region as a whole; the border region is the most studied part of the South from a political perspective; contrasting identities are manifested in violent conflicts; and the south more generally has a reputation for lawlessness and banditry. Sketched in informative abstracts, politics in the 'Lower or Deep South' are diagnosed, as distinguished from politics in the South overall, including the 'Middle'

and 'Upper South'. Muslim politics shifted from parliamentary means to an unconventional path with no specific form or operational procedures. Violence was fuelled by alienation, and by a range of grievances. Since 1973, a significant "counter-elite" has emerged to challenge the official elite.

The South has been a potentially renegade region with a propensity for disorder, begging questions about the origins and nature of banditry. Arguably, the border provinces are the "theatre" of much infighting over considerable resources among influential groups. These gangs have comprised regional and provincial level government officials, wealthy and corrupt businessmen, and top local gangsters. Not only does this overview open and, most of all, train perspectives on the South of Thailand but it also stimulates the conceptualization of further exploration, beyond the researched track.

The paper *Southern Thai Women in Development: A Tale of Two Villages* by Jawanit Kittitornkool is categorized as belonging to the wider context, seemingly with a focus on southern women in development. Alas, the tales of women from two southern villages are paid too little attention. A summary of the few studies cited is supplemented with information obtained by interviewing 14 persons, eleven of them in Southern Thailand. The presentation of the core matter is signalled under the heading of "The Villages and The Women", in Ban Khao Bua and Ban Tha Hin. Their different topographies



might have been selection criteria. Moreover, one is a village where community development groups have been promoted by government agencies, whereas in the other a council was formed under the leadership of the abbot and monks.

Instead of any comparative analysis, profiles of 'The Leading Women' are lumped together as if they lived in one and the same village. Consequently, there is neither rationale nor need for any further comment. Worse yet, a half-baked description is offered in that it covers one village exclusively, to the effect that the section entitled "The Analysis of Women's Participation in Development" remains void of any analytical finding. Ultimately, the drawing of conclusions is unfeasible.

In spite of these criticisms, this book is strongly recommended to readers of all walks of life. It contains information that might well fill in lacunae of earlier, completed, or ongoing research. All persons who are concerned about the situation in the south of Thailand and desirous to see the plethora of predicaments alleviated will gain valuable insight.

Karl E. Weber

G.J. Younghusband, *The Trans-Salwin State of Kiang Tung*, ed. David K. Wyatt. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, pp. xiv + 80, 4 pull-out maps and plans, paperback, Baht 395.

First comes one Englishman to shoot birds or beasts, then come two Englishmen to make a map, and then comes an army to take the country. It is better therefore to kill the first Englishman.

Pathan saying quoted in G.J. Younghusband *A Soldier's Memoirs in Peace and War* (1917, 320).

The general in direct command of the so-called 'Third Anglo-Burmese War', which started in November 1885, was General Sir Frederick Roberts VC (1832–1914). He was Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in India 1885–93, and later became Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar. He was in Mandalay from November 1886 to February 1887, a period that coincided with the visit to Chiang Tung of 28-year-old Lieutenant George Younghusband, of the Queen's Own Corps of Guides. By then, what remained of the Kingdom of Burma ('Upper Burma and the Shan States' to the British) had been incorporated into British India. It had taken only a few weeks to capture Mandalay and secure the surrender and exile of the Burmese king. But the 'pacification of the countryside' was to take several more years. 'Punitive expeditions' against 'rebels'

and 'dacoits' continued into the twentieth century. At the height of the war, the British Indian Army in Burma numbered some 40,000 troops and 15,000 armed police.

The Shan State of Chiang Tung presented the British with a problem, not only because of its relative size and independence - they had recently murdered all the Burmese Commissioners - but also because of its geographical location on the wrong side of the River Salween. This made it difficult for a modern army to march on it directly from Burma.

In late 1886 Younghusband was briefed by Colonel Bell VC in Simla, the British Indian Army HQ, for a mission to collect military intelligence on routes to Chiang Tung through Siam and its northern dependencies. General Roberts knew Younghusband personally and may have suggested him for the mission. In an anecdotal chapter in one of Younghusband's later memoirs, he refers to Roberts's personal kindness in awarding him the Burma War Medal for his services in Chiang Tung. The official and secret report on the mission - of which only two copies exist - is reproduced in the present publication, which also has a valuable introduction and glossary by Professor Wyatt.

What the young lieutenant did in 1887 by visiting Chiang Tung could probably be accomplished today by any military attaché from Bangkok, driving up to Chiang Tung in a 4 x 4 on a family holiday of about two weeks. Nor would (s)he need a supporting cast



of guide, interpreter, driver, mechanic, cook and someone with a shotgun. The resulting intelligence would probably be just about as irrelevant, or unused. In the event, Younghusband's advice to 'hand over' Chiang Tung to China was not heeded. In 1890 Chiang Tung peacefully became part of British Burma, or 'submitted' and 'accepted the position of feudatory' as Scott has it (Scott 1901: 307).

In his introduction, 'Spy and Counterspy in the Shan States', Wyatt emphasises the theme of military espionage and the way in which the Shan kept Younghusband at arm's length, but under surveillance and subject to harassment, theft and threat. Wyatt highlights the disingenuous way in which Younghusband's popular published version of his travels (*Eighteen Hundred Miles on a Burmese Tat*, published in 1888) - hereafter *1,800 miles....* - a tat is a Burmese pony - described his journey as the adventures of a young officer on unpaid leave from India, out for a bit of fun and small game hunting.

This review looks at the context of his journey and the quality and value of his report. First, I compare the volume under review [KT] with *1,800 miles...* I use only the comparable sections of the journey from Chiang Mai to Chiang Tung and back to Chiang Rai. In *1,800 miles...* the relevant sections (pp. 39–80 of 162 pages) are of approximately the same length as KT, more or less 10,000 words. In brief, KT is only slightly different from *1,800 miles...* but crucially so. The preface to *1,800 miles...* reads:

'The following pages give an account of a journey made during six months leave [not true] in the beginning of 1887. They do not profess any literary merit whatever [by and large true] but are merely a faithful [not entirely true] record of new countries and new nations, as seen with the eyes of an

ORDINARY BRITISH SUBALTERN' [not quite true]

I am obliged to present the differences between the texts in summary form, but they can be checked. In short, as we would expect, the popular text includes some relatively trivial or anecdotal material that is not in KT, and omits references to specifically political and strategic information and comment. This includes reference to disguises and subterfuge, to maps, weaponry, military strengths, logistics, city defences, roads passable for guns, artillery ranges, best routes for lines of advance and positions for siege and attack. It also includes reference to political analysis and advice.

Younghusband has a chapter devoted to his time in Burma and Siam in each of his two later volumes of memoirs. In *A Soldier's Memoirs...1917*, Chapter 7 (of 21) is entitled 'A Burmese adventure' and in *Forty years a Soldier... 1923*, Chapter 6 (of 16) 'An Adventure in Siam' (Wyatt refers only to the latter). Each of these is brief and contains little new except for the first published evidence of his role in 'the Intelligence Branch', and an expanded story of how he bought some fake European am-

ethyysts in a Shan amethyst mine (in 1887!).

It is instructive to compare KT with Captain W.C. McLeod's 1837 report (Grabowsky and Turton 2003 [henceforth McLeod]). Younghusband reprints McLeod's route Chiang Tung-Chiang Rung, but makes no further use of McLeod. In a six month excursion from India and back, Younghusband spent just nine full days in Chiang Tung city and 27 days in the province altogether. McLeod spent fourteen days in Chiang Tung city and 43 days in the province altogether. In all McLeod spent four times as long in the (comparable) region as a whole, including Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, and his report is about four times as long.

The McLeod and Younghusband visits to Chiang Tung, in 1837 and 1887 respectively, could hardly be more contrasting. McLeod was four years older, had recently been promoted captain, was more widely experienced and had lived in Burma for over ten years. Much more importantly, he had an ambassadorial role. He bore letters and gifts between heads of state. He followed protocol. He spoke excellent Burmese, and perhaps a little Tai. Younghusband knew almost nothing of the situation, spoke no relevant languages, and, moreover, despised his interpreter, whereas McLeod's interpreter deputised for him and was of great assistance. Younghusband had the benefit of the reports of previous visitors. People on the ground included (since the Treaty of 1883) the British Vice-

Consul in Chiang Mai, Mr Archer, and the American Missionary, Dr Cheek. Like McLeod, he received advice from the Chinese (Yunnanese Muslim) traders. He is generally less recognisant of his helpers and sources than McLeod. Younghusband avoided official contact, adopted disguises and pretended to be poorer than he was to avoid theft and the obligation to give gifts. He ends his report with the words: 'This information for the most part is that of the Bazar, and not official'. This does not necessarily downgrade the value of the information, but it underlines the limits of his access.

So not only did he spend less time in Chiang Tung and write less than McLeod, but his report is less soundly based. He is not as gifted an observer or writer as McLeod, or (Sir) James Scott, who was soon to follow. Scott gives credit to McLeod and many others, but makes not a single reference to Younghusband (Scott 1901).

KT contains some trivial, prejudiced and self-regarding material, which I find cumulatively distasteful. He describes the Chiang Tung Prince, who is twelve years old, as a 'rather idiotic-looking youth, with a face that may turn into a very cruel one'. He writes offensively about his interpreter David, whom he renames Ananias: 'a poisonous beast and the most unholy coward' (*Forty Years*), 'the most fearful and hopeless coward God ever created', 'that skunk Ananias'. Then there are the rather dreadful, and often malicious thumbnail sketches of faces of people he met, some



twenty-two in all in the present volume. He is also self-regarding in a rather unattractive way. One portrait reproduced here and in *1,800 miles...* is captioned in the former 'Myself, about 3 months after leaving civilization' (he is heavily bearded and has long hair) and in the latter 'My own sweet self after leaving Zimme'. His boastful and exaggerating style is echoed in *Forty Years*: 'Sir George White with his army was now attacking from the West (though we did not know it at the time [?]), whilst Judh Bir [his orderly] and I were attacking from the South' (p. 100). Even towards Judh Bir, a Gurkha, and therefore close in the British military hierarchy of martial races to the epitome of the Pathan 'tribesman', he manages to be condescending, in such phrases as 'a famous little fellow' and 'a right tight brave little man and companion'. Wyatt calls these attitudes 'cavalier'. I suppose this goes with phrases he uses in later books, such as 'dash my wig'!

Younghusband's mission was, for him, a minor episode in a long career that included military action in India, Egypt, Afghanistan, Burma, Philippines (with the US army) and South Africa (against the Boers). Wounded in France in the First World War, he was rewarded with the sinecure of Keeper of the Jewel House, in the Tower of London, a post he held with the title Sir George Younghusband KCMG, KCIE, FRGS until his death in 1944. He wrote a *Short History of the Tower of London*, which has the same anecdotal style and forced levity as his three (now four) other

published books. He dined out on the story of the fake amethysts. About other deceptions practised on him, we might assume he may have been more discreet.

As for the 'Trans-Salwin State of Kiang Tung', if that is the direction you view it in, it has remained a contested area, demonstrating well the sound judgement of Younghusband, though he meant it slightly differently: 'The Kiang Tung province in the hands of the British can never be anything but a source of weakness to the integrity of the Burmese Kingdom, ... a constant challenge to outsiders.' (KT p.13). In 1943 it was ceded to Thailand, to be returned after the war. In 1953 it was largely occupied by insurgents and Chinese (KMT) irregular forces. In 1983 there were some nineteen insurgent groups in the Shan and Kachin states, representing various ethnic and political alliances. The Shan State of Chiang Tung will long remain a focus of fascination for historians and politicians alike.

The editor suggests that 'There is much in Younghusband's report that *remains* good reading.... He rarely lets us forget, *however*, that he was on serious duty as a military spy.' (KT p. x, emphases added). I would give a different emphasis and say that it is *once again* interesting, precisely *because of* the military angle. It needs to be read as a symptomatic text and not as a rattling good tale, nor as a mine of useful data. And, as the editor says, the wider context of intelligence interest in Chiang Tung at the time, by the British Foreign

Office, and by the Siamese and Chiang Mai governments, requires that we read this report 'more carefully and skeptically than we might otherwise do'. (KT p. xii). Professor Wyatt and Silkworm Books are to be congratulated on living up to their high standards of editing, annotating and publishing manuscripts and long out-of-print texts of historical interest.

Andrew Turton



Anthony R. Walker, *Merit and the millenium: routine and crisis in the ritual lives of the Lahu people*. New Delhi, Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 2003, pp. xxxi + 907, maps, pp. illustrations.

Anthony Walker spent nearly four decades studying the religious beliefs and practices of the Lahu. He now presents us with this massive volume in which he records and explains how the Lahu people view the super-human world, and describes and analyzes the ritual practices through which they interact with that invisible world.

The author bases his work on his participant observation of ritual life in a Lahu Nyi village in Lanna (northern Thailand) in the late 1960s, as well as on later field research among the Lahu of Yunnan. As a result, he explains the ideas and practices that he found in “his” Lahu village in northern Thailand in terms of the wider context of the Lahu-speaking peoples. This may incidentally help to demonstrate that the highland populations of southern China and northern South-East Asia interact fairly often, at least on the periphery, with lowland civilizations. In addition, the author scrutinizes much of the widely scattered and extremely heterogeneous publications concerning the Lahu which have been written by Western travellers and Chinese administrators, as well as by colonial officers, evangelical missionaries and sundry other observers.

Textual analysis revealed numerous references to ideas and institutions that were obviously of Buddhist origin, such as monks, merit, and demerit. Furthermore, these Lahu ritual texts are sprinkled with words and expressions derived from Pali or Sanskrit, but also occasionally from Dai, Chinese or Burmese. These characteristics of Lahu ritual texts, together with the significance of the village temple and the recurrent phenomenon of prophets and messianic movements, led the author to investigate as much as feasible the Lahu’s Mahayana Buddhist heritage in Yunnan.

Having recorded the rich and varied ritual life of the Lahu in the village in which he carried out his field work before proceeding to the analysis of the ritual texts he had collected, Anthony Walker found that there was much less variation among the ritual texts than among the ritual practices. Explanations offered by informants about ritual practices and their underlying premises were often divergent, sometimes contradictory or confused, whereas exegetical commentary on textual materials tended to be much more coherent and comprehensive, as well as considerably less divergent.

In the first part of this hefty volume, entitled “A Lahu village in North Thailand and its socio-historical matrices” (p 3–108), Anthony Walker sums up his study of a Lahu Nyi village near Phrao, Chiang Mai province, carried out between 1966 and 1970. He briefly describes the layout of the village, the

economic basis of the inhabitants' livelihood, the daily round of village life, the phenotype and dress of the villagers, their material culture, and some aspects of their social organization.

In a section called "Through the mists of the past: from hypothetical Qiang to proven Lahu", Walker goes on to attempt to make some sense out of the rather scanty and frequently obscure available material that may reveal something of the prehistory, protohistory and history of the Lahu people. He then discusses the controversial etymology of the ethnonym Lahu. There follows a section about the differences between Lahu groups such as the Lahu Na, the Lahu Nyi, the Lahu Shehleh, and the Lahu Shi. The author notes that linguistic differences do not always coincide with socio-cultural differences. He also discusses the relationship between the Kucong and the Lahu proper. Whether the Kucong should be considered to be a division of the Lahu or a separate people (in China, they have applied, without success, for official recognition as a *shaoshu minzu*) is a moot point. This leads to a discussion of the geographical distribution and demography of the Lahu, dispersed as they are in the mountain areas of southern Yunnan (411,476, including 30,051 Kucong, in 1991), the eastern Shan State of Myanmar (probably more than 200,000 nowadays), northern Thailand (60,321 in 1987), northwestern Laos (about 16,000, including at least 3,000 Kucong, in 1985), and northwestern Vietnam (about 5,400, mostly

Kucong, in 1993).

The hard core of the book is entitled "The diverse strands of Lahu supernatural ideas and ritual practices" (pp. 111–547). The author investigates "animism" and "theism" in Lahu ontology. Among the Lahu, there seems to be a consensus on the existence in every human being of both a material body and some spiritual essence, which are intimately interrelated.

Whereas almost all Lisu would agree that men have nine *ha* and that women have seven *ha* (a Lisu term which I would prefer to render in English as "vital spirit" rather than "soul"), the author's Lahu informants were very vague about the number of *awv ha* (a Lahu term translated as "soul" in this book). Their replies to the author's questions ranged from two to thirty-two, such presumably mystic numbers as three, four, twelve and seventeen being most often mentioned as possibilities or certainties, while thirty-two is likely to reflect Yuan (Khon Müang) influence. What happens to these *awv ha* after a person dies is equally vague. In the case of "good deaths" or "natural deaths" – *i.e.* deaths which have not occurred during childbirth or in bizarre circumstances and that have not resulted from an act of violence such as murder, suicide or accident – at least one of the *awv ha* departs for the Land of the Dead. Predictably, the anthropologist's queries about where the Land of the Dead is located and what it is like frequently elicited replies such as "How can I know, I've never been there! Have



you?” (p. 126). Therefore the author tends to keep an open mind about “traditional” Lahu ideas on this subject.

Walker then relates what he has learned about “traditional” Lahu beliefs concerning the world of the *ne* (spirits) before going into the question of Lahu “theism”, certainly a major aspect of Lahu metaphysics. The Lahu (or, at least, some of them) appear to be quite exceptional among comparable peoples in eastern and southeastern Asia in that they attribute great importance to *G’uiv sha*, their original creator and supreme deity. The author admits willingly that “among almost all the other peoples we have mentioned (and the dozens upon dozens unmentioned) the high or almighty creator deity is regarded as a remote, almost insignificant supernatural being in comparison with the much more immediate territorial guardians, sickness-bearing spirits, etc.” (p. 160). He contends that the interest of the Lahu (or at least, some sections of them) has evolved gradually as a result of Mahayana Buddhist influence, beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

A lengthy chapter concerns the practice of “animism”. After having introduced the practitioners, *maw⁷ pa_* and *she_ pa_*, the author describes various methods of divination practised among the Lahu (they vary somewhat, of course, from group to group). He gives considerable details about the ceremonies in which *awv ha* are recalled whenever someone falls sick as a result of one or more *awv ha* wandering off.

Much detailed material is also offered concerning spirit propitiation and spirit exorcism. In another chapter, the author examines what he calls rather appropriately “the extremes of an animistic continuum”, namely the garnering of merit and the practice of sorcery.

In the next section, Walker investigates the circumstances under which Mahayana Buddhism spread among the Lahu of southwestern Yunnan in the late eighteenth century - to the extent that the rather scarce and often imprecise historical records permit. He attempts to evaluate the legacy of this episode among what he calls the “post-Mahayana Buddhist Lahu”. Detailed ethnographic materials are mustered to indicate how this Mahayana Buddhist heritage has been incorporated with animistic and theistic ideas into the routine of their ritual lives. Village temples, together with their attendant officials and the rituals which take place in them, are described. Some attention is also paid to the annual cycle and to the life cycle. Particularly interesting is the chapter concerning the messianic movements that have led to significant changes in the beliefs and rituals of various Lahu-speaking peoples. Indeed, a recurrent phenomenon is the appearance of men - styling themselves as prophets or messiahs - who claim unity with *G’uiv sha*, pretend to possess miraculous healing powers, and proclaim the need for profound changes (including the end of Han or Dai hegemony in their area).

The third part of the book (pp. 551–733) is concerned with the spread

of Baptist and other forms of Christianity among the Lahu. The author strives to identify the reasons why Christian missionaries have been much more successful in spreading their religious convictions among the Lahu than among most other highlanders in that part of the world. He estimates that about 10 per cent of the Lahu have embraced Christianity, the percentage being much higher, perhaps 30 per cent, in Thailand than elsewhere. However, it would seem that some of the converts drift away from Christianity almost as easily as they have adhered to it.

The author incorrectly equates the Palaung with the Bulang. Thus he states that “the Austroasiatic (and Buddhist) Palaung (Bulang in Pinyin romanization) recognize Sagya in this role” (p.159). Elsewhere, one reads about “the Bulang (Palaung) of the Yunnan-Kengtung area” (p.144, note 69) and “the Bulang (Palaung) Mountains in Xishuanbanna’s Menghai County” (p. 381)... In fact, “Palaung” is not at all a variant of “Bulang”. It is a Burmese exonym for the Ta’ang (De’ang) people who live in the western and northwestern parts of the Shan State of Burma and in adjacent districts of the Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Zhou in western Yunnan. The Ta’ang are very seldom in contact with the Lahu, except to a very limited extent in an area north of Lashio, where there are significant numbers of persons of both “ethnic groups” (or “nationalities”, as they say in Myanmar or “national minorities”, as they are termed in China). The Bulang

are quite distinct socially and culturally from the Ta’ang/Palaung and they speak a different Austroasiatic language. Living in southwestern Yunnan, they come into contact more or less frequently with the Lahu. On the Chinese side, the Ta’ang and the Bulang constitute two separate entities among the fifty-five *shaoshu minzu* (national minorities) that are officially recognized.

One of the most welcome features of this book is its rich illustrative material. A large number of high quality photographs, technically excellent and highly informative, are presented on 72 plates. Some of them are quite attractive and exceptionally striking.

This work is an important contribution to the study of the ritual life of the Lahu. It cannot possibly be overlooked by any future researcher in this special field or in related fields. The author has gathered and published a huge amount of ethnographic details about routine and crisis in Lahu ritual life, which will be invaluable for comparative purposes. Generally speaking, detailed ethnographic work of this kind is indispensable to make well-informed comparisons and to validate theoretical constructions.

William Lang Dessaint



Norman G. Owen, editor, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*. Singapore, Singapore University Press, 2005, pp.xxiii + 541.

The publication of *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (henceforth *Emergence*) is, as this review will go on to elaborate, very much to be welcomed. At the same time, and particularly for those whose engagement in the Southeast Asia region spans several decades, the book's evolution deserves some initial comment. Six of the eight authors of the present book – David P. Chandler, Norman G. Owen, William R. Roff, David Joel Steinberg, Robert H. Taylor, Alexander Woodside and David K. Wyatt – were associated with the book's predecessor, *In Search of Southeast Asia* (henceforth *In Search*) either in its initial, 1971 publication form, or with its revised successor, published in 1987. The newcomers to the book, at least so far as the text is concerned, are Norman G. Owen and Jean Gelman Taylor: Owen as editor and contributor, and Taylor as a replacement for John R.W. Smail, to whom the new volume is dedicated and whose particular interest was Indonesia.

In its initial form, *In Search* was a remarkably successful collaborative effort which drew on the country-specific talents of its multiple authors, while each member of the group played a part in the chapters dealing with general issues. As is made clear in the 'Preface' to *Emergence*, the period when *In Search* was written shaped the authors'

approach to their subject. They wrote at a time of 'the seeming triumph of secular nationalism and the ongoing war in Vietnam'. Although the revised 1987 edition of *In Search* took account of the many great changes that had taken place between 1971 and the mid-1980s, it was still clearly recognisable as the revised version of an earlier text. Both editions of *In Search* were graced by an outstanding and extended 'Bibliography', which in the 1987 edition ran to no fewer than sixty-nine pages. With brief but helpful annotations, this was an extremely valuable scholarly tool in itself. The absence of a similar bibliography, and of a glossary of terms that was also part of *In Search*, is one of the immediate differences apparent to a reader of *Emergence*. Presumably removed as a cost-cutting measure, the loss of both is a matter of real regret.

That the book has been conceived as a teaching tool is immediately apparent from the section headed 'How to Use This Book', which notes the authors' assumption – surely correct – that few of those who read *Emergence* will do so from cover to cover. Rather, the authors suggest, the book has been constructed in a fashion that allows readers either to focus on 'general thematic' chapters or to follow the histories of particular countries within the Southeast Asian region.

These are sensible observations, particularly for those who are new to the discipline of Southeast Asian history. But they are observations that raise the question as to just who will benefit from

reading this book. It is no distraction from my enthusiastic endorsement of this book's value to suggest that its ideal reader is someone who has already developed a basic knowledge and understanding of the region's history. For this is, indeed, a book that provides a sophisticated account of an area of the world that poses a challenge to those who seek to write about it. As the authors observe in their 'Preface', this is a challenge that 'is compounded by its myriad peoples, each with its own past, sense of cultural and social identity, and shaping geographic reality'.

Without doubt the authors of *Emergence* rise to these challenges, whether in relation to the histories of the individual countries or in the chapters devoted to thematic analysis. In doing so they demonstrate the detailed knowledge and understanding of their subjects that are a reflection of the many decades they have spent in studying and writing about the region. Yet, to return to an earlier remark, the depth of their knowledge and understanding can, I think, be intimidating to a newcomer.

Chapter 17, 'Channels of Change', provides an example of the point I am making. I think it is admirable in its analysis and coverage, and there is nothing that I would wish to criticize about it. I simply think that the readers who will benefit most from reading it are those who have already gained a basic knowledge of the history of a number of Southeast Asian countries, as well as more general knowledge of issues associated with urbanism and education,

to note the two issues that are the particular preoccupation of this chapter.

The final chapters dealing with the very recent history of each Southeast Asian country bring the story of the region almost up-to-date and are perceptive accounts of the essential features of society and politics within each of those countries. These chapters provide a fitting end to the country-specific chapters throughout the book as a whole. In each case these final chapters end with a thought-provoking question or observation - none of which have been invalidated by the passage of time since the manuscript was completed. To note just two of these final country-specific points, I am struck by the accuracy of the chapter on Laos ending with the question as to whether that country can be kept 'from becoming an informal annex of southern China', and by the observation that, in the Philippines there remains an unresolved issue in the 'struggle for the right to rule and represent' that country.

Overall, the book is a triumph of collaborative effort and one that we can confidently expect to stand the test of time, even as the study of Southeast Asian history continues to develop with a greater depth of scholarship and an expansion of the topics that come under study. It is not too much to state that the text is essentially seamless, so that even those acquainted with the writings of the individual authors will not feel that they are reading a collection of essays. Read against the fact that the first important general history of Southeast



Asia – that of the late Professor D.G. Hall – was published only fifty years ago, this book is a testimony to how far the discipline and writing about it have progressed.

Milton Osborne



Craig J. Reynolds, *Seditious Histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian Pasts*. Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2006, pp. xix + 367.

Craig Reynolds is one of the most distinctive historians working on Thailand, largely because he is fundamentally a historian of ideas – a relatively rare variant of the genus on the world scale, and almost unsighted in Thailand until his appearance on the scene. Through his writing, teaching and inspiration he has helped to make this area a relatively major part of Thai historical writing in recent years.

Much of his output has been in articles, several of which have acquired classic status. This book assembles twelve pieces, previously scattered in journals, proceedings, or edited collections over three decades. Two appear here for the first time. Four are significantly expanded and reworked from earlier published incarnations. The others are reprinted with minor polishing, including new titles to keep up with the times. The stolidly academic title “The Case of K. S. R. Kulap: A Challenge to Royal Historical Writing in Late Nineteenth Century Thailand” (from *JSS* 1973) is transformed into the rather harrypotterish, “Mr. Kulap and Purloined Documents.”

Three of the pieces are review articles. These include a contribution to the debate on what defines Southeast Asia as an idea in history; a roundup of models of the premodern southeastern

Asian state, including the Asiatic mode, theatre state, and mandala; and a sort of anti-review about the absence of gender in Thai historical writing.

The rest of the articles all have a distinctive approach: they are about documents. Reynolds selects a key text or clutch of texts, puts them in their historical context, and then squeezes out their significance and legacy by walking round them and examining them from all angles.

The documents stretch across the Bangkok era. They start with a Buddhist chronicle (*Sangkityavamsa*) of the First Reign, and range through to the soundbites of public intellectuals confronting globalization over the last decade. Along the way, Reynolds walks around Chaophraya Thiphakorawong’s *Kitchanukit*, the Traiphum, manuscripts which Kulap “borrowed” from the palace library, *Nirat Nongkhai*, the cultural mandates of the Phibun era, historical texts on feudalism in the 1960s and 1970s, the output of the official culture industry, and the whole genre of manuals on everything from healing through warfare to business success. Reynolds’ two book-length pieces were similar, more exhaustive studies of documents, namely Prince Wachirayan’s autobiography, and Jit Phoumisak’s *Real Face of Sakdina Today*. This is quite a range of texts and subjects.

Although the articles span the Bangkok era from the First Reign to the present, Reynolds does not present them to us in chronological order. Indeed, chronology is something which has be-



come steadily less and less important in his work. The first piece, written in the 1970s, takes a lot of space anchoring Phra Phonnarat's chronicle firmly in its historical context. The latest piece, written in the 2000s, ignores time almost altogether and considers manuals ranging from the treatises on warfare in the Ayutthaya period to the how-to books that crowd present-day bookstands as a single genre with no consideration whether there is any "development" over time. In his history of ideas, the ideas increasingly surmount the history.

Instead of using chronology, Reynolds divides the articles into two batches. The first batch contains the "seditious histories" that give the book its title. These articles focus on documents which were written to disrupt. K. S. R. Kulap not only challenged the palace's exclusive right to own the chronicles and other key texts of Thai history, but also challenged their exclusive right to *change* them. Thim Sukkhayang used the poetic form of the *nirat* for the highly unusual (and, at the time, dangerous) role of political criticism. Jit Phoumisak used the royal chronicles to up-end mainstream history and drag Thailand into Marxist discourse. Reynolds pictures all three of these intellectuals as pioneers who helped to change the public culture, and suffered jail as a result. In selecting these subjects of study, Reynolds was consciously disrupting the mainstream of Thai historical writing in the 1970s and 1980s, which seemed bent on glorifying those who held power and thereby

dominated the production of ideas.

Reynolds' second category of "cultural studies" is more in the mainstream. The main focus of these articles is the adjustment of the Siamese elite to the West over the course of the nineteenth century. Reynolds shows how the elite changed to accommodate new ideas coming from the powerful West, but ultimately he stresses how much the elite managed to retain in the process. The science of the Traiphum was discarded so that its philosophical support of social hierarchy could be retained. Polygamy was elegantly defended by Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, using arguments designed to appeal to a western moral sensibility.

The theme of the last two articles is how "Thainess" has been manufactured and manipulated over the past century. The first is an expanded version of the introduction to *National Identity and Its Defenders*. The second is rather lazily titled "Epilogue", which forces the reader to wade a long way in before discovering this is a discussion of Thainess and globalization.

Reynolds argues that "Thainess" was manufactured as an idea based on culture and heritage rather than ethnicity, because the ethnic mix was always problematic. It has always been bound up with concerns for national security, and has tended to be more of a state weapon than a popular feeling. In the era of globalization, Thainess has been recruited to every possible agenda. On the one hand, cultural expansionists gaze northwards at various Tai-language groups

beyond the borders. On the other, cultural defenders squeal about the threat to Thainess from globalization.

In the background of this collection of articles is the post-modern revolution in social science over the past generation. Reynolds totally avoids the jargon of postmodern writing, and Foucault gets only one passing mention, not worth even recording for the index. But all through these articles, Reynolds is conscious that the writing of history itself is part of the history of ideas. It is not surprising that his work is popular with the new generation of historians who have grown up academically with the postmodern view. But there is a cost. Some of the later pieces seem to plait the contending discourses and counterpointed ironies so densely that any overall conclusion is difficult to see.

This is a superb collection which anyone with an interest in Thai culture and history will enjoy.

Chris Baker



Ronald Bruce St John, *Revolution, Reform and Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam*. London, Routledge, 2006, pp. xvi + 282.

Indochina was a French invention, a product of colonial logic that wilfully disregarded historical political and cultural realities. In particular it ignored the most significant cultural divide in Southeast Asia, which runs down the Annamite Cordillera between Confucian Vietnam and Theravada Buddhist Laos and Cambodia. But it also ignored patterns of historical interaction.

Not until the Nguyen dynasty in the nineteenth century did Vietnam evince much interest in extending its political influence west into Laos and Cambodia. Prior to that, the direction of both Vietnamese migration and its projection of political power were from north to south, at the expense of the Cham, rather than of the Lao kingdoms to the west. Only in the last phase of Vietnamese expansion were Cambodian interests directly challenged. A Vietnamese attempt in the 1830s to extend political control to the west encountered the equally expansionist ambitions of Siam. After years of inconclusive conflict, Vietnam and Siam agreed to exercise joint hegemony over Cambodia.

Paradoxically, while claiming to have preserved Cambodian and Lao independence, French colonial power held only Siam at bay. For the Vietnamese the way was left open for renewed migration and the possibility of greater political influence. The vision of an expanded Viet-

namese empire was shared by both the conservative right and revolutionary left of Vietnamese politics. It was not shared by Lao or Cambodians.

In post-colonial Indochina, it was the vision of the left - of Indochina held together through 'special' relationships between ruling Marxist-Leninist parties - that dominated during what the Lao call the 'thirty-year struggle' from 1945 to 1975 to throw off the last remnants of colonialism (French to 1954 in the First Indochina War) and imperialism (American to 1975 in the Second Indochina War). But then came the phenomenon of the Khmer Rouge, and a Third Indochina War was required to bring Cambodia back into the sort of relationship Vietnam wanted - to the annoyance of China.

After 1979 Vietnamese political influence first waxed, then waned, in Cambodia, while it diminished more slowly in Laos. Changing relations have largely been in response to external circumstances, though internal policy differences have also contributed. Since the later 1990s, when all three countries joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), intra-ASEAN relations and developing regionalism within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) - not least the inclusion of China - have further reduced the significance of any exclusively 'Indochinese' regional grouping.

St John tells the story of the post-colonial, post-imperial unravelling of Indochina since 1975, not as narrative history, but as a chronological survey

of developments in the political economy of all three countries. In order to do this, he begins by telling us what the French vision of Indochina was all about, and saying something about the Vietnamese conception of 'special relationships' linking the three countries. But the latter is covered too sketchily in the opening background chapter, and the leap from French Indochina to 1975 leaves out too much. We would like to know something about the intervening years, particularly with respect to Cambodian-Vietnamese relations. Indeed the whole Khmer Rouge period from 1975 to the end of 1978 gets very cursory treatment. In contrast to Vietnam and Laos, no section is devoted just to Cambodia in chapter two on the 'rush to socialism'; though thereafter coverage is approximately equal for all three states.

St John assumes some knowledge not just of broad historical developments, but also of who the principal *dramatis personae* were. Names are introduced with few biographical references. Despite this, however, the story of post-1975 'Indochina' is well told, through a wealth of political detail and economic data. What are not covered are those cultural and social dimensions that have contributed to internal policy differences since the early 1990s, as regimes in all three ruling parties seek to shore up their legitimacy in a post-communist world. For example, there is little on religion. St John does have interesting things to say about political culture in Laos and Cambodia, but is strangely silent on the

very different political culture of Vietnam. This is a pity, because a comparison would shed light on the different prospects for development for Vietnam on the one hand, and Laos and Cambodia on the other.

A strength of the book is the attention it gives to regional relationships, notably between the three 'Indochinese' states, but also more widely as they engage with ASEAN in the 1990s. Diverging foreign policies are also well covered. So too is the history of regional integration, which goes back to the mid-1950s, when the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) produced two reports, and continued with the formation of the Mekong Committee in 1957. Integration was placed on hold during the Second Indochina War and the aftermath of the Third, but gathered strength after the UN-imposed political settlement in Cambodia, in the form of the GMS, promoted by the Asian Development Bank, and ASEAN membership.

St John is an indefatigable author, an independent scholar who in his own words writes "with a three-fold geographical focus on North Africa and the Middle East, Andean America, and Southeast Asia." Given this wide range of interests, one might expect this book to be a somewhat cursory study. But St John has combed the literature and combined it with his own knowledge of the region to produce a broad and compelling synthesis. A great amount of information is packed into the pages of *Revolution, Reform and Regionalism*,



so much that at times one loses the argument in the mass of detail and the relentless parade of economic data. This is not a book for the casual reader or the faint-hearted, but for those with a genuine interest in the region it is a useful and informed addition to the literature. It will be of value not just to students, but also to all those working in the region in the fields of aid, commerce and diplomacy.

Martin Stuart-Fox

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and Joël Meissonnier, *Yaa Baa: Production, Traffic and Consumption of Methamphetamine in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Singapore, Singapore University Press, 2004, pp.xxii + 210.

Yaa Baa, by Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and Joël Meissonnier, is a well-researched and informative addition to the fields of ethnography and geopolitics. *Yaa baa*, or “crazy drug” as it is commonly known in Southeast Asia, is an illicit amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) or methamphetamine. While illegal drug use has been present in Southeast Asia for generations, this new synthetic and cheap alternative to “harder” drugs has taken a firm footing in the region as people seek out alternative means of coping with the stresses of life and modern society. The study, a translation of a 2002 French publication, sets out to investigate methamphetamine production, distribution and consumption in mainland Southeast Asia. The research is useful in accounting for the recent rise in illicit synthetic “designer” drug production and consumption throughout Asia due to past and present socio-economic and political circumstances. The complete range of methamphetamine production, trafficking and consumption is explored using a geopolitical approach, as this methodology highlights production and trafficking patterns with which the study is concerned (p.xix).

The book is divided into three parts with ten chapters, including a detailed

introduction and comprehensive conclusion. In Part 1, “*Yaa Baa*, An Illicit Drug from the Golden Triangle,” geographer Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy provides an historical and geopolitical background of methamphetamines and their production throughout Asia. Part 2, “The Circuits of *Yaa Baa*,” by sociologist Joël Meissonnier, describes the contemporary conditions in mainland Southeast Asia, specifically Thailand, that aid in sustaining the *yaa baa* market from its origins to its present status. Part 3, “Sociological Context of the Explosion in Methamphetamine Use in Thailand,” also by Joël Meissonnier, is a chronological outline of the conditions encountered by consecutive generations of Thai youth and adolescents at the end of the twentieth century. This section also contains an analysis of the present condition of the school and the family in Thailand in order to examine some of the reasoning behind the attraction to *yaa baa* and other illicit drugs among Thai youth. Each chapter of the book’s three sections delivers well-structured and assessed historical and current data based on research and observations in the regions discussed. The information is provided to lay the framework for the geographical, geopolitical and socio-economic conditions and patterns that support the development, production, distribution and consumption of *yaa baa* and other ATS in mainland Southeast Asia. This allows for a detailed account and investigation of the diversity of individuals and institutions involved in the proliferation of illicit drugs, as well as the people who buy and use them.



Chapter 1 provides a scientific examination and summary of methamphetamines, including addiction, psychological and physiological effects, and methods of treatment for addiction. Chapter 2 is a general outline of ATS, specifically methamphetamines, from its initial chemical synthesis in Germany in 1887 (p.7) to present-day production.

Chapter 3 focuses on the emergence and development of the “Golden Triangle” region formed between Burma, Laos and Thailand, beginning with the initial cultivation of the opium poppy in China. Emphasis is placed on the Western military presence in the region, Communism and its effects, and the Indochinese War, which are believed to have facilitated opium cultivation, transportation and consumption in the Indochinese highlands. Also described is the evolution of illicit drug production in Burma, including the country’s recent social and political history and its ever-present internal military conflicts.

In Chapter 4, the final section of Part 1, an analysis of how the Golden Triangle emerged as a major production site, and mainland Southeast Asia as a major consumption region, for synthetic illicit drugs is discussed. The situation in Burma, Cambodia, China, Laos and Thailand is looked at with reference to drug patterns emerging during the 1990s, a period viewed as the “boom time” for methamphetamine production and consumption in Asia. Also investigated are the routes of methamphetamine trafficking in the Golden Tri-

angle, highlighting methods and paths of transportation traditionally and frequently used in northern and southern Thailand, southwestern Laos, western Cambodia and southeast Burma. Noteworthy is an examination in the rise in illicit drug abuse in the region seen in direct relation to poorer socio-economic conditions, especially the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which rocked the region.

Beginning Part 2, Chapter 5 is a description of the modes and methods of movement of *yaa baa* from its production in Burmese towns along the Thai border, through its cross-country journey, to its final destination in Thailand. The circulation of methamphetamine pills as they pass through the various middlemen and intermediary drug runners and dealers to the eventual consumer is explained through an in-depth analysis of activities and events. This section analyzes the various players that have a role in *yaa baa*’s distribution networks. The complex distribution patterns of the drug and its users throughout various regions in Thailand are mapped, highlighting areas of high usage density as well as possible explanations for the elevated level of consumption among various ethnic, social and economic groups in each region.

Chapter 6 analyzes the popularity of *yaa baa* among manual laborers and low income groups. The “uniqueness” of *yaa baa* consumers is noted, as they include members from all levels and groups of the Thai social strata, which in turn creates a problem when trying to identify or pinpoint the target con-

sumer group. While in the past, drug abuse in Thailand was linked and categorized by a consumer's socio-economic status, such as opium and heroin with low income rural or urban slum dwellers, and cocaine with high society or upper class individuals, *yaa baa* has transcended the standard division of users based on socio-economic categorization, creating one large encompassing group with members from each level of society. In order to identify the social profile of methamphetamine consumers, two corresponding methods are utilized. First, consumption habits of members of the lower class in Thailand who are commonly believed to be the initial users of methamphetamines on a widespread basis are examined. Second, user trends among Thai youth and adolescents who more recently became major methamphetamine users are discussed, with several points being raised regarding the rise in popularity of *yaa baa* in Thai society. Noteworthy is the rapid transition of Thailand from an agricultural-based society to a modern and globalized industrial one over a relatively short period of time beginning in the 1970s. This rapid industrialization and urban migration forced changes in the work habits of laborers and raised employer expectations of output and productivity. Another reason for the increase in *yaa baa* is ascribed to the change in behavior among heroin users who switched to *yaa baa* mainly due to its low cost and relative ease of availability. Here *yaa baa* is described

by consumers as a means of escape and coping with poverty and adverse home or work conditions, corporal and mental fatigue, or numbing physical and psychological pain.

Chapter 7 is a discussion of *yaa baa*'s alarmingly high rate of consumption and acceptance among young people in Thailand, now viewed as the target consumer group of the drug. An important theory regarding the exponential increase in the number of methamphetamine consumers among Thai youth in the last decade is presented. The authors infer that "in Thailand the propensity to imitate others' behaviour is particularly strong. Every young *yaa baa* user belongs to a group of friends who also consume the drug" (p.83). This explains the sociability and wide acceptance of the drug among Thai youth. As any keen observer of Thailand would note, Thais are rarely ever alone by choice; peer or group interactions and relationships are what binds Thai society together. Just as in the West, where drinking, eating, etc. are viewed as inherently social activities, so too is drug consumption in some degree in Thailand. Because drinking alcohol or taking drugs alone is viewed as a sign of despair or even addiction, Thai society does not condone alcohol or drug consumption by oneself. In this sense, *yaa baa* acts as a crucial link among group members. The act of consuming drugs, as it is shared among group members, enhances and reinforces the group's social bonds and collective identity.



Part 3, Chapter 8, provides an historical overview of circumstances faced by succeeding generations of Thai youth during the last quarter of the twentieth century. This is undertaken to identify the socio-historical origins of *yaa baa* consumption among Thai youth and young adults. The authors surmise that the political, social, economic and cultural conditions of Thailand in the late 1990s have been very favorable to the methamphetamine boom (p. 115). This is believed to have given rise to the current “fun-seeking” and hedonistic attitude popular among Thai youth and young adults. Environmental and social conditions thus went well with and provided further support for the proliferation of *yaa baa* within Thai society. *Yaa baa* abuse is seen almost as a playful game, where consumption equals fun, enjoyment and excitement experienced in a group or among peers with the individual desire to have a good time.

Chapter 9 focuses on the current state of three major social establishments in Thailand: the school, *Sangha* (monkhood) and family. This is done to display how each has unintentionally aided in increasing the number of Thai youth and young adults who consume or experiment with *yaa baa*. The assessment explains how the mechanisms of these institutions effectively render many young people vulnerable and powerless against the potential of being enticed into illegal drug abuse in Thailand.

Chapter 10, the final chapter, conceptualizes a sociological model based on Max Weber’s “ideal type” theory. This model enables the authors to create an amalgamated profile of *yaa baa* consumers based on certain “characteristic traits” (p.143). This model distinguishes methamphetamine consumers based on their motives and economic interests. Additionally, this model acts as a basis for increasing the geographical range of the study. From this original abstract model, associated hypotheses are created for ATS consumption in neighboring Burma, Cambodia and Laos. This model demonstrates the intricacy of social patterns that promote and support *yaa baa* production and consumption in mainland Southeast Asia. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of a recently introduced synthetic ATS in Thailand, ecstasy, an expensive psychotropic drug usually imported from Europe. This relatively new entrant into the Thai illicit drug market has produced a new social class among ATS consumers. The switch to or preference for ecstasy over *yaa baa* among recreational drug consumers in Thailand has created an “ecstasy elite” of high-end, high profile, upper-class consumers.

The authors conclude that the *yaa baa* explosion in Thailand is intrinsically connected to the country’s own socio-historical conditions. It is asserted that the popularity and rapid growth of *yaa baa* consumption in Thailand, particularly among youth and young adults, is due to a combination of (local) factors

not present in Western societies. These local factors have made *yaa baa* a “normal” drug believed to lack physical or social consequences, thus removing the possibility for temptation or attraction that a drug of such widespread abuse and popularity would generally be subjected to in the West (p.164).

The authors makes clear how and why *yaa baa* has taken such a strong foothold in Thailand and surrounding countries. In spite of this, there are a few shortcomings which, if addressed, would greatly add to the book’s overall presentation and clarity. For example, the book’s title is very deceiving, as the research is focused mainly on Thailand rather than mainland Southeast Asia as a whole. Although discussion is provided on surrounding countries, no definitive explanations or conclusions are made in any great detail in comparison with the information on Thailand.

More specifically, Chapter 5 opens with a discussion of middleman distributors of *yaa baa*, but does not expand on the subject and fails to refer to Bonacich’s 1973 discussion of middleman minorities, which is pivotal to any dialogue on the subject. In addition, the authors claim of *yaa baa* being available “in seemingly every nook and cranny of ordinary life in Thailand,” (p.61) is not correct for the present day situation or even when the book was translated to English in 2004. For instance, since the last Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, began his “war on drugs”, (p. 25) the position and popularity of *yaa baa* in Thailand

has changed considerably, yet the authors fail to discuss any of the events or circumstances that have evolved since his personal crusade began, only briefly mentioning this early in the book.

In Chapter 6, a discussion of *yaa baa* consumption and distribution in Bangkok’s Klong Toey notorious market and slum district paints a false and very outdated picture of the current situation in the area. The authors’ claim that *yaa baa* is out of control and widely abused in the area is based mostly on secondary sources obtained from governmental or state-run agencies that fail to address the problem in terms of the actual situation. The availability and abuse of *yaa baa* in Klong Toey has changed considerably from the open-market atmosphere of a couple years ago and is now greatly frowned upon and discouraged among residents and shopkeepers in the district. The statistics provided here, as well as in the previous chapter, are quite dated and should have been revised for the current publication of the book. A suggestion for future editions would be to revise and update several of the facts and figures regarding addiction and consumption. The state of affairs since Mr Thaksin’s crusade against drugs, which began before the book was translated, should have been included, at least in the conclusion.

Yale Needel



B.P. Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Michael Smithies. Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2006, pp.x+ 186.

The republication in translation of Bernard-Philippe Groslier's 1958 book, *Angkor et le Cambodge au XVIe siècle d'après les sources portugaises et espagnols*, is a notably welcome event. The original Presses Universitaires de France version of this work has long been out of print and was, in any case, originally restricted to a relatively limited print run. That the book should now be available in a clear English translation means that this important work is now accessible to a much wider audience. Both Orchid Press and the translator, Michael Smithies, are to be warmly congratulated in bringing this project to completion, and for making the book available in such high quality binding.

At the time of its publication the book was seen as contributing to our knowledge of Cambodian history in three main areas. First, Groslier, then the *Conservateur* of the Angkor temples and more broadly an archeological scholar, took up the much-disputed issue of the royal succession following the death of the great Angkorian king, Jayavarman VII, in the thirteenth century CE. Events following this event, in the period leading up to the removal of the Cambodian court from Angkor and the temporary establishment of that court in Phnom Penh in the fifteenth century, have long been a subject of historical

debate. Secondly, the author, in this book, and with the assistance of Charles Boxer, the noted historian of Iberian maritime expansion, presented for the first time a coherent account of what might legitimately be called the 'Iberian Period' in Cambodian history. And finally, though far from exhaustively since the book is full of rewarding 'asides', Groslier used this publication to advance his theories on the nature of the Angkorian hydraulic system, which, in his eyes, needed to be understood in terms both of its practical agricultural and religious symbolic character.

The first and last of the areas just noted involve issues that are still not fully resolved. While it is probably correct to say that so far as the royal succession is concerned, scholars have moved towards a greater degree of agreement than was the case when Groslier published in 1958, there are still some matters over which there is dispute among specialists. Moreover, and while it is still common to find 1431 CE cited as the date at which the court left Angkor, there is no absolute certainty about this date. For there is the real possibility that the move to Phnom Penh could have taken place at any time between the 1431 date and, perhaps, as late as 1450.

As for Groslier's theories concerning Angkor's hydraulic system, in which, simplifying greatly, he proposed that the whole of that system combined practical and religious considerations, these have come under sustained attack in recent decades. In particular, his sugges-

tion that the great Angkorian *barays*, or reservoirs, played a major part in enabling the city of Angkor to feed a population possibly as large as one million, was forcefully rejected by more recent scholarship, notably by Philip Stott, W. van Liere and Robert Acker. (Their arguments are helpfully summarised in Chapter 8 of Charles Higham's 2001 publication, *The Civilization of Angkor*.) Nevertheless, the issue of just how the city of Angkor supported its large population continues to be open to further discussion. In this regard the research being undertaken by the Greater Angkor Project (GAP), primarily based at the University of Sydney but also involving APSARA, the Cambodian authority responsible for the administration of the Angkor temples, and the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, is highly relevant. The work already undertaken by the GAP, while not simply endorsing Groslier's proposals concerning the hydraulic system and the role it played in sustaining a large population, increasingly points to the existence of large-scale canals as playing a vital part in enabling the cultivation of very large quantities of rice.

In contrast to the issues discussed above, it is unlikely that the book's discussion of the role of Portuguese and Spanish missionaries and freebooting adventurers in Cambodia in the sixteenth century will be surpassed by any later scholarly endeavour. The story that Groslier has to tell is, of course, a record of imperial greed and rapine mixed with evangelising zeal, all of which are now

the subject of politically correct opprobrium. However that may be, the account of the fruitless efforts of the missionaries and the ultimately failed attempts by men such as Diego Veloso and Blas Ruiz to play a role in the governance of Cambodia remains fascinating nonetheless. What is more, so far as the role of the adventurers is concerned, it casts an important light on the weakness of the Cambodian court in the late sixteenth century and on its readiness in that period of weakness to turn to Western foreigners for assistance.

Mention has already been made of the valuable role played by Michael Smithies in translating Groslier's work. The further point should be made that not only has he done so in a felicitous manner, he has in addition overseen the time-consuming transcription of Portuguese and Spanish names that were not always consistently cited in the original. So far as technical matters are concerned I will only refer to one very minor typographical error, which occurs on page 105, where the date for Doudart de Lagrée's visit to Angkor is noted as having taken place in June 1867. The visit was, in fact, in June 1866.

I beg the Journal's editor and readers' indulgence to allow this reviewer a brief personal observation in ending this review. I first met Bernard-Philippe Groslier in 1960 and came to know him better in 1966, when I was carrying out research in Cambodia on the nineteenth century. He was both a man of great charm and a scholar of the highest repute. He was also someone who was



ready to assist students, such as I was, through his deep understanding of the entire span of Cambodian history. A member of the fourth generation of his family to work in what was once 'French Indochina', and the son of George Groslier, the long-time Director of the Phnom Penh museum, the final years of his life were tragic, personally and in scholarly terms. He was forced to leave Siem Reap during the Cambodian civil war that erupted in 1970. Removed to Phnom Penh, he suffered serious injuries when he confronted a burglar in his apartment, wounds from which he never fully recovered. It is fitting that this important work has now been translated and so made accessible to a wider audience. It is a fitting, additional memorial to his life and achievements.

Milton Osborne

Sappho Marchal, *Khmer Costumes and Ornaments of the Devatas of Angkor Wat* (1927). Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2005, pp.xx + 99, 41 plates, \$16.

Sappho Marchal's book was first published in French in 1927. Her father, Henri Marchal, was a conservator at Angkor and so, says Victor Goloubew in his foreword, she "grew up in the shadow of the temples". Indeed the *devatas*, or *apsaras* as they are more commonly known, may well have been her surrogate companions despite being sculpted in bas-relief. While many can be examined at close quarters, others are less accessible. One can imagine the author, hatted to ward off the intense heat, with binoculars or even a camera at hand to record the data she sought.

The book has the translator's note, followed by Goloubew's foreword and Marchal's concise notes on the *apsaras*' costumes, jewellery, flowers and coiffures. An inventory of the numbers of *apsaras* at different architectural locations at Angkor Wat is followed by a table showing the distribution of coiffure types in these locations. Forty-one plates of drawings follow, accompanied by brief comments on the salient distinguishing features selected for illustration, particularly the spectacular hairstyles and their ornamentation.

She numbers the *apsaras* at 1,737, excluding those on the towers of Angkor Wat, which if included would bring the total to 1,860. But there were more which, over the course of time, suffered damage due to natural and unnatural

causes that erased additional information. While *apsaras* are not unique to Angkor Wat, these particular examples are the focus of Marchal's work which, being almost life-size, facilitate depiction of details on the reliefs with a high degree of accuracy.

Marchal has ordered her drawings according to a particular plan. The first plates (1-XVI) demonstrate the simplest hairstyles, where long tresses are dealt with by simply looping, knotting or binding. The next group introduces ornamentation commencing with plate XV11 (figs E, G, I), which shows the hair supported by a "diadem", while on plate XV111 no tresses appear, only headpieces termed "bonnet[s]" by Marchal. It is not clear visually whether there is any difference between the bonnet and the diadem, though English does distinguish between them, the former having ties beneath the chin, and the latter being a "lightly jewelled circlet". On some Khmer statues sculpted in the round, a diadem with ties at the back of the head does appear. The most elaborate of the *apsaras*' head adornments, with their characteristic triad of tall triangular cone shapes and a variety of additional ornamentation, feature on plates XXXIV to XL. The final plate, XL1, shows headpieces with a single central pointed cone, which the author argues is in effect the prototype of the *mkot* that has since become the form of the crown in Siam and Cambodia for royalty and dance dramas such as the *Reamker*.



The author speculates about the way other, more complex, hairstyles may have been devised. About one style (plate VI figs. B, C) she says it must use “pierced patterned cloth” through which the hair is pulled. It can, however, more easily be explained with reference to hair styles contemporary today, where fine plaits in multiple narrow bands lying close to the head are currently favoured by so-called ‘rap artists’. In other styles Marchal uses the word *cuille* translated as “cut” (plate 1X sketch I; plate XV1 fig. G). This is difficult to interpret as sketched and most probably is more appropriately glossed as “parted”. This look would then correspond to the fashion called “French plaiting” so popular in the 1980s-1990s, where loosely parted locks of hair are intertwined. Indeed, chronologically, the Angkor styles may be regarded as prototypes of these styles.

Marchal speculates as to how the hair itself was dressed so as to allow those locks to maintain their upright sweep if, actually, the forms thus depicted were not simply the sculptor’s interpretations. Was it a frame secured to the head over which the dark tresses were draped? Was perhaps some sort of pomade applied? Twentieth century Khmer custom may yield some clues. Informants report that hair is dressed with oils from coconut or papaya to which ash was added if “... you wanted to have stiff hair that would not fall down”.¹ There is also a hair

product made from *samrong* fruit mixed with wax. Men used it to twist moustaches into buffalo horn shapes, for instance. These traditional preparations, the ingredients of which are endemic to Cambodia, may well have been available in Angkorean times.

Marchal also surmises that some particular ornamental additions were probably flower stalks of coconut palm and areca nut plants, the ends of which were directly inserted into the hairstyle. Present-day custom indicates that white jasmine flowers threaded onto stalks and found everywhere as ornamentation could well have been similarly constructed and used.

This wealth of details, though concerned principally with hairstyles, has unexpected benefits for those interested in Khmer costume of the time. Marchal has sketched the *apsaras*’ costumes in some cases. The Khmer term for this style of hip wrapper is *sampot*. She attempts to explain the construction of the patterned waist to ankle hip wrappers, “sarong”, with flowing or arching sidepieces (Figs. 1–3). Her conclusion is “merely a hypothesis”, but on close examination, it fails the test on two grounds, one conceptual and one technological. The main objection concerns the fact that the length of cloth is cut to fit the form with one end scalloped. Cloth used as hip wrappers then or now would never have been cut and tailored in this part of Asia or in the Hindu tra-

¹ Muan I. (ed.), *Seams of Change. Clothing and the Care of the Self in 19th and 20th Century Cambodia*, pp. 252–3. Phnom Penh, Reyum Publishing, 2003.

dition from which Khmer hip wrapper styles were derived. And scissors would be needed to cut the scalloped edges of the cloth and the slot for a belt arrangement as indicated. Scissors were not one of the tools of the time.

But the appearance of a few apsara figures (plate XIV fig. F: XV111 figs. A,b,E) wearing simple wrapped garments which would now be termed shorts or culottes, with a voluminous bow at the back and with the ends flowing to the side, provides much more useful evidence as to how the prestigious hip wrapper ensembles were constructed. If these shorts were worn underneath the wrap-around length of cloth — the sarong — then the mode of construction of this ensemble becomes quite clear.

Finally, jewellery in the form of upper arm bands, bangles, “gorgets” or neckpieces, belts and chunky earrings complete the look of the day, in Angkorean times, at least for these companions of the deities in their virtual heaven. Lotus complement these man-made adornments in the patterns on the headpieces and in the hands of the apsaras.

What was Mlle Marchal’s purpose in recording these decorative details, if indeed she had one other than a love of design and the opportunity to record these unique examples? We do not know. Goloubew suggests that the French love of all things Khmer resulting from the 1906 visit of the royal Khmer dance troupe to France could

have inspired designers to try to source traditional patterns for adapting Khmer-style fashion to French taste. In which case, Marchal’s drawings would have been a unique source.

Whatever the purpose, scholars of Khmer cultural history have tremendous reason to be grateful for what she did. As noted above, she has detailed decorative features which have been more or less bypassed in the study of classical Khmer sculpted art. Little details, such as the culotte forms worn by some apsaras, have rarely been noted by others, but now their visualisation has afforded confirmation of the apsaras’ elaborate hip wrapper forms as being constructed of two layers of cloth as suggested elsewhere.²

The strength of this slim volume is in the wealth of illustrations serving as reference detail for scholars both Cambodian and beyond. Sketches may transcend language, so the benefit of translating the accompanying text from the original French into English is not in the translation per se. Instead, firstly, it re-introduces this 1927 publication into the mainstream and, secondly, it allows non-French speakers access to the questions raised by Marchal, despite being presumably secondary to her artistic purpose. It could have a further very positive outcome. It may stimulate some munificent benefactor to fund scholars to delve into those French archives which shelter other documentary treasures and translate them to make

² Green, G., *Traditional Textiles of Cambodia*. Bangkok, River Books, 2003, p. 32.



them accessible to a wider, non-French-speaking readership. First on this reviewer's list would be the records of the Commission des Moeurs et Coutumes, compiled in the few decades prior to their deposition in 1950 as microfilm at the Asiatic Society in Paris. These record cultural practices as related by Khmer *achars* (ceremonial officiants), monks and villagers which, in subjects similar but different, could reveal much more to illuminate Khmer cultural studies.

Gillian Green

Vittorio Roveda, *Images of the Gods: Khmer mythology in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos*. Bangkok, River Books, 2005, pp.544, Bt.2,495.

Images of the Gods fills 548 pages and is illustrated with over 2,400 color photographs, with 856 digital photographs indexed in a database on an accompanying CD-ROM. An ambitious undertaking, it explores Khmer Buddhist and Hindu mythology and visual narrative through relief sculpture. Paintings, free standing sculpture and cult images are not within the scope of the study, though a few modern narrative sculptural compositions are included. In his introduction, Roveda states that “Khmer sculptural reliefs are the major artifacts that survive to document this nation’s history and culture from the 8th to the 14th centuries,” that sculptural reliefs are important beyond their aesthetic value as works of art, that they contain important information not only about Khmer culture and religion, but also that the development of narrative reliefs can aid in confirming the chronological development of art and architecture. He then briefly introduces many points crucial to the understanding of both religious art and its context: what is the meaning of mythology; how do reliefs function in their environmental context; and what visual parameters of Khmer mythology will be covered. The book is divided into three parts, beginning with a study of the making of images of deities and their planned placement, followed by an “attempt at a com-

prehensive overview of the visual narratives found not only in Cambodia, but also in Thailand and Laos, once part of the Khmer empire.” All the images used to illustrate this and other portions of the text are, wherever possible, in their original context, in situ on the temples on temple grounds, with very few examples depicted from museum collections. A conscious decision was made to exclude reliefs that were no longer in their original context. The last section is “an attempt to verify the impact of Khmer visual narrative on the indigenous culture of Thailand.”

The first section, Making Images of the Gods, explores the reasons for the creation of images of the gods and the processes involved, largely from the perspective of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of South Asia. This is followed by a discussion of a brief history of the development of the Hindu and Buddhist religions, especially as is relevant to Khmer belief and practice. The major deities and their principle symbols are clearly and concisely introduced, illustrated sparsely with images from Khmer temple reliefs. There are then subsections further discussing religious syncretism, local beliefs and animism, the Devaraja, the cult of ancestors, and historic personages who were deified. South Asian literary sources are then presented, with the great epics, the *Mahabharata*, *Hari-vamsa*, *Ramayana* and the *Puranas*, introduced in a direct and concise manner, again providing material essential



to placing Khmer temple reliefs in proper context.

The next section, Images in Khmer Art, covers the technical and physical aspects of images in Khmer art and architecture, beginning with the fundamental division of relief types into decorative or purely ornamental, heraldic or figures posed in a static or proclaiming/announcing attitude and not engaged in a narrative action, and narrative reliefs which depict an event or action that progresses in time and leads to or from another event. The location to which each of these relief types is usually associated is discussed and artistic elements such as composition and the establishment of pictorial space are introduced. A brief synopsis of the relationships between heraldic and narrative reliefs and architectural elements upon which they are placed follows, illustrating the interrelated development of these types of reliefs and the stylistic development of pediments, lintels, and pilasters. This is followed by a subsection on the history of scholarship concerning the function of the reliefs and their symbolism in terms of royal power. The structural symbolism of Khmer temples is introduced to further help the reader understand the reliefs in their original context. This section ends with a brief discussion of portraiture, use of landscape scenes, and the iconoclasm and destruction of Buddhist reliefs during the thirteenth century after the death of Jayavarman VII.

Section 3, Chronology of Khmer Images and Styles, consists of two clear

and well thought out timelines. The first presents the relative development of visual narrative by architectural position, illustrated with key monuments, on one page. The other, a three-page foldout, presents the reigns of Khmer kings relative to the artistic styles and key monuments of Khmer architecture in both Cambodia and Thailand.

Sections 4, 5, and 6 present the actual religious subjects depicted on Khmer temple reliefs. Section 4 and its subsections cover myths relating to both Vaishnava and Shivaite Hindu practice. The first subsection includes reliefs about the deity Vishnu and his avatars. The second subsection discusses myths about Krishna, the third the *Mahabharata*, and the fourth the *Ramayana*, the *Legend of Rama*. The fifth subsection explores myths about Shiva. The sixth subsection covers the lesser Hindu and Vedic gods. Section 5 covers the portrayal of mythical animals and demi-gods such as *ganas* and *yakshas*, and local legends in reliefs. Section 6 presents Buddhist reliefs, with the first subsection discussing the life of the Buddha, the second portrayals of the *Jataka* stories, the third Mahayana and Vajrayana images, while the sixth subsection explores heraldic images of the Buddha. Section 7 presents reliefs depicting historical and secular subjects, Section 8 tapestry or decorative reliefs, and Section 9 reviews reliefs where the identity or source of the subject matter is unknown.

All of the above sections and subsections are clearly and logically in the

same format and thus a discussion of section 4.4 on the *Ramayana* also applies to all. The *Ramayana* is introduced as it appears in the Khmer context, as well as how its presentation in Khmer art differs from that of South Asia. The seven *kandas*, or sections of the *Ramayana*, are then briefly outlined, presenting the themes that appear in temple reliefs. The specific events portrayed in Khmer visual art are then listed, with brief comments on how frequently they appear and whether they are more common in certain periods or regions. Each scene from the *Ramayana* that appears in Khmer art is then introduced, with Roveda's personal observations, as well as those of other scholars. The discussion of each scene is illustrated on the opposite or following pages with color photographs, often drawn from different monuments and periods of Khmer history. Where appropriate, examples from Thailand and Laos are also included. A CD symbol accompanied by image numbers at the bottom of the page indicates that additional images are available in the image database on the CD-ROM that accompanies the text. The story or deity is discussed with accompanying photographs, which provide a clear idea of the iconographic and stylistic variations that occur on Khmer temples in an easily accessible location, not at the end of the chapter, a photo section, or the end of the book. Rather than looking at the images on the CD-ROM as being inconvenient to look at while reading or while actually visiting temples, it should be viewed as a

bonus that a significant amount of additional material that could not be included in the book has been made available. While some readers might find problems with some of the author's interpretations of specific reliefs, the study of Khmer visual narratives is still a relatively new field and there are many subjects about which scholars are not yet in full agreement and which are open to discussion. What is most important is that this book makes available on the same page many reliefs that have never been published, are published in books which are out of print, or are not easily accessible.

Section 10: the Diffusion of Images, has two subsections, one covering the diffusion of images in Cambodia and the other in Thailand and Laos. While the preceding sections of the book present Khmer reliefs by subject, this section is more properly a guide to Khmer temples. It moves away from the book's stated core subject of Khmer mythology as presented in reliefs, to very broadly introducing individual temples, with their brief histories, descriptions of their layouts and free-standing sculptural programs, as well as very brief descriptions of the location and identification of reliefs.

The text concludes with Visual Narratives: A Summary, which raises specific questions about the narratives and suggests possible theories concerning the significance of deities holding a staff or *dander*, the reason for the paucity of Shivaite narrative reliefs, the presence of Buddhist reliefs prior to the



reign of Jayavarman VII, and the relationship of patronage and the development of narratives through the arrival of succeeding waves of fresh Hindu influence from South Asia. This concluding section is followed by the ground plans of some of the most important sites in Cambodia, as well as the temple complexes of Phimai and Phanom Rung in Thailand. A short glossary and bibliography conclude the book.

Attached to the rear cover of the book, as mentioned, is a CD-ROM with an 856-image database that is optimized for both PC and MAC operating systems. As tested on a PC, the format of the database permits searches on single or multiple fields and groups of images can be formed across different fields using a clear, logical command interface. Controls are in a column to the left. A window with thumbnail images selected is in the middle and the main window displays the image selected for study. At the bottom of the main window is the image information displayed in fields that are also used for searching the database, including: title, location, additional information, reference number, page reference, personage, and architectural object. Searches and image displays are quick.

The book is well conceived and is a valuable addition to any library on Southeast Asian art, as well as Hindu and Buddhist studies. There are a few problems which appear to have occurred in proof reading and editing, the most serious of which are that some of the references noted in the text, such as

(Moore, Stott, and Sukasvasti, 1996) on page 496 (a reference to *Ancient Capitals of Thailand*), are missing from the bibliography and, hopefully, this will be corrected in future editions. As already noted, the fields of Khmer art historical and religious studies are evolving and as epigraphical and textual sources are limited, some intriguing areas such as the synchronism between Shiva and the Buddha, as well as the meaning behind certain reliefs, have a far more complex scholarly dialogue surrounding them than can be addressed in the scope of a broad survey such as this. As a result, there will be disagreements over some of the theories presented or privileged, as well as some of the identifications, a fact that should not detract from the value of this work.

John Listopad

John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie, *History, Buddhism and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2006, pp.270, Bt.650.

After some two decades of isolation (or virtual isolation), Cambodia opened its doors to independent field research in the early 1990s on the heels of the United Nations-brokered peace settlement. Yet even before the 1970–75 civil war, only the anthropologists May Ebihara and Gabrielle Martel engaged in any extensive fieldwork in Cambodia, while philologist François Bizot, who was detained and miraculously released by the Khmer Rouge in 1972–73, began collecting heterodoxical Buddhist manuscripts in remote Khmer wats. With the recent opening of Khmer society, a number of younger scholars, in large part American students of (or encouraged by) cultural anthropologists Charles Keyes and Jane and Lucien Hanks and historian David Chandler, turned to Khmer studies. *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*, a well edited volume initially published by the University of Hawai'i Press in 2004, has brought together findings by a number of these humanities-oriented researchers.

A spate of political science studies also emerged on Cambodia that focused on the United Nations-sponsored peace-keeping process. These international relations-type studies distinguished themselves by being more or less oblivious of the local historical-cultural, social, and political realities, which rest

on a fluid bedrock of “religion,” that is the strength of the present volume. Most chapters in this book stem from articles originally presented in 1998 to an Association for Asian Studies panel on Cambodian religion. As in the neighboring Theravāda countries, religion in Cambodia cannot be categorized as a separate sphere of human activity, much less as a basis for effecting a western separation of religion (“church”) and state. In spite of decades of western secular-scientific official vocabularies, whether capitalist- or socialist-sponsored, religion in Cambodia since the social upheavals of the 1970s and 1980s has revived as a multi-dimensional way of life rather than as a religion in that western sense. In his introduction, editor John Marston affirms that religion in the social space of post-socialist Cambodia is anything but a static phenomenon removed from everyday reality, but is rather a “matrix of social change itself” that is “in a perpetual process of reforming and recreating itself”(p.1).

The convulsions of the 1970s and 1980s, a by-product of warring foreign ideologies, led to a settlement sponsored by the international community based on principles of liberal democracy. As tenuous as this template has proven to be, it has produced a free-market economy (whose downside has included the plundering of Cambodia's natural and public resources, the introduction of the drug and sex trades, a flagrant widening of the gap between rich and poor, and a consumer culture concen-



trated but not confined to Phnom Penh), greater freedom of expression, the appearance of a multi-party system, and the return of a marginalized monarchy. This veneer of western-type democracy also provided cover for the re-emergence of less perceptible (to the outsider) religious forces in the 1990s documented in this book.

After being subjected as a special target for destruction by the Khmer Rouge, Buddhism spontaneously sprang back to life at the grassroots level in the 1980s, albeit under the tight control of the Vietnamese-backed regime. Major restrictions on the practice of Buddhism were lifted in 1989 with the departure of Vietnamese troops, triggering the U.N. peace process between resistance factions based in Thailand and the Vietnamese-installed Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea. Villagers began in earnest to rebuild their wats and ordain their sons. A month after Prince Norodom Sihanouk returned to Cambodia in November 1991 at the invitation of the regime (now renamed the interim State of Cambodia), he restored the two Buddhist orders, the Mahanikāya and Thammayutikāya. Yet as this book attests, Theravāda Buddhism as part of Cambodia's cultural-religious matrix did not revert to a pre-1970s *status quo ante*, except at the official level where, for example, the 1960s administrative structures and curricula for monk education were re-instated. Far more revealing, for its human response to the conflagrations of the previous decades, has been the religious revival at the societal

level.

A strong thread woven through most of the essays is the phenomenon of a spontaneous upsurge in the 1990s of cultic and other supernatural and symbolic religious acts. This surge clearly spoke to psychic needs for healing and reconciliation — personal, communal, and “national” — in part as a way of finding meaning from the catastrophic events. Bertrand Didier discusses the revival of mystic *pāramī* (sacred power or energy) practices and their close relationship not only to Theravāda Buddhism but also kingship. Unlike in Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, the *grū pāramī*, or mediums, who risk losing their power if they are not moral exemplars observing the Five Precepts, frequently occupy ritual space in Buddhist temple premises. For the mediums, who “reveal the creative vitality that animates Cambodian society,” the *pāramī*, tellingly, “have come to make order among the living and the dead and to repair a collective trauma. ...These *pāramī* identities link political, social, and cosmological orders so that they can address the contemporary situations and expectations of Cambodian society” (pp.168,166). The 1990s also witnessed the re-emergence of religious asceticism within or on the margins of Theravāda Buddhism. The female ascetics, *yāy* or *tūn jī*, seeking *nibbāna* as described by Elizabeth Guthrie, are as a rule more disciplined and morally exemplary than the new generation of monks, few of whom harbor personal salvation as their goal. Marston's article

on *tāpas* (ascetics frequently claiming supernatural powers) cult movements suggests a linkage between individual and national identity, or “the practice of individuals exercising symbolic agency to rebuild the nation” (p.188). He monitored five prophetically linked building projects in the country, completion of which would augur an era of peace and prosperity. In a newer turn, the peace and reconciliation walks, or *Dhammayātrās*, organized in the 1990s by the spiritual leader of Cambodian Buddhism, Ven. Maha Ghosananda, are interpreted by Kathryn Poethig primarily as a modern, or postmodern, transnational expression of Buddhism with some indigenous roots. Translated as a “walk for righteousness,” this “reparative” public ritual nonetheless struck a deep, cathartic chord among the villagers touched by these annual pilgrimages. They were initially organized and always funded to a large extent by expatriate peace organizations which discretely remained behind the scenes. But the *Dhammayātrās*’ link to global issues embraced by “socially engaged Buddhists” (peace through non-violence, banning of landmines, environmental concerns) belied how the walk was ritually experienced and interpreted by many of the villagers. In the prophetic terms of the *Buddhamnāy*, they saw the appearance of the light-skinned Khmer “holy man from the west” coming back to save his people after the brutal reign of the *damil* (dark-skinned infidels). Hours before daybreak and well into the morning, thousands of

families lined the roads on their knees, palms clasped, next to buckets of lustral water (blessed by Pāli chants), with lotus flowers, candles, and incense ready to be sprinkled or washed by Ghosananda and the monks to “extinguish the fire of war” (p.197). It deserves to be noted parenthetically that while the monks led the processions, the driving force of the *Dhammayātrās*, both in terms of numbers and disciplined commitment, were the lay devotee nuns (*tūn jī*).

The unique features of the *Dhammayātrā* notwithstanding, it remains difficult to determine in an empirical sense the extent to which the above experiences, with their millennial undertones, were characteristic of Buddhism in pre-1970s Cambodia. The paucity of social research for earlier periods renders informed comparisons less than adequate. Millenarian ideas and movements in general, though, have been shown to flower in times of existential crises, when the social order is subjected to stress or radical change. The historical chapters in this volume, covering the so-called Middle Period (between the fall of Angkor and the onset of modernity) and the colonial period, when, respectively, the Cambodian polity was under the threat of extinction and the stress of adapting to westernization, suggest that magico-cosmological thinking, the breeding space for millennial movements, has been a constant of Khmer consciousness. Relying largely on iconographic evidence, cultural historian Ashley



Thompson postulates an association of the stupa with the Maitreya (“Buddha-to-come”) cult, where the promise of the Buddha’s return is seen not in terms of ushering in a new world but restoring the old through the consecration of a political renaissance by the *cakkavattin* king. She makes a persuasive case for Khmer cosmological order based on Maitreya as an attempt to re-establish sociopolitical order amidst the turbulences of the Middle Period. In a related article on the iconography of the Leper King (purportedly Jayavarman VII), Thompson associates the body of the statue, whose subject suffers for want of healing, with the body of the Khmer kingdom, where the idea of the king as a body stands metonymically for his kingdom, paralleling ways that the body of the Buddha is seen as integrating and ordering the physical world. She defines the “spectral structure of power” in Cambodia as consisting of the king’s natural (and infected) body/the body politic/the body of the *dhamma*, where the king as a sovereign standing in for the whole of society becomes through the principle of substitution a vehicle for healing power.

Both Anne Hansen and Penny Edwards, using primary documentary sources, deal with the colonial period, revealing in nuanced ways how Buddhism and the Khmer language were appropriated by a few modernizing Khmer intellectuals to construct a new Khmer identity embodied in the “nation”. Central to this project was the demystification of the Khmer cosmo-

logical Buddhist universe in favor of a rational worldview through, in part, scriptural literalism. One cannot help wonder to what extent this process of disenchantment, where the cultural nationalism which they illuminate later spilled over into political nationalism, a pattern starkly similar to what unfolded in Europe in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, played a role in unraveling the Cambodian socio-political order. The main value of this volume is in how it brings to light spontaneous initiatives in the social complexity of 1990s Cambodia to re-knit that order at the level of the psyche.

The editors anticipated lacunae in this book by choosing not to deal with non-Khmer religious practices (viz., the indigenous peoples, Vietnamese, Muslim Chams, and Chinese, who in all comprise less than ten percent of the population) and by not delving into a concerted effort since the mid-1990s to evangelize the Cambodian population. Outcomes of the latter project, led by American Protestant evangelical-pentecostals, many of them using Khmer-American converts, were in any case too early to assess in this admirable and in many ways path-breaking collection of essays on the underbelly of Cambodia’s still discordant political system.

Peter Gyallay-Pap

Harris, Ian, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*. Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 2005 and Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2006, pp.368, Bt 650.

Ian Harris' *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice* represents a substantial contribution to scholarly literature on Cambodia and a significant step toward putting Cambodia on the larger map of Buddhist studies. If one looks for a precedent for this volume, as a detailed overview of specifically Cambodian Buddhism, one must go back as far as Adhémard Leclère's 1899 volume, *Le Bouddhisme au Cambodge*, and it is the first book in English to attempt to treat Cambodian Buddhism in this degree of thoroughness. We are not likely to have another one anytime soon.

Harris draws on an impressive range of sources, which he brings together with intelligence and ingenuity. The book's extensive bibliography is itself a helpful tool. The book glistens with interesting, illuminating details, many gleaned from sources having little to do with Buddhism per se. He uses a straightforward chronological narrative that follows standard periodization from the Angkor period to the present, departing from the historical record to insert chapters on the "Territorial and Social Lineaments" of Cambodian Theravada Buddhism – basically, the kinds of things documented in ethnographies – and "Literary and Cult Traditions" – a way of combining discussion of the textual tradition with the esoteric Buddhism described by Bizot. As a guide to infor-

mation of time and place and forms of practice, attempting a degree of completeness, it will be an invaluable resource to students and scholars approaching the issue of Cambodian religion.

The most notable specific strengths of the book are perhaps that: 1) Harris' knowledge of Sanskrit and solid grounding in the historical schools of Buddhism and Brahmanism enable him to provide a nicely nuanced assessment of previous scholarship on the pre-Angkor and Angkor periods, often based on the evidence of inscriptions. 2) He has thoroughly assimilated the work of François Bizot on esoteric traditions of Cambodian Buddhism, a topic sometimes daunting to English-speaking scholars. Beyond his useful summary of Bizot's work, Harris succeeds in illustrating the influence of esoteric practices throughout different periods. 3) His field research on Buddhism and politics in the last 25 years has uncovered much important, fascinating information.

Any work as detailed as this is bound to have a few factual errors and scholars devoted to different aspects of Cambodian Buddhism may come up with their own lists. The section I was least comfortable with was that on spirit practices. The disparate secondary sources that Harris draws on here have led him to some mistaken conclusions: that *boramei* "spirits" are always female and that *arak* mediums are also always female. Many key Khmer terms are mistranslated, for example *rup* as "priest," *beisach* as "retinue," and *ktom*



as “shrine”. But these are relatively minor details that do not too greatly detract from the overall weight of the book.

The fact that Harris does not have a consistent transliteration system for Khmer has been criticized in a previous review of the book, and one risks being pedantic in dwelling on it. But it becomes more than an issue of transliteration when, as occurs several times, one finds the same word transliterated more than one way (*bray* and *priey*, for example). In the most embarrassing cases, there is some question as to whether Harris realizes that the two spellings represent the same word and the same concept. A Khmer word list at the back of the book, which gives a key to how transliterated words are written in Khmer script, should in theory have pointed to the problem and helped to solve it – but turns out to be only a partial list. This is something which should not be too difficult to resolve if, as one hopes, there are future editions of the book.

With the possible exception of the discussion on esoteric Buddhism that threads through the volume, the pleasures of the book are more in the richness of its details than what it reveals about the broader contours of Cambodian Buddhism – although any criticism of its overview must be prefaced by the acknowledgement that the mere fact of bringing together masses of information helps us to raise questions which we otherwise might not have been able to do. I am uncomfortable with the book’s reference to “the essential conservatism

of Cambodian religious traditions” (p.80) or that “Theravada Buddhism subsisted in a relatively steady state with no major shocks or shifts to the established religious order for several hundred years” (p. 227), a perspective that certainly has precedent in the literature but in the end is more a statement of what we do not yet know than a meaningful assessment of Cambodian history. Harris gives no hint of being aware of the post-colonial argument that colonial intervention was justified by a discourse of a changeless past. Needless to say, it is precisely at the moment of colonialism that, in Harris’ account, change begins to occur in Cambodian Buddhism. One cannot accuse Harris of taking a pro-colonialist position, but he also does not particularly challenge or rethink the assumptions of colonialist discourse or delve too deeply into the power dynamics of Buddhism under colonialism.

Since he sees a division between a timeless past and the changes beginning with colonial intervention, it is not too surprising that in the modern period he emphasizes the difference between “non-reformed” and “reformed” Buddhism, a dichotomy which perhaps makes sense in pre-Pol Pot twentieth century Cambodia, but is more strained as he applies it to Cambodian Buddhism in the wake of socialism, where the terms re-emerge but begin to signify different things. To say that Maha Ghosananda, the expatriate Khmer monk who organized peace marches in the 1990s, is in the same “reformed” category as the prewar patriarch Chuon

Noth, obscures more than it reveals. Similarly, it seems naive not to distinguish between the “non-reformed” Buddhism of remote rural areas and the self-styled “non-reformed” magical Buddhism of monks close to high-ranking politicians. Harris’ analysis does not go so far as to capture the irony that, after the years under socialism, the Buddhism that called itself “reformed” was often the most conservative, whereas some of the Buddhism which called itself “non-reformed” was more daring in its adjustment to new political and economic realities.

John Marston



Colin Poole, *Tonle Sap: The Heart of Cambodia's Natural Heritage*, photographs by Eleanor Briggs. Bangkok, River Books, 2005, pp. 172.

The Tonle Sap easily ranks as one of the wonders of the natural world. During the rainy season, the Mekong Delta, unable to absorb overwhelming volumes of monsoon run-off, blocks the Mekong's downstream flow, forcing the river to reverse its direction. The swollen waters pulse up the Tonle Sap River and into the lake itself, swelling it to five times its dry season dimensions. With the end of the rainy season, a tamer Mekong again flows freely to the South China Sea, draining the lake and returning it to its original contours.

For eons, this phenomenon has been vital to Cambodia's prosperity. As in ancient times, the lake holds the world's largest concentration of freshwater fish. It also nourishes the second of the country's two staple foods: rice. During the Angkorian period, the receding waters exposed moist, fertile soil, which was planted in the rice consumed by Angkor's population. Nineteenth century travelers like Henri Mouhot commented upon its fecundity and the wealth of flora and fauna of Cambodia in general.

Its ecology and the people who have depended upon its bounty comprise a fascinating story. This book's title, back-cover blurb, and table of contents with evocative sub-headings—Mountains and Forest, the Ancient Environment, Living on the Lake, the Fishing Lots of

Battambang, Core Areas of the Biosphere Reserve, the Tonle Sap River and Phnom Penh, and the Cambodian Mekong—enhance the reader's expectation that he will traverse this bounty and learn of the interrelationship between the people and their lake.

He soon discovers, however, that the title is a bit misleading. While the Tonle Sap forms the core of the book, the author wanders the length of Cambodia and even up the Mekong to China in a text that meanders through a consideration of the sad state of the forests and wildlife in the regions along the Mekong. The reader encounters disheartening tales of the demise or impending extinction of tigers, crocodiles, waterbirds—nearly everything except the fish. The text also embraces a cursory consideration of the lifestyles of the people who harvest these beasts for sustenance and sale.

The author brings considerable credentials to his task – Director of the Asia Program for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – and has worked and traveled in Cambodia for eight years. His travels have imbued him with an understandable pessimism about the future of the country's natural heritage under the onslaught of burgeoning population, lack of economic alternatives, absence of vision or political will, and lack of control (or unwillingness to intervene) over its resources by Cambodian authorities.

While laudable for its wealth of detail and while its heart is in the right place, the book suffers from a frustrat-

ing lack of organization. Because the author fails to provide a roadmap, the reader wanders all over the map (literally and figuratively) of environmental abuse in the past 30 years of Cambodian history (whose abuses of humans, even today, far outweigh those imposed on the landscape).

The book's principle problem is that the author fails to integrate the various elements. As a result, the reader is left with a bag of bits without a structure, an interpretation, or a greater comprehension of the culture that depends upon the Tonle Sap's—or Cambodia's, for that matter—largesse, nor the mindset that is hastening its environmental destruction. Worse yet, the text soon devolves into a laundry list of abuses more appropriate to a United Nations 'State of Wildlife in Cambodia', a dry litany of environmental destruction. Instead of evoking the magic and wonder of the Tonle Sap, thereby making us want to save it, the reader is banged on the head with numbing detail of disappearing nature. It is all valid, but we have read it elsewhere about most of the world's wild areas. A few anecdotes would have particularized it for Cambodia, and driven home the point in more poignant manner, integrating the reader into what is happening and how it affects individuals, rather than standing back and surveying from a great distance.

What the book needs is a foundation stone. It begins with a consideration of Phnom Kulen, then, a short while later, mentions in passing Angkor's stone reliefs depicting a plethora of wildlife and

waterlife at Angkor. It then digresses to a section on the tigers of Mondulkiri on the Vietnamese border; one of many boxed stories which disrupt the flow. A few pages later, it devotes an entire chapter to Angkor and its historical note in the region. The book might better have started here and followed a chronological progression, illuminating the tragedy of disappearing species by discussing early in the book what was there in the past.

These types of digressions are repeated elsewhere. On page 64, the author provides a somewhat lyrical setting evoking the magic of the Tonle Sap, and the reader begins to gain an appreciation of the lake's wonder. But soon the author tugs the reader in a new direction. On page 74, he considers the history and fate of the freshwater crocodile. It then moves to a consideration of introduced pests like golden apple snails and African catfish, and then continues with a two-page discussion of herbal pests like mimosa pigra, water hyacinth, and on to a new port project and the problem of immigrants. There, the chapter ends. The reader turns the page to find another boxed story, only one page long, devoted to...crocodiles.

The book is also riven with asides and non-sequiturs. For example, in the middle of a discussion of the wildlife black market trade, there appears a paragraph on artifact looting which is not germane to the text. These asides appear to have been dropped on the page haphazardly without consideration of their importance or relevance, and with-



out integrating the diverse elements into a whole. The tragedy is that they mar one's appreciation of the author's scholarship.

Throughout, one seeks an analysis of root causes beyond grinding poverty and official corruption. At the very least, one expects a summation and perhaps a prognosis and prescription. Instead, the final chapter is devoted to the Mekong dolphins and the dangers they face. One turns the page and abruptly finds oneself in the book's footnote section. Thus, there are no concluding thoughts, no analysis of how to remedy a dire situation, and not a single mention of the Tonle Sap the book title led the reader to assume would be the subject, since the dolphins inhabit the Mekong near the Lao border.

In the end, the reader emerges unclear about what makes the Tonle Sap unique. With no blueprint of how the situation might be rectified, the book becomes a tract rather than a treatise, seemingly reflecting WCS hand-wringing impotence—evident in every page—in finding solutions to halting the depredation. The reader can only conclude that the situation is hopeless and beyond remedy, yet the photos superbly capture the lake's teeming human and natural life.

Readers seeking a comprehensive exploration of how the stories of natural resources and people are interwoven are in for some hard work. Perseverance has its rewards, but the task would have

been considerably lightened with greater care in its presentation.

Steve Van Beek

L. E. Bagshawe (tr.), *The Kinwun Mingyi's London Diary*. Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2006, pp.412.

This book involves two men well known for their contributions to our knowledge of Burma. The first, U Gaung, otherwise known as the Kinwun Mingyi (actually a title, not a personal name), a scholar-official of pre-conquest Burma (and collaborator with the colonial regime afterwards), travelled to the West twice (London and Paris) in the early 1870s, made meticulous notes of his travels, and introduced the Burmese court to Europe. The second, L. Euan Bagshawe, is a former colonial officer (Indian Civil Service from 1941 until independence) and later employee in the Rangoon office of Imperial Chemical Industries until nationalization in 1964 (see the foreword to *The Maniyadanabon of Shin Sandalinka*). After a subsequent thesis written on colonial education in Burma at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London), Bagshawe embarked on a series of useful translations of some of the most significant texts of the Konbaung period (Shin Sandalinka's *Mani-yadana-bon* and U Po Hlaing's *Raza-dhamma-thingaha-kyan*) and colonial-era, retroactive compilations of data on it (U Tin's *Myanma-Min Ok-chok-poun-sadan*).

The translation offered in the present volume is that of U Gaung's diaries of his journey to London and back in 1872–1873, as published in two volumes under the editorship of Pe Maung

Tin in 1953–1954 (another edition, used by the present reviewer, was published in 1908 and edited by U Ba Gun). Bagshawe's is not the first translation. An earlier translation of sorts was made in 1974 by the Burmese nationalist historian Maung Htin Aung in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, but Htin Aung's version amounts to a summary rather than a formal translation. Bagshawe, who completed his own translation before he read the former, has made use of the very useful introductory matter provided by Htin Aung in his 1974 publication. In addition to Gaung's diaries, Bagshawe has collected a number of articles on the embassy, printed in various newspapers in the British Isles, that help to shed more light on the events discussed.

Gaung's travels had a major impact on the Burmese court and on Burmese intellectual trends. Until then, the Burmese had only vague notions about the world outside of Asia (and even large parts within it). Newspaper accounts, drawings, information gathered from European visitors, and so on, certainly provided some data, but it was really only with the circulation of Gaung's reports of his travels that this information could be brought together within a new conceptual framework. This was especially so with distances travelled, giving the court a much more realistic idea of the dimensions of the globe and Burma's place (and size) on it. Nevertheless, it is easy to overestimate the impact of Gaung's records, as they would suggest, from the numerous



sentences pregnant with intimations of surprise at the scale and organization of Western industry, that this was something completely new to the Burmese mind. It was not. Burmese had become knowledgeable about such things during visits to government installations in Calcutta (and earlier through texts on Western science) over the previous four decades, and indeed the Burmese themselves had already begun to experiment with Western machinery. What the reader might miss in what appears to be evidence of Burma's backwardness in the face of Western superiority is that this text is really about a quite apposite development—for the first time, Burmese (aside from a few youths taken away by missionaries to Europe for religious training) had left Asia on their own initiative to build connections with the West and to gain more information regarding it. It was a major moment in Burma's opening up to the outside world.

Bagshawe provides a very thorough historical introduction, although focused on British-Burmese relations (however, one would have expected much more on Gaung himself, such as personal contacts with the British on the frontier where he was posted and his personal connections to Mindon), in pp. ix-xlvi. The translation itself represents a significant amount of labour on Bagshawe's part. The original text is not always easy to translate into English, especially since Gaung was describing many technical subjects for which Burmese terms did not yet exist and

attempting to make sense of things whose internal mechanisms he did not understand (the mechanical Turk, for example, on p. 392). It is also a very lengthy text. For these reasons it is commendable that Bagshawe undertook this project rather than focus on many of the shorter texts available from the precolonial period (although these too are important for their own reasons). The result is a very rewarding text, a pleasure to read and informative with every page. As with Bagshawe's other translations, the original editor's introductions have been retained and translated.

The only real drawbacks to the book, and these are minor in view of the translator's greater contribution, are that (1) his footnotes are extremely informal and (2) more research could have been conducted regarding proper names. This reviewer suspects that comments made in the footnotes may be the original, unadulterated jottings one takes down on paper in the process of translation. Footnote 108, "Literally 'iron head fillet'—don't know what it means" should not have remained in this form in the published work. Although minor, sentences of this kind pepper the footnotes throughout and it gives the reader less confidence in the translation, as if the whole remains a work in progress. On a similar note, the identification of Western proper names, the people U Gaung met, the companies he encountered, and the places he visited are too frequently given with a parenthetical question mark. Again, the reader hesi-

tates to place much confidence in the identification in question. Yet these questions could have been resolved with a little more effort at the identifications. Perhaps this problem can be rectified in later editions of the work. A problem perhaps attributable to the publisher and not to Bagshawe is the index, which misses key topics in the text and sometimes organizes them in confusing ways (one can only find automata under 'Crystal Palace,' not independently, as it should have been).

The present volume is an enormous boon to scholars working on precolonial Burma, although it may be especially useful to a growing number of scholars, not trained in the Burmese language, who seek to do comparative work on Burma and other South-East Asian societies. The present translation, just as was the case with Bagshawe's earlier translations, thus provides a bridge into the understudied, yet critical, Konbaung period. The present reviewer highly recommends the volume for scholars and students alike.

Michael W. Charney



Justin Watkins, ed., *Studies in Burmese Linguistics*. Canberra, Pacific Linguistics, Australian National University, 2005.

For many reasons this book is welcome. One is that the Burmese language, its amazing specificity, its richness and variety of styles, and its long life as a written language, deserved such a remarkable set of contributions. Another reason is its dedication to John Okell. He has constantly promoted this language in various forms and through all sorts of activities. For instance, when mixing with a Burmese itinerant theatrical troop, he heard the literary language of plays throughout whole nights on end, and during the day noted the players' colloquial speech. He became expert in esoteric poetry, in laborious translations from Pali (*nissaya*), and in dialectal Burmese, thanks to his fieldwork in 'restricted' areas, etc.

Useful indications are given at the very beginning concerning the general structure of the book. The list of abbreviations and conventions includes the transcription and transliteration of Burmese. Then come subtle analyses of the contributions in James A. Matisoff's preface, and the genesis of the work is explained in Justin Watkins' foreword.

The contributions are arranged logically. First come those concerning phonology, then syntax and verb semantics, linked together by (the last paper on syntax) 'The verb "give" as a causativiser in colloquial Burmese'; then follow discourse and stylistic register, a

new approach particularly appropriate for Burmese, where the meaning is so dependant on the context. More classical are contributions concerning old Burmese, but they are enlightening for the history of the language. The last part concerns lexicography, with a clear paper pointing out the specific difficulties of Burmese in that field. References are grouped in a general list at the end.

In the introductory part, the transcription of consonants and vowels appears as simple as it could be, systematically using IPA international symbols. For tones, specifically Burmese, John Okell had already used (1969) an economic — and very Burmese — method: one tone unmarked, two others each marked by an accent. But here, Okell's accent for the creaky tone indicates high tone, his accent for high tone indicates low tone and an additional mark under the vowel indicates the creaky tone. Is this progress? The transliteration is certainly such. It is used in the Library of Congress as well as internationally and improves the system of *Epigraphia birmanica* since it allows a better rendering of the Burmese writing: for instance, simple and double 'ñ' are now distinguished. Constant use of both systems throughout the book facilitates one's reading. A note at the end of Justin Watkins' foreword invites 'readers to regard the terms Burmese and Myanmar as equivalent and interchangeable', so the title of the book is justified.

Turning to the different contributions, D. Green's 'Word, foot and syllable

structure in Burmese' applies to Burmese the theory of optimality, a constraint-based theory. The author describes carefully the segments of the language, from syllable to phrase; his approach allows him to detect constraints specific to Burmese. His distinction between major and minor syllables is equally fruitful. Describing competing constraints, he points out how the canonic form of Burmese syllables is shown in loanwords. However, the Burmese writing of 'chocolate' is surprising (p. 24). Usually the last syllable was written *-lak* and not *-lek*. It may be a case of orthographic evolution, showing the constant evolution of languages, especially Burmese.

Andrew Simpson and Justin Watkins' paper, 'Focus in Burmese: an investigation and experimental study of information structure and prosody' is a systematic and well-documented study. Information was provided by talks with Burmese speakers and recordings, and completed by the remarks and comments of experienced Birmanophones. Experiments were conducted with native speakers and the help of acoustic analyses. The investigation 'Concerning the area of Eastern Asia' might be less new than is stated in the introduction to this contribution: René Gsell, a Thai specialist and phonetician, was perfectly aware of the importance of prosody (intensity, duration, intonation and pause) in languages of Southeast Asia. Such an investigation in Burmese is promising and calls for a larger exploitation of prosody *versus* structure.

D. Bradley's 'Reflexives in Literary and Spoken Burmese' shows reflexives as a category of terms amazingly recurrent in written and spoken Burmese. They are studied from the twelfth century up to the present. On the way, one learns that the literary reflexive *mi mi* is a reduplication of 'person' in Tibeto-Burmese, and is reminded that pause has a grammatical role in Burmese. Even if one hesitates to admit that reflexive 'body' and the syntactic particle *-ko* have the same etymon, one can appreciate how comparative Tibeto-Burmese studies and historical background benefit from such an investigation.

V. B. Kassevitch's 'Syntactic and morphological markers in Burmese: are they really optional?' insists on the various possibilities of marking syntax and morphology without using markers. Possibilities are word order, word-class specification, and context. Despite a constant avoidance of redundancy – 'a typological feature of Burmese' for Kassevitch – the choice, between markers or other possibilities, is far from being free. Let me quote a personal experiment: deletion of an agent marker after a personal name, which functioned as a substitute of the pronoun 'he', changed the meaning of that name to 'I', an unpredictable change in a 'mark-drop language'.

In 'The verb "give" as a causativiser in Burmese', Kenji Okano illustrates a new trend in Burmese language: the multiplication of versatile verbs. They are functioning now either as pre- or post-head verbs. Formerly 'give' fol-



lowed the head-verb and carries still more meanings in this position. Concerning the possible Mon origin of the use of 'give' as auxiliary, the author has doubts, for historical reasons.

In her contribution, Uta Gärtner gives a complex answer to the title: 'Is the Myanmar language really tenseless?'. The Burmese language is said to be 'tenseless', according to a concept of tense based on Indo-European languages; 'however, Myanmar turns out to be ambiguous with respect to tense (as well as in other respects)'. Her analysis, illustrated by numerous examples, shows a subtle use of numerous verbal particles and grammaticalised lexical items, following or preceding the verb. This environment might indicate aspect, modality and even tense. The indication is clear only if the verbal syntagma is embedded in a context. The great number of examples is very useful. They enlighten the complexity of the subject: in several of them, where the statement refers to past tense, the final marker is *-may*, the marker of supposition most often referring to the future.

There is a clarification of this complexity in F.K.L. Chit Hlaing (Lehman)'s paper: in 'Towards a formal cognitive theory of grammatical aspect and its treatment in Burmese', he demonstrates the imbrication of time, aspect and modality, basing his theory on analyses of Burmese examples. It becomes clear that an event already past, or a previous state, therefore both carrying the factual modality, might be enunciated as a supposition, by the speaker, in a cognitive perspective.

Alice Vittrant's 'Burmese as a modality-prominent language' is near to Lehman's theoretical position. She insists on the pervasiveness of modality. Her demonstration is based on a precisely delimited corpus of sentences, collected and controlled 'in the field' and placed in their situational context. The prominence of modality would, perhaps, appear more clearly if the possibility of aspectual signification were considered.

Paulette Hopple's 'Topicalisation in Burmese expository discourse' is the first paper among three concerning 'Discourse and stylistic register'. In fact most of the papers in the book indicate which style their examples belong to and in which kind of discourse they appear; but here, the influence of discursive and stylistic register on grammar is the target of the contribution. Hopple concentrates her study on one linguistic subject: topicalisation, on one text only, the National Day text, expository discourse, and one style: modern written Burmese. Burmese is one of those topic-prominent Tibeto-Burmese languages, where the topic to comment relation has more importance than the subject to predicate relation (Kassevitch already signalled that the presence of a grammatical subject is not necessary in Burmese). In fact, implications are numerous in Burmese. Let us quote P. Hopple's realistic 'cultural' remark: 'the unstated knowledge implied by the writer...can leave second language readers of Burmese perplexed'. Less fruitful is the choice of a single text, of the 'expository' genre,

where the style is more official than representative of modern written Burmese.

San San Hnin Tun also, in 'Discourse particles in Burmese', writes about the situation-dependant nature of particles; she, also, focuses on only two particles: two only. She chose them because the speaker's or the writer's feelings show through them, their use is sometimes characteristic of a speaker, and the addressee himself is cognizant of their presence. But their emotive function appears only when they are used in connection with certain other particles. This subtle analysis is based on various examples, belonging to written and spoken styles, but also on the knowledge a Burmese linguist has of her native tongue.

U Saw Tun's 'Writing Modern Burmese: an examination of the status of colloquial Burmese' has the same advantage. The contribution begins with a clear history of the matter, at least from 1965 onwards. In fact the gap between written and spoken Burmese alarmed Burmese writers long before. But in 1965 began the organized modern attempt for solving the problem, arguments for and against the renewal of written Burmese spread, and the government entered the controversy in order to extend its control in the linguistic field. In spite of consultations with specialists of the Burmese language, the authorities were not always expert, and fashion dictated many things, including errors: unsuitable literary markers were substituted for proper ones used in both styles. U Saw Tun evidences these

errors and deplores the introduction of spoken vocabulary in literary texts and of sophisticated literary terms in the spoken language. Numerous examples help to understand his criticisms.

Rudolf A. Yanson in his 'Tense in Burmese: a diachronic account' re-examines the problem of tense in Burmese. For him, in the modern language the semantic content of the final markers does not justify their assimilation to tense markers. As for old Burmese, the numerous inscriptions show that the verb was obviously tenseless. Concerning classical Burmese, the author demonstrates how innumerable translations from Pali provoked an evolution of ancient Burmese verbal markers, which eventually modified their grammatical category and led to the introduction of a few Pali grammatical elements (such as the optative suffix).

Ohno Torru's contribution, 'The structure of Pagan-period Burmese' gives the reader an impressive amount of information. It is perfectly organized and easy to consult, sources are listed at the beginning, and an index of the grammatical forms follows the text. The main source is the collection of rubbings of inscriptions published between 1972 and 1983. The numerous examples quoted have been deciphered by the author. As Burmese writing was not yet settled in Pagan, the same word was written in different forms. The list of vowels, the words where they appear and the study of phonology show an important evolution of the Burmese vocalic system: modern *ui* was *uiv*, *eiv*, *i*,



modern *e* was *i*. In fact it is still *i* in Arakanese and in Marma, dialects of Burmese. As for the consonants, the author assumes that aspirated and unaspirated stops were contrasting, but exemplifies the contrast between voiced and voiceless consonants only with loan words. In modern Burmese it is still difficult to find contrasting voiced and voiceless consonants. As one might expect, contrast between aspirated and unaspirated consonants is seen also in two categories of verbs: causatives and non-causatives. Interrogation marks (for a 'yes or no' question), *hi* for 'to be' and negative sentences ending with the verb of Pagan Burmese were still used in the Marma dialect this reviewer collected in 1951.

Annemarie Esche, in 'The experience of writing the first German-Myanmar Dictionary' speaks of her 'arduous enterprise' as somebody who could not help undertaking it and who loved to do it. She begins with a detailed presentation of her sources, *Myanmar Dictionary*, *Myanmar-English Dictionary*, and many others, evaluating their respective advantages, and includes standardized orthography, short examples, indication of the pronunciation, and botanical names of plants. As for the lexicographical problems, equivalency of terms comes first; it is already difficult when the translation is between two European languages, but it is worse to try to find equivalents between two different cultures: the translation might become an explanation. Orthographic reforms in Myanmar were another problem, and

the choice between written and spoken language another one. One of her final remarks is to accept the fact that 'such a work...is never finished'.

All these contributions have painted a vivid portrait of Burmese language, a mysterious entity with a long history and a strong personality.

Denise Bernot

Judith L. Richell, *Disease and Demography in Colonial Burma*. Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2006, pp.xiv + 327, tables, maps, glossary, bibliography, appendices, index.

As Ian Brown explains in his foreword to the book, Judith Richell died in 1999 at the age of fifty-six while enrolled in the doctoral programme in History at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London). Although close to completion, school regulations prevented the posthumous submission of her thesis, leaving publication as the only available route to circulating this valuable study. As a result, the author was absent in the final editing process and thus we do not know exactly what changes would have been made or indeed how the final volume would have looked. A review must thus examine the book within this context. As the reader will find, Richell's voyage into Burmese demography and public health is innovative and much needed.

In addition to an introduction and conclusion, Richell's book is divided into six chapters covering (1) "Numbering the People," (2) "Birth Rates and Death Rates in Colonial Burma," (3) "Infant Mortality," (4) "The Family and Childhood in Colonial Burma," (5) "Adult Morbidity and Mortality and the Development of Public Health in Burma," and (6) "The Determinants of Mortality: Nutrition and Malaria in Colonial Burma." The appendices also include compilations from the census data on the numbers of Chinese, Mus-

lims, and Hindus in Burma covering the decades between 1911 and 1931. Scattered throughout the text are very clear tables and graphs and some very useful maps.

The book can generally be divided into two broad sections. The first section, consisting of Chapters One and Two (pp. 1–84), is heavily quantitative, with the discussion focused on the problems of locating reliable statistics, calculating more reliable figures, and identifying the boundaries (time and space) of Richell's case study. The lack of a substantial general body of work on demography in Burma (previous work on Burmese demographic history has been limited to the works of A. R. Vyatkin and R. M. Sundrum) presented Richell with both a challenge and an opportunity, both of which she fully undertook. On the one hand, the lack of substantial secondary literature forced Richell to undertake the onerous task of sifting through censuses and related reports for detailed statistics and, on the other, the paucity of literature allowed her a free hand in shaping a demographic study on her own terms. For Richell, a number of factors weighed heavily in favour of a more circumspect analysis of Burmese population statistics. Difficulties in discerning between indigenous and immigrant Muslims were avoided, by excluding Arakan from the study. The necessity for reliable government data also favoured Lower Burma and several districts just to the north, due to the consistency and longer duration of colonial record-keep-



ing. Thus, much of Upper Burma, including all the hill (and thus ethnic) areas, as well as most of Tenasserim, were also excluded. Ultimately, Richell's case study focuses on areas of the Irrawaddy Delta that coincidentally share certain features: (1) predominant sedentary agriculture, (2) "Burmese" culture, and (3) Theravada Buddhism as the prevailing religious orientation (p. 6). Richell similarly had to reject several sources of information that would have otherwise seemed useful. The annual reports from 1862–1865, for example, were subject to severe underestimation, both by local headman and colonial administrators alike, while the 1872 and 1881 censuses, both covering years prior to the annexation of Upper Burma, necessarily only referred to Lower Burma.

The second section of the book, which include Chapters Three to Six, while rich in statistics, becomes much more qualitative in its analysis than in the first section and this discussion is focused on public health (as it impacts demography). In Chapters Three and Four, Richell carefully considers how child-bearing women's nutrition and breast milk feeding, infant food supplements, and various infant diseases (smallpox, malaria, venereal diseases) affected infant mortality rates, as well as Burmese attitudes toward child-bearing and child-rearing. Richell also documents the British public health response, which was deficient in part because of hesitance to appoint female doctors (p. 125). Chapters Five and Six focus on adult mortality, including the impact of

diseases (cholera, plague, smallpox, and malaria) and nutrition levels. In this context, Richell also provides information on the emergence of the colonial public health department. Richell makes an important contribution in her argument that the much feared epidemic diseases of cholera, smallpox, and the plague were the cause of only ten percent of adult mortality (p. 169). Richell turns to other causes of adult mortality, such as diarrhoea and dysentery, which actually saw a steady and significant decline in the late colonial period, while deaths from respiratory disease saw a roughly comparable inverse trend. The major factors in adult mortality, Richell finds, were actually two problems for which the colonial reaction was either very slow or almost non-existent. First, chronic and widespread malnutrition among the Burmese population made them vulnerable to all sorts of health problems, especially beri-beri. Second, under the guise of "fevers", malaria laid low many Burmese to an astounding degree, made worse by commercial factors and civil engineering projects. Curiously, however, the classic study of this problem in Sri Lanka (Rhoads Murphey, "The Ruin of Ancient Ceylon", *Journal of Asian Studies* 16.2, 1957), which also made allusions to this problem for the classical and early modern era Burma, has escaped this discussion and the bibliography. In any event, "fevers", of which fifty percent of deaths were due to malaria, Richell concludes, constituted the single greatest threat to the indigenous population in terms of deaths caused by disease (p. 258).

There are minor drawbacks. Even without being able to draw up statistics comparable to the Irrawaddy Valley districts, more attention probably should have been paid to Arakan, Tenasserim, and the hill areas, if only in terms of qualitative data and if only to include the bulk of non-Burman ethnic groups in a study that seeks to examine health and demography in colonial Burma. The study also does not make use of Burmese-language material, which may have otherwise enriched the discussion of problems in gathering health data or yielded light on how Burmese viewed the shaping of public health around (and for) them. Even so, the present volume represents a very important contribution to the field and one that should stand the test of time.

The book presently under review is a solid, comprehensive examination of public health in colonial Burma that must be read by any researcher working on this period and place. The breakdown of chapters into clearly outlined sub-topics of public health makes it an especially effective case study for comparative studies of the state of health in Asia generally. This book is highly recommended as well for undergraduate and postgraduate courses focused on the more human side of Southeast Asian History.

Michael W. Charney



Emma Larkin, *Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop*. London, John Murray, 2005, pp.vii + 232.

Emma Larkin is a journalist with an M.A. in Asian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies. In the present volume, Larkin explores the state of contemporary Burma and locates its past by following a trail pinned to major points in the experiences of George Orwell during his stay in Burma in the 1920s as a colonial policeman. Orwell's numerous books, including *Animal Farm*, *Burmese Days*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* painted a bleak picture, in the age of totalitarianism in which they were written, of the control of man by man and the suppression of the individual and the human spirit. Seventy years on, Larkin finds, Orwell's writings are just as relevant to the Burma of today, a "much more terrifying landscape ... a real-life *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where Orwell's nightmare visions are being played out with a gruelling certainty" (p. 4). Moreover, Burma remained relevant to Orwell's perspectives until his last days for, as Larkin explains, Orwell had left at his deathbed plans to write another book, one which would revisit his memories of Burma. In the present volume, Larkin in one sense completes a journey Orwell died too soon to make.

Between the Prologue and Epilogue are five chapters devoted to (1) Mandalay, (2) The Delta, (3) Rangoon, (4) Moulmein, and (5) Katha, all points following Orwell's experiences in the

country. Throughout the chapters, Larkin introduces the reader to ghosts, Burmese Orwell fans, teashop intellectuals, an unwitting bicycle trip into a military compound, and everywhere stories of personal tragedy. To these two narrative strands is added a third, a summary of Burmese historical events placed at different points in the book to make the reader aware of the broader significance of what Larkin sees or hears. The book is not, and was not intended to be, an academic study, but relatively light reading. Even so, Larkin's impressions of contemporary Burma, seen through the framework provided by Orwell's life, provide a potent reminder to readers sitting comfortably in the West of just how badly off the contemporary Burmese are. As such, Larkin's book is not so much a new contribution as it is an updated contribution to an extensive field of travel literature regarding contemporary Burma, all of its parts seeking to relay the same basic account of Burma. Larkin's book is more intelligent than most and the emphasis on Orwell (for, by the end of the book, one clearly sees that this is really more a story of Burma than of Orwell), helps to make the volume as a whole engaging reading.

There is, of course, a problem with depending too much on the information in the book. Many people in this book exist in a realm of anonymity and thus are unavailable for verification, probably due to the need to avoid retaliation by the state. Some vague statements in the book may mislead readers unfamiliar with Burma's past: "Not long after

Burma became independent from Britain in 1948, a military dictator sealed off the country from the outside world, launched 'The Burmese Way to Socialism' and turned Burma into one of the poorest countries in Asia" (p. 2) is rather sweeping, even if one does accept that 1962 happened not long after 1948 (fourteen years), and the suggestion that emancipating local businesses and trade from Western control amounted to isolation from the outside world misunderstands both the Ne Win years and the role of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia (and other Communist bloc states) during the period. More striking is Larkin's observation that "it is not easy to get English-language books in Burma" (pp. 7–8). This is a major misrepresentation, as one quick jot down to Pansodan or 37th Lan, or hundreds of shops in Rangoon, Mandalay, and elsewhere, would quickly reveal. Larkin's discussion of the changing of place names in Burma also fails to discuss the full dimensions of the issue. Myanmar, for example, is not a "new" name as Larkin suggests (p. 11), but rather a form of the original name (Myanma) that was grossly corrupted by Europeans (Burma). There is also good reason why Mandalay was unchanged: it was one of the examples of indigenous names that the British failed to change beyond recognition, hence it was retained, and this should have been stressed as it supports the government's claim, dismissed by Larkin, that this was simply a move to delete "colonial tags".

Although unnamed, the very respected and prolific Burmese historian

referred to (p. 32) appears to be the late Professor Than Tun. Even if not, Than Tun's experience can suggest a word of caution of reading too much into the "erasure" of identity plot. Than Tun's experience, for example, as bad as it was, was not like that in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as suggested by the unnamed writer quoted by Larkin in reference to the equally unnamed historian. In Than Tun's case, government censorship did not amount to a permanent erasure of his identity, but on and off harassment that continually relaxed after tempers had subsided. Certainly, this was a grave, difficult time for Than Tun. Nevertheless, comparing these kinds of experiences to the Orwellian nightmare does not do the latter justice, nor does it give accuracy to the experiences of such men (and women) as the former. This is not to rob critics of the regime of the legitimacy of their goals, but rather to suggest that such inaccuracies do not do anyone any good in attempting to understand Burma accurately.

Such problematic observations aside, the volume remains an interesting perspective on the state of the country. It is a well-written book, stylistically, and is certainly accessible to the general readership. The general readers will find that the numerous stories in the volume will heighten the attraction of travel to Burma, to see for themselves what Burma is really like.

Michael W. Charney



Susan Conway, *The Shan: Culture, Art and Crafts*. Bangkok, River Books, 2006, pp. 212, 300 photographs and colour illustrations.

This is a beautiful book. It is beautifully produced, and beautifully written. It is worth buying for the illustrations alone: not just for the colour photographs of Shan arts and crafts, architecture and textiles, but also for the wonderful collection of historical black-and-white photographs that the author has assembled. But the book also makes a valuable and fascinating scholarly contribution to a little studied and poorly understood part of the Tai world.

Susan Conway is that rare combination of both artist and scholar. She is a curator of exhibitions (most recently on Lan Na, Shan and Siamese Nineteenth Century Court Dress at the Jim Thompson Centre in Bangkok), and exhibits her own art work. And she is a Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London who has published widely in scholarly journals. Her previous book, *Silken Threads Lacquer Thrones*, was about the court textiles of Lan Na. So this volume on the Shan is a logical progression.

As in *Silken Threads Lacquer Thrones* and her catalogue for her Bangkok exhibition, in this volume on the Shan Conway brings together politics, social status, and culture (from architecture to textiles and dress to crafts such as lacquerware and silver) in order to show how one reinforces the other, how the politics of status were

served by dress and the display of artistic finery.

The importance of dress in defining social status is not much appreciated in the present age of dark suits and discreet cocktail dresses. Nor are fine arts items of public display by presidents, prime ministers or company CEOs in their dealings with each other. But both were well understood by the Burmese in promulgating their sumptuary regulations defining exactly what each tributary ruler had the right to wear and display. Conway shows us how dress mattered for the Shan, as both a badge of identity and a statement of political association. To flaunt Burmese sumptuary laws, for example, would be to claim autonomy — or at least the protection of a more powerful suzerain, such as China.

Conway begins by setting the scene, something that is not easy to do for such a geographically and ethnically diverse area as the Shan states of Burma. Her way in through maps and landscape works nicely. Where she encounters difficulty, as anyone would, is in the definition of ethnic groups. Here several criteria intersect: geography, altitude, linguistic affiliations, and culture. This is the same difficulty encountered in trying to categorize the ethnic diversity of Laos. No single criterion will work, but to apply a combination only multiplies diversity.

Conway lists four groups in the Shan region: Tai, Wa, Kachin and Karen, which in the glossary are defined purely in terms of overlapping geographical location, but later mentions a fifth, the

Palaung. This does not get us very far. None but the Tai figure much in the text, which is understandable: this is a book about the Shan. But difficulties arise with the Tai, four groups of which for Conway constitute the Shan (a term none of them use). All overlap, and none are limited to the Shan states. The largest group, the Tai-Yai (also known as Tai-Ngio), are also found in Lan Na, but for Conway comprise the Shan proper. But she also uses the term to include the Tai-Khoen (also found in Lan Na) and the Tai-Neua and Tai-Lue, both of whom spill across from the Sipsong Pan Na.

To these overlapping geographical relationships can be added historical ones resting on claims to priority. Conway refers to George Young to sort this out, but Georges Condominas would have been more useful. Politically Conway rightly focuses on the *muong/meuang*, an institution finely tuned to variations in the balance of power and status, but most confusing in its multiple shifting relationships. These drove the British nuts, but if they had learned to read the language of court dress, they might have been less confused.

Muong structure and relationships as expressions of Tai political culture are impossible to understand outside the context of the Theravada Buddhist worldview. Here Conway should certainly have said more. 'Karma' does not even warrant an entry in the index (though 'merit' does). And since it is court dress as indicative of political status that she is interested in (and very

good on), the basis of Tai political culture really does deserve elaboration.

Conway does, however, cover a lot of ground — from the organization of Shan society to the role of women, the social importance of Buddhist monasteries, spirit worship and astrology, villages and palaces, and back to women again. A separate chapter is devoted to the history of the Shan states. But as Conway lists 43 such states (five comprising the northern states and 38 the southern ones), her task is well nigh impossible in a few pages. Sensibly, she deals with the Shan as a group, differentiating only a few major states, and examines their relations with Burma, the upper part of which was ruled in the fourteenth century by Shan kings, with Lan Na and Siam, and with the Sipsong Pan Na and China. With colonialism comes a clearer narrative, and some wonderful photographs.

The strength of *The Shan* lies in the next four chapters on male and female dress, court life, and arts and crafts. Here Conway is in her element, making full use of archival sources, travel memoirs and historical photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The photographs of Burmese court dress are extraordinary. Both for men and women, this resembles nothing so much as samurai armour and looks quite uncomfortable compared to the dress men and women wore even on more formal occasions back in their home states.

The rigidity of Burmese sumptuary laws and extreme consciousness of status led to some innovative use of pat-



terns and materials by Shan princes, thus adding to the amazing variety of male dress. Rank was of supreme importance, indicated by multiple collars, chains and umbrellas held over princes in procession. Beside such symbols the later British honours system of sashes and medals was but a pale reflection!

Male dress in particular had political implications. The prince of Muong Sing, for example, whose territory then covered both banks of the Mekong, sometimes wore Tai-Lue dress to indicate his identification with the Sipsong Pan Na, and sometimes a Chinese dragon robe as a tributary of China. In the end, the more substantial part of his realm was included in French Laos.

Female dress was more variable, reflecting the cross influence of ethnic elites, or marriages arranged to cement political relationships. The wives of a Shan prince might be Wa or Karen or Palaung, as well as Shan. Each would wear ethnic dress on appropriate occasions, to reflect both ethnicity and political relationships.

The greater versatility in female dress sometimes reflected fashion, incorporating new silks from China, or styles of embroidery using silver or gold thread, or machine-made lace from Europe. Conway also explains how female dress reflected religious belief. Thus Buddhist women always wore skirts with waist bands, so as to differentiate waist from easily polluted hem, which was not a consideration for animist Karen, Kachin, or Wa.

Conway describes different female dress styles by state, though only ten are

mentioned. One wonders what was the basis of choice? Perhaps only the availability of photographs whose provenance could be identified. Beautiful examples of Shan fabrics (both indigenous and imported), skirts and embroidery are illustrated, most from private collections.

In a fascinating chapter on princes and palaces, Conway shows how the architecture of palaces, their furnishings of elaborate thrones and decorated shrines, their gilded couches and artistic treasures, all proclaimed the status of the ruler. Drawing on the descriptions of early explorers and officials, Conway reveals the life of the palace. Servants, who lived outside the palace compound, were summoned by drum. Food was brought from kitchens in containers. But what did they use as toilets? There is no mention of wardrobes of the kind found in medieval European castles.

There is a drawing by Louis De-la-porte, the artist of the French Mekong Expedition, which Conway reproduces, showing the prince of Muong You receiving the French explorers. Around him are placed his finest possessions, which attest to his status. These include lacquer ware, repoussé silver work, ceramics and inlaid wood carving. For these Shan craftsmen were famous. Conway devotes a chapter to Shan arts and crafts, giving prominence especially to weaving, embroidery and appliqué, but also revealing the finer points of metalworking and the preparation of palm leaf manuscripts.

The final chapter is on trade. The Shan were great long-distance traders.

Conway discusses trade routes and the items traded with China to the north and Burma to the south. But Shan traders also made their way down the Mekong, through the Lao territories as far as Cambodia. Many village traders were women, who played a far more significant economic role (as did women all across the Tai world) than women in China.

In the end it was trade that undermined Shan arts and crafts, especially weaving, by introducing cheap mass-produced materials. Tourism has cheapened the quality of the Shan arts once crafted for princes. And the Burmese military has put an end to Shan court life. Conway records a world that is sadly lost, and she does it remarkably well.

Martin Stuart-Fox



Anthony Grant and Paul Sidwell, eds, *Chamic and Beyond: Studies in Mainland Austronesian Languages*. Canberra, Pacific Linguistics, Australian National University, pp.xvii+271, A\$63.00.

With his twin specialisms in Chamic and Mon-Khmer, no human on earth is better situated than Paul Sidwell to team up with Anthony Grant, the author of nearly half the material in this volume, to edit a collection of articles representing the cutting edge of research into the problematic Chamic branch of Austronesian. Chamic resists the relatively more straightforward classificatory paradigms of other branches of Austronesian because of its typological proximity to Mon-Khmer and other mainland South-East Asian language families. The mechanisms, processes, stages and details of this typological shift are, put simply, complex.

Mark Brunelle's 'A phonetic study of Eastern Cham register' aims to address the question of the Mon-Khmerisation of Eastern Cham in a phonetic context, by examining the phonetic detail of the Mon-Khmer-style registrational contrast in Eastern Chamic, uncontroversially derived from a loss of initial consonant contrasts, possibly as a result of contact with Mon-Khmer languages.

Brunelle investigates whether or not the Eastern Cham registers have evolved further into lexical tone as a consequence of coda-consonant weakening and subsequent deletion. He finds first that Written Cham labial and palatal coda consonants typically debuccalise

to homorganic glide+glottal stop sequences (or laryngealised homorganic glides), while Written Cham final coronal, velar and glottal stops are usually articulated as such. The experimental work is reported in detail. The 3-D graphic representations of the effects on fundamental frequency of final consonants are particularly well-conceived, though a range of other phonetic correlates of final consonants are also explored, with supporting statistical analysis. Especially valuable is the complementary perceptual test, which suggests that the register contrast is perceived from a complex of acoustic cues.

'The Effects of Intimate Multidirectional Linguistic Contact in Chamic' is the first of two chapters contributed to the volume by Anthony Grant, one of its editors. This is a substantial article of some 70 pages which examines the socio-historical reasons for the relatively much greater divergence of Chamic from its Proto-Malayo-Chamic roots than Malayic languages. Grant provides a considered and digestible account of a highly complex set of linguistic influences on Chamic languages brought about through contact with various languages at various times, and relates phonological changes in Chamic in specific terms to events during two millennia of Chamic speakers' social history. This article builds in particular on the work of Graham Thurgood's (1999) article *From ancient Cham to modern dialects: two thousand years of change*.

Grant's second article, 'Norm-referenced Lexicostatistics and the case of Chamic' assesses the merits of various

lexicostatistical methods, contrasting 'horizontal' with 'vertical' varieties. He discusses the shortcomings of Isidore Dyen's (1965) 'horizontal' pair-referenced study *A lexicostatistical classification of the Austronesian languages*, in which all forms are compared to all others, for determining higher-level interrelationships between branches of Malayo-Polynesian. Grant endorses instead 'vertical' norm-referenced lexicostatistics, a methodology which compares many forms to one historical norm (which must have been reconstructed independently of the languages under examination). Applying his chosen method to Chamic, using the 'default' Austronesian word list drawn up by Robert Blust (1981), Grant finds that Acehnese is as similar to more conservative Chamic languages as Malay is. The findings are discussed at length and the statistical data are presented in full in tabular form.

Peter Norquest's 'Word Structure in Chamic: Prosodic Alignment versus Segmental Faithfulness' is an optimality theoretic account of the stages in shift from light disyllables to heavy monosyllables, changes wrought on Proto-Malayo-Chamic word structure under the influence of Mon-Khmer, as described in Graham Thurgood's (1999) monograph *From ancient Cham to modern dialects: two thousand years of language contact and change*. For each stage in the process – first from Proto-Malayo-Polynesian to Proto-Malayo-Chamic, thence to Proto-Chamic and on into diverse Chamic daughter languages

(looking in particular at Kwara'ae, Hlai, Rotuman and Tsat), Norquest provides a readable and accessible summary of the facts, illustrated with abundant examples, and then applies the OT framework.

Pittayawat Pittayaporn's article 'Moken as a Mainland Southeast Asian Language' looks at the variety of Moken spoken at Rawai on Ko Phuket, Thailand. Pittayawat's main argument is that Mon-Khmerisation is too blunt a theory to account for the 'mainland' features observed in Moken phonology, and assigns these features instead one of three categories: the influence of loanwords, internal restructuring or conservative Proto-Austronesian word structure. He justifies his argument in terms of a language-contact model (based on Thomason and Kaufman, 1988 and Ross, 2003) which characterises Moken speech communities as internally close-knit, but yet multilingual and maintaining open relationships with the speech communities nearby. On the one hand the internal tightness of the community assures the continued use of Moken as the primary language, but with inevitable interference from imperfect learning of mainland South-East Asian contact languages.

Paul Sidwell's article 'Acehnese and the Aceh-Chamic Language Family' examines the position of Acehnese relative to Malayic and Chamic generally. In several areas, Sidwell raises as many questions as he seeks to answer. For instance, he finds a phylogenetic model with a process of separation and branch-



ing an implausible explanation for the relationship between Malayic and Chamic. He posits the presence of an unattested and extinct 'substratumised' branch Mon-Khmer in Chamic. Sidwell's conclusion, after detailed discussion of Thurgood's (1999) treatment of Acehnese and extensive discussion of the complex historical-linguistic context, is a reconfiguration of the higher branches of the Malayo-Chamic tree, with an Acehnese-Chamic subfamily yielding Acehnese and Proto-Chamic, in preference to Thurgood's (1999) classification of Acehnese as 'Chamic'. This in itself calls for much re-examination of the data.

Graham Thurgood seems to be looking over the shoulder of the reader throughout much of this volume, but he makes an actual appearance, along with Ela Thurgood, in the last article of the volume: 'The Tones from Proto-Chamic to Tsat [Hainan Cham]: Insights from Zheng (1997) and from Summer 2004 fieldwork.' The Thurgoods chart the development of suprasegmental phenomena in Tsat from Proto-Chamic. The present-day five-tone system is described in terms of its diachronic origins, identifying laryngealised allotones of four of the phonological tones conditioned by glottal finals. The creaky phonation of the glottal allotones is clearly demonstrated by well-illustrated instrumental analysis.

One of the strengths of this book is that it contains, on the one hand, work which builds on, clarifies and adds detail to our existing understanding of

Chamic languages. On the other hand, in particular in the work of Pittayaporn and Sidwell, the book challenges our understanding, providing a very valuable safeguard against the fossilisation of unjustifiably 'received knowledge', while so many facts, both present-day and historical, remain unknown, or at least unclear or in doubt. The significance of Thurgood's (1999) monograph, alongside other major contributions to the field, remain paramount throughout the volume, but the work contained in this book collectively represents a major next step in Chamic scholarship.

Justin Watkins

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Anthony Reid, ed., *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*. Singapore, Singapore University Press, in association with Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2006, pp. xxx + 397.

The initial versions of the fifteen chapters of this book were originally discussed at a conference in Singapore in May 2004 when, as the editor points out in his preface, 'the prospects for a negotiated consensual solution to the long-standing problem of Aceh appeared particularly dark' (xiii). Aceh's prospects looked even worse when, at the end of that year, the province was hit by a huge earthquake and tsunami (which took the life of one of the contributors, the Acehnese historian, M. Isa Sulaiman, to whom the book is dedicated). Yet, most extraordinarily, a little over half a year later representatives of the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) met in Helsinki and signed an agreement that brought an end to the fighting of the previous three decades.

The authors of the chapters in the first half of the book, which are concerned with pre-colonial and colonial history, were not forced by developments during 2005 to re-consider their perspectives, but the authors of the later chapters now face the challenge of trying to accommodate the successful outcome of the peace talks into their generally gloomy pre-tsunami prognoses. On the basis of most of these chapters, readers could not have predicted that at least part

of the 'Aceh Problem' was on the brink of being solved. The chapters, the editor reminds us, were undergoing final editing at exactly the time that the Memorandum of Understanding was being signed in Helsinki. Several of the authors have added a few hurried paragraphs to take account of the peace negotiations, but the reader gets the impression that these are just 'add-ons' that are difficult to integrate with the pre-2005 discussion. This reviewer, I should add, sympathizes very much with their predicament because he too shared their earlier pessimism and was surprised by the eventual outcome.

The early chapters trace developments in Aceh up to the Indonesian revolution against Dutch colonial rule. The authors of these chapters have their own concerns, but together they provide a coherent overview of a long period. Edwards Mckinnon surveys archaeological evidence indicating early Indian and Chinese trading contacts during the first millennium and he notes Muslim tombstones from the early twelfth century. It was only in the early sixteenth century, as Peter Riddell explains, that an Islamic Sultanate began to emerge and develop, in the seventeenth century, into a major regional power extending into the Malay peninsula during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Aceh's Islamic identity was strengthened, although customary law (*adat*) continued to coexist with Islamic law. During the last six decades of the seventeenth century the Islamic state of Aceh was ruled by a succession of women until the Sher-

iff of Mecca issued a *fatwa* outlawing that practice in 1699. Anthony Reid outlines the expansion of Aceh's trade, especially with the Ottoman empire, and then with Europeans. But by the nineteenth century Aceh was seeking wider international contacts as the Dutch threat loomed larger, culminating with the war launched in 1873 which eventually subjugated Aceh. Lee Kam Hing notes that Aceh's external links were more with the British Straits Settlements than with Batavia and asks why it was not able to survive as an independent entity like Siam, which was balanced between the French and the British. He finds the answer in the 1824 Treaty, which left the Indonesian archipelago within the Dutch sphere while the Malay peninsula was left to the British. Anthony Reid then takes the story through the Dutch invasion of Aceh and eventually to Indonesia's war of independence. Finally Teuku Ibrahim Alfian provides a link with the contemporary chapters in his discussion of the concept of Holy War in Acehnese history.

The second half of the book is concerned with the 'Aceh Problem', particularly the resistance to Jakarta that began under the leadership of the Darul Islam (DI) in the 1950s and continued under GAM from 1976 to 2005. Isa Sulaiman's chapter traces the evolution of Acehnese resistance to Jakarta from Darul Islam (DI) to GAM by focusing on the life of Hasan di Tiro. DI and GAM were separate movements, one aiming to achieve an Islamic Indonesian nation while the other sought indepen-

dence from Indonesia, but they had common roots in Jakarta's treatment of Aceh in the 1950s. Initially an Indonesian nationalist, Hasan worked for the DI and advocated federalism, but the DI's defeat led him eventually to launch GAM in 1976. As Isa points out, 'the nationalist movement started by Hasan di Tiro did not emerge suddenly in 1976 or the 1980s, but developed gradually' (139). The continuity between DI and GAM, despite their different objectives, is also a theme of Edward Aspinall's chapter. Although he agrees that New Order military brutality was a major factor driving GAM's demand for independence, he points out that such brutality was also common in the 1950s. Although military outrages did not turn DI into a separatist organization, they produced 'the first signs of the process which decades later gave rise to full-blown ethnic separatism' (151).

William Nesson even more strongly rejects the view that GAM was primarily a reaction to brutal repression during the New Order. He suggests that GAM's struggle for independence was 'a product of longer-standing historical sentiments that stretch back to the fight against the Dutch and of even deeper, centuries-old feelings that the Acehnese have about their unique place in the world' (185). GAM is strong in the north and east of Aceh not because of social disruption caused by New Order exploitation of oil and natural gas in those areas but because 'the north and the east were historically the heart (not the entire body) of Acehnese resistance from



Dutch times through the PUSA[All-Aceh Union of Ulama]-led social revolution and DI' (186). This argument, however, does not make it easy to explain GAM's post-tsunami acceptance of a peace agreement without independence. Damien Kingsbury and Lesley McCulloch's study of military business in Aceh faces a similar question. Like many scholars, they explain that the military is dependent on extra-budgetary funding obtained from its own business enterprises and various forms of extortion. Thus, 'the economic interests of the military explain, at least in part, the government's reluctance to pursue a political solution to the problems in Aceh' (211) and 'To facilitate such profiteering and enrichment, the military now have a vested interest in maintaining a level of conflict that justifies their presence' (212). These were reasonable judgements before 2005, but we now need to ask why the military accepted the peace agreement. Why is the military not actively undermining the agreement as it did in the cases of the earlier cease-fire agreements in 2001 and 2003? These questions could not, of course, have been anticipated by the writers when they first wrote their chapters but, as the peace agreement becomes increasingly embedded, further explanation is needed. Michelle Miller shares the pessimism of these authors. Her chapter analyses 'special autonomy', especially the special autonomy law adopted in 2001. This law never generated much enthusiasm in Aceh and virtually lost any meaning

after the introduction of the military emergency in 2003. In a Postscript written after the tsunami but before the peace agreement, she expected that 'the capacity of civilian institutions to govern in Aceh will continue to be constrained by the interests and priorities of the Indonesian military' and that 'the TNI [military] is unlikely to leave any time soon' (311).

The remaining three authors are more detached in their approach. Kirsten Schulze carefully examines the military and political strategies of both GAM and the Indonesian government. On the government's side she notes that 'between 1977 and 2004 there was not one successful attempt at addressing the primary causes of the conflict - economic and social inequalities, the feelings of exploitation, and the loss of dignity and of the space for political, cultural and social expression ...' (264). On the GAM side, she mentions 'increasing criminalization of some of its rank and file as well as the ethnically and politically motivated targeting of civilians.' (265). Aleksius Jemadu warns that 'it is too simplistic to depict the Aceh problem as a conflict between a sovereign state and a separatist movement.' (275). To understand government policies it is necessary to examine rivalries between political and economic interests in Indonesia's new democracy. He therefore discusses the shaping of Aceh policy during the Habibie, Wahid and Megawati presidencies. Writing as the informal talks were just beginning in Helsinki, he asks 'How much of the

current tendency towards peaceful conflict resolution is based on the pragmatism of some Indonesian political leaders and businessmen whose main interest is the lucrative business of Aceh's post-tsunami reconstruction projects?' (288). (Being somewhat pragmatically inclined myself, I would add 'If it works, why not?'). Like Jemadu, Rodd McGibbon also dismisses the tendency 'to pit Aceh against Jakarta in a simple vertical conflict between centre and region' and argues that one of the keys to the conflict is 'the failure of successive local elites, and their Jakarta-based patrons, to establish leadership claims over local politics' (315–6). His chapter provides a masterly detailed survey of the rise and fall of local elites from the colonial period to the present and, unlike most of the contributors, ends on a guardedly optimistic note.

This book covers a lot of ground and provides a comprehensive overview of Aceh's history and recent politics. It also includes many insights and information on the events of recent years. The peace agreement, reached in the totally unexpected circumstances caused by the tsunami, have brought into question some of the judgements on the recent period, but the authors can hardly be blamed for that. Maybe they will be spurred to bring out an updated edition.

Harold Crouch



Elizabeth Morrell, *Securing A Place: Small-scale Artisans in Modern Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2005, pp.220.

This book is of greater relevance than its title suggests. Findings of fieldwork in South Sulawesi are pertinent to small-scale enterprises throughout Southeast Asia. It is concluded that regional art and craft production articulate transformations and paradoxes. Although such production can ensure continuity of local material culture and strengthen roles for artisan producers, economic continuity and strength will be more difficult to achieve.

The author's lengthy professional preoccupation with two of Sulawesi's major population groups, the Bugis and the Sa'dan Valley Torajan, entailed fieldwork from 1994 until 2004. Hence, both research ventures are longitudinal studies.

The author is commended for her admirably executed ethnography, which appears well balanced between strong empathy and critical assessment. The studies have in common the geographical location on Sulawesi's southwestern peninsula, and the distinctions, within each population, between self-employed, home-based artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs operating with employee artisans. Most other aspects are in stark contrast, including historical cultural traits, present-day religious affiliation, residual impact of deep-rooted social organization, gender roles, hori-

zontal mobility, tourism impact, demand for handicrafts, and tendency toward modernity.

This review is structured to attract a large readership, also rationalized by referring to the author's emphasis on how small-scale artisans secure a place in their homeland's dual economy.

To get to know the Bugis artisans, it is suggested to read, first, chapter 4, about "The Sound of Life". It was 'recorded' in two locales, one filled with the voices of independent, self-sufficient women weavers, and another where the rhythmic clicking of non-mechanized looms operated by employee weavers was resounding. The author introduces 13 weavers of different socio-economic status, some of whom weave out of economic necessity, or to generate supplementary income, or for lack of formal employment matching professional qualification, or else for the pleasure of creating elaborate designs.

There is a stark contrast between self-employed backstrap weavers and weavers employed by enterprises operating a non-mechanized loom known as ATBM, short for *Alat Tenun Bulan Mesin*. Labour divisions and production methods are determined and controlled by entrepreneurs. Four entrepreneurs are introduced, including one woman, which reflects the dominance of male owners. With minimal working capital, they use synthetic fibres to avoid high initial costs, and to maximize income through bulk production.

Most weaving and associated activity is generated in the surroundings of

Sengkang, officially promoted as the “City of Silk”. Two streams of silk weaving have emerged, which can be classified as “independent-traditional” and “entrepreneurial-modern”.

Almost exclusively, women operating the “independent-traditional” stream avoid competition by producing either complex brocaded textiles or simpler sarongs in brilliantly colored patterns. They are backstrap weavers using silk to produce the *sarung Bugis* of heavy filaments and strong texture. Their “phonic quality” gives wearers the enjoyment of the sound made by silk cloth as they walk.

The “entrepreneurial-modern” stream is dominated by operators of workshops in which weaving and associated tasks are separate activities performed by different employees, mostly producing synthetic textiles. Thread preparation, dyeing, painting, and tying are largely done by women, in a system of dispersed labour, where no single worker acquires the skills to complete the process from concept to finished textile.

Drastic changes are reported in chapter 5, “Commerce, Autonomy, and Creativity”. The officially planned revitalization of the silk industry in Wajo, an historical kingdom and now a district, was envisaged as a small, specialized handloom manufacture of high-quality fabrics. As of 1995, Wajo plans were appropriated by officials interested in economic growth and by entrepreneurs. Independent backstrap weavers, however, retain a niche that holds potential for extension. In the method of altering

a pattern known as *seribu semacam*, “from one come a thousand”, one basic motif offers opportunities for innovation through modest experiments and gradual changes. Despite the success of these artisans in creating a place in the market and earning enough to support themselves, independent weaving activity is still widely dismissed as insignificant to regional and national economic development.

Whereas the silk industry has been publicized by regional and government developers to project a corporate image of progress arising from highly respected traditions, the textile industry is dependent upon low wages and on structures of employment that restrict development of the individual capabilities and resourcefulness which characterize small-scale household weavers. In the political economy of development, the status accorded to silk textiles is greater than the status accorded to the maker, and the artifact takes precedence over the artisan.

An historical overview is given under the heading of “Identity, Silk, and Status” (chapter 2). Discussed are patterns encapsulated in quadrate domains; interfacing between center and periphery; the question of concord or competition; the *sarung Bugis* as signifiers of commerce; the influence of Islam; the interplay of silk, Islam, and power; and the importance of textiles as political emblems.

Upland Toraja population groups are different in fundamental aspects. Again,



the reviewer recommends to make oneself familiar, first, with “The Artisans” (chapter 8). The author herself emphasizes that “the objects created by Torajan artisans are well known, yet the artisans themselves remain anonymous”.

The author distinguishes the categories of fine artists and souvenir makers, producers of antiques made to order, ceremonial sculptors, women engaged in carving, entrepreneurs dealing in products created by artisans, and woodcarvers as artists.

Examples of fine artists and souvenir makers are the members of one particular family of full-time, creative and innovative artisans, who observe market trends yet do not use an assembly-line production process.

The category of producers of antiques made to order is personified by a sculptor who sees himself as an interpreter of Torajan tradition responding to market demand. His portfolio comprises reproductions of sculptures such as antique ancestral figures, known as *tau-tau*, many sold as antiques, which conform to measurements of cargo containers that demand more precision than do the customary funerary carriages.

The exact opposite is a ceremonial sculptor who produces mainly funerary figures used by Torajans in their rituals. He rejects primitivism and creates modern *tau-tau* memorial figures. In one of the many paradoxes found in ethnographic art, this sculptor polishes with commercial varnish the ritual objects

created for use by Torajans to express modernity, while he artificially ages the objects produced for the tourist consumer to express tradition.

Women engaged in carving represent the lowest socio-economic level of Torajan artisans who, as a group, are among the poorest. Most carve small wooden and bamboo objects for the souvenir industry. Need for income has locked many women into production of the low-cost, high-turnover sector, restricting the development of wider skills.

The exemplary entrepreneur dealing in products created by artisans values creative autonomy, and subcontracts work so that carvers produce a number of objects in a limited range. They retain control of their own production. A young, successful woodcarver is representative of artists who create landscape panels depicting images of Torajan daily life.

Supporting artisans, redefinition of artifacts, influence of the external market, the innovators, and tradition and transition are addressed under the heading of “Innovation and Transition” (chapter 9). Most supporting artisans have been forced into the souvenir industry by lack of alternatives. However, the exponential expansion of labor and production in the limited tourist art market restricts incomes.

The influence of the external market has bordered on the bizarre. Most fine art works commissioned by foreign dealers adhere to notions of tradition which are defined largely by Western

concepts of Torajan authenticity. A major influence is the body of printed material. The photocopy machine has become a standard tool for artisans, needed to copy photographs of objects in museum catalogues and books brought by visitors intent on ordering reproductions of artifacts. Photocopies impose notions of historical veracity governed by consumer desire for the primitive and exotic.

Tradition and transition run in parallel. Externally, international attention has been a catalyst for the assertion of Torajan identity in transition. Internally, the rationale for elaborate ceremonies, and for the building of *tongkonan* houses, ancestral physical foci for the kinship groups, and rice barns, remains within the institutions and structures of Torajan society, and tourism provides a means of generating income to fund such traditional activities.

The author identifies and describes “An Emerging Art Industry” (chapter 7). It has produced traditional objects for local consumption; re-integrated syncretism in the form of such items as screen-printed textile banners; and developed commercial fine art objects as well as replicated antique objects, souvenirs, popular arts, decoration objects, and popular music; as well as fostered cultural assimilation solely through finely detailed sculptural human figures.

Modern artisan activities are performed by bead workers, weavers, and woodcarvers. The majority are independent workers who carry out all stages of production. Weavers produce sarongs

and other textiles in brightly colored commercial cotton yarn, woven on backstrap looms. During periods when demand is strong and production steady, even the poorest artisans are able to attain their individual levels of self-sufficiency.

An overview of cultural roots and traits is heralded with what reads like a Torajan artisan’s exclamation “We Have No New Art ...” (chapter 6). The author stresses ancestral connections, traces social networks, describes modes of articulating ideals and the interfacing of Christianity and the material culture of animism, refers to “Toraja Handmade”, and characterizes changing aesthetics. In the author’s words, “while urban artisans’ creations are removed from the souvenir objects made by peasant artisans, this small group has paradoxically introduced primitivism through non-traditional techniques requiring higher levels of technology. They have capitalized on the Western appreciation of primitivism, which they utilize to establish themselves within the modern world.”

A peculiar feature of the presentation of the two studies is the inverted overlapping of the contents of the opening section, entitled “Artisan in Society” (chapter 1), and the concluding section, entitled “Negotiating Change” (chapter 10). At the outset, the author presents a single, elaborate introduction, coupled with a summary of select findings, instead of raising questions or expressing assumptions.

Some such salient findings appear to be of significance overall. Thus, the sur-



vival strategy is propelled by “resourcefulness, tenacity, and resilience”. The apparent contradiction of invoking tradition to achieve progress is overridden by local concepts of modernization as an evolutionary mechanism. Above all, “the motivation to express ethnic identity is so compelling that it shapes modern creativity.”

In drawing comparisons, the author stresses the following points: distribution of familiar crafted objects results in standardization; cultural uniqueness is collective and articulated through imagery which is distinctively Bugis or Torajan; Bugis identity is upheld in that “tradition provides the foundation, rather than the medium of modernization”; Toraja identity is based on “tradition that acts as a medium of modernization through visual practices of animist belief, reinforced by tourist concepts of exotic primitivism”.

To sum up, the author’s introductory, albeit not explicit, research proposition is confirmed in the concluding section. The question as to how small-scale artisans fared in “securing a place”, or “which place” rather, is answered through the author’s words that “most artisans return profits to the family rather than the business, and they prioritize self-sufficiency over entrepreneurial ideals”.

The author’s critical appraisal of implementation as well as management of related governmental plans is encapsulated in two among several such evaluative inferences. She concludes that “for most artisans, production is

merely a stop-gap activity which does not offer the relief from unemployment that planners have hoped to achieve”. In general terms, she stresses the point that “assuming the premise that economic development should provide improved access to a range of services, including education, nutrition, and health, then it is clear that artisans have largely been excluded from the development process”.

The author also deplors the official disregard of the dynamics of contemporary culture owing to official prioritizing of the “exotic” and “primitive”, which has restricted the evolution of modern fine arts.

Among the author’s numerous, highly useful references is one to Thailand’s modern handloom silk industry. Her longitudinal study of how small-scale artisans have fared seems to convey a lesson for Thailand’s current One Tambon One Product project.

Karl E. Weber

Vu Trong Phung, *The Industry of Marrying Europeans (Kỹ nghệ lấy Tây)*, translated, with introduction, by Thúy Tranviet. Ithaca, NY, Cornell Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2006.

This book is a translation of the 1930s reportage written by a famous Vietnamese writer, Vũ Trọng Phụng. Western readers have only recently been able to enjoy Vũ Trọng Phụng's wit and sharp observations. *The Light of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics*, published in 1996, includes Greg Lockhart's translation of a short piece by Vũ Trọng Phụng entitled *Cóm thầy cóm cô* (translated as 'Household Servants'). More recently, since 2004, thanks to the efforts of Peter Zinoman and Nguyen Nguyet Cam, foreign readers have been able to absorb themselves in the adventurous exploits of Red Haired Xuân, the protagonist of the novel *Số Đố* (Dumb Luck). Alongside these now takes its place Thúy Tranviet's translation of *Kỹ nghệ lấy Tây (The Industry of Marrying Europeans)*.

By the time the Vietnamese writer Vũ Trọng Phụng was born, in 1912, the French had firmly established their colonial presence in Indochina. The penetration of Western culture and thinking facilitated through the French *mission civilisatrice* resulted in an inevitable clash of cultures and fostered fundamental changes in the political, social and cultural consciousness of the Vietnamese population. For a writer with keen observation skills, razor-sharp

wit and a heightened sense of scepticism, Vietnam at that time provided a setting saturated with endless potential. The interaction between different cultures is an intricate process. While some may view it as an enriching journey of discovery, a source of excitement and anticipation of change and new discoveries, for others it becomes a barbaric act of destruction, which pollutes and annihilates indigenous values. In early twentieth century Vietnam these opposing attitudes to modernization were epitomized by a generational divide. For the older generation of traditional scholars, the radical challenges to the pre-existing cultural paradigms were painful and irreconcilable; not only were the new values ushered in by a conquering colonial civilization, in an aggressive manner, with military power propped up by a mighty political and administrative apparatus, but also, most importantly, these changes defied the core of their philosophy of life. The younger generation, already born into the new regime, on the other hand, found it easier to adjust to the changes and embrace them. Although Vũ Trọng Phụng opted, more often than not, for satirical renditions of the clash between tradition and modernity in Vietnam, his humorous dialogue, amusing characterizations and use of parody conceal a sombre social critique and expose the complex nature of the human character.

Vũ Trọng Phụng was a prolific writer who managed to cram a remarkable literary career into his short life. He lived most of his life in the heart of



Hanoi in the area known as the 36 Guild Streets, a buzzing commercial part of the city. This lively neighbourhood placed him at the epicentre of social transformation: a colourful panoptic of people from all walks of life — traders, craftsmen, prostitutes, beggars, petty criminals, servants, rickshaw pullers, street peddlers, gamblers, opium addicts, domestic servants and their masters — provided the writer with sufficient examples of how the people of Vietnam adapted to the changing social order.

For most of the twentieth century, with the exception of a few years during the 1950s, the work of Vũ Trọng Phụng remained marginalized and even banned in Vietnam. The Vietnamese communist authorities suppressed the author's significance by eliminating him from official histories of Vietnamese literature. They objected to his lack of revolutionary zeal, to his rejection of communism (he refused to join the Party) and to his refusal to use his talent to promote the revolutionary reconstruction of Vietnam on its road to socialism. Censorship of his work meant that he remained unknown to the younger generation of Vietnamese. It was only after 1986, when the political climate was liberalized and censorship softened following the introduction of renovation (*đổi mới*), that he was rehabilitated and the younger generation had the opportunity to acquaint itself with his work. Vũ Trọng Phụng would have enjoyed the paradox inherent in his posthumous transformation from a

banned author marginalized by a political regime to a stalwart of bookshops firmly installed in the school syllabus.

The Industry of Marrying Europeans (*Kỹ nghệ lấy Tây*) was first published in 1934. In this work, Vũ Trọng Phụng presents his readers with an unconventional genre which blends reality and fiction. This 'documentary narrative' or 'fictional reportage' is a genre he loved and perfected. His ability to fictionalise the truth, to reconstruct, invent, and imagine dialogues, earned him the title of 'a king of reportage' (*ông vua phóng sự*). As Thúy Tranviet reminds us, 'he was known for writing a reportage that reads like a novel and a novel that reads like a reportage' (p.11). *The Industry of Marrying Europeans* is the outcome of the author's interviews with Legionnaires and their Vietnamese 'wives' in a village of Thi Cau north of Hanoi. The work offers a fascinating glimpse into a cross-cultural society, a hybrid society 'where imported cheese and butter have crossed the oceans to conquer people from different social status'. Vũ Trọng Phụng admitted that he became curious about the nature of relationships between the European Legionnaire soldiers and Vietnamese women upon hearing a Vietnamese woman in a courtroom state that her occupation was 'marrying Europeans'. In the foreword to the translation of Vũ Trọng Phụng's novel, *Số Đố* (Dumb Luck), Zinoman points out Phung's well-known reservations about 'the new woman' and his fondness for traditional Confucian morality and female virtues. This sentiment is mani-

fested in his intentional use of the word *kỹ nghệ* (industry) in the title; the term immediately satirises such unions and leaves no space for any misunderstanding of the motivations behind such liaisons, which have nothing to do with love, romance and commitment and have everything to do with mutually beneficial business transactions.

The Industry of Marrying Europeans is a fascinating work and it is a credit to the translator that her version presents a masterful rendition of the Vietnamese original. The complex and layered Vietnamese original presents many challenges, as translating from Vietnamese has its own specific problems, for example, the complicated system of terms of personal reference dependent on gender, marital status, age, social position and level of familiarity. Furthermore, the original text is imbued with satirical language, puns, double meanings and cultural connotations, which require careful unwrapping. Yet by far the most demanding challenge lies in the original's use of a mixture of languages. Apart from the Vietnamese, the original contains passages in French and in a hybrid 'pidgin' French. In order to convey the speech of the lower classes, who lacked a proper knowledge of French, Phụng employs a Vietnamized transliteration of French called *Tây bồi*. Neither the women nor their Legionnaire 'husbands' are native speakers of French and they communicate in this distorted 'mishmash' language – a veritable trial for the translator. The translator first transliterates this pidgin

French into proper French and then translates the French into English.

As Thúy Tranviet points out, the translator not only needs to understand the literal meanings of the words, but must also take into account the cultural aspects of the language, as well as the mood of the author, in order to capture 'the tone' of the work. This translation certainly succeeded in this respect.

Vũ Trọng Phụng's work still awaits serious scholarly evaluation both inside and outside Vietnam. The introductory essay included in this volume places Vũ Trọng Phụng in a wider historical and social context and provides a useful analysis of *The Industry of Marrying Foreigners*.

Remembering Vũ Trọng Phụng, the Vietnamese poet Lưu Trọng Lũ once said that 'Vũ Trọng Phụng's work exposes and condemns all that is ugly, corrupt, and grotesque about humankind during our era'. Times have changed but human beings remain prone to the seduction of the glitter of superficiality. Contemporary Vietnamese society, at a time of globalization and consumerism, finds itself in the midst of a clash of cultures; the collapse of traditional values, the uncritical adoration of Western consumer goods, the blind worship of money and lack of respect for genuine morality – all spawn confusion over values and generate tension. In this context, Vũ Trọng Phụng's work seems surprisingly topical.

Anyone interested in Vietnamese literature, modern history and colonialism or fascinated by the French Foreign



Legion will enjoy this excellent translation. Most of all, it will be enjoyed by all who are intrigued by the nature of human behaviour.

Dana Healey

Karen Fjelstad and Nguyen Thi Hien, editors, *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 2006, pp. 186.

Since the 1980s, Vietnamese popular rituals and religions have been revitalized, including Len Dong spirit possession rituals and the worship of female goddesses. The connection between economic development and the revival of popular religions in contemporary Vietnam has become an intriguing question among those who are interested in Vietnamese studies. The volume *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities* gives readers a vivid picture of various aspects of contemporary Vietnamese spiritual life in the midst of the rapid changes of lifestyles and values due to the economic reform, known as Doi Moi (Renovation), in the late 1980s. What makes this volume different from other previous works on Vietnamese popular religions and rituals, such as Thien Do's *Vietnamese Supernaturalism: Views from the Southern Region*, and Philip Taylor's *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam*, is its focus on the study of Len Dong spirit possession rituals and mediumship in contemporary Vietnamese communities, both in urban and country areas, as well as in the homeland and abroad.

The volume starts with the article "The Mother Goddess Religion: Its

History, Pantheon, and Practices" by Ngo Duc Thanh. It explores the development and practices of Len Dong rituals which are closely connected to the worship of the Mother Goddess religion in pre- and post-Renovation Vietnam. The author also provides thorough background knowledge of the worship of mother goddesses in Vietnamese society, including the origins of the Mother Goddess religion, its pantheon and main practices. The author also tries to establish why the Mother Goddess religion is considered an indigenous religion of the Kinh people and how it is incorporated with Taoism, Buddhism and the beliefs of other indigenous ethnic groups in Vietnam.

Pham Quynh Phuong's article "Tran Hung Dao and the Mother Goddess Religion" introduces the worship of Saint Tran (Tran Hung Dao), a general who served the Tran Dynasty, who freed the country from the Mongol and Chinese occupation. He is unarguably regarded as a national hero and thus venerated as a saint who can expel evil spirits. The author points out that the worship of Saint Tran in the pantheon of the Mother Goddess religion and the fact that female mediums are possessed by Saint Tran is an interesting phenomenon in Vietnamese society, because female mediums have been seen as sexual wantons and immoral. The incorporation of the cult of Saint Tran into the Mother Goddess religion shows the attempt to avoid political authority in the Socialist era, when the practices of Len Dong were illegal. This is because the



incorporation of Saint Tran gives legitimacy and higher status to the Mother Goddess religion.

The author also suggests that the popularity of the belief in supernatural power in Vietnam is linked to the rapid growth in the business and economic sector. More people in urban areas have become involved in spirit possession rituals because of their exposure to ‘the uncertainty of the market economy’. Likewise, Nguyen Thi Hien’s article, “A Bit of Spirit Favor is Equal to a Load of Mundane Gifts: Votive Paper Offerings of Len Dong Rituals in Post-Renovation Vietnam” observes that the practices of Len Dong and the use of votive paper offerings of Len Dong rituals in Post-Renovation continues to grow despite the government’s restrictions. This is because:

While the increase in ritual practices may be in response to the stressful and difficult living conditions for many Vietnamese, as well as their religiosity, some people have found a way out of poverty by building lucrative businesses that capitalize on the growing demand for votive paper offerings. (p. 127)

Nguyen Thi Hien not only gives a clear explanation as to why votive paper offerings have been an important part of the Len Dong rituals, but also raises an interesting question about religion and business by giving a comparison of two case studies: a female experienced medium turned to business to

help her practice as a medium; whereas a fourth generation specialist of votive paper offerings became a medium to support his business. A concern about materialism in Len Dong performances and the tension between materialism and religion are also found in Vietnamese communities in Silicon Valley, in the United States of America, where the mediums are criticized for ‘buying and selling spirits’ [*buon than ban thanh*], as shown in Karen Fjelstad’s study, “We Have Len Dong Too: Transitional Aspects of Spirit Possession”.

A great contribution to this volume is the cross-boundary study of Vietnamese popular beliefs. Two articles by Karen Fjelstad and Lisa Maiffret highlight the important role of Len Dong rituals and mediumship in the Vietnamese communities of Silicon Valley. There is a sense of nostalgia in the performances of Len Dong among overseas Vietnamese:

The earliest arrivals to Silicon Valley found emotional solace in possession ceremonies that evoked memories of Vietnam and a home they had recently left. For later arrivals, spirit possession ceremonies are important symbols of a culture and tradition they value and want to keep alive. (p. 100)

Other articles in this volume also present different aspects of the study of Len Dong. For example, Barley Norton’s article discusses how the idea of gender and the construction of gender are reflected in *chau van* bands,



performing for the Len Dong rituals, and through views concerning mediums. “Spirit Performance and the Ritual Construction of Personal Identity in Modern Vietnam” by Kirsten W. Endres provides interesting stories of mediums. The article, “Children of the Spirits, Followers of a Master: Spirit Mediums in Post-Renovation Vietnam”, co-authored by Viveca Larsson and Kirsten W. Endres, explores the relationship between masters, mediums and followers in a temple community.

Laurel Kendall’s study, “Do the Four Palaces Inhabit an East Asia Landscape?” ends this volume by summarizing what is discussed in previous chapters. The author also attempts to put the Mother Goddess religion and Len Dong possession rituals in the larger context of East Asia, where Confucian influence prevails.

Ethnographical reports and anecdotes from fieldwork are also a strong point of this collection, because they provide readers with good first-hand information on practices. In sum, the scholarship of this book is admirable because it helps fill a gap in the studies of the religious practices in Post-Renovation Vietnam. It is also an invaluable addition to the understanding of contemporary Vietnamese communities, both inside and outside Vietnam.

Montira Rato



Sadia N. Pekkanen and Kellee S. Tsai, eds, *Japan and China in the World Political Economy*. London, Routledge, 2005, pp.245.

This book analyses the experiences in recent economic reform in Japan and China in a comparative framework. The focus is given to structural reform since the bursting of the asset bubble in Japan, and to reform and opening up since the late-1970s in China. While the literature about these two reform policies considered separately is abundant, it is quite rare for them to be taken up at the same time in a comparative way. In this sense, this book can be viewed as a pioneering achievement.

Over the past 15 years or so, Japan and China, which sharply contrast with each other in stages of economic development and political systems, have faced the common trend of so-called globalization and have struggled to adjust their economic systems to increasing pressure for world economic integration. The basic idea of this book is that under such circumstances the once popular concept of the developmental state, which was conceptualized by making post-war Japan and “newly industrializing economies” (NIEs) a model, is not relevant any more when considering the role of the state for economic development. Instead, this book commends the concept of the late liberalizer as appropriate to describe the role of the state in the contemporary world political and economic situation. It is widely understood that the devel-

opmental state adopts state-centered or state-dominated economic policies with various protection measures and incentives, and actively promotes infant industries and exports. In contrast, the liberalizer in this book is thought to pursue the freeing-up of the domestic economy by adopting market-oriented policies in response to increasing pressure from globalization. The word “late” used above means that the country started implementing market-oriented domestic policies at a later historical juncture than others and is likely to face greater international pressure to carry out liberalizing policies that may destroy or significantly modify the old economic system. Therefore, compared to the developmental state, the late liberalizer will more often encounter strong resistance from vested interest groups or from losers created by its policies. Battles between pro- and anti-liberalization forces characterize the policy process in the era of liberalization.

There are two viewpoints emphasized throughout this book. One is how the role of a state has shifted from the developmental state to the liberalizing state, and the other is on the latest situation in the battle between pro- and anti-liberalization forces in each country. Although China deviates from the developmental state model in many respects, the description of how China deviates from such a model helps the reader to understand the characteristics of Chinese policy-making institutions and policy. This book’s approach makes

the comparative policy analysis of two distinctively different countries interesting and its contents rich.

Five key areas, i.e. development, trade, investment, finance and technology, are considered separately by specialists for each country. Two articles in the development section give a general overview of economic development after the war in Japan and China, respectively. By helping the reader to understand difficulties encountered by policy makers in the transition from developmental state to liberalizer, this section serves as a good guide for the following sections. The author of the Japanese part of the development section, T. J. Pempel, writes:

...instruments and characteristics critical to success at one point in time might themselves become impediments to continued growth once initial development goals had been achieved. It is this difficulty of adaptation that continues to hamper the political and economic reorientation of Japan to a world in which economic liberalization has become the predominant paradigm. (p. 42)

This is exactly the point which the proponents of structural reform in Japan have repeatedly emphasized during the long stagnation after the bursting of the economic bubble. This type of historical dynamism in the policy-making process also exists in China and is described in the Chinese part.

The four sections which follow analyze areas of specific development, with trade and investment sections explicitly dealing with international pressure to liberalize and domestic responses to it. As the form or strength of resistance against liberalization is not necessarily the same and sometimes quite different according to area, the structure of this book seems appropriate to clarify the factors which have contributed to the acceleration of liberalization and the factors which have obstructed it. With findings in each area being integrated by the editors to draw overall lessons and implications, readers are able to obtain both the overall picture and area-specific details about the processes of recent liberalization in the two countries.

Looking back at the post-war economic development of Japan and China, economic relations between the two were negligible, even though both countries were geographically close, and each traced a distinctly different development path up until the end of the 1970s. It is since the early 1990s, when the two governments further strengthened market liberalization efforts, that economic relations between the two have deepened significantly. At that time, Japan experienced an unprecedented sharp appreciation of the yen against the dollar, accompanied by a large-scale shift in production overseas, which in turn led to increased efforts in structural reform by the government. At the same time, the Chinese government accelerated reform and the opening-up



process under a new slogan, the “socialist market economy”. As economic conditions were strongly complementary to each other, the acceleration of liberalization policies in the two countries led to a significant deepening of the economic relationship between them. In this, the two governments vigorously acted as liberalizers from the early 1990s, resulting in new economic opportunities for both countries in a mutually beneficial way.

At present, the economic integration of East Asia is proceeding spontaneously and both countries are trying to take a leading role in this integration process. Ideas for more formal integration, such as the “East Asian Community”, are surfacing. In such a situation, the future directions of both countries will be of great concern for many people, because they will have a significant influence on the process and the way in which East Asian economic integration will be formulated. Will the two countries which dominate East Asian economies by their size continue to advance in the direction of liberalization? Or is it more likely for them to encounter a backlash against liberalization? This book seems to reserve answers to these questions and cautions against the simplistic idea that the policies of the two countries will advance straightforwardly in the direction of liberalization. In addition to the uncertainty stemming from the dynamism of the process of policy formation on which this book lays great emphasis, the following viewpoints or findings by the

authors and editors of this book seem to contribute to cautious reservations about the future: firstly, the Japanese government still seems to retain the attitude of a developmental state, and has not embraced wholeheartedly all the liberalization measures in the past; and secondly, in China, because of growing internal difficulties, such as an increasing inequality in income distribution as a result of economic liberalization and rapid growth, there exists a not negligible risk with respect to the acceptability of a policy of liberalization in the future.

Globalization is likely to continue and pressure to make economies more consistent with so-called global standards will increase. But, as this book emphasizes, there still exists many forms of resistance to further liberalization. The case of the liberalization of the postal services in Japan exemplifies this point. In Japan, prime minister Koizumi struggled hard to overcome resistance to his agenda of structural reform, even within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In the case of the privatization of the postal services, when strong resistance within the LDP led to the rejection of draft privatization law in the Diet, Koizumi purged opponents in the LDP, dismissed the lower house of the Diet and called a general election. He won the election and the postal services privatization law was enacted. This occurred in 2005, four years after he began his campaign for this reform. If Prime Minister Koizumi had been defeated in that election, the privatization

of the postal services would have been postponed indefinitely. Dramas of this kind have happened in the past and will be repeated in the future. The situation in China will be more or less the same, in that there have been battles between pro- and anti-market-oriented policy groups within the Communist Party, which will also be repeated. Therefore, to talk about future policy formation requires careful investigation of the balance of power between related groups even within the ruling parties and the government. The authors and editors of this book are quite aware of this point. This book certainly helps readers deepen their understanding about policy formation in the two countries, and also provides a useful framework for considering development policy in general.

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